

## Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

### Record of Meeting with Minister for Education, Sport and Culture

Date: 5<sup>th</sup> February 2007

Location: Le Capelain Room, Sates Building

#### **Present**

Deputy F.J. Hill, B.E.M., Chairman

Deputy J. Gallichan

Senator M. Vibert, Minister for Education, Sport and Culture

Deputy J. B. Fox, Assistant Minister for Education, Sport and Culture

Mr T. McKeon, Director, Education, Sport and Culture

Mr. D. Greenwood, Assistant Director – Culture and Lifelong Learning

Mr. W. Millow, Scrutiny Officer

Mr. T. Oldham, Scrutiny Officer

The meeting was held to consider the Education, Sport and Culture Department's proposed policy plans and related topic areas for 2007. Summarising the discussions, the Panel is advised of the following:

#### 1. Higher Education Funding:

There were pressing time constraints for a final decision to be taken on Higher Education funding policy in advance of 2007/8 academic year applications. The policy taken forward from this point would be permanent for the foreseeable future although the proposals were designed to allow flexibility. The Minister felt the consultation process for the four proposed options had been thorough and advised that the options were in line with schemes in place in the U.K, U.S.A and Australia amongst others, whereby the student was introduced as a contributor to meeting the costs. The previous model of funding was based on a culture whereby a small, elite percentage of school leavers entered Higher Education and this model would be incompatible with the current situation of wider access.

Consideration was given to the contribution of a potential Scrutiny Review. Work remained to be done by the Department in ancillary areas such as local business bursary schemes, tax incentives (discussions were ongoing with the Department of Treasury & Resources) and defining the family in relation to parental contributions (awaiting advice from Law Officers although due to delays alternative legal advice would possibly be sought). Input from Scrutiny in these areas would be welcomed.

It was agreed that Mr. Greenwood would provide a written update to the Panel of the ancillary areas still under discussion.

#### 2. Youth Service:

The Youth Service Action Plan and Strategic Plan had been agreed and were due to be implemented. Areas such as the Youth Service-Parish relationship and youth provision on the Waterfront were identified as constructive areas for a potential Scrutiny Review.

A key factor for continuing the work of the Youth Service was the ground support offered by volunteers and helpers. There were possibly fewer helpers due to tighter controls

surrounding adults working with young people.

### 3. Annual Business Plan:

The Panel's approach to the Annual Business Plan was welcomed by the Minister.

The Director of Education, Sport and Culture advised that the overall timetable for development of the Annual Business Plan set the timetable for the Department's work. It was suggested that the Panel consider the overall Annual Business Plan timetable (and the Department's contribution to it) in order to identify appropriate times to undertake work in relation to this topic.

### 4. Early Years:

The Minister stated that the complex issues in this area for 0-3 year-olds and 3-5 year-olds could benefit from a Review by the Panel.

The two options being considered for 3-5 year-olds, as outlined in the Minister's recent report in December 2006 (R.C.100/2006 Early Childhood Education and Care: Progress Report December 2006), were universal free entitlement of 20 hours per week (for 38 weeks per year) or a means tested model of delivery. The Minister was due to take follow up proposals to the Council of Ministers shortly and was happy to forward those proposals to the Panel.

### 5. Fort Regent:

The Department was still awaiting the EDAW Report on the strategy for the regeneration of St Helier that would include proposals for Fort Regent. The Department planned that the Fort would continue to be used as a centre for sport and leisure activities for at least the next 15-20 years, although this would require significant investment.

### 6. Cultural Strategy:

The States had approved the Cultural Strategy and the Culture Development Officer was in place. Deputy Labey, Assistant Minister, had been given responsibility in this area.

The Panel advised that it would possibly invite Mr. Colin Perchard, Chairman of the Jersey Arts Trust, for discussions with the Panel.

The Department was looking at the venues in which it provided services to identify any that were no longer suitable for the given use. St James' Church was considered to be a problem as it was potentially no longer fit for its current purpose. It had ongoing structural issues and was expensive to maintain, although the Department maintained that it had no responsibility for funding such repairs, as these fell under the remit of Property Holdings. Consideration as to its future use, and the offices of the Jersey Arts Trust in the property next to the church, were ongoing.

### 7. Sport:

Jersey was said to be generally well served for sports facilities. The Department had a good working relationship with sports clubs.

If Jersey were to hold the Island Games in the future, consideration would need to be given to the required infrastructure.

Continued funding of the Waterfront swimming pool was a topic likely to assume greater

significance in the near future, as the original money agreed by the Department to contribute towards its running would have been spent.

8. General:

The Department indicated that other upcoming topics that would be looked at included the Skills Agenda for 14-19, Citizenship and the implications of proposed amendments to the UK curriculum. The Jersey Heritage Trust was also an organisation that the Panel would possibly wish to look at.

With reference to the curriculum, Jersey was said to be a leader in the field. However, the Department would consider adopting changes made to the UK curriculum that it felt would benefit the Island's school children.