

FIRST MAJOR REVIEW – ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION - WITNESS SESSION

Contact Officer: Gill Brice
Telephone: 01895 250693

REASON FOR ITEM

To enable the Committee to gather evidence as part of their First Major Review in relation to Elective Home Education (EHE).

OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE COMMITTEE

1. Question the witnesses
2. Highlight issues for further investigation
3. To make a note of possible recommendations for the review

INFORMATION

1. At this Committee's meeting on 5 July 2011 approval was given to the committee undertaking a review on Elective Home Education. The Aim of the review was to provide a balance of both safeguarding issues and the rights of parents within the EHE Policy ensuring lawfulness and mindful of the views of Residents.
2. At the Committee's second witness session on 19 October 2011, Members heard from 5 witnesses, four parents of EHE Children and a representative of the Home Education Advisory Services. Details of the evidence provided at the witness session is detailed in the minutes which are attached to this agenda.

HOME EDUCATION ADVISORY SERVICE (HEAS)

3. For Members information and taken from HEAS' website, "HEAS is a national home education charity based in the United Kingdom. It is dedicated to the provision of advice and practical support for families who wish to educate their children at home in preference to sending them to school. Interest in home education is increasing and HEAS recognises that reliable information should be available for everyone. HEAS was established in 1995 by a group of experienced home educators in order to provide good quality information on both the legal and practical aspects of home education. Since then HEAS has given information to many families and also to education authorities, other professionals, academic researchers, politicians, voluntary agencies, the media and other bodies.
4. HEAS offers information for home educators including advice about educational materials, resources, GCSE examinations, special educational needs, information technology, legal matters and curriculum design. HEAS produces a range of leaflets and the Home Education Handbook. In addition HEAS subscribers receive the quarterly HEAS Bulletin, access to the Advice Line, contacts with other subscribers and the HEAS registration card (for home educating families) which gives free or reduced rates of admission to certain museums and sites of interest.

5. HEAS believes that every parent should receive full information about their children's education - including information about the facts of home education. Many parents say "I wish I'd known about this years ago", and HEAS is working to increase public awareness of home education. Some parents choose the home option at the outset, while others undertake it as a last resort when there are insuperable problems at school. There are many different reasons but HEAS upholds the right of parents to make their own arrangements for their children's education at home. HEAS believes that home education has much to offer and the experience of many families shows that it can be enjoyable and rewarding for both parents and children."
6. Subsequent to the meeting, the representative from HEAS has submitted written information which I attach for Members information as **Appendix A**. Members should give consideration to the issues raised in the written information which are integral to the Committee's review.
7. Officers will be attendance to provide a response to the issues raised in the correspondence.

WITNESSES

7. For this third witness session it is hoped that the Policy Overview Committee will be hearing from a randomly selected number of formerly home educated young people that have now moved through to higher education. Four young people have been written to asking if they would attend the meeting to help the Committee with its review. As of the publication of the agenda there has been no response to these invitations. The young people were given the alternative option of providing a written submission, should they not be able to attend the meeting.

PAPERS WITH THE REPORT

Letter from HEAS – Appendix A

Scoping report attached as Appendix B

SUGGESTED COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

Members question the witnesses and identify important issues for their review.

Members identify areas where further information and evidence is required to help greater understanding of the issues.

Members to give consideration to initial recommendations for the review.