

PRIMARY SCHOOL PROVISION IN HEREFORD CITY

Report By: HEAD OF POLICY AND RESOURCES

Wards Affected

Hereford City and surrounding Wards

Purpose

1. To inform the Committee of the strategy of providing school places in Hereford City, particularly south of the river.

Financial Implications

2. The capital investment required which is substantial will be the subject of separate approval systems.

Report

3. At the last meeting, the draft School Organisation Plan was considered, particularly regarding the projected pupil numbers in Hereford City Primary Schools. A more detailed report on this was requested.
4. The information for each school in the City is set out in Appendix 1. This information has led to the following conclusions:
 - In the City as a whole pupil numbers are expected to fall by 300 over the next 3 years, although admissions in reception are likely to stabilise at current levels.
 - South of the river, pupil numbers may increase. There should be no further reduction in pupil admission numbers. Planned admission levels may need to increase to cater for housing development and the known numbers of children.
 - West of Hereford, there may be advantages, after allowing for the expected increase in admission levels in 2008, in reducing admission limits to help individual school organisation and planning.
 - Outside central Hereford, no increase is expected in pupil numbers. In the absence of any large scale housing development, consideration could be given to reducing admission limits to help in school organisation and bring greater stability to school planning.
5. The Committee were particularly concerned that there may not be sufficient places south of the river to cater for the projected numbers of pupils, particularly in light of the housing development at Stirling Lines. It is acknowledged that the situation does need to be closely monitored.

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

6. There is also a proposal for the Hunderton Junior and Infant Schools, which were established as separate schools with 5 forms of entry (i.e. 150 pupils per annum) to be amalgamated into one 3-11 primary school catering for 3 forms of entry (i.e. 90 pupils per annum). The year groups in September 2004 at the Infants school were 46 in year R, 65 in year 1 and 66 in year 2. This does indicate that a school for 3 forms of entry would be realistic, with some latitude for growth.
7. The proposed amalgamation, towards which the Governing Bodies are inclined, would require a statutory notice, with periods of informal and formal consultation. A copy of the draft, informal consultation document is attached at Appendix 2. It is proposed to use this draft document for the consultation with the relevant schools, their parents and local communities in the spring term 2005.
8. The amalgamation would succeed only if new school buildings could be provided. An initial feasibility study has been undertaken and this has shown that new accommodation for 630 pupils (7 year groups of 90 pupils each) and a nursery class could be built on site. It would have to be undertaken in a phased manner, at an expected total cost at current prices of at least £4 million. The current buildings have major technical faults, including concrete cancer, and significant investment is therefore required if they are to be maintained in the longer terms. It is proposed to make a bid to the DfES for the funding for the new school given that the project would meet the government targets of improving standards, providing for need in well deprived areas, would reduce surplus space and provide a site for integrated children's services, thereby meeting the ambitions of the extended schools initiative. The project would have to ensure the continued presence of the current community activities and suitable accommodation for the children's centre, perhaps by retention of the relevant parts of the buildings already within the overall site.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Committee note the information provided in this report and indicate their views on the proposals for action, with a particular focus on the proposed approach at the Hunderton Primary and Junior schools.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None identified.