

MEMORANDUM

Date: 19 March 2004

**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
Minicom: 6611**

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

**CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY 17 MARCH 2004**

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

D E Billing, N K Brook, P T J Channell, A D Dodd, B C Engel, A K Gray, F Guest,
D W Hills, B J Lamb, A Lee, M H O'Neill, S Quilty (Chairman for this meeting only),
I Simpson, R H Smith, J Taunton

Parent Representatives:

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

Church Representative:

J Reynolds	Education Board of the Diocese of St Albans
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Teacher Representatives:

P Brooks	National Association of Governors and Managers
G Rowlands	Association of Teachers and Lecturers
S Springett	National Association of Headteachers

Health and Voluntary Sector Representative:

L Wallace Chairman of Hertfordshire Association for Young People
(HAYP)

Also present:

Executive Members: R I N Gordon (Education)
 J M Pitman (Children's Services)

M Downing, R Mays, R Mills, E N Singam

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

A K Gray had filled the vacancy for this meeting only.

The Committee stood in memory of Tanis Kent's grandson, Tim.

The Committee welcomed Jane Pitman, Executive Member, Children's Services to her first meeting.

The Committee thanked Clare Kaye for all her work in supporting them and welcomed David Moses in his new role as Head of Scrutiny.

Since this was their last meeting due to the end of their four-year term of office, Terry Douris, on behalf of the Parent Representatives, thanked officers and the Committee for all their support; the Committee thanked the Parent Representatives for their valuable contribution.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 21 January 2004 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

PUBLIC PETITIONS (Standing Order C11)

Mrs Amanda De'Ath presented a petition on behalf of the Mount Pleasant Lane Secondary Transfer Committee on Secondary Transfer Rules. The petition was referred to officers for a written response, and was also discussed under Item 4.

David
Ayres
Alan
Sapsford

QUESTIONS (Standing Order C9(4))

- 1 **Sue Jones**, on behalf of Tanis Kent, asked the Executive Member (Children's Services), **Jane Pitman**, the following question:

'What is the situation regarding the holiday playscheme for disabled children and those with special needs run by Mencap in the Harpenden and St Albans area? Will the Easter scheme run and how long will the summer scheme be?'

Jane Pitman replied:

'The High Oaks Playscheme (HOPS) in Windermere Primary School, St Albans and The Grove Primary School, Harpenden, will be operating at Easter and Summer this year. The scheme will operate junior and senior sections at both venues. It has been agreed with Royal MenCap that there will be 8 days at Easter (5 to 16 April) and 5 weeks in the summer (26 July to 27 August) excluding bank holidays.'

Additional background information:

This information was given out at a meeting of parents on 02/02/04 at Harpenden Memorial Hospital. The meeting was attended by Lin Phillips (CSF Group Manager West), Rose Geraghty (CSF Disability Team Manager West) and Steve Jacklin (CSF Planning Officer). Also present at the meeting was Katie West (Royal MenCap Play & Leisure Manager) and Ben Boucher (Royal MenCap Playscheme Coordinador). This meeting was attended by between 20 - 30 parents of children using HOPS. The meeting was very positive and resulted in a working group being set up to look at any issue for the Scheme. The first meeting of the working group was on 02/03/04 and again was very positive and parents passed on their thanks to all offices

for their input on 02/02/04.

- 2 **David Billing**, asked the Executive Member (Education), **Robert Gordon**, the following question:

'The 5 March 2004 Briefing Note on Mobile Classrooms is helpful. However:

- 1 *Is it the case that it is a DfES aim to phase out all mobiles, in which case how will the LEA phase out this number, and over what timescale?*
- 2 *Why have 11 mobiles been allowed to degenerate to category D ("Life Expired and giving serious cause for concern on grounds of health and safety")? It is acknowledged that one of these is used by a private playgroup, and some are in Foundation and Voluntary Aided schools.*
- 3 *Of these, only 4 are listed to be replaced, and only one has a date specified for this; can dates now be specified for replacing urgently all those in category D, for which the LEA has a responsibility?*
- 4 *Why are a number of schools reliant on as many as three or more mobiles?'*

Robert Gordon replied:

- 1 *The DfES Departmental Investment Strategy for 2003-06 does not specifically refer to the phasing out of mobile classrooms. Some will always be necessary particularly where the expected duration of need does not justify permanent build. The Strategy states that "Investing in the accommodation in which pupils learn and teachers and other staff work is vital since it has a positive impact on pupils attainment".*

We aim to reduce the use of mobile classrooms, other than for short-term need, as funding programmes allow.

- 2 *Of the mobiles which are in category D:*

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- 3 *(a) those at Mount Pleasant Lane, Roundwood Park and Verulam have been replaced, and will be removed shortly unless retained at the school's request.*
(b) That at Havers is not used as a classroom. Members will also

recall that the school is subject to proposals for closure on its 'merger' with The Firs

(c) Those at Boxmoor, Hockerill, Parmiters, Rickmansworth and Sarratt are including for permanent replacement in the 2004-2006 HCC capital programme or 2004-2005 VA capital programme

(d) That at Hollybush will be refurbished or replaced with another mobile classroom in 2004-2005

- 4 *Mobile classrooms are used to deal with significant short term growth in pupils numbers and, if such a growth is sustained in the medium to long term, this accommodation will be replaced in permanent as resources allow.'*

David Billing asked the following supplementary question:

'Who is responsible for the Health and Safety considerations when schools decide to retain mobile?'

