

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

EDUCATION OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

5PM TUESDAY, 2 DECEMBER 2003

**COMMITTEE ROOMS 2/3
BRIGHTON TOWN HALL**

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Hamilton (Chair), Councillors Mrs Norman (Deputy Chair), Battle, Bennett, Hazelgrove, Pigdeon, Simson, Willows and Wrighton.

Statutory Co-optees with Voting Rights: Mr A Magrath – Parent Governor Representative.

Non-Voting Non-Statutory Co-optees: Mr A Nicholas – National Union of Teachers; Mrs S Llewellyn-Powell – Association of Teachers and Lecturers; Reverend S Terry – Brighton and Hove Governors Network; Ms. S. Messenger, NASUWT.

Also Present: Liz Wylie, Assistant Director, Strategy & Planning; Janette Karklins, Assistant Director, Quality, Standards & Leadership; Mark Romain, Audit Manager; Penny Jennings (Committee Administrator)

Apologies were received from Councillor Smith, Mr J Taylor, Diocese of Chichester, Mr F Myers, Diocese of Arundel and Brighton, and Mrs K Lewis, Parent Governor Representative.

Before proceeding to the formal business of the meeting, the Chair took the opportunity to welcome Ruth Lewis who would be attending as a parent governor representative from the next meeting of the Panel. It was noted that Kate Lewis had been unable to attend the meeting which was to have been her last and it was agreed that a letter be sent on behalf of the Panel thanking her for her input and enthusiasm during the period of her involvement with the Panel.

PART ONE

ACTION

26. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

26.A Declarations of Substitutes

26.1 Substitute Co-optee For

Councillor Pidgeon
Mr A Nicholas

Councillor Smith
Mrs A Antonio - NUT

26.B Declarations of Interest

26.2 There were no declarations of interest.

26.C Exclusion of Press and Public

26.3 The Committee considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in Section 100A(3) or 100 1 of the Local Government Act 1972.

26.4 **RESOLVED** - That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting during consideration of all items on the agenda.

27A. MINUTES

27.1 **RESOLVED** - That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2003 be approved and signed by the Chair.

27B. MATTERS ARISING

27.2 Councillor Norman referred to the educational attainments (paragraph 15.3) of looked after children and it was noted that this item was contained in the report (Item 32) relating to Test and Examination Results. It was agreed that a separate report would be submitted to the March meeting of the Panel if practicable.

27.3 Reference was made to the apparent high sickness absence (Paragraph 16.3) amongst teaching and other staff employed within schools. It was noted that figures for sickness absence of teachers and other staff e.g. classroom assistants, were not recorded separately. The Assistant Director confirmed that the reasons for the levels of absence were complex and did not appear to be attributable to one particular cause, although some were due to stress. However, in common with practice across the Council as a whole, a series of robust measures had been put into place to ensure that full details were recorded of absences and that measures were in place to deal with repeated absences and to address them in liaison with the Community Health Service when and

where appropriate. This was done in tandem with other measures such as recruitment and retention.

27.4 The Chair stressed that it was important not to use a 'big stick' approach, but to identify the causes of sickness absence and to address them as far as this was possible. It was also important to ascertain how the figures for comparable authorities were recorded to see whether or not the figures for Brighton & Hove were prepared on a common basis.

27.5 The Assistant Director confirmed (Paragraph 16.7) that the number of compulsory redundancies across the Authority were very low. However, it was agreed that the precise figures for early retirements and numbers of leavers would be extrapolated as soon as was practicable and that these would be provided to a future meeting of the Panel.

COMART

27.6 The Assistant Director referred to the report relating to the East Brighton College of Media Arts (COMART), which was now in the public domain following the meeting of the Children, Families and Schools Sub-Committee the previous day (for copy see minute book).

27.7 The report had provided Members with a summary of the outcomes of the formative consultation, which had been conducted following the meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 8 September 2003. The further work which had taken place on the "small school model" was summarised and the rationale for the recommendation made was also set out. Ultimately, for the reasons set out in the report, the Sub-Committee which had cross-party membership had regrettably agreed that the Local Education Authority should publish statutory notices proposing that East Brighton College of Media Arts should close from 31 August 2005.

