

MINUTES of the meeting of the School Organisation Committee held at Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Hereford on Monday, 29th November, 2004 at 3.00 p.m.

Present: Councillor John Thomas (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs M.D. Lloyd-Hayes
Mrs K. Rooke (School Governor – Special)
Mr. T. Bailey (Church of England)
Ms. S. Gray (Learning and Skills Council)

In attendance: Councillor D.W. Rule MBE (Cabinet Member - Education)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor J. Stone and Rev. I. Terry.

2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY)

Mr. T. Bailey was a substitute for Rev. I. Terry and Ms. S. Gray was a substitute for Mr. A. Curless.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs. Lloyd-Hayes declared a personal interest in item 5 as a Governor at St. Pauls Primary School.

4. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

The Committee noted that the term of office for the Chair and Vice-Chair had expired in May 2004 but the convention was that they continued in office until the successors were appointed.

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor J.P. Thomas be reappointed as Chairman.

Councillor J.P. Thomas accepted the Chairmanship.

No nominations were received for the position of Vice-Chairman.

RESOLVED:

THAT (a) Councillor J.P. Thomas be appointed Chairman of the School Organisation Committee.

and

(b) The position of Vice-Chairman be appointed at the next meeting of the Committee.

5. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED: THAT the minutes of the last meeting held on 26th May 2004 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. **SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN**

The Head of Policy and Resources reported to the Committee on the consultations undertaken on revised pupil statistics, on Hereford City Primary School provision and Leominster Primary School provision.

In the consultations on the revised pupil statistics it was reported that only one reply had been received which was from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC); this was appended to the report. The Head of Policy and Resources informed the Committee that he felt the points made by the LSC were valid and recommended that the School Organisation Plan be amended accordingly.

On the question of primary school provision in Hereford City, Members were informed that all Headteachers in the Hereford 'pyramid' had been invited to a meeting on 22nd September 2004. The Head of Policy and Resources reported that at the meeting it had been decided that no radical changes were needed as numbers entering into reception classes in the last 2/3 years had stabilised. There was also a need to be prepared for variations within Hereford, as known children data indicates areas north of the river Wye are faced with a continued fall in pupil numbers, whereas schools in the areas south of the river are facing a possible rise in pupil numbers. The potential rise in pupil numbers in the south of the city was not regarded as a problem due to the additional capacity available at Hunderton School.

In light of the falling pupil numbers in the north of the city, St. Paul's and Trinity Schools are considering reducing their Planned Admission Number (PAN). The Committee accepted the principal of reducing the PAN at St. Paul's but were concerned at reducing the PAN at Trinity due to the potential for new development at Holmer as outlined in the Unitary Development Plan (UDP).

The Head of Policy and Resources informed the Committee that the future of primary school provision had been debated in pyramid meetings of all Leominster schools, the North Herefordshire Local Area Forum and a combined meeting of the Leominster Junior and Infants schools. At these meetings it was acknowledged that the population of Leominster had increased significantly and that the geography of the town had altered. However there was no support for a new school to serve the western side of the town. The general consensus was that as a vast increase in pupil numbers was not expected then investment should be made at the current primary school site in Leominster to ensure it meets current and future standards.

The Committee felt that due to the results of the consultation that no further action should be taken, however, the Committee did wish to keep the situation under review especially after the settlement of the UDP.

RESOLVED:

THAT: (a) the School Organisation Plan be amended to reflect the Learning and Skills Council's comments and the amended document be approved;

(b) the approach on Hereford City Primary Schools be approved;

(c) the Planned Admission Number reduction proposed at St. Paul's Primary School be approved;

(d) the Planned Admission Number reduction proposed for Trinity Primary School proceed with caution;

and

(e) Primary School provision in Leominster be reviewed after the settlement of the Unitary Development Plan.

7. HOPE UNDER DINMORE, ST MARY'S OF HOPE C E PRIMARY SCHOOL - POSITION STATEMENT

The Committee was informed of the issue of the public notice proposing the closure of St. Mary's of Hope Church of England Primary School.

The School Services Manager reported that the Governors of St. Mary's had recently written to the Director of Education, after the number of pupils on its roll had dropped to 11, saying that after careful consideration they had reluctantly concluded that it was in the interests of the children at the school that the school should be closed and alternative provision sought. The Governors requested the Council to take the formal steps for closure.

It is proposed that the pupils of St. Mary's attend St. Michaels Church of England Primary School in Bodenham, which has sufficient room to accommodate all pupils currently at St. Mary's. Free transport will be provided to all pupils at St. Mary's to St. Michael's that meet the LEA's eligibility criteria.

The Cabinet Member (Education) authorised the issue of the required statutory public notice on 28th October, a copy of which is appended to the report. The notice was issued on the 11th November 2004, beginning the consultation period which runs for two months after publication.

If there are no objections the Council would take steps to close the school at the end of the autumn term. However, if there are objections then the matter would be referred back to the Committee.

RESOLVED:

THAT the report be noted.

8. STRATEGIC AREA REVIEW

The Committee received a presentation from Sharon Gray, Director of Strategic Planning at the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) on its recent Strategic Area Review.

Ms Gray informed the Committee that the Review had taken place due to insufficiency within the 14-19 and post 19 education and learning, which was creating too many skills gaps and shortages and leaving the local work force short of appropriately qualified people.

Ms Gray reported that a consultation had taken place which had resulted in a twofold recommendation from the LSC. These were:

1. The double dissolution of Herefordshire College of Technology and Herefordshire College of Art and Design be pursued with the creation of a new Corporation, which receives the assets and liabilities from both founder organisations.
2. That Herefordshire Sixth Form College and Pershore Group of Colleges (Holme Lacy site) actively investigate how to support the new proposed Corporation through better-shared utilisation of resources and complementary curriculum arrangements, for the benefit of learners, communities and employers.

Ms Gray summarised the principal benefits of the merger as being:

- Better integrated curriculum offer, improved curriculum planning, development and delivery;
- Improved accessibility of provision and learner integration and easier student progression;
- Improved employer engagement and development of responsive provision;
- Improved integration of accommodation usage;
- Reduced running costs;
- Improved long term viability;
- Better access to funding to support capital investment on the Folly Lane site.

Ms Gray informed the Committee that the Strategic Area Review was currently completing a public consultation on its report which was due to end in early January 2005. This would be followed by further consultations with other interested parties before the final approved report is published in March 2005.

The Head of Policy and Resources stated that the Strategic Area Review was a starting point for Herefordshire to grow from a low skills low wages area. He also informed the Committee that those people who were successful in post 16 education often moved away from Herefordshire.

The Committee discussed the problems of basic skills in the County and how this included adults as well. Ms. Gray advised the Committee that a separate document on Adult and Community Learning was being prepared by the LSC.

RESOLVED:

THAT progress on the Strategic Area Review undertaken by the Learning and Skills Council be noted.

9. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Head of Policy and Resources circulated a brief report on the Extended Schools Initiative and transportation costs. This will be available for report and discussion at the next meeting of the Committee.

Meeting ended at 4.30 p.m.

CHAIRMAN