Would it be possible to review those schools with large numbers of mobiles?'

What are the criteria used to determine whether a mobile classroom should be installed, rather than a permanent one?'

Robert Gordon replied:

'I will check these issues and provide answers in due course.'

Keith Hutt

PART 1 ('OPEN') BUSINESS

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

ACTION

1. FAMILY SUPPORT CENTRE SERVICE FOR UNDER 10'S

[Officer contacts: Helen Ashdown, Senior Development Manager, Tel: 01992 555521
David Silverman, Early Years Manager, Tel: 01992 556132]

1.1 The Committee considered a report requested by Tanis Kent detailing the proposals and consultation process for the remodelling of the Family Support Service for Children under 10.

1.2 An addendum report was circulated on the first three consultation workshops and the Committee were updated verbally on the last workshop held on 16 March 2004.

1.3 Conclusions:

- i The Committee welcomed the opportunity to review the proposals for remodelling the Family Support Service for Children under 10 and thanked Helen Ashdown for her work.
- ii The Committee broadly welcomed the proposals, particularly the focus on prevention and the response to the current national agenda for improving child protection.
- iii The Committee were concerned that a number of issues were not lost in the implementation process, as follows:
 - That the corresponding improvements in universal services required for these proposals to be effective, are made, and that the good preventative work traditionally carried out at Family Centres [e.g. Parenting Classes] is not lost.
 - That access to services is not made more difficult for users due to location or perceived lack of independence of the service.
 - That the views of users as well as partners and staff are taken on board in the detailed planning of the new service.
 - That there continued to be opportunities and venues for

preventative services, such as groups and classes that cannot be provided in the home, and that this provision is located in areas of greatest need.

- iv The Committee noted that this work would now be taken forward by the Children and Families Panel.

Helen Ashdown
Lisa Sargeant

EDUCATION

2 A REVIEW OF SCHOOLS' PERFORMANCE FROM 2001 TO 2003

ACTION

[Officer contacts: Andy Cunningham, Principal Adviser for Teaching and Learning, Tel: 01582 830348
Gill Jones, Interim Assistant Director, School Standards and Curriculum, Tel: 01582 830364]

- 2.1 The Committee considered a report setting out school performance from 2001 to 2003 and providing an update of progress to review the strategy for school improvements.

2.2 Conclusions:

- i The Committee welcomed the report and celebrated the high level of achievement of Hertfordshire schools, but noted some areas of significant concerns, in particular the gender gap in achievement; the Committee would receive more information on this area at future meetings.
- ii The Committee agreed that it would be helpful to receive an annual report on school performance and progress, to include more detail on value added and floor targets. The timing of this report would allow the Committee's comments to inform budget considerations.

Martyn Cribb
Justin
Donovan
Gill Jones
Andy
Cunningham

Martyn Cribb
Justin Donovan
Gill Jones
Andy
Cunningham
Julia Harries

iii The Committee agreed that a report should be brought to the June meeting on the performance of vulnerable children at all key stages to allow the Committee to decide if a Topic Group was needed to scrutinise this issue.

ACTION

Martyn Cribb
Justin Donovan
Gill Jones
Andy
Cunningham
Julia Harries

iv The Committee agreed to set up a short term Topic Group to scrutinise Key Stage 2 Achievement.

Julia Harries
Martyn Cribb
Justin
Donovan
Gill Jones
Andy
Cunningham

3 PROGRESS REPORT ON POST-16 ACHIEVEMENT AND COLLABORATIVE WORKING

[Officer contact: Mike Griffin, Co-Assistant Director,
Development Division,
Tel: 01992 555927]

3.1 The Committee considered a report giving an update on the 16-19 Strategy following the publication and analysis of the 2003 achievement data for Hertfordshire secondary schools.

3.2 The Committee welcomed to the meeting Janet Lewis, Headteacher of Sandringham School, Jim Porteous, 16-19 Project Leader, Stevenage, Heather Bloomfield, Beaumont School, Daniel Large, Sandringham School and Christian Dollymore, Verulam School, who explained how collaboration worked in their area, the benefits to students, to staff and to the schools involved.

3.3 Conclusions:

i The Committee welcomed the improvements demonstrated by the statistics in the report and the experiences reported.

ii The Committee thanked all of the visitors for their valuable contribution, particularly noting the comments of the students that collaboration had allowed them to choose, not only a wider range of subjects, but different syllabi and subject combinations; the students also reported the benefits of the social activities derived

ACTION

from collaborative arrangements and the opportunities to experience different school cultures.

