

MINUTES of the meeting of Education Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Tuesday, 5th October, 2004 at 10.00 a.m.

Present:	Councillor	B.F. Ashton (Chairman)
	Councillor	J.P. Thomas (Vice-Chairman)
	Councillors	H. Bramer, N.J.J. Davies, R.M. Manning, Mrs. S.J. Robertson, D.C. Taylor, Ms. A.M. Toon and W.J. Walling
	Church Members	J.D. Griffin (Roman Catholic), J. Chapman (Church of England).
	Parent Governor Members	(none present)
	Teacher Representatives	J.D. Pritchard (Primary Teachers)
	Headteacher Representatives	A Marson (Secondary Headteachers) and Miss S. Peate (Primary Sector Headteachers)

17. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr S. Boka, Mr C. Lewandowski, Councillor Mrs J.E. Pemberton and Revd. I Terry.

The Committee noted that Mr Sandy Boka had been appointed as Parent Governor Member representing Secondary Schools.

The Committee were informed that Mrs E. Christopher Teacher representative for the Special school sector, was no longer eligible to serve on the Committee and that a replacement representative was being sought.

18. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Mr J. Chapman substituted for Rev I. Terry.

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

20. MINUTES

Councillor Ms A.M. Toon reported that she had sought clarification from the County Secretary & Solicitor concerning voting and the declaration of interests in relation to minute number 11 – Review of Discretionary Policies Applicable to Home to School Transport.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd June, 2004, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

21. YEAR 2004 RESULTS FOR HEREFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS

The Committee considered the Summer 2004 provisional results at Key Stages 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 for Herefordshire Schools.

The Head of Inspection, Advice and School Performance Services (IASPS) reported that results for 2004 were provisional. They were subject to a margin of error, in general, of + or – 1% due to schools in all phases having returned a number of papers for re-marking. National comparative data was not yet available or remained provisional. In addition, the Key Stage 3 English results had been withheld due to extensive difficulties with the accuracy of the marking and were not likely to be available before the end of September.

Overall, the results indicated another successful year for pupils and schools across the County, with some significant improvements at the end of primary school in English and Maths, and a sustained level of high performance at Secondary schools.

The Committee debated the provisional results, noting that the exam results of pupils who took exams early were included in the results for the year in which the pupil would normally have taken the exam. In response to a question concerning the range of 6th Form exam subjects taken, particularly relating to the increase in 'modern' subjects, the Head of IASPS reported that a break-down of subject could be obtained. However, the outcomes from the Area Wide Inspection and the Tomlinson Report may affect the range of subjects currently offered. The Committee congratulated the students, teachers and education officers on the exam results.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the Director of Education be asked to convey the congratulations of the Committee to students, teachers and education officers on the exam results attained.

22. TEACHER'S WORKLOAD AGREEMENT - MONITORING OF PROCESS

The Committee were informed of the progress being made, both locally and nationally, in implementing the National School Workforce Remodelling Programme.

The Head of Inspection, Advice and School Performance Service (IASPS) reported that, while it was still early days in the delivery of the programme, good progress had been made locally in delivering the teachers' Workload Agreement and Remodelling Programme as outlined in the report.

The Head of IASPS highlighted that schools were making good progress in relieving teachers of the 24 administrative and clerical tasks they were no longer routinely required to undertake. While there was no evidence that this part of the agreement was proving to be a major hurdle in any particular school, he acknowledged that comments made at the Work Force Remodelling Forum indicated some problems did exist. Alongside the contractual changes was the Remodelling Programme, which provided a good opportunity for schools to take a fresh look at how they operated.

In the course of discussion, the Committee noted that from September 2005 Headteachers must have dedicated time, not just to manage, but to lead their school, (non-contact time). This prompted the Committee to debate the distinction between management and leadership and how Headteachers distinguished between the two.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

23. STAFF SICKNESS ABSENCE

The Committee considered levels of staff sickness and absence in the Education Service.

The report set out the staff absence figures for the Education Service, broken down into Blackfriars, Teachers and School Support Staff sectors, for the period 1st January 2001 to 31st August 2004.

The Director of Education reported that, considering that teaching and support staff had a high rate of exposure to ailments, the Service's sickness rate was broadly in line with the Councils average.

