
SCHOOL FOOD SCRUTINY TASK GROUP

REPORT OF A MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 29 JANUARY 2009 AT COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE

Present:

Members: John English, Peter Fuller, Mollie Groom, Malcolm Hewson, Rebecca MacDonald (Chairman)

Officers: Nigel Hunt (Head of School Buildings & Places), Sarah King (School Food Strategy Co-ordinator), Karen Linaker (Scrutiny Support Officer), Vince Marriott (Secondary School Adviser for Design & Technology), Richard Parker (Assistant Director, Resources, Improvement & Youth Development), Sarah Peters (Corporate Contracts Officer), and Brigid Sparke (Food Technology Teacher, Pewsey Vale School)

Other: Alan Bowley (Contract Director – Sodexo)

APOLOGIES

1. Apologies for absence were received from Patrick Coleman.

REPORT OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

2. Members noted the report of the previous meeting and that all matters included were scheduled to be taken forward and considered at the task group's future meetings.

IMPROVEMENTS MADE SO FAR TO THE SCHOOL MEALS' SERVICE

3. In response to the task group's queries raised previously concerning the school meals' service in Wiltshire, and changes made / funding allocated since the government launched its campaign for improvements, the School Food Strategy Co-ordinator presented information and responded to members questions. In discussing this information, the following key points were raised:
 - (a) there had been a number of different funding streams to improve school kitchens and school meals over the past 4 years, including a School Meals Grant which had been delegated directly to schools from 2005-08.
 - (b) in addition, the "School Lunch Grant" had been made available from 2008-11, intended to assist schools with the direct costs of providing a school lunch and also in implementing the new food standards

- (c) the most recent pot of money from the DCSF amounted to £100m nationally, and would be awarded on the basis that schools match the grant figure
- (d) Wiltshire schools had responded well to this recent round of funding and 86 schools had submitted bids totalling £3.2m. This demonstrated a good sense of commitment to the drive to improve school meals. There was some concern that not all of the £3.2m bid for would be granted and therefore a selection criteria would be applied, which the Schools Forum would consider in due course
- (e) taking all previously granted funding and the possible future bids into account, approximately £6.5m of investment would have been put into Wiltshire schools since 2005
- (f) with regard to the impact of this funding so far, Sarah referred to a series of reports she had produced in relation to the Targeted School Meals Grant
- (g) monitoring the impact in relation to the School Lunch Grant had yet to be carried out, and monitoring arrangements in relation to the most recent DCSF grant would need to be agreed
- (h) despite this investment, there were still a number of schools without adequate facilities to provide the standard of meals required by government
- (i) the challenges facing some school kitchens in the county included outdated equipment, inappropriate flooring, gas and ventilation problems and asbestos. Assessment of these challenges had been carried out and officers were in the process of writing to schools to explain the level of risk they faced, i.e. in the worse case scenario - closure of their school kitchen
- (j) the closure of kitchens was a risk to the viability of the council's school meals' contract
- (k) for those schools outside of the school meals' contract and having to work with poor kitchen facilities, such as highlighted in paragraph (i) above, this was a further disincentive to them in providing a meals' service
- (l) there was also a number of schools who had opted out of the council's school meals' contract and who had poor kitchen facilities choosing to transport in meals from other providers
- (m) much more investment was required, and the Building Schools for the Future funding programmes would help

AGREED to note the clarification given with regard to the analysis carried out so far into the impact of investment to improve the school meals service in Wiltshire since 2005.

WHAT IS THE GENERAL IMPACT OF MAKING LEARNING TO COOK AND UNDERSTAND THE PRINCIPLES OF DIET AND NUTRITION AN ENTITLEMENT FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS?

