

**To: All Members of the County Council  
and of the Children, Schools and  
Families Scrutiny Committee  
All Chief Officers**

**From: COUNTY SECRETARY'S  
DEPARTMENT**

**Ask for: Julia Harries**

**Ext: 25563**

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**My Ref: JH**

**Your Ref:**

cc: CSF officers  
All officers named for 'actions'  
Committee section

**CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
WEDNESDAY 15 OCTOBER 2003**

**MINUTES**

**ATTENDANCE**

**MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE**

T I Ambrose, D E Billing, N K Brook, P T J Channell, A D Dodd,  
B C Engel, A K Gray, F Guest, T G M Kent (Chairman), B J Lamb, D E Lloyd,  
M H O'Neill, S Quilty (Vice-Chairman), I Simpson, R H Smith

Parent Representatives:

P Cherry	North area
C Broadhurst	East area
T Douris	West area

Church Representatives:

J Reynolds	Education Board of the Diocese of St Albans
M Stothard	Archdiocese of Westminster Schools Commission

Teacher Representatives:

P Brooks	National Association of Governors and Managers
I Gibson	National Association of School Master/Union of Women Teachers
G Rowlands	Association of Teachers and Lecturers

Health and Voluntary Sector Representative:

M Mitchell Deputy Executive Director, Dacorum CVS

**Also present:**

Executive Member: R I N Gordon

S E Jones, L R Kercher, R Mays

**CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- (i) A K Gray had replaced J Taunton for this meeting only.
- (ii) M Mitchell, Deputy Executive Director, Dacorum CVS, was welcomed to his first meeting of the Committee as a Voluntary Sector Representative.
- (iii) The Committee noted the resignations of John Hayes, Teacher Representative and Jessica Linskill, Health Representative.
- (iv) Since this was the last meeting for John Evans, Deputy Director of Children, Schools and Families, the Committee thanked him for all his hard work over the years and wished him well in his new post as Director of Education and Children with Peterborough City Council.

**MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18 June 2003 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**PUBLIC PETITIONS** (Standing Order C11)

None

**QUESTIONS** (Standing Order C9(4))

**Tanis Kent** asked the Executive Member, **Robert Gordon**, the following questions:

- 1 *'There have been allegations made in a letter in the Mercury that a family lied about their address to get their child into Presdales. What steps do the County Council take to check up on addresses given on secondary transfer forms and is there any action taken when allegations on cheating are made?'*

**Robert Gordon** replied:

*'Initial checks on addresses are done by headteachers of primary schools who receive paper applications from parents of their Year 6 pupils. They are also asked to check lists of those who apply on-line.'*

*A number of allegations is made each year that some families have made fraudulent applications. In all cases these allegations are followed up and evidence of the address is sought from the parent and headteacher of the current primary school. Where it can be proved that the child did not live at the address given at the time of the application, then the place will be withdrawn.'*

- 2 *'In the Havers Firs consultation document it states that the numbers attending the two schools by 2007 will be 398. At present there are only 294 children on role at the two schools. At the consultation evening a question was asked about where these additional children would come from. The officer replied they would come from the existing catchment areas of the two schools.'*

*Can the Cabinet Member tell me where the housing developments are, that are going to generate 100 more children in 4 years?'*

**Robert Gordon** replied:

*'The numbers quoted in the consultation document are taken from the official pupil forecast (2003). These figures include known housing developments in Bishop's Stortford and the number of pupils these are likely to generate. These numbers are then distributed to planning areas and reflected in the projections for individual schools.'*

*'The additional children forecast for the Firs and Havers Schools are projected to come from developments at Thorley Park, Hadham Road and Adderley Road as well as from the town centre developments, including that on the Herts & Essex Hospital site.'*

**Tanis Kent** asked the following supplementary question:

*'It was very clear at the consultation meeting that the population in the area was increasing; one of the reasons for amalgamating schools was to aid schools with budget difficulties due to falling roles; this has led to confusion in the minds of parents who see houses being built and a large rise in population but a fall in school roles. I am still not clear that these additional children will be in the catchment area of the new school.'*

