

MEMORANDUM

Date: 14 October 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 13 OCTOBER 2004**

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

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), L R Kercher, B J Lamb, A Lee,
M H O'Neill, S Quilty (Vice-Chairman), R M Roberts, R H Smith

Parent Representatives:

P A Cherry	North 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:

A Saunders	Secondary Headteachers' Association
T Douris	National Association of Governors and Managers
S Springett	National Association of Headteachers
D Williams	National Union of Teachers

Also present:

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

S A Batson, R Mays, J T Metcalf

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Membership changes:

Aislinn Lee replaced **Ian Simpson** for this meeting only.

Richard Roberts replaced **Julian Taunton** for this meeting only.

Lorna Kercher replaced **David Billing** for this meeting only.

Alison Saunders was welcomed as the new Secondary Headteachers' Association representative.

Mona Walker was welcomed as the new Health representative.

Moira Swann was welcomed as the new Deputy Director, Social Care and Prevention.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 23 June 2004 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

PUBLIC PETITIONS (Standing Order C11)

None

QUESTIONS (Standing Order C9(4))

Pat Cherry asked **Robert Gordon**, Executive Member for Education, the following question:

- 1 *'Could the Executive Member please tell me why the Parent Governor Representatives are not invited to attend the public meetings which are arranged by CSF? I believe that it is my remit to represent the parents of the North Quadrant , and I was not informed of the meeting at Longmeadow School in Stevenage, and only managed to attend the other three meetings by reading of them in the local press. Unless I am invited to such meetings I fail to see how I am able to fulfil this important role.'*

Robert Gordon replied:

'Consultation documents, which form invitations to public consultation meetings, are sent to all statutory consultees and other parties with specific geographical interest. I am sorry if parent governor representatives have not been included in the circulation and have asked the department to ensure they are on all future occasions.'

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

'Nicky Line path in Redbourn

Under the new rules, this became a designated route to school for Redbourn parents and because of this, Roundwood became the nearest school for a number of them. However, parents won't use this path because they say it's dangerous so they are having to pay for a place on school transport. Does this situation occur in other parts of the county now that unlit paths are designated, and what if anything is being done to resolve this dispute in Redbourn?'

Robert Gordon replied:

'The HCC policy on Home to School Transport is set out on page 8 of "Moving On".'

At the suggestion of Redbourn parents themselves the County Council agreed to include as part of designated routes "a cycleway adopted by HCC".

Under the law, the availability of the route is assessed on the grounds of road safety not on the grounds of personal safety. To be available for measurement purposes the route must be reasonably safe for the child to walk, accompanied as necessary by an adult.

There is no obligation on parents to require their children to use the designated route if they consider it unsuitable.

Rural Hertfordshire is crossed with unlit roads and paths that are used as part of designated routes for the purposes of admissions and transport entitlement.

In the circumstances, there are no proposals to amend the published arrangements affecting Redbourn. '

- 3** **Terry Douris** asked **Robert Gordon**, Executive Member for Education, the following question:

'The Executive Member may be aware of the considerable difficulties which schools have faced since the introduction of the SHARP financial system earlier this year. I believe that not only has this placed an immense and unnecessary strain on schools' financial services staff but equally importantly it has prevented governors from properly fulfilling their statutory monitoring duty in managing their school's budgets.

Could the Executive Member:

- a provide members with some background to the reasons for this unfortunate state of affairs.*
- b give all schools an absolute guarantee when the problems will finally be resolved.*
- c re-assure members that all future system changes are fully tested before being introduced to avoid the unnecessary use of time and anxiety which such difficulties create.'*

Robert Gordon replied:

'I regret the difficulties caused to schools during the implementation of SAP (the Authority's new finance, HR/payroll and procurement system). There has been a number of problems, initially stemming from data migration issues. The department has been supporting schools with advice and guidance throughout and significant work has been undertaken to resolve the issues.

I am advised that the bank reconciliation errors will have been resolved for 486 schools with the September payroll report. The issues affecting the others have been identified and individual support is being provided to them.

It has not been possible to produce contract statements to schools for the provision of traded services due to a 'bug' in the reporting module of this facility with the SAP software. Work to remedy this is being undertaken and I am advised that a 'fix' is imminent. It is anticipated that it will be possible to provide a half-yearly statement

of contract work covering the period April - September 2004 to schools within the next few weeks. Regular reports will then be available after that date.

The department is establishing a single point of contact for schools with outstanding payroll reporting errors and a working group is being established consisting of schools and consultants from Logica, Pecaso and ITNET to review the payroll report and to advise on improvements. Information and guidance to schools will continue to be provided via the SHARP for schools web page <www.thegrid.org.uk/info/sharp> and bulletins and guidance.

Parallel testing of the old and new payroll system was undertaken as a part of the system's implementation. The current difficulties are not caused by a system fault, but result from a 'bug' in the reporting software, which was not detected until the transfer to the new system.'

Terry Douris asked the following supplementary question:

'Is the Executive Member aware that some staff have not been paid their September salary?'

