

**MINUTES of the meeting of the School Organisation Committee held at the Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford, on 21 October 2003 at 3.00 pm.**

**Present:**

Local Education Authority

Councillors JP Thomas (Chairman), Mrs MD Lloyd-Hayes, J Stone.

Roman Catholic Church

Mr C Jones.

School Governor – Secondary

Mr P Williams.

In attendance: Councillor DW Rule Cabinet Member (Education).

**1. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

**RESOLVED:** That Councillor J Stone be appointed Vice-Chairman for the ensuing year.

**Note:** Members were advised that the Reverend Michael Smith would be retiring shortly. Members requested that their best wishes be passed on to Reverend Smith for a happy retirement along with their thanks for the work he had carried out on the School Organisation Committee and the Local Admissions Forum.

**2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Mr H Cullen - Special Education Group, Mr A Curless - Learning & Skills Council, Mrs K Rooke - School Governor Special Schools, Rev M Smith - Church of England.

**3. NAMED SUBSTITUTES**

Mr B Blake was a substitute for Mrs K Rooke – School Governor Special Schools.

**4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made.

**5. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2003 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**6. SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN 2003 - 2008**

Members were reminded that at the last meeting a discussion had been held on racial harassment and how it was being addressed through the School Organisation Plan. A copy of the booklet Dealing With Racial Harassment - Guidance For Schools was provided for all Members.

George Salmon, Head of Policy and Resources (Education) advised Members that only a very few responses had been received on the School Organisation Plan with the main comments coming from the Forward Planning Department. Members were advised of the comments made by the Forward Planning Department, which it was felt were helpful. It was noted that the Forward Planning Department were unwilling

to support a standard financial contribution from developers of £1,000 per dwelling unit to support local schools and felt it should not become part of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (UDP). The Head of Policy and Resources (Education) stated that by not putting this requirement within the UDP meant negotiations would need to be carried out each time any new development was proposed. Members considered that the comments from the Forward Planning Department had 'watered down' the policy and they still believed that the request for £1,000 per dwelling contribution from developers was not an unreasonable one. Members noted that in the area of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and the requirement for special schools, there was an increase in the number of children on roll and not a decrease as with primary schools.

The revisions to paragraphs 1.28, 1.29 and 2.58 of the School Organisation Plan are outlined below:

- 1.28 The Link between in-migration and new housing will also be analysed. The new housing growth is identified in the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (UDP). Whilst the UDP has not yet been formally adopted, the amount, location and phasing of new housing development is listed in Appendix 2.
- 1.29 The level of housing proposed will not require any new schools, but depending on the location, size, timing and type of housing additional investment at existing schools is likely to be required. Accordingly, the UDP includes a planning obligation policy requiring financial contributions from housing developments towards community educational facilities, where they are relevant and reasonably related. Other Plan policies will require new developments to be sustainably located and address safe routes to school.
- 2.58 It has been recognised for many years that schools do play a vital roll in their communities especially in rural areas such as Herefordshire. This policy has produced the major joint use facilities at Leominster, Ledbury, Kington, Wigmore and Ross. It is hoped that sports halls at Kington and at Weobley will be completed in the plan period to enhance the current provision. The new Whitecross High School at Three Elms could provide recreational/educational opportunities to the community out of school hours. On a smaller scale, joint use village halls exist at Peterchurch, Shobdon, Wellington, Marden and Little Dewchurch. Community facilities are planned in the new school at Sutton St Nicholas, whilst the new housing proposed at Barons Cross, Leominster is required to make provision for nursery accommodation for early years education. Community Learning Centres have been developed at Haywood, The Minster, Clifford and Longtown. Private and voluntary pre-school provision and before and after school care is also found on 33 school sites. This experience will be helpful in developing other community use under the extended school initiative.

Members' general comments were firstly addressed towards nursery provision, the falling numbers in schools and the potential for some school closures. There was concern that these issues would be addressed as and when they might occur, therefore it was felt that there needed to be some provision made in advance in the School Organisation Plan regarding nursery provision. The Head of Policy and Resources (Education) advised that the majority of primary schools did not have nursery provision although there was an expectation that 2004 would see an increase in places within the City but not rural areas, where there would be a continued reliance on private provision. He added that of the 14 nurseries provided by the LEA all were under used. The main reason being that the hours were limited and didn't necessarily fit in with general working hours for parents. He added that it

was intended that this would be addressed with the schools to provide parents with either whole morning or afternoon nursery provision.

Members considered that the decreasing number of nursery spaces available would disadvantage people living in rural areas. The Head of Policy and Resources (Education) advised that Herefordshire had recently received funding from central Government for extended school day provision, which the LEA intended to target towards primary schools and proposed carrying out pilot projects on extended school days between rural schools.

Members agreed that the main areas to be expanded upon within the School Organisation Plan were:

- the falling roll numbers,
- the loss of nursery provision, and
- the potential loss of primary schools.

Members believed that a policy was needed to keep the rural schools viable and to emphasise in the conclusion of the School Organisation Plan the intention to support rural schools. Members were advised that a report to the Education Scrutiny Committee would be made in the future as there were five primary schools with pupil numbers of 50 and these schools would therefore fall within the category for potential review. It was noted that this mainly affected the small schools in isolated areas. Members briefly discussed federations of primary schools and the possible benefits. They were advised that this was currently underway in the Yorkshire area but required a reasonable amount of geographic grouping to be successful. Members requested that information on this and statistical demographic information relating to Herefordshire be provided at the next meeting of the Committee.

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-**

- That (a) **the School Organisation Plan be expanded upon to address the area of falling roll numbers, loss of nursery provision and the potential loss of primary schools in the County;**
- (b) **a policy be developed to ensure the viability of rural schools;**
- (c) **paragraphs 1.28, 1.29 and 2.58 be revised as outlined above;**
- and
- (d) **a report outlining examples of federations of primary schools in Yorkshire and statistical and demographic information relating to Herefordshire be presented at the next meeting.**

**7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**RESOLVED:**

**That the next meeting be held on Wednesday 4 February 2003 at 3.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Brockington.**

The meeting ended at 4.15pm

**CHAIRMAN**