**Robert Gordon** replied:

*'I accept that you are not yet convinced; the final results of the consultation will be reported to members.'*

*'The amalgamation of infant and junior schools is not just a numbers issue and has educational benefits in its own rights. We will return to this after the consultation has finished.'*

- 3 *'At the Firs/Havers consultation evening, concern was expressed about the timescale for amalgamation, September 2006 being the date given.'*

*Why is the County Council unwilling to fund the building of the extension at The Firs so that the proposed amalgamation if agreed can go ahead much more rapidly? The money being put back in the county's coffers when the Havers site is sold. Eight years ago when the previous amalgamation was suggested, there was to be no such delay.'*

**Robert Gordon** replied:

*'I would have preferred the new school to open in September 2005 but we do not have the resources to forward fund the £2 million of capital that the new building works require. We have to use the contemporaneous contracting route. Town planning issues and negotiations for the sale of the current Havers School site have to be concluded before building work can be committed to provide the primary school on the Firs site.'*

*The potential for forward funding is constrained by the level of the County Council's balances which are still adversely affected by previous such decisions, notably in Borehamwood where the proceeds of the surplus sites have still not been received.'*

**Tanis Kent** asked the following supplementary question:

*'If the negotiations over the sale of the site look as if they will continue past 2005/06, will the County Council be prepared to look again at how we will fund this school?'*

**Robert Gordon** replied:

*'I understand and sympathise regarding the uncertainty caused to all concerned. All options will be considered to see what is practical.'*

- 4 *'The Round Diamond move was delayed by a year because of problems with planning permissions and the disposal of the old school site. Why is the County Council considering the same kind of scheme for the Havers Firs amalgamation, which could lead to it being even later than 2006?'*

**Robert Gordon** replied:

*'I am advised that the delay in completing Round Diamond School was not caused by the use of contemporaneous contracting but was caused by town planning issues relating to concluding a S106 agreement.'*

**Sue Jones** asked the Executive Member the following questions:

- 5 *'Does the Executive Member agree that the debacle of the CATS summer playschemes in Welwyn Garden City was totally unacceptable and can he tell us what is being done to find out why it happened and how such a situation can be avoided in future?'*

**Robert Gordon** replied:

*'In late July an incident occurred at the CATS playscheme (a playscheme for disabled children) resulting in a child while in the outside area being hit in the face by a pebble, causing some minor bleeding. The mother, who was present at the time of the accident, took her child straight to the hospital. As they were leaving, the CSF Disability Team Manager arrived at the playscheme and was informed of the incident. The Scheme is managed by Hertfordshire Royal MenCap and its co-ordinator later reported back to CSF having met the mother at the hospital. The child was not detained in hospital.'*

*Parents raised concerns about levels of staffing and inadequate supervision with Royal MenCap. Consequently, Royal MenCap took the decision to close the playscheme temporarily and CSF was informed. Following a review of staffing and meetings with parents, the scheme reopened after one day and gradually built up numbers over the next 2 days. The playscheme was re-organised by adjusting*

*the mix of children with severe needs, improved staff ratios, improved monitoring arrangements and changes to the children's activities. A parents' committee has been set up to meet with staff from both Royal MenCap and CSF to be involved in future planning of this playscheme, and one parent has been involved in the appointment of the new Royal MenCap local playscheme service manager. Parents present at the meetings were satisfied that the situation had been taken seriously and that appropriate action had been taken.*

*Clearly this incident and service interruption was regrettable but officers are satisfied that appropriate action was taken and that measures have been put in place to remove the risk of a similar situation arising in the future. The children using the service were taken on some trips in order to in some way make up for the loss of service.'*

