

ANNUAL REVIEW OF SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN

Report By: Head of Policy and Resources

Wards Affected

Countywide

Purpose

1. To provide up to date information on pupil numbers and projections and to seek support for the issue of this revised information for comment, as part of the School Organisation Plan, and consider the resulting proposed actions.

Financial Implications

2. None.

Report

3. In the revised guidelines issued by the DfES, a full School Organisation Plan needs to be produced every 3 years rather than every year. Outside the 3-year cycle, the plan needs to be produced only where there is a change in policy, strategy or local circumstances relating to the organisation of schools. LEAs, however, are strongly advised to review, revise and publish the part of the plan containing the demographic information for September each year where a full plan is not published. It is this that this report addresses.
4. The DfES is undertaking a review of LEA planning requirements with a view to rationalising the number of plans that an authority must produce. They hope to move to a single education plan by 2006/2007. Guidance on that will not be issued until the autumn but it is expected that the School Organisation Plan will be included in the Single Education Plan in future.
5. The revised statistical data is set out in Appendix 1. Appendix 2 sets out the housing allocations for Hereford City, the market towns and main villages as set out in the draft UDP being placed on deposit for public consultation until 24th June. The Committee's attention is drawn to the following issues as identified in Appendices 1 and 2:
 - (i) **the continued fall in primary numbers.** In the summer 2004 there are 36 schools with fewer than 100 pupils on roll compared to 32 in 1998. The smallest school is still St Mary's, Hope Under Dinmore with 14 on roll at the beginning of this term. The 15 smallest schools are listed in Appendix 6.

The issue of falling rolls in the primary sector has been raised by those objecting to the scheme in relation to the approved proposal to provide a new school at Staunton-on-Wye. The Governors of this aided school, with the support of the LEA, bid for DfES grant to replace this school, which provides 70 places, with new buildings with the same capacity. Approval was given by the DfES in December, 2001, but it has taken since then to progress a planning application.

For further information on the subject of this report is available from
George Salmon, Head of Policy and Resources on (01432) 260802

The LEA supported the application on the assumption that a new school will serve up to 45 children from within its existing catchment area, with other places being filled as at present by children from outside the area.

The planning application is due to be considered on Wednesday 26th May. If granted the LEA will move to purchase the new site. This may involve the use of CPO powers.

Although there is no doubt that a viable school operating with 60-70 pupils on roll would be produced at Staunton, it is equally true that this number of pupils could be found places in the surrounding schools of Eardisley, Madley, Weobley and Credenhill. These schools are respectively 4.5, 6.4, 7.5 and 6.7 miles distant from Staunton on Wye School.

Given the strong support for smaller village schools and the policies with the School Organisation Plan, (these are set out in Appendix 5) the School Organisation Committee is asked to confirm that it supports the action taken and that which maybe needed in the future to ensure that a school at Staunton is maintained.

Although smaller rural schools are particularly vulnerable to falling rolls, the decrease in pupil numbers also affects larger city schools. Here reductions in pupil numbers can cause severe organisational problems, especially when resultant numbers produce year groups which are too big to divide neatly into classes of 28 to 30, and too small to afford the number of teachers to teach small classes of 20-25.

This is occurring in Hereford City and it is proposed that a review of admission numbers be undertaken as part of this consultation exercise. (see Appendix 3).

- (ii) **Admissions to high schools** have reached their peak, and from now on high school numbers will decline in the 11-16 age range.
- (iii) **Sixth forms in high schools** continue to grow in size with the larger year groups being fed through, and the staying on rate increasing. See Table below.

School	Number on roll in 6 th form						
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Lady Hawkins High	35	47	52	50	53	53	62
The John Masefield High	118	105	112	124	119	128	134
The Minster College	88	76	84	68	84	86	89
The John Kyrle High	113	135	146	145	167	160	162
Total	354	363	394	387	423	427	447

- (iv) Although the percentage of **pupils from an ethnic background** other than British remains small (2.3%) this is an increase, a trend which we would expect to continue. (see Appendix 4).
- (v) In terms of the **proposed housing**, the draft UDP has been amended and placed on deposit. The revised allocations are listed in Appendix 2. It is noted that the development at Putson has been increased by 100 houses and the impact of 500 houses in this area does need to be monitored. If a review of provision in the city is undertaken more detailed work could take place as part of that.

The allocation of 360 houses at Barons Cross in Leominster is retained, and this does raise the question over primary school provision within the town. Leominster has grown since the Leominster Junior and Infant schools were created at the southern end of the town. Although the 360 new houses may not generate significantly greater numbers of children, the growth of Leominster prompts the question whether the existing provision meets the future need or whether in the medium to larger term, provision should be made on the western side of the town as well as on the existing site.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT:

- (a) **the statistical update be issued to consultees for information and comment;**
 - (b) **the Committee confirm their support for a primary school at Staunton-on-Wye;**
 - (c) **the Committee request a review of primary school provision be undertaken in Herford City and the results of the review be reported to the next meeting;**
- and**
- (d) **a debate be initiated on the future pattern of primary school provision in Leominster.**

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NONE