

EDUCATION AND HERITAGE – 3RD OCTOBER

Achieving Excellence and Education and Learning

1. The Committee considered the part of the draft Medium Term Corporate Strategy entitled "Achieving Excellence in Education and Learning" and raised a number of issues with the Lead Member for Education. In the course of debate:-
 - (a) The Committee noted that the format of providing a text in bold type and then a series of bullet points enabled a vision for the aim of Achieving Excellence in Education and Learning to be set out, followed by a number of specific targets to be attained within the four year period. The Committee noted that the vision did not include a commitment to comprehensive community based education. The Lead Member expressed the view that it would be difficult or unrealistic to do so in the light of the pace of change relating to the provision of comprehensive education and local authority's role in the provision of education;
 - (b) It was acknowledged that it might be necessary to reassess the Council's policy on a number of issues in the light of changing legislation, for example, in relation to pupil exclusions;
 - (c) The Committee suggested and the Lead Member accepted that it might be helpful to provide some further explanation within the document of the purpose of the Fair Funding for Education campaign;
 - (d) In response to the question as to whether it would be appropriate to include a reference to development of partnerships in the area of educational provision, the Lead Member responded that he considered that it was premature to do so at this stage.
2. The Committee recommended that the Scrutiny Commission suggest to the Cabinet that:-
 - (a) The first sentence of the first paragraph in the italicised text be amended to give greater emphasis to the wide range of abilities to be catered for by the Education service;
 - (b) The bullet points should be amended to emphasise the County Council's continuing commitment to the agreed policy for provision for children with special educational needs, and in particular, the continuing provision of specialist schools for children with those needs;
 - (c) There should be a commitment in the document to a programme of continuing improvement of school buildings, including replacement of unsuitable buildings and mobile classrooms wherever possible;

- (d) There should be an expression of the Council's commitment actively to encourage schools to tackle problems with drugs and alcohol experienced by young people.

Supporting Culture and Leisure

- 3. The Committee considered the part of the draft Medium Term Corporate Strategy entitled "supporting Culture and Leisure and raised issues with the Lead Member for Education in relation to Library Services. The Committee suggested and the Lead Member accepted that it might be helpful to provide a further explanation of the terms used in the first bullet point. In particular, the Committee recommended that the term "national standards" be clarified and that the reference to "integrated approach to service delivery" be clarified to ensure that reference was made to the provision of a wide range of services provided by the County Council, district councils and, if appropriate, other agencies.
- 4. In relation to those issues referred to under the heading "Supporting Culture and Leisure", other than those relating to the Library Service, the Committee recommended that the Scrutiny Commission consider the following comments, as an appropriate member of the Cabinet had been unable to attend the meeting to answer questions:-
 - (a) In view of the consequences of disaggregation of the Museums Service at Local Government Re-organisation, there should be some reference to co-operative working with other local authorities to safeguard the County's heritage.
 - (b) The third bullet point should be re-drafted (or further bullet point added) to ensure that greater emphasis was given to the development of country parks other than the Bosworth Battlefield, whilst recognising the importance of the Bosworth Battlefield as a major visitor attraction.