**Sue Jones** asked the following supplementary question:

*'This question arose from the WelwynHatfield Parents Forum in September which was attended by several angry parents but no officer from County who could answer their concerns. The parents experience of the summer playscheme does not reflect or agree with the description on events given in your answer. There is another meeting of the Parents Forum in December [1<sup>st</sup>] so please will you ensure that the appropriate officer or officers attend to speak with the parents?'*

**Robert Gordon** replied:

*'Certainly'*

CSF  
officers to  
ensure  
attendance  
at this  
meeting

**PART 1 ('OPEN') BUSINESS****1. CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SERVICE PLAN 2004/05**

[Officer contact: Andrew Wellington, Senior Development Manager (Young People and Transition)  
Tel: 01992 556980]

1.1 The Committee considered a report outlining the content of the draft Children, Schools and Families Service Plan 2004/05.

1.2 The Committee noted that they would receive a further report in January 2004 to include feedback from the consultation, as part of the process leading to approval of the Plan at Cabinet and County Council in February 2004.

Andrew Wellington  
Julia Harries

**1.3 Conclusions:**

a The Committee welcomed the draft Plan as an excellent foundation stone for the work of CSF and made the following suggestions for improvement:

- i • Future drafts should track changes
- ii • There should be increased focus on collaboration in the area of the 14-19 Strategy
- iii • The Plan should reflect the joint working, set out in 'Every Child Matters'
- iv • Good practice in feeding back to partners should not be lost
- v • The profile of the issue of bullying should be raised

Andrew Wellington

b Further issues arising from consideration of the draft Plan included:

- i • Members continued to be concerned that schools causing concern were still taking too long to turn round and urged the Director to focus on improving the speed and effectiveness of intervention
- ii • There was an increasing need to support and train governors and an awareness that governing bodies would be graded in

Director  
Gill Jones

	ACTION
<p>future inspections</p> <p>iii • There was a suggestion of initiating a Herts Awards Scheme for children to encourage and support individual achievement</p>	
<p><b>2 COUNTY COUNCIL REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET MONITOR – CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES BUDGET MONITORING AND REPORTING IN 2002/03</b></p> <p>[Officer contact: Lesley Brockington, Assistant Director, Resources, Tel: 01992 555710]</p> <p>2.1 The Committee considered a report addressing the issues relating to the CSF outturn monitor raised by the Resources Scrutiny Committee at their meeting in June 2003.</p> <p>2.2 <b><u>Conclusions:</u></b></p> <p>a The Committee supported the conclusions of the Children and Families Panel on 25 September 2003, recognising the difficulty in controlling and predicting demand led budgets and acknowledging the work that had been done to resolve the problems.</p> <p>b The Committee requested a report to the January 2004 Scrutiny Committee meeting, setting out the amended strategy for looked after children and the associated proposals for controlling other areas of significant overspending.</p>	<p>Lesley Brockington Julia Harries</p>

**3 A/AS LEVEL ACHIEVEMENT**

[Officer contact: Mike Griffin, Co-assistant Director  
(Development Division) and Diversity  
Pathfinder Project Director,  
Tel: 01992 555927]

3.1 The Committee considered a report detailing A/AS level achievement in the context of the County Strategy for 16-19 which aimed to increase participation, retention and achievement.

**3.2 Conclusions:**

a The Committee welcomed the progress on collaboration but expressed concern that our performance at A/AS level continued to compare unfavourably with our statistical neighbours.

b The Committee requested a further report to the March 2004 meeting on the effectiveness of the whole 16-19 Strategy, including:

- i • Vocational courses
- ii • Further statistical analysis of value added data and a comparison with our statistical neighbours
- iii • The relationship with colleges
- iv • Transport needs generated by collaboration and how these are met
- v • Curriculum analysis and choices offered to students

Mike Griffin

Julia Harries

#### 4 REPORT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF QUADRANTS TOPIC GROUP

[Officer contact: Cheryl Hopkins, Assistant Director, Local Services,  
Tel: 01992 555631]

4.1 David Lloyd, Chairman of the Effectiveness of Quadrants Topic Group, introduced this report updating members on the work of the Group and the visits to Quadrants during the summer.

