

CITY OF PLYMOUTH

Report: Overview and Scrutiny Panel - Education and Children's Services

Subject: 6 Term Proposal

Committee: Scrutiny Commission

Date: 9th January 2003

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Executive Summary: The purpose of this report is to submit recommendations to the Executive Committee following meetings of the scrutiny panel responsible for reviewing the 6 Term Proposal.

Corporate Strategy: The establishment of Scrutiny and Overview Panels forms part of the corporate strategy for implementation of that part of the modernisation agenda relative to new democratic arrangements.

Financial Implications: Not quantified at this stage.

Other Implications: None at this stage.

Recommendations It is recommended that -

- (1) commencement of a wide and varied consultation process be undertaken as soon as possible;

findings from the completed consultation be reported back to the appropriate Scrutiny Committee before the end of March 2003;

a decision be reached on the alterations of the current school terms as soon as possible, to include consideration of both 5 and 6 term proposals.

Background papers:

- (i) Rhythms of Schools

DECISION	RECORD OF DECLARATION OF INTEREST
REASONS FOR DECISION	RECORD OF ANY DISPENSATIONS
ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED	
REASONS FOR REJECTION OF ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS	RECORD OF PAPERS CONSIDERED

REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL - EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

6 TERM PROPOSAL

1.0 Introduction

The Scrutiny Commission agreed a work programme for Overview and Scrutiny Panels at its meeting on 3rd October, 2002. It was agreed that the topic to be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel - Education and Children's Services would be the 6 Term Proposal.

2.0 Panel Structure

Councillors

Councillor Mrs Jones, in the Chair.
 Councillor Camp, Vice Chairman.
 Councillors Mrs Ford, Mrs Foster and Mrs Nicholson,

Co-opted Members

Mr. G. Edwards.
 Mrs. R French
 Mr. D. Milon
 Prebendary Philpott
 Mr. K. Willis.

Witnesses

Mrs. D. Fitzpatrick, Parent Governor (Primary)
 Mr. C. Greenlees, Parent Governor (Secondary)
 Dr. Sweeney, Headteacher at Ridgeway School

Lead Officers

Barbara Booth, Head of Schools Organisation and Services, Lifelong Learning Directorate
 Christina Smale, Senior Education Officer, (School Services, Lifelong Learning Directorate)

Panel Administrator – Christine Crown, Legal and Democratic Services Department.

Objectives

3. To reach a decision on the way forward for the 6 Term Proposal.

4.0 Hearings

4. The Panel met on two occasions, Friday 29th November and Friday 6th December 2002, to hear from witnesses and formulate a report of recommendations to the Scrutiny Commission on 9th January, 2003.

The Panel's Findings

5. The planning of the consultation process so far had been insular and had not taken on a wide and varied remit.
- 5.2 Concern was raised that, although invitations had been extended, a witness from the Primary School sector had not been available to participate in this scrutiny work programme item.

Secondary School opinions showed that they would like to see a 5 Term Proposal investigated along side the consultation process for the 6 Term Proposal.

Panel's Recommended Action

- 6.1 The consultation process should give consideration to protect Good Friday and Easter Monday, which would enable children and schools to participate in major festivals;
- 6.2 The consultation process should include awareness of the range of programmes which run during the 6-week summer holiday. A shorter summer holiday could be detrimental to both children and parents who may attend summer camps or drugs/alcohol rehabilitation programmes.
- 6.3 The consultation process should give consideration to how employers would feel about the 5 and 6 term proposal, as holiday requests from employees may cause possible constraints. This could also affect the number of parents booking family holidays within term time.

The consultation process should give consideration to the school terms set by other authorities in addition to those within Devon and Cornwall, as conflict between neighbouring and outside authorities could prove difficult.

The Panel wishes to emphasise the need for the widest possible consultation between teaching staff, auxiliary and ancillary staff, parents, employers and children. It would be advantageous if the consultation paper could be shared with the relevant committee before it is sent out for consultation.

7.0 Implementation and Monitoring

7.1 Educational Standards need to be monitored in the long term to gauge the effects of a change in school terms.

8.0 Summary

8. Consideration must be given to a joint consultation process for the 5 and 6 Term Proposal as a matter of urgency.

9.0 Chairman's Summary

9.1 The Chairman, on behalf of the Panel, would like to -

- (a) confirm that the topic of the 6 Term Proposal has been considered with conscientious and serious application;
- (b) thank all the officers and witnesses concerned for their contributions to this Overview and Scrutiny Panel.