4. Members received further information from officers regarding the government's requirement that secondary school pupils be entitled to learn how to cook and understand the principles of diet and nutrition from 2011. This further information included:
- (a) the licence to cook programme was a government initiative designed to support the need of teachers who wanted to teach cooking but who had no formal training; and to meet the government target to increase the number of teachers who could teach cookery in schools
 - (b) the national shortage of teachers in this field was not reflected in Wiltshire, and the overall standard of teaching cookery (within Food Technology) was consistently good with a number of schools being outstanding – Pewsey Vale, Malmesbury, St Augustines, Clarendon, Salisbury High School, Corsham, Abbeyfield, Hardenhuish, John Bentley, The George Ward, St Laurence, St Edmunds, South Wilts, Sheldon and Devizes
 - (c) the need to train secondary teachers in Wiltshire was therefore not a priority. However, a number of schools were using the licence to cook programme to support and extend their curriculum provision
 - (d) when food technology was made a compulsory element of the Key Stage 3 curriculum for all pupils from 2011, the following issues would need to be considered by schools:
 - (i) a number of schools already provided the minimum of 16 hours set by the government
 - (ii) a few schools had a rotational curriculum in Design & Technology in which their overall time allocation might fall slightly below the 16 hours target. These schools would need to make some adjustments to meet the target
 - (iii) the provision in key stage 4 was determined by examination course choices and whilst the government target did not currently focus on this key stage, if it were to be extended in the future, all Wiltshire schools would find meeting such a target a challenge. This would be in terms of insufficient teaching staff and food workshops as well as finding the curriculum capacity to meet such a target
5. Members then asked questions regarding how parents were being engaged in cooking with their children in schools, and the following clarification was given:
- (a) the Lets Get Cooking programme in primary schools was actively engaging parents

- (b) family learning days in schools - when parents were invited in to take part in activities relating to food and cooking
 - (c) the local authority and its partners were currently working on an objective using the Healthy Schools Programme as a focus to better co-ordinate all the different initiatives currently ongoing in Wiltshire to promote healthy eating and active lifestyles
 - (d) using children's centres to host healthy eating events and activities for families – this was something that Sodexo was working with the School Food Trust to develop
 - (f) the Food in Schools Programme (also known as Food Learning Partnerships – **see attached slides**)
 - (e) much of this activity was being focused in the areas of high social deprivation, where it was most needed.
6. Members then asked how the local authority, schools and partners would monitor the impact of initiatives to improve the cooking skills of children and their families. In response, officers referred to the two performance indicators which related to obesity, and explained that a way of monitoring how these were being met would need to be devised. In addition members were referred to the role Ofsted played in monitoring and to the role which the Healthy Schools Programme could play.

AGREED to note the clarification recieved.

HOW MANY AND WHICH SCHOOLS IN WILTSHIRE WILL NEED TO MAKE PLANS TO BUILD OR SHARE MODERN FOOD TECHNOLOGY EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES?

7. The Head of School Buildings & Places referred to the information in the task group's agenda concerning a government funding project to refurbish schools currently without any means to teach food technology. In considering this information and discussing the general need in Wiltshire schools for modern food technology equipment and facilities, the following key points were made:
- (a) this bid had been successful and meant that the following four Wiltshire schools would benefit from government funding over the next two years:
 - Bishop Wordsworth's Grammar School for Boys:
£300,000 – New Build (09/10 – 10/11)
 - Downland Special School: (£50,000 – for improved equipment in 09/10)
 - Exeter House Special School: (300,000 – New Build in 09/10 – 10/11)
 - Larkrise Special School: (300,000 – New Build in 09/10 – 10/11)

- (b) the three new build schemes would be developed through a feasibility phase, informed by officers and teachers with knowledge and expertise in food technology and by the local authority's architects
- (c) future provision of food technology facilities and equipment would need to take into account the introduction of new hospitality and catering diplomas
- (d) other schools currently had to draw on the 'devolved formula capital budget' when wanting to make improvements to their current food technology equipment and facilities
- (e) cookery clubs and after school activities provided further opportunities for pupils to take part in learning how to cook
- (f) the government's requirement from 2011 was that pupils be entitled to a minimum of 16 hours learning how to cook and understand the principles of diet and nutrition, but it was not a compulsory requirement
- (g) to meet the 2011 requirement, a decision needed to be reached on what was 'modern food technology equipment and facilities' – this would establish a specification which could guide future provision in Wiltshire
- (h) the majority of schools in Wiltshire did have rooms which ranged from 'adequate' to 'very good' in terms of furniture, cookers and preparation space
- (i) the task group would want to see careful monitoring put in place so that there was a baseline established before modern facilities were introduced – so as to ensure meaningful measurement of the benefits derived from future investment.

AGREED to note the clarification recieved.

NEXT MEETING

8. Members noted that their next meeting would take place on the 26th February 2009, and that this would commence at 9.30am and conclude at approximately 4pm.

(Duration of meeting: 2.00 pm to 3.15 pm)

*This record was produced by Karen Linaker, Scrutiny Support Officer, 01225 713056
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