#### 4.2 Conclusions:

a The Committee noted the report and in particular the significant concerns of staff regarding staffing and location.

b It was agreed that the next meeting of the Topic Group on 27 November 2003 would set a timetabled work programme for continuation of this scrutiny, including the following areas:

- i • Accommodation
- ii • Oracle – member seminar on 13 November 2003
- iii • Multi-professional working, including learning from best practice
- iv • Dates for future meetings

Cheryl  
Hopkins  
Julia Harries

**5 YEAR 7 CHILDREN OUT OF SCHOOL**

[Officer contact: Nick Powley, Education Access Manager,  
Tel: 01992 555933]

5.1 The Committee considered a report requested by Tanis Kent giving information regarding the number of Year 7 children who did not attend school at the start of the autumn in September 2003.

5.2 The Committee noted the up to date figures as follows:

	<b>EAST</b>	<b>NORTH</b>	<b>WEST</b>	<b>SOUTH</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
As at 14/10/03	0	7	4	13	24

**5.3 Conclusion:**

The Committee congratulated officers on the work that has been done to make acceptable arrangements for many of the children originally out of school.

**6 ANNUAL REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE IN 2002/03 BY THE SOCIAL SERVICES INSPECTORATE**

[Officer contact: Wendy Evans, Policy Officer  
Tel: 01992 556720]

6.1 The Committee considered a report setting out the findings of the Annual Review of the Social Services Inspectorate, highlighting areas of particularly good performance and identifying action plans to address the areas for development identified by the SSI.

**6.2 Conclusion:**

The Committee congratulated staff on a positive review and the continuous improvements achieved over the past year.

**7 TRAFFIC LIGHT MONITOR**

[Officer contacts: Lesley Brockington, Assistant Director,  
Resources,  
Tel: 01992 555710  
Geoff Brown, Head of Performance,  
Tel: 01992 555370]

7.1 The Committee considered a report giving the latest data for the promises monitor 2003/04, as requested by the Scrutiny Co-ordination Panel in May 2003.

**7.2 Conclusions:**

- a The Committee considered this to be a helpful report enabling members to focus on areas where we were not achieving targets and were getting worse.
- b The Committee agreed that Key Stage 2 results should be the subject of further scrutiny, date of meeting to be decided.

Gill Jones  
Julia Harries

**8 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET MONITOR TO 31 JULY 2003**

[Officer contact: Lesley Brockington, Assistant Director,  
Resources,  
Tel: 01992 555710]

8.1 The Committee considered a report on the budget monitor to 31 July 2003, as requested by the Scrutiny Co-ordination Panel in May 2003.

		ACTION
8.2	<b><u>Conclusions:</u></b>	
a	The Committee expressed concern about the level of capital slippages from basic need funding.	
b	The Committee requested that this section of the budget monitor be presented in a clearer and more detailed way in future reports.	Lesley Brockington
<b>9</b>	<b>SCRUTINY UPDATE AND WORK PROGRAMME REPORT</b>	
	[Officer contact: Julia Harries, Committee Administrator Tel: 01992 555563]	
9.1	The Committee noted a report setting out the progress on scrutiny items and outlining a work programme for future meetings of the Committee.	
9.2	The Committee noted that Derek Hills had requested a scrutiny item on dyslexia; it was noted that a report on this would go to the Special Needs Panel and then be referred to the Scrutiny Committee if necessary.	Alan Sapsford Sue Westgate
	<b>ITEMS REFERRED TO THE COUNTY COUNCIL</b> (Standing Order SC.7(2))	
	The Opposition chose agenda item 1, the Children, Schools and Families Service Plan, to be reported to Council on 25 November 2003.	Julia Harries Ron Coxall

**Andrew Laycock**  
County Secretary