

Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

Record of Meeting

Date: 22nd June 2017

Present	Deputy L. M. C. Doublet, Chairman Deputy S. Y. Mezec Deputy J. M. Maçon
Apologies	Deputy T. A. Vallois, Vice-Chairman
Absent	
In attendance	Ms S. May, Chair, Beaulieu Parents Consultative Committee Mr R. Horgan, Representative, Beaulieu Parents Consultative Committee Mr M. Wanless, Parent Representative Mr A. Harris, Scrutiny Officer

Ref Back	Agenda matter	Action
Item 1 14/10/16 516/36(4)	<p>1. P.41/2017 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) (2017 – 2019): Amendment to funding for fee-paying schools.</p> <p>The Panel received Ms S. May, Mr R. Horgan and Mr M. Wanless from the Beaulieu Parents Consultative Committee for a meeting to discuss P.41/2017 MTFP (2017 – 2019): Amendment to funding for fee-paying schools that had been lodged by the Minister for Education.</p> <p>The Panel noted figures that had been produced by Mr M. Wanless detailing the impact that an increase in fees would have on families who sent their children to Beaulieu Primary and Secondary schools. It was explained that the proposed 1.5% reductions planned for 2018 and 2019 were in fact overall reductions to the grant of 6% for the primary school and 12% for the secondary school. It was further explained that the Committee had recently held an emergency meeting in order to discuss this with parents and the prevailing view was that this would be the first increase of many, with concerns expressed that once an increase had been agreed by the States this would lead to further increases in the coming years. Many parents had written to the Minister in order to express concern at the fee reduction but had all received a standardised response.</p> <p>It was explained to the Panel that 36% of children in education attended the fee-paying schools and this amounted to an £8 million saving to the States every year, which equated to a £47,000 saving per child over the course of their education. It was estimated that if fees in Jersey increased to be in line with the U.K private schools then 3000 extra non-fee-paying places would be required in Jersey and even a 5% drop in children attending fee-paying schools would eliminate any savings made as a result of the proposition.</p> <p>Concern was expressed by the Committee representatives that this reduction in funding had been proposed without the necessary research to back it up.</p>	

	<p>The Committee had submitted a Freedom of information (FOI) request to the Department detailing the budget afforded to non-fee-paying schools. It was acknowledged by the Committee that many non-fee-paying schools did operate within tight financial constraints and that it was not uncommon for schools to be overspent at the end of the financial year. In comparison it was explained that Beaulieu did not have this luxury to fall back on due to additional financial pressures such as capital costs and States loans with a 4% interest rate. It was noted that any loans granted by the States were paid back by reducing the grant.</p> <p>The Committee detailed several efficiency savings that the schools had made in order to continue to be financially viable. These included savings to staffing costs, outsourcing of cleaning contracts, Information Technology changes, outsourcing of the uniform shop and a reorganisation of the administration and finance teams. Over the past 5 years the school had achieved savings of £1 million.</p> <p>It was noted that the Head Teacher had already informed parents that any grant reductions could not be absorbed by the school and the associated costs would be passed on to parents. It was explained this was in contrast to the assertion of the Minister that schools would be able to absorb this increase. Due to a £500,000 refurbishment scheme of the middle school which parents had been asked to contribute towards, it was deemed by the Committee that having to pay for both was not fair on parents. The Committee also acknowledged that the school had to balance a delicate relationship with the Education department.</p> <p>The Panel noted that the school had increased its fees by roughly 3.5% every year since 2013 and requested figures detailing the number of children who had left the school in each of those school years. The Committee agreed to liaise with the Officer with regards to the figures.</p> <p>The Committee expressed concerns that nearly all efficiencies had been made and identifying further savings was likely to prove difficult, however it acknowledged that cuts had to be made across the department, although it was noted that these should be fair across all schools in order to maintain a natural equilibrium.</p>	<p>AH</p>
--	--	------------------