27.8 The Assistant Director further explained that following that decision a prescribed statutory process had to be followed. Following the publication of Statutory Notices in the "Evening Argus" and outside school and across the surrounding area and to all interested parties, a six week publication period would run during which further observations, objections and comments could be received. At the expiry of that period the LEA / Council would have a 4 week period within which to respond. A specially convened meeting of the Children, Families & Schools Sub-Committee would then be held in February 2004. If the Sub-Committee were then minded to proceed with closure, a meeting of the School Organisation Committee would need to be held. Although Council Members were elected to it, this was a totally independent body which also had Members from each of the Diocese and others. This body was not controlled by the Council and comprised 5 voting groups. For any decision taken by these groups to be valid each group had to reach a decision and the overall decision of all the groups had to be unanimous.

27.9 In answer to questions the Assistant Director explained that extensive dialogue was continuing with Partnership working taking place to ensure a positive outcome for staff at the school and for the pupils. Redeployment of staff (should COMART close) would be sought following a laid down protocol and in consultation with the individuals concerned and the unions. Work would also take place to ensure that the work of the school continued up to the point of closure. It was agreed that the Panel would continue to be updated.

27.10 **RESOLVED** - That the position be noted.

28. QUARTER 1 BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2003/04

28.1 The Panel considered the report of the Director of Children, Families & Schools that presented the 2003/04 quarterly Performance Indicator (PI) results. (For copy see minute book)

28.2 In answer to questions, the Assistant Director explained that notwithstanding that the numbers of permanently excluded pupils in Brighton and Hove were very low, any who were, were offered tutoring of more than 20 hours per week prior to the reintegration which was largely organised through ACE. This target had been met in full. It was noted that the number of pupils on rolls permanently excluded during the year from all schools maintained by the Authority per 1,000 pupils, were unavailable as the end of the collection period had not been reached at the time the report had been

prepared, it was anticipated that these figures could be provided to a future meeting.

28.3 RESOLVED – (1) That the Performance Indicator results achieved during the first quarter 2003/04 as detailed in the abridged Q1 Best Value Performance Report 2003/04 be noted; and.

(2) That the 2002/03 year end results are being audited by District Audit be noted.

29. SERVICE AUDITS COMPLETED 1 SEPTEMBER TO 30 NOVEMBER 2003

29.1 The Panel considered a report of the Director of Children, Families & Schools that listed the service audits carried out in the period 1 September to 30 November 2003, together with the key areas covered by the recommendations in each case. (For copy see minute book)

29.2 Whilst welcoming the report detailing Service Audits completed 1 September - 30 November 2003, Members stressed that they would welcome details of the precise criteria used when determining a service audit was to be carried out at any given school. This information would be useful as it would enable them to scrutinise that procedure and to develop an understanding of the factors considered. It did not appear that the current measures were transparent. Members stressed that they did not want specific details relating to individual schools, but wished to obtain a clearer understanding of the process.

29.3 The Audit Manager explained that, whilst school governing bodies were involved as appropriate, not all of the issues investigated were related to issues of governance and that the audits were based on operational areas looked at over the course of a number of audits and were used as a barometer for further more in depth pieces of work and was agreed that a further report would be prepared for consideration at a future meeting of the Panel.

29.4 RESOLVED – That the areas covered by internal audit work in the Children, Families Directorate by the Council's internal audit team between 1 September and 30 November 2003 be noted and that a further report detailing the types of issue considered in determining to carry out a service audit be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel.

30. BUDGET UPDATE

30.1 The Panel heard an oral report given by the Director of Children, Families & Schools. The Assistant Director explained that a 4% guaranteed increase had been given as a settlement in line with the formula applied by Central Government. Whilst this figure should be sufficient to ensure that all schools should be able to meet the anticipated costs of the teachers' annual pay rise which it was anticipated would be of the order of 2.5% - 3%. This might not be sufficient to deal with incremental movements, although it was too early to know the relative impact of this settlement, as the 4% settlement would not be sufficient to make good any other deficits, if schools were unable to stay within budget, then they would undoubtedly need to make cuts in the following financial year.

30.2 The developing situation was being closely monitored and efficiency savings would be made following dialogue with the individual schools. Governing bodies would be directly involved and measures would be taken on a case by case basis to ensure stability. It was recognised that the budget situation would at best be very tight. It was noted that a Schools Forum meeting was to be held on 15 December 2003 as a broader forum for discussions.

30.3 **RESOLVED** – That the position be noted and that further update reports would be provided to future meetings of the Panel.

