

**MEMORANDUM**

**Date: 24 June 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

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**CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
WEDNESDAY 23 JUNE 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, S E Jones, T G M Kent (Chairman), B J Lamb, M H O'Neill,  
S Quilty (Vice-Chairman), I Simpson, R H Smith, J Taunton

Parent Representatives:

P A Cherry	North area
J E Shire	South area
M Calvert	East area
R Tucker	West area

Church Representative:

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

T Douris	National Association of Governors and Managers
I Gibson	National Association of School Masters/ Union of Women Teachers
G Rowlands	Association of Teachers and Lecturers
S Springett	National Association of Headteachers
D Williams	National Union of Teachers

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)

R Mays

**CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**A K Gray** had filled the vacancy on a permanent basis.

**S E Jones** had replaced **A Lee** on a permanent basis.

The Chairman welcomed the four new Parent Representatives:

P A Cherry	North area
J E Shire	South area
M Calvert	East area
R Tucker	West area,

D Williams, the new NUT representative, and T Douris the new NAGM representative.

M Stothard, representative of the Archdiocese of Westminster Schools Commission, sent his apologies and the Committee noted that this would have been his last meeting; the Committee thanked Michael for all his contributions to their work and wished him well for the future.

**MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 17 March and 5 April 2004 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 **Robert Gordon**, Executive Member, Education, the following question:

- 1 *'Have the recommendations made by the Casual Admissions Topic Group set up by the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee been put into effect? In particular, the recommendation that people should not continue on the Continuing Interest list indefinitely but be given the chance to re-apply.'*

**Robert Gordon** replied:

*'Generally, yes.'*

*Applicants who have been on the continuing interest list for more than one term are now written to and asked whether they wish to continue to be considered for their schools of preference. If they do not respond they are removed from the list. If they do ask to stay on the list, they are considered against the appropriate rules along with other casual admissions as places become available'.*

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

- 2 *'The striking Youth Workers said that Hertfordshire gets a £2million grant for youth work, but only half of that goes to the County Youth Service:*
- (a) *Is the size of the Government grant correct?*  
(b) *What is the grant spent on?'*

**Robert Gordon** replied:

*'In 2003/04, Youth Service specific grants amounting to £313K.*

*The main funding for Youth Work is part of the Youth & Community EFSS sub-block of £8.020m which covers Youth and Community, Adult and Community Learning and student support and awards. As shown in the Section 52 Statement for 2003/04 the planned spend on Youth and Community was £9.32m, £1.3m in excess of the EFSS figure. The Youth Workers Union appears to have confused the EFSS sub-block with the spending on the Youth Service alone.'*

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

- 3 *'How many pupils living in the Cheshunt/Waltham Cross area did not get a place at a ranked school and were written in to a school in Hertford or Ware this year?'*

**Robert Gordon** replied:

*'Two.'*

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

*'Are those two pupils still having to go to Hertford or Ware or do they now have a place in the Cheshunt/Waltham Cross area?'*

**Robert Gordon** replied:

*'I will arrange to let you have an update on the situation once the appeals are settled.'*

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

- 4 *'Does the Cabinet Member for Education consider it equitable that parents with access to the Internet could find out their child's secondary placement from 5.00pm on the day before allocation letters were due to be delivered?'*

*If this system is to continue, what steps are to be taken to see that*

*the website does not crash as it did this year?’*

**Robert Gordon** replied:

*‘We need to provide some incentive to parents to apply on-line if we are to respond to the e-government agenda. Parents without their own Internet access can use those provided in public libraries.*

*All was not well with the on-line system for secondary applications on allocation day this year and it was certainly running slowly. However, I can report that 611 transactions were completed between 5pm and 9.20pm and a further 700 between 9.30am and 11am the next morning. Officers have investigated the reason for the system shutting down between 9.20pm and 9.30am and are now working on a technical solution that will ensure that these problems do not re-occur.’*

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

*‘Your answer does not answer my question, which was whether it was equitable for parents with access to the Internet to find out about their child’s allocation of a secondary school place at 5.00pm on the night before other parents.’*