The Committee debated the sickness figures and while they acknowledged that these could only show the general trends, they requested that future reports show a fuller breakdown and include, if possible, comparative information nationally.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and where possible a more comprehensive breakdown of figures be presented.

24. UPDATE ON OFSTED SCHOOL INSPECTIONS SINCE SEPTEMBER 2003

The Committee received an up-date on the outcomes of Ofsted School Inspections since 1 September 2003, and in particular those inspections for which reports had been published since the end of the school year 2003 – 2004.

The Head of Inspection, Advice and School Performance Services (IASPS) reported that, since the report to Committee on 5th April 2004, Ofsted reports on 8 schools had been published. Appendix 1 contained summary paragraphs setting out an overall evaluation of each school. During the 2003–2004 academic year Ofsted had inspected a total of 14 Herefordshire Schools, including 7 primary, 3 special and 4 high schools. This had been a smaller number than in previous years, being a 13% sample of all schools. The sample contained 8% of primaries, 75% of special schools and 28% of Secondary Schools. The Head of IASPS commented that, overall, the evidence emerging from these Ofsted inspections supported the notion that Herefordshire had a successful and robust education system in which pupils received a good quality of education.

The Head of IASPS highlighted the disappointing situation at Weobley High School, which had been placed in special measures and was the first school in the County to be placed in this category for over two years. He explained that a new and much more challenging inspection regime had been introduced by Ofsted in September 2003 which had led to a sharp increase nationally in the number of schools being placed in special measures. The inspection process was being revised again for September 2005. He further commented that it was abundantly clear that any school that could not demonstrate consistently high standards of teaching, an improving examination performance and positive value added was vulnerable to being placed in one of the negative categories.

The Director of Education acknowledged that, while the local assessment had been that Weobley was underachieving, the Education Service and Weobley High School had accepted the more severe verdict provided by Ofsted. He reported that collectively there had been regret about the heaviness of the language used in the report. He further reported that the school was moving forward positively under the leadership of the new headteacher.

The Committee agreed that, overall, Herefordshire had many good or very good

schools, as evidenced by the Ofsted inspection reports. However, they acknowledged that schools, and the Education Service, must not get complacent, particularly in view of the revised inspection regime. On questioning the monitoring of schools the Committee were informed that IASPS undertook a rigorous monitoring programme, under which the assessment of each school was updated on a termly basis.

RESOLVED: that the report on Ofsted School inspections be noted.

25. BEST VALUE REVIEW OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The Committee considered the Stage 3 Report of the Best Value Review of Special Educational Needs Provision and Support Services.

The Head of Children's & Student's Service reported that the original scope of the review covered individual support for statemented pupils and the contribution of educational psychology. This remit was considered too narrow and the Committee had accepted that it be extended to encompass the physical and sensory, medical and behavioural and learning support services. The Stage 3 Report had been circulated to the Committee and made available to the public.

The Manager of Special Educational Needs reported that the Best Value Review Team, Chaired by Dr S. Ferguson, recommended that the way forward most likely to deliver improvement to the services provided would be to maintain current provision but to implement improvements, as set out at section 9.1 page 41 of the report. The Review Team believed that this would retain continuity of provision and enable known issues to be rectified.

The Committee noted that the review had identified concerns relating to co-ordination between services (para. 1.7) and Communication (para. 1.8). In response to a request for clarification on paragraph 9.4 – Delegate monies to schools – the Committee were informed that, while many statutory areas of the service could not be delegated and the rural nature of the authority discouraged a competitive element, there were further areas of funding that could be considered for delegation.

The Committee further noted that having taken into account responses from schools, particularly in the primary sector, the system of Banded Funding for Special Educational Needs had been improved.

In response to a question regarding the level of support for gifted children, the Director of Education reported that while there was no statutory requirement to provide additional support, there was a government expectation that, in common with all pupils, appropriate differentiated support would be provided to meet their needs

RESOLVED:

That

- a) **the outcomes and findings of the Best Value Stage 3 report on Special Educational Needs Provision and Support Services be accepted;**
- b) **the recommendation set out at section 10 on page 43 of the Best Value Review, report namely that 'the way forward most likely to deliver improvement to the services provided would be to maintain current provision but to implement improvements' (indicated at section 9.1), be accepted and recommended to the Strategic Monitoring Committee.**
- c) **the Chairman write to thank Dr Sue Ferguson for Chairing the review and producing such a comprehensive report; and**

- d) the subject of the level of support for gifted children be considered as an item for inclusion in the Committee's work programme.

