

APPENDIX 3

EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

COMMENTS ON THE REVISED ESTIMATE 2002/03 AND REVENUE BUDGET 2003/04

The Education Scrutiny Committee met on Wednesday 22nd January 2003. Mr I D Ould CC, the Cabinet Lead Member for Statutory Education, Early Years and Education Property attended the meeting to respond to questions by the Committee.

REVISED ESTIMATE 2002/03

Comments/Issues Raised

The Committee:

- (a) Noted that there had been an underspend on the SEN Out-County Placements budget of £307,390. This reflected the policy set out in the SEN Development Plan of reducing dependency on Out-County special schools. Efforts would continue to be made to place children with SEN in schools in Leicestershire provided that they had access to the necessary support and an assurance was given that such placements were consistent with offering the best possible education for the child concerned. The Committee requested further information on this issue to a future meeting.
- (b) Noted that there had been greater than anticipated growth in the statementing budget, although this had not lead to any delays in issuing statements of SEN. The Cabinet Lead Member commented that the Council would have to review its policy on statementing in the light of a recent report by the Audit Commission.
- (c) Noted that the savings, (£100,000), arising from the delay in developing the Early Excellence Centre were caused by having to bring together several different sources of funding. The bids for funding had now been submitted.
- (d) Noted that savings of £154,000 arising from delays in implementing the Common Admission Policy had arisen because of delays in providing accommodation.

Decisions

That the Scrutiny Commission be recommended to note the Revised Estimate for 2002/03.

REVENUE BUDGET 2003/04

Comments/Issues Raised

General

The Cabinet Lead Member referred to a recent meeting in London at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister at which representatives from the County Council had made representations about the low level of central government funding for education in Leicestershire. Discussion took place about the most appropriate means by which the Council could continue to press its case for better funding for education.

The Committee then:

- (a) Noted that there was a cash increase, after the loss of specific grants and SEN delegation, of £13.4 million (7.1%) on the Schools Delegated budget. This would have to fund all spending pressures including the teachers' pay award, the increase in employers' pension contributions for teaching staff, job evaluation and growth in pupil numbers (estimated to cost £1million). It was thought that the higher than anticipated growth in pupil numbers was due, in part, to migration of pupils from the City of Leicester.
- (b) Noted that it was not possible to expand the Common Admission Policy as there was insufficient revenue funding, although this was a stated priority in the Council's Medium Term Corporate Strategy. The Cabinet Lead Member pointed out that priority had, instead, been given to meeting the Government's priority for providing universal nursery education for 3 year olds from 1 April 2003.
- (c) Expressed concern about the proposed reduction of £30,000 on Sports Grants. The Committee indicated that, should the saving be pursued, it would wish to monitor the impact.

Decisions

That the Scrutiny Commission be recommended to note the Revenue Budget proposals for 2003/04.

escbudgetcoms