31. SUMMARY OF OFSTED REPORTS

31.1 The Panel considered a report of the Director of Children, Families & Schools that reported on the outcomes of the school Ofsted inspections which took place in the autumn term 2003; and the outcome of the appeal which was made against the Ofsted category of 'underachieving' for one of the schools inspected earlier in 2003. (For copy see minute book)

31.2 Councillor Norman, the Deputy Chair expressed concern regarding the situation in respect of Davigdor Infants School where there had been considerable differences between the verbal feedback and the final report which had called the findings into question. As a result the school had lodged an appeal on a re-inspection was being sought during 2004/05. This situation was very unsatisfactory, particularly in terms of seeking to ensure that it did not occur again. Such occurrences were damaging to the relationship between individual schools and Ofsted.

31.3 The Reverend Terry also queried the degree of weight that a new inspection team might give to the findings made by new team. It was hoped that they would revisit and look with fresh eyes. The Assistant Director explained that the Advisory Service had provided extensive support to the school in making good progress in addressing the concerns raised regarding the schools performance. Following the appeal made by the school the Inspector who had made the original inspection visit would be monitored by Ofsted.

31.3 **RESOLVED** – That the contents of the report be noted.

32. TEST AND EXAMINATION RESULTS IN BRIGHTON & HOVE SCHOOLS 2003

32.1 The Panel considered a report of the Director of Children, Families and Schools that set out the national test and examination results for Brighton & Hove schools for the 2003/2003 academic year. (For copy see minute book)

32.2 Members welcomed the information contained in the report and were pleased to note that overall results were improving, and the measures being undertaken in those areas where the targets set had still to be met.

32.3 Councillor Norman, the Deputy Chair made reference to the information available in respect of looked after children requesting that a detailed report in respect of this group, giving a fuller picture of their attainments and the support provided for them, be submitted to the next meeting of the Panel.

32.4 In answer to questions regarding whether or not statistics were collected in respect of traveller children and whether or not there were actually any in this group that attended Brighton and Hove schools on a peripatetic basis, it was agreed that the 'zero' would be checked. It was explained that where families settled or did not classify themselves as such, they would not be recorded as such, although any needs of individual children would be taken on board within the schools they attended.

32.5 Mr McGrath, a parent governor representative referred to the need to seek to keep the pressure up on Central Government to ensure that funding which was released to pump prime specific projects was made available for a sufficient length of time to enable projects to become established. It was noted that application for such funding was at the discretion of individual schools.

32.6 In answer to questions it was explained creative measures such as learning mentors were being applied to address those areas where boys were under-achieving and also those where girls were achieving less well than boys.

32.7 **RESOLVED** – That the contents of the report be noted.

33. PREPARATION FOR THE OFSTED SSI INSPECTION AND THE REQUIRED SELF EVALUATION

33.1 The Panel considered the report of the Director of Children, Families & Schools outlining the preparations that have been made for the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) in Spring 2004. (For copy see minute book)

33.2 In answer to questions it was noted that the Standards in Education (Ofsted) and new Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) would be focusing on the self-evaluation of services across education and Social Services in tandem with one another. With self evaluation although both would be operating under two separate legislative frameworks, a joint judgement would be made on common areas across the Children, Families and Schools Service.

33.3 A series of briefing notes had been prepared for all stakeholders detailing the inspection process. The inspections would result in two separate reports but the joint aspects of the inspections would have exactly the same text in both of the reports.

33.4 **RESOLVED** –That the report and appendices be noted.

34. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ANNUAL EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN - ACTION PLAN

34.1 The Panel considered a report of the Director of Children, Families & Schools informing Members of progress after six months with the Education Development Plan (EDP) annual Action Plan. (For copy see minute book).

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

35. Eb4U EDUCATION STRATEGY

35.1 The Panel considered the report of the Director of Children, Families & Schools informing Members of progress by Eb4U in developing an Education Strategy to complement the work of schools, the LEA, Connexions and the Learning & Skills

Council (LSC). (For copy see minute book)

35.2 Members noted that the designated area within East Brighton covered by the budget of £47.2 million over 10 years noted that the programme was guided by a community partnership made up of local residents and partner agencies.

35.3 In answer to questions in respect of COMART, it was explained that Eb4U had been involved in providing funding for projects to tackle high levels of absence and had also provided funding for the activities of the "Crew Club", a community based youth club based in Whitehawk. Eb4U had not become involved in supporting the anti-closure campaign and had been very careful to respect the delineation between its community based remit and COMART's function as a school. Eb4U was not officer led and was part of an independent partnership arrangement. As well as Whitehawk Eb4U also covered the Moulsecomb area.

35.4 **RESOLVED** –That the Panel note the progress achieved.

The meeting concluded at 7.00 pm.

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

2004