Robert Gordon replied:

'No, I am not aware of this and I trust that the Help Desk has been provided with details of this. It has been a complicated transition and I will do anything I can to ensure schools are receiving the help they need to overcome difficulties.'

PART 1 ('OPEN') BUSINESS

CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION

1. THE CSF PLAN 2005/08

[Officer contact: Lesley Brockington, Deputy Director of Commissioning, Performance and Resources, 01992 588770]

- 1.1 The Draft Plan had been circulated separately, and a revised page 13 was circulated.

- 1.2 The Committee considered a report outlining the content of the draft strategic Children, School and Families Plan 2005/08 within the new planning framework.
- 1.3 The Committee noted that this report and draft Plan would go to the Children, Schools and Families Panel on 15 October 2004 as part of the consultation process.
- 1.4 The Committee noted that they would receive a further report in January 2005 to include feedback from the consultation, as part of the process leading to approval of the Plan at Cabinet and County Council in February 2005.
- 1.5 The schedule of stakeholder consultation meetings would be re-circulated to members.
- 1.6 **Conclusion:**
- i The Committee welcomed the new format of the draft Plan and congratulated CSF staff for their contribution to its development.

2 **GROWTH AND CHANGE: PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE IN CSF**

[Officer contact: Alan Sapsford, Assistant Director,
Special Projects, 01992 555927]

- 2.1 The Committee considered a report setting out proposals for structural and organisation change with CSF as a result of the Growth and Change Programme started in November 2003. The full consultation document, executive summary and response form had been circulated separately.
- 2.2 The Committee noted that the CSF Panel on 15 October 2004 would receive a presentation/seminar on the proposals. All members of the County Council and of the Scrutiny Committee had been invited to this seminar.
- 2.3 The Committee also noted that the final proposals would be considered by the CSF Panel on 25 November 2004, the Scrutiny Committee on 19 January 2005; recommendations would be approved by Cabinet on 24 January 2005.

ACTION

Lesley
Brockington
David Moses

Lesley
Brockington

David Moses
David Roberts

2.4 A schedule setting out the impact of new funding arrangements on schools would be re-circulated to members.

ACTION

Lesley
Brockington

2.5 **Conclusions:**

The Committee:

- i welcomed the general direction of the Growth and Change proposals,
- ii encouraged members and stakeholders to attend the consultation evening on Monday 8 November 2004, 7.30pm in the County Suite,
- iii agreed to consider the responses to consultations at the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee in January 2005, and to review at an appropriate time the effectiveness of the new arrangements.

Wendy Evans

Lesley
Brockington
David Moses

EDUCATION**3 OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS LEARNING – SCOPING REPORT**

[Officer contact: Marianne Stevenson, Acting Head of LINC Unit, 01992 555915]

3.1 The Committee received a scoping report providing an overview of Out of School Hours [OSHL] in Hertfordshire, with specific reference to Homework Clubs. The report set out options for scrutiny of this area.

3.2 A revised Appendix B was circulated.

3.3 **Conclusions:**

The Committee:

- i would welcome more detailed information on homework clubs in secondary schools,
- ii asked that their attention be drawn to any information suggesting a decrease in the activity of breakfast/homework clubs,

Justin Donovan
Sandra Wood

Justin Donovan

- iii recommended that the CSF Panel take into account the 'value added' benefit of raising pupil attainment that homework clubs, as part of the wider OSHL programme, provide and ensure its development within the 'Extended Schools' developments.

ACTION

Justin Donovan
Marianne
Stevenson

4 FINAL REPORT OF THE KEY STAGE 2 TOPIC GROUP

[Officer contacts: Clive Mitchell, Head of School Effectiveness, Primary, 01582 830360, Brigid de Rivaz, Primary Strategy Manager, 01582 830326]

- 4.1 The Committee considered the final report of the Key Stage 2 Achievement Topic Group setting out its conclusions and recommendations.

4.2 **Conclusions:**

The Committee:

- i welcomed the report and thanked the Topic Group for its work,
ii endorsed the recommendations in paragraph 6 of the report,
iii agreed to refer the issue of transition from primary to secondary school to the Education Panel; parent governor representatives to be fully involved in consideration of this issue.

Justin Donovan
Neil Terry
Claire Pomfret

5 OVERVIEW OF THE WORK OF HERTFORDSHIRE YOUTH SERVICE

[Officer contact: Chris Garcia, Head of Youth Service,
01992 555780]

5.1 The Chairman welcomed to the meeting:

Andrew Simmonds, Chief Executive, Connexions
Dave Green, Joint Chair, Hertfordshire Council for Voluntary and
Youth Services [HCVYS]
Matt Canterford }
Clare Scott } young people
Harpret Gill }
Josh Morgan }
Andy Betts, Drug Education Youth Worker
Laura Butcher, Peer Development Trainee

5.2 The Committee considered a report setting out the current performance of the Hertfordshire Youth Service, in response to member requests for more information.

5.3 The report identified a number of challenges facing the Service, both locally and in relation to the national agenda for Local Authority Youth Services: improving quality, increasing engagement with schools and other support services and responding to 'Resourcing Excellent Youth Services'.

