



REVIEW OF SCHOOL PROVISION

PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITY: CHILDREN'S SERVICES

CABINET

21ST JUNE, 2007

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To inform members of the position on the review of school provision being undertaken in the County.

Key Decision

This is a Key Decision because it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in Herefordshire in an area comprising one or more wards.

It was included in the Forward Plan.

Recommendations

THAT Cabinet

- (a) **supports the revised programme for the school review**
- (b) **Supports the proposals from the Governors of Wigmore Primary School and Wigmore High School to form a federated school from September 2007.**

Reasons

School provision is a critical feature and decisions are required which will shape provision over the next 20 years. A way forward needs to be found balancing the need to make the right decisions and to reduce current uncertainty.

Considerations

1. In March 2006 Cabinet approved a programme to review the provision of school places in the County in light of falling numbers of children;

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
George Salmon, Head of Commissioning and Improvement – Schools and Services
on (01432) 260802

2. initial consultation has been undertaken in the following areas:

Kington, Weobley & Wigmore
Kingstone & Peterchurch
Bromyard & Leominster
Secondary Provision in the County

A proposals document has been issued for the Kington, Weobley and Wigmore areas;

3. The review has fallen behind the original programme partly due to priority being given the performance management reporting and the delays in recruiting to 2 third tier posts;
4. It is now proposed to complete the review in one exercise, rather than on an area by area basis;
5. This one exercise will be started by the publication of a principles papers which will be issued in September 2007. From this paper firm proposals will be made on provision across the County in a report to Cabinet prior to the end of 2007;
6. Two changes are proposed outside this timetable. Formal notices to close Brilley Primary School were issued at the beginning of May. It is anticipated that a final decision will be needed from Cabinet in August.
7. The Governing Bodies of Wigmore Primary School and Wigmore High School have used powers in the 2006 Education and Inspection Act to propose federation from September 2007. This coincides with the retirement of the headteacher of the primary school. Both schools will be managed through a joint Governing Body and single headteacher. The Governors are consulting parents and other bodies on this. The Local Authority is invited to express its views;
8. There is some evidence from national research that this can lead to more effective education, and certainly there are economies to be made in simple management of these 2 schools on the same campus;
9. The process does not involve the closure of either school, and can be reversed by Governing Bodies issuing a further notice to discontinue such an arrangement;
10. On balance the Director of Children's Services supports the Governors proposals. Assessments will be made if benefits do accrue, and whether the same model could be applied elsewhere.

Risk Management

The major risks to the review programme is one of staff resources. Priority is being given to resolve this.

Alternative Options

The review could proceed on an area by area basis as originally intended but schools are seeking clear leadership and early resolution of this to remove future uncertainty.

Consultees

None.

Background Papers

Review of School Provision;
Kington, Weobley & Wigmore
Kingstone & Peterchurch
Bromyard & Leominster
Secondary Provision in the County