**Robert Gordon** replied:

*‘Fairness is not absolute and is a matter of judgement. All parents could access the Internet through our libraries and we have to offer some incentive for parents to apply on-line, which is justified in these circumstances.’*

**Tanis Kent** asked **Jane Pitman**, Executive Member, Children’s Services, the following question:

- 5** *‘What % of the young people who appear before the Youth Justice Panel have been out of school for a) 6 months, and b) 12 months?’*

**Jane Pitman** replied:

*'The young people who appear before Youth Offending Panels are those who have been to court for the first time (often having had a reprimand from the police and a Final Warning previously). They vary significantly in the seriousness of their offending and thus in their likelihood of displaying the sort of behaviour that would cause them to be excluded.*

*Of the 385 young people receiving Referral Orders in 2003, 11(3%) were permanently excluded while on referral orders and a further 25(6.4%) on fixed term exclusion. From the data it has been possible to analyse, 4 of these were excluded prior to offending, Because of the way the databases are compiled, it is not possible to give an accurate figure for the length of the exclusion prior to the Referral Order being made, though it looks as if none were excluded more than 6 months when they went to court. The data however may be misleading, as where it flags up that the young person offended first, the offending may not allude to the current court appearance but to an earlier event (such as a reprimand). It is not feasible at this time to dig deep enough into the data to improve on this information.*

*More broadly across the whole of their workload in 2003 based on an analysis of 1,125 young people, the youth offending teams dealt with 62 young people who were permanently excluded and a further 325 who were undergoing a fixed term exclusion. In total, 84 % of the young people who are worked with by YOTs had a place in Education Training or Employment. (The performance indicator from the government for both Youth Justice and LEAs was 80% for 2003).*

*In addition there will be around 70 children (usually years 10 or 11) who are on reduced hours at school far short of the 25 hours of school per week or in some other less than full time educational placement. One last group which does not show up in the statistics is those who have a place but choose for whatever reason not to attend. With those towards the end of their school careers this can be seen as the easiest course for both school and pupil. The youth offending teams may flag it up in the record of intervention with the young person but there is not a category that would show it when interrogating the data.'*

**Lorna Kercher** asked **Robert Gordon**, Executive Member, Education, the following question:

- 6 *'How many Letchworth children were allocated secondary places in Stevenage this year? How many are actually going to go to Stevenage?'*

**Robert Gordon** replied:

*'Thirty-two. As at 20 May, twenty-seven of them had accepted places in a Stevenage secondary school.'*

*The rule changes introduced for 2005 creating separate co-educational priority areas for Hitchin and Letchworth should see improved outcomes in future years.'*

- 7 **Nigel Agar** asked the Executive Member, Education, **Robert Gordon**, the following question:

*'Are we being faced with a 'fait accompli' over the closure of educational field centres?'*

**Robert Gordon** replied:

*'No. Work is in hand to review the service to bring net expenditure in line with the agreed budget and the recommendations of the Best Value Review of Herts Outdoors in 2000. We are in a period of consultation with affected staff and no decision will be made before this period ends on 30 June.'*

The Committee agreed that in future, questions would be taken at the end of the meeting.

All to note

## PART 1 ('OPEN') BUSINESS

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

## ACTION

1. **RESPONDING TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SSI INSPECTION OF CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES IN HERTFORDSHIRE**

[Officer contacts: John Harris, Director of Children, Schools and Families, 01992 555700  
John Richards, Interim Deputy Director, Social Care and Prevention, 01992 555755]

1.1 The Committee considered a report setting out the progress made following the SSI Inspection of Child Protection Services in Hertfordshire.

