

CLOSURE OF ST. MARY'S OF HOPE CE PRIMARY SCHOOL, HOPE-UNDER-DINMORE

PROGRAMME AREA RESPONSIBILITY: CHILDREN'S SERVICES

CABINET

17TH MARCH, 2005

Wards Affected

Hampton Court.

Purpose

To determine the outcome of the Statutory Notice to discontinue St. Mary's of Hope CE Primary School with effect from 24th March, 2005.

Key Decision

This is a Key Decision because it is 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.

Recommendation

THAT the permanent closure of this school with effect from 24th March be formally agreed.

Reasons

Following a request from the Governing Body the Council agreed to support the closure by the issuing of the statutory notice in consultation with the Cabinet Member.

Considerations

1. At the beginning of the autumn term 2004, the total number of pupils at these schools was 12. This compares to the figure of 25 in January, 2002 when the previous proposal to close the school was opposed by the national adjudicators. In light of this on 20th October, 2004 the Chairman of Governors and Headteacher wrote to all parents of registered pupils at St. Mary's of Hope concluding that despite the schools very good work over several years it would now be in the best interests of the children for the school to close permanently as soon as possible (Appendix 1). This letter was followed by a letter from the Director of Education to the same parents on 22nd October, 2004 explaining the legal process (Appendix 2).
2. An initial public notice was issued on 11th November (Appendix 3) indicating a possible closure within the 2004/5 year subject to any objections/comments being received by the Council. By November, 2004 all parents had indicated that they wished their children to transfer to an alternative school from the commencement of the spring term 2005. The preferred school for the 11 children remaining at the school was as follows:

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
George Salmon, Head of Policy and Resources on 01432 260802

Bodenham, St. Michael's - 6 children
Marden Primary - 2 children
Leominster Infants - 1 child
Leominster Junior - 1 child
Wellington - 1 child

3. On 17th December, 2004 (last day of autumn term) all children had been offered and accepted places at the preferred alternative school with transport arrangements determined, and support offered to purchase new school uniform.
4. The DfES recommended that an additional public notice be issued to set a specific date for closure (Appendix 4). This public notice was issued on 30th December and has now completed its six weeks representation period. No objections or comments have been received. The Council must now determine the future of this school which currently has no pupils registered. The Council has the power to decide the permanent closure of St. Mary's of Hope without reference to the Schools Organisational Committee as there have been no objections. The Council must advise the DfES of its decision.

Alternative Options

There are no realistic alternative options

Risk Management

There is no perceived risk management implications. The property is not owned by the Council, and cessation of use as a school means that the property reverts to the Trustees. It is understood that the trustees intend to maintain a lease with a childcare provider who occupies part of the buildings

Consultees

In line with statutory procedures all interested bodies were formally consulted.

Background Papers

Letter from Chairman of Governors and Headteacher dated 20th October, 2004.

Letter from Director of Education dated 22nd October, 2004.

First public notice dated 11th November, 2004

Final public notice dated 30th December, 2004.