5.4 Andrew Simmonds and Dave Green outlined the role of Connexions and HCVYS in Hertfordshire and their partnership work with all agencies working with young people.

5.5 Matt, Clare, Harpret and Josh told the Committee of their positive experiences of the Youth Service in Hertfordshire and how it had affected their lives.

5.6 **Conclusions:**

The Committee:

- i thanked all the witnesses for their valued contribution to the meeting, and congratulated all the young people on their achievements,

ACTION

- ii congratulated the Connexions Service on their recent good OfSTED report,
- iii identified that the prime factors in providing a good Youth Service included:
 - quality of Youth Workers
 - accessibility of Youth Centres and detached workers
 - ability to offer services that young people wanted,
- iv acknowledged the difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified Youth Workers, and considered the option for any unused budgets being made available for use by local organisations to fill the gaps,
- v acknowledged that there are general funding issues,
- vi recommended that these issues be addressed by the proposed review of the Youth Service by the Director of Children, Schools and Families, which should be undertaken in consultation with young people, following the publication of the Green Paper; a report on the review and its findings should go to the Education Panel on 23 March 2005.

Justin Donovan
Neil Terry
Claire Pomfret

6 COUNCIL PROMISES MONITOR REPORT – ‘TRAFFIC LIGHT’ MONITOR FOR 2004 - 2005

[Officer contacts: Geoff Brown, Head of Performance Improvement, 01992 555370
Peter Stanley, Change Consultant, 01992 555306
Lesley Brockington, Deputy Director of Commissioning, Performance and Resources, 01992 588770]

- 6.1 The Committee noted a report giving the latest data for the promises monitor 2004/05.
- 6.2 **Conclusions:**
The Committee:
 - i welcomed the continued improvement in the performance of Looked After Children,

ACTION

- ii acknowledged that the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership would work together during the implementation of the Children Bill to ensure there is adequate support given to children in vulnerable families,
- iii expressed concerns as to whether the Key Stage 4 targets were sufficiently stretched to encourage schools to continue to improve.

7(a) LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICE AGREEMENT 1 (LPSA 1) – 'TRAFFIC LIGHT' MONITOR FOR 2004 - 05

[Officer contacts: Geoff Brown, Head of Performance Improvement, 01992 555370
Peter Stanley, Change Consultant, 01992 555306]

- 7a.1 The Committee noted a report giving the latest data for the LPSA monitor 2004/05.

7(b) LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICE AGREEMENT (LPSA)

[Officer contacts: Roger de Ste Croix, Senior Development Manager: Service Quality (Acting)
01992 555370
Keith Shephard, Change Consultant, 01992 555368]

- 7b.1 The Committee noted a report setting out the targets within the Council's Local Public Service Agreement relevant to the Children, Schools and Families Service.

8 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET MONITOR TO 30 JUNE 2004

[Officer contact: Lesley Brockington, Deputy Director, Commissioning, Performance and Resources,
Tel: 01992 555710]

- 8.1 The Committee noted a report on the budget monitor to 30 June 2004.

9 SCRUTINY UPDATE AND WORK PROGRAMME REPORT	ACTION
[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 there would be a seminar for members on the Children Bill on Wednesday 24 November at 10.00am at Wheathampstead, after which members could review the Committee's work programme.	John Harris David Moses
9.3 The Committee also considered various reports which had been circulated prior to the meeting:	
i Update on year 7 Children out of School – members requested data on the current position, particularly in the south of the County.	Justin Donovan
ii Schools Library Service – the Committee agreed that there was no need for scrutiny of this issue at present, and the Community Services Scrutiny Committee would be informed accordingly. The Director of Community Information was asked to inform members if the pattern of buyback of the library service by schools began to deteriorate in the future.	Nicola Hayden Andrew Robertson David Moses
iii Update on Uptake of Nursery Provision – noted.	
iv Annual report on CSF Complaints – noted.	
v Secondary Speech and Language Base – noted.	
vi Progress on Best Value Reviews – noted.	
9.4 On the Work Programme, page 9, the Committee agreed:	
i Item 1, the Effective Reporting of the % of SEN Children in Schools, would be dealt with in a briefing note.	Justin Donovan
ii Item 2, the Education of Permanently Excluded Pupils, would be put on the Committee's agenda for March 2005.	Justin Donovan David Roberts David Moses

MEMORANDUM

Date: 14 October 2004

	ACTION
iii Item 3, Fostering and Adoption, would be referred to the Children's Services Panel.	Moira Swann Lisa Sargeant Claire Pomfret
iv Item 4, the Transition Process, would be referred to the Education Panel.	Justin Donovan Neil Terry Claire Pomfret
v It was agreed that the following items would be on the Committee's agenda for its' January meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• CSF Resource Budget• CSF Plan• Growth and Change• Responding to the Recommendations of the SSI Inspection of Child Protection Services• Post-16 Achievement and Collaborative Working• Strategic Area Review	David Moses David Roberts
ITEMS REFERRED TO THE COUNTY COUNCIL (Standing Order SC.7(2))	
None	

Andrew Laycock
County Secretary