1.2 Nominated officers gave a presentation on a key areas, as follows:

- i. Overview of the project managed response – John Harris & Seona Gordon*
- ii. The volume and variety of child protection work - David Ring*
- iii. The self evaluation audit – Cheryl Hopkins*
- iv. The ACPC response and action plan – Carol Taylor*
- v. Increasing capacity in the Quadrants – Mike Benaim*
- vi. Child Protection delivery and management framework – Jacki Rothwell*
- vii. Learning and Development strategy – Jean Farrer*

1.3 Copies of the slides were made available to members.

Julia Harries

1.4 **Conclusions**

(i) The Committee:

- a welcomed the report and progress made during the last six months in responding to the recommendations of the SSI Inspection of Child Protection Services in Hertfordshire,

- |          |   |   |
|----------|---|---|
| b        | thanked officers for their presentations and all CSF staff for their commitment and enthusiasm in responding to the Inspection recommendations,   |   |
| c        | requested a further progress report for the meeting on 19 January 2005,   | <b>ACTION</b><br>John Harris/John Richards<br>[Julia Harries] |
| d        | requested the Director of CSF to consider the best way of improving and ensuring a regular flow of information between local managers and local members,  | John Harris   |
| e        | welcomed the actions taken to date to build capacity and encouraged the Director to ensure that all actions possible continue to be taken to overcome staffing shortages and to assist staff to utilise modern I.T facilities,  | John Harris   |
| f        | noted the management and Learning and Development framework that has been put place in order to build long term improvement,  |   |
| g        | Noted that the independent assessment of cases had reinforced the variability in performance outlined in the SSI report.  |   |
| (ii)     | Members expressed concerns regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the risks to capacity in the East Quadrant arising from the higher level of vacancies, and</li> <li>• the risks associated with the current backlog of unallocated cases, but noted the risk management processes used by officers to deal with this.</li> </ul> | John Harris/John Richards                                     |
| <b>2</b> | <b>CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS FOR DRIVERS</b>   | <b>ACTION</b>   |
|          | [Officer contacts: Tony Edwards, Principal Transport Officer, 01992 588653]   |   |
| 2.1      | The Committee considered a report responding to the request of the meeting in March to provide further information on Enhanced and Standard Criminal Background Checks carried out on County Council taxi contract drivers, and providing information regarding bus driver checks on County Council contracts.                                  | <b>ACTION</b>   |

- 2.2 The Committee noted that criminal checks' records are retained by HCC.
- 2.3 A briefing note would be circulated to all members of the Committee setting out the current guidance to schools on these issues. Jenny Hambrook/  
Carol Taylor  
[Julia Harries]
- 2.4 **Conclusions**
- (i) The Committee:
- a welcomed the report and the fact that all Taxi Drivers and Coach Escorts receive enhanced criminal background checks and are provided with ID cards,
- b noted the process currently in place for drawing the attention of schools and parents to this,
- c agreed to support Essex County Council and other local authorities by requesting the Traffic Commissioner to introduce enhanced criminal background checks when licensing PSV drivers, John Harris
- d requested the Director, with advice from Health and Safety Officers, to check that schools are advised on the appropriateness of requesting contractors providing transport for residential trips to ensure that their drivers have had an enhanced check. John Harris

**EDUCATION****3 PERFORMANCE OF VULNERABLE CHILDREN AT ALL KEY STAGES**

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

- 3.1 The Committee considered a report setting out the performance of minority ethnic groups; travellers; asylum seekers; refugees; looked after children; children with statements of special educational needs and those permanently excluded from school, at each Key Stage and outlining the actions taken to improve achievement.
- 3.2 The Committee congratulated Gill Jones on her recent appointment as Head of Standards and School Effectiveness. **ACTION**

3.3 The Committee welcomed Jan Spavin, Headteacher of Westfield Community Technology College [a LINC school] who outlined the issues to be considered to increase students achievement:

- curriculum
- teaching and learning
- support
- workforce remodelling
- budgets

3.4 More data was requested on asylum seekers.

Shahla  
Taheri-White

3.5 **Conclusions**

(i) The Committee:

a noted the report and thanked all the witnesses for their valuable contributions to the debate,

b acknowledged that, whilst the situation in Hertfordshire compares well with the national data, there are also some areas of significant concern; to assist further scrutiny of this, the Committee requested a report on the education of permanently excluded pupils, to include the work of ESCs, Youth Programme Unit and attendance issues,

Justin  
Donovan/Gill  
Jones  
[Julia Harries]

c in particular, noted the example of good practice outlined by the Head Teacher of Westfield Community Technology College and expressed a desire that this be shared with other schools,

d endorsed the proposed next steps as outlined in the report.