- iii The Committee raised a number of issues which they recommended the Director, the LSC and schools should work to address:
- Disappointment that it has taken so long to reach the current stage of collaborative arrangements in the County.
 - The practical and administrative problems of students moving between schools.
 - Recognising our commitment to meet the educational needs of all children; to continue to press for good provision in all areas, whether there is collaboration or not.
 - Further examination of the relationships between collaboration, cohort size and individual school performance and how this impacts on how we can provide the best learning opportunities for all our children, through collaboration or other means.
 - The importance of ensuring there is an appropriate range of learning opportunities, including non-school based ones, in all areas and that impartial advice is available to all young people to suggest the best learning option for the individual.
- iv The Committee raised the issue of 6th Form Colleges, and the following points were discussed:
- The importance of a thriving 6th Form to the whole school community.
 - 6th Form Colleges could have all the benefits provided by collaborative groups, without the accompanying travel, administrative and practical difficulties.
 - There was a clear correlation between cohort size and achievement, which was demonstrated effectively by 6th Form Colleges.
- v The Committee requested that any proposals for 14-19 year-olds resulting from the LSC review should be brought to members for consideration.

Mike Griffin

Mike Griffin

4 CONSULTATION ON ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2005-2006**ACTION**

[Officer contact: David Ayres, Interim Head of Education
Access
Tel: 01992 555933]

4.1 The Committee noted a report setting out the statutory consultation proposals for admission arrangements 2005-06, consultation responses received.

4.2 In response to the petitioner, Robert Gordon stated that any changes in the allocation of single sex places would require detailed modelling and this would be undertaken during the process of drawing up the school admission rules for 2006.

Alan
Sapsford
David Ayres

4.3 **Comments to County Council on 30 March 2004:**

The Committee proposed that the definition of "children" in rule 4 should be changed to read:

' "Children" means children by blood, marriage, adoption or the child of a partner, and in every case living in the same house from Monday to Friday.'

Alan
Sapsford
David Ayres

5 REPORT OF THE MONITORING OF SCHOOLS TOPIC GROUP

[Officer contact: Gill Jones, Interim Assistant Director,
School Standards and Curriculum
Tel: 01582 830364]

5.1 The Committee considered a report outlining the work undertaken by the Topic Groups and setting out its findings.

5.2 **Conclusions:**

- i The Committee welcomed the report, acknowledged the contributions of the expert witnesses and noted that:
- The issues raised by the Topic Group would be considered at the next meeting of the Achievement Panel.
 - A further report would be brought to the Committee in October 2005

Gill Jones
Neil Terry
Julia Harries

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| li | The Committee suggested that the actions in paragraphs 5.3 and 6 of the report be included in the CSF Action Plan. | Gill Jones |
| 6 | TRAFFIC LIGHT MONITOR | ACTION |
| | [Officer contacts: Lesley Brockington, Deputy Director, Commissioning, Performance and Resources,
Tel: 01992 555710
Geoff Brown, Change Consultant
Tel: 01992 555370] | |
| 6.1 | The Committee noted a report giving the latest data for the promises monitor 2003/04. | |
| 7 | REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET MONITOR TO 31 DECEMBER 2003 | |
| | [Officer contact: Lesley Brockington, Deputy Director, Commissioning, Performance and Resources,
Tel: 01992 555710] | |
| 7.1 | The Committee considered a report on the budget monitor to 31 December 2003. | |
| 7.2 | <u>Conclusions:</u> | |
| | The Committee noted the report and requested 2 briefing notes for members: | Lesley Brockington |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The demand for nursery places and steps taken to promote uptake of places. • Capital slippage in South West Herts. | |

8 SCRUTINY UPDATE AND WORK PROGRAMME REPORT	ACTION
[Officer contact: Julia Harries, Committee Administrator Tel: 01992 555563]	
8.1 The Committee noted a report setting out the progress on scrutiny items and outlining a work programme for future meetings of the Committee.	
8.2 <u>Conclusions:</u>	
i <u>Item 3:</u> Operation Coachman; the Committee noted that all 10 District Councils now used an 'enhanced check' on all taxi drivers and escorts on County Council contracts; it was agreed that the proper definition of 'enhanced check' should be included in the report to the June meeting of the Committee.	Wendy Broome
ii <u>Item 4:</u> Effectiveness of Quadrants; the Committee noted that the Topic Group was now 'on hold' ; the work done by the Group so far would be incorporated into CSF's Growth and Change programme and members of the Group would be involved in the consideration of the draft report to the Children and Families Panel	
iii <u>Item 22:</u> Processes and Member Involvement in School Reorganisations; the Committee noted the reassurances given by the Executive Member and the Director that the protocols for consultation on school reorganisations were at the draft stage and members would be involved in their development.	
iv The Committee noted that the following would be added to the work programme, as discussed under item 2, A Review of Schools Performance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a report to the June meeting on the performance of vulnerable children at all key stages to allow the Committee to decide if a Topic Group was needed to scrutinise this issue. • a short term Topic Group to scrutinise Key Stage 2 Achievement. 	Julia Harries

ITEMS REFERRED TO THE COUNTY COUNCIL
(Standing Order SC.7(2))

Item 2, A Review of Schools' Performance from 2001 to 2003

Julia Harries
Ron Coxall

Andrew Laycock
County Secretary