26. SCHOOL TRAVEL INITIATIVES - PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received a progress report on the school travel initiatives being pursued by the Council to encourage the use of more sustainable forms of transport for journeys to school.

The Head of Policy and Resources reported that combining joint DfES/DfT School Travel Initiative funding (£32,000) and Local Transport Plan (LTP) funding had enabled the recruitment of a full-time School Travel Adviser and a term-time School Travel Support Worker and introduced Linda Sinker and Alan Hickling respectively.

The Committee noted that all maintained schools had been surveyed to assess the status of school travel plans. Support was provided to schools in the process of developing travel plans and all plans received were reviewed with regard to the DfES minimum criteria. Nineteen county schools had met the deadline for the first year of the grant scheme and would now be able to apply for the grant to implement their travel plans. It was further noted that studies for phase 3 Safer Routes to School projects had recently been completed and several schemes had been programmed for 2004/05. Further steps would be undertaken by both the School Travel Adviser, and School Travel Support Worker to progress the programme.

In response to a comment regarding the need to ensure better integration of the various transport related policies and funding, the Head of Policy and Resources reported that the School Travel Officer Working Group would be re-established to co-ordinate the range of officers and responsibilities impacting on school travel.

RESOLVED: that the initiatives outlined in the report be noted.

27. REVIEW OF SMALL SCHOOLS - BRILLEY PRIMARY, ST. MARY'S OF HOPE CE PRIMARY, KINGS CAPLE PRIMARY, LONGTOWN PRIMARY AND DILWYN PRIMARY

The Committee were given details of pupil numbers in 5 very small schools at the start of the autumn term, 2004 and invited to comment about the extent to which the position of any of the five schools, whose pupil numbers are below the review levels specified in Herefordshire's School Organisation Plan, should be examined further.

The Director of Education reported that the policy concerning the review of primary schools was contained in Section 2D of the School Organisation Plan, which was set out in the report. Under the review categories set out in the review policy, there were 3 Primary Schools with fewer than 35 pupils and 2 with 36 to 45 pupils on roll at the start of the autumn term 2004.

He highlighted that **St Mary's of Hope CE Primary at Hope Under Dinmore** remained the smallest school in the County. The standard of teaching and learning did not cause concern. However, the current roll of 15 pupils amounted to a drop of 35% compared with the 23 pupils on roll at the time of the previous review, which concluded when the National Adjudicator rejected the Council's closure proposal in June 2002. The Director of Education reported that discussions were underway with the Diocesan Authority and the Governors of the school concerning the situation.

Numbers at both **Brilley Primary** and **King's Caple Primary** schools had been falling slowly for several years. Brilley currently had 29 on roll. Only one pupil was

expected to leave in 2005 but there was a large group of 11 year olds due to leave in July 2006. In the summer term 2004 25% of pupils on roll were from Brillley's own catchment area. King's Cagle currently had 35 on roll. Parts of its designated catchment area were not far from several other schools. Both schools had recently appointed headteachers who would need time in which to demonstrate the longer term prospects for their schools.

Longtown Primary and **Dilwyn Primary** schools had been small schools for many years with fluctuating pupil admissions. The Director of Education reported that they differed from the previously mentioned schools, however, because they did not appear to be in immediate danger of the number of pupils on roll falling further. Longtown's roll had remained between 35 and 45 pupils for over 10 years. The school took a very high percentage of pupils from its own catchment area. Dilwyn's roll was around 40 pupils ten years ago, peaked at 54 five years ago and was currently 41.

The Committee appreciated that all of these were good schools with effective leadership.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

28. ANNUAL REVIEW OF SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN

The Committee were invited to comment on the draft School Organisation Plan 2004-2008.

The Head of Policy and Resources reported that on 26th May 2004 the School Organisation Committee (SOC) had considered information for the School Organisation Plan. The main issues identified by the SOC were: i) the continued fall in primary numbers; ii) that admissions to high schools had peaked, in the future the size of the Year 7 cohort expected to fall, but with sixth forms in high schools expected to continue to grow and iii) the numbers of pupils from ethnic backgrounds other than British remained small (2.3%), though there was an increase, which was reflected in the additional number of requests from schools to support pupils who spoke little English. The SOC requested that a review of primary school provision in Hereford City be undertaken. The SOC also suggested that a debate be initiated into the future of primary school provision in Leominster, given the expansion towards Baron's Cross. The Head of Policy and Resources reported that the Leominster issue had now been debated and the Governors of Leominster Junior and Infants schools felt that improved provision on the existing site would be preferable.