Gill Jones

#### 4 PROVISION FOR 14-19 YEAR OLDS AND RECREATIONAL COURSES IN DACORUM

#### ACTION

[Officer contacts: Mike Griffin, Co-Assistant Director, Development, 01992 555927, Marianne Stevenson, Acting Head of LINC Unit, Development, 01992 555915]

4.1 The Committee received a report outlining the progress of the Topic Group and reporting on more recent events at West Herts College.

4.2 The Committee noted that the Topic Group would be reconvened if necessary in the future.

#### 4.3 Conclusions

(i) The Committee:

a noted the report and acknowledged the achievements of the Topic Group in helping to facilitate collaborative working between secondary schools in the Hemel Hempstead area,

b noted that the development of the Strategic Area Review (StAR) would have a critical impact on the provision of education for 14-19 year olds in Dacorum, looked forward to members being consulted on this and requested a report to be brought back to the next meeting,

Marianne Stevenson  
[Julia Harries]

c Requested the County Council encourage the development of vocational and apprenticeship training within Hertfordshire.

John Harris

#### 5 PETITION FROM ST JOSEPH'S RC JUNIOR SCHOOL, WALTHAM CROSS

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

5.1 The Committee noted a report responding to the petition to County Council on 18 May 2004.

#### 6 COUNCIL PROMISES AND LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICE AGREEMENT (LPSA) MONITOR REPORT – 'TRAFFIC LIGHT'

#### ACTION

**MONITOR**

[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  
29 FEBRUARY 2004**

[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 29 February 2004.
- 7.2 The Committee noted the increased unit costs of taxi contractors as a result of new licensing laws.

7.3 **Conclusions**

- (i) The CSF Board report on ORACLE would be circulated to all members of the Committee.
- (ii) A briefing note on adult StAR and the outcomes of the NIACE review would be circulated to all members of the Committee.
- (iii) Further information on uptake of nursery provision would be Included in future Revenue and Capital Budget Monitor reports.

Lesley  
Brockington/  
Alan  
Sapsford  
[Julia Harries]

Marianne  
Stevenson  
[Julia Harries]

Lesley  
Brockington

(iv) The Committee requested that the issue of fostering and adoption, particularly the actions being taken to promote and recruit foster parents be added to the work programme.	Julia Harries
(v) Further information on Integrated Transport Project would be Included in future Revenue and Capital Budget Monitor reports.	Lesley Brockington
<b>8 SCRUTINY UPDATE AND WORK PROGRAMME REPORT</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
[Officer contact: Julia Harries, Committee Administrator Tel: 01992 555563]	
8.1 The Committee noted a report setting out progress on scrutiny items and outlining a work programme for future meetings.	
8.2 <b><u>Conclusions</u></b>	
(i) The Committee would receive a scoping report in October 2004 on the Schools Library Service/Homework Clubs [item 2 on page 12] in order to decide if further scrutiny was required.	David Moses [Julia Harries]
(ii) The Education of Permanently Excluded Pupils would be added to the Work Programme, no date identified as yet.	Justin Donovan/Gill Jones [Julia Harries]
(iii) A briefing note would be circulated to all members of the Committee on the effective reporting by schools of the % of children on the SEN register.	Debbie Orton [Julia Harries]
(iv) A provisional overview of school test and examination results would be included as an extended section in the Traffic Light Monitor to the October meeting of the Committee.	Justin Donovan/Gill Jones
<b>ITEMS REFERRED TO THE COUNTY COUNCIL</b> (Standing Order SC.7(2))	
Item 1	Julia Harries Ron Coxall

**Andrew Laycock**  
County Secretary