The Committee noted the position outlined in the report and discussed issues concerning 'planning gain' and the expected pupil numbers in the South Wye area, particularly in view of the development of Bradbury Estate

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

29. PROGRESS OF MAJOR CAPITAL SCHEMES (AND TARGETED CAPITAL FUND)

The Committee received a progress report on the education capital programme.

The Head of Policy and Resources reported that 26% of the resources allocated for education building projects had been spent. Projected expenditure on capital projects in Education for 2004/05 was summarised in Appendix 1 to the report. He outlined progress on a number of major building schemes identified in the report.

Appendix 2 to the report indicated the Planned School Maintenance Programme for 2004/05.

The Committee debated the progress of schemes. In response to a question concerning security at schools The Committee were informed that, in the case of major improvements or new builds, security considerations were incorporated into the scheme. The Director of Education commented that there needed to be a balance between having a secure welcoming school without creating a hostile, oppressive environment. In the case of sprinkler systems it had been decided not assess the position in each case, bearing in mind the relevant cost and level of risk involved.

The Committee requested that a report on security at schools be presented to a future meeting.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and a report on security at schools be presented to a future meeting.

30. EDUCATION REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2004/05

The Committee received a report on the monitoring of the revenue budget for education.

The Director of Education reported that, based on expenditure to 31st July 2004, it was anticipated that the Education Revenue Budget would be underspent by £220,000. The trend had been confirmed by monitoring of spend to 31st August, as indicated by the projected underspend of £415,000 set out in Appendix 1 to the report. He emphasised that the budget would continue to be carefully monitored.

RESOLVED: That the monitoring report on the Education Revenue Expenditure to 31st August 2004 be noted.

31. COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS AND APPEALS

The Committee considered the summary of comments, complaints and appeals relating to the Education Directorate, for the period 1st November 2003 to 31st August 2004.

The Director of Education reported that, contrary to expectations, the number of pupil admission appeals had fallen following the introduction of the new co-ordinated arrangements (the three preference system). He hoped this trend would be repeated when the co-ordinated arrangements were introduced for the primary school transfer.

The Committee noted that notwithstanding the introduction of 'banded funding' for special needs, parents retain their statutory rights to ask for formal assessments with a view to obtaining a statement of Special Needs and that a number of related appeals had therefore arisen. That route would continue to be available to parents, though it was expected that the number of such appeals would reduce following the further implementation of banded funding.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

32. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the range of business that it was anticipated the Committee would need to consider during the remainder of the financial year

2004/05.

The Committee suggested that the following items be considered for inclusion in the Committee work programme:

1. Security at Schools – discussed at minute item No. 29. – Progress of Major Capital Schemes.
2. The work of the Connexions Service – (the Social and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee have requested a seminar on this issue).
3. ICT issues affecting schools – a seminar for the Committee on this issue had been arranged for 21st March 2005.
4. Schools Policy Towards Drugs – this issue had been previously suggested at the 22nd June, 2004 meeting when the Committee considered the education of excluded pupils. (Minute item No 12)
5. Level of Support for Gifted Children – discussed at minute No 25 – Best Value Review of Special Educational Needs.
6. Level of support for schools with pupils ‘whose first language is not English (discussed at minute item 28).
7. Primary school provision in Hereford City, particularly in South Wye (discussed at minute item 28).
8. School Transport – The Director of Education reported that following the review of Discretionary Policies Applicable to Home to School Transport, reported to Committee on 22nd June 2004, the matter had been considered by Cabinet on 15th July 2004 who decided that “there should be no change to the current policy pending the outcome of the government’s transport review and the Council’s cross-cutting best value review of transport”. The Director recommended that this issue be held in abeyance until the outcome of the government’s review and the Council’s best value review.

RESOLVED: That items 1 – 7 be included in the work programme and item 8 be held in abeyance until the outcome of the government’s transport review and the Council’s Best Value Review of transport.

The meeting ended at 12.19 p.m.

CHAIRMAN