

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
12<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2009**

---

**FINAL REPORT OF THE SCHOOL FOOD TASK GROUP****Purpose of the Report**

1. To present the findings and recommendations of the School Food Task Group.

**Action Required of the Committee**

2. The committee is asked to consider this report and to adopt its recommendations.
3. The committee is asked to submit this report and its recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education & Youth Development and the Cabinet Member for ICT, Procurement & Partnerships for consideration and for a formal response.

**Background**

4. The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee commissioned this task group in September 2008, following consideration of a report updating members on the progress of the council's School Food Strategy.
5. Wiltshire's School Food Strategy was launched in 2007 in response to the government's White Paper 'Choosing Health: making healthier choices easier' (2004), and the announcement in March 2005 of a package of measures to significantly improve the quality of food offered in schools. These measures were supported by a national fund of £220m for 2005-2008. The government's expectation was that, in partnership with parents, schools, health services, school meal providers, contractors and others, local authorities would lead the development and implementation of a local strategy to deliver a high quality, sustainable school meals service.
6. The objectives of this council's School Food Strategy were influenced by the findings and recommendations of two previous task groups of this committee – the Sodexo School Catering Task Group (Sept 04 – Apr 05) and the School Catering Task Group (Oct 05 – June 06).
7. The objectives relate to:
  - (a) national and local policies for food in schools
  - (b) education and training
  - (c) partnerships
  - (d) links with local producers of food and local providers
  - (e) communications
  - (f) environmental and financial sustainability of school meals
  - (g) resources to support and improve school meals
  - (h) contract arrangements
  - (i) monitoring and evaluation of school meals and the services offered.

8. The committee has received 6 monthly updates on the progress of the strategy. On considering the update in September 2008, the committee concluded that there were a number of areas related to the strategy which warranted further evaluation. These areas included the government's new nutrient based standards for school meals, the teaching of cookery (referred to as 'food technology' in this report), and plans for the council's new school catering contract.
9. Consequently, this School Food Task Group (Nov 08 – Mar 09) was commissioned with the following terms of reference:

*To give further attention to the following:*

- (a) the government's nutrient based standards, and the challenges they pose*
- (b) how many secondary and special schools in Wiltshire will need to make plans to build or share modern food technology facilities and equipment*
- (c) what is the general impact of making learning to cook and understand the principles of diet and nutrition an entitlement for 11-14 year olds*
- (d) the principles underlying the new school catering contract, particularly to:*
  - i. see how best to secure buy-in from schools*
  - ii. gain a better appreciation of the demand for alternative school food delivery methods*
  - iii. gain a better appreciation of what alternative school food delivery methods will be possible for schools in the future*
- (e) the role of the Schools Forum in promoting the council's school food strategy.*

### **Task Group's Methodology**

10. The members which took part in this task group were Rebecca Macdonald (Chairman), Patrick Coleman, John English, Peter Fuller, Mollie Groom and Malcolm Hewson. These members were able to bring to the task group a broad mix of experience and knowledge in school catering, education, health and procurement. Three of the members had taken part in the previous two task group exercises on school catering, as mentioned in paragraph 5 above.
11. In addition to considering the main topics listed in the terms of reference at paragraph 8 above, the task group also discussed information relating to investment in school meals since 2005 and the 'Whole School Approach' as carried out in Wiltshire.
12. These topics and additional information were explored at a series of meetings with officers, teachers, and catering representatives, and through a number of school visits.

## Main Findings

### 13. Investment in School Meals since 2005

- (a) Currently there are 237 schools in Wiltshire (202 primary, 29 secondary and 6 special). 171 primary schools provide meals. 114 primary schools have kitchens, 52 have serveries and 36 have neither. All 29 secondary schools have at least one kitchen and 5 out of the 6 special schools have kitchens.
- (b) The local authority and schools have taken advantage of a number of different government funding streams to upgrade school kitchen equipment, buildings and the school meals service in general since 2005. These include the 'Targeted School Meals Grant – 5a' (2005-2008), the 'School Meals Grant 5b' 2005-2008 and the 'School Lunch Grant' (2008 – 2011).
- (c) Since 2005, approximately £2.7m has been invested in improving kitchens, the school meals service in general, and the quality of food.

Targeted School Meals Grant 5a (2005-8) <i>[administered through the local authority]</i>	=	£1,079,262
School Meals Grant 5b (2005-8) <i>[delegated directly to schools]</i>	=	£936,560
School Lunch Grant (2008-9)	=	£671,813
<b><u>TOTAL</u></b>	=	<b><u>£2,684,635</u></b>

- (d) The key messages from the school food strategy co-ordinator's analysis of the impact of the 'Targeted School Meals Grant 5a' are:
- (i) 95 schools used the funding mainly to upgrade kitchen equipment and dining areas, repair / improve building and decoration, and to subsidise staff and meal costs
  - (ii) the grant has had a positive impact on the school meals' service in Wiltshire in those 95 schools that have bid for funding, with the greatest impact perceived by schools to be the increased use of fresh, local ingredients, and that more pupils are enjoying the healthy food provided
  - (iii) dining environments and the lunch time experience has been enhanced and the general quality of food has improved.
- (e) In addition to the funding already mentioned, there is an opportunity for schools to bid via the local authority for further funding from the Department for Children, Schools and Families for kitchen and dining room projects. 87 Wiltshire schools have bid for £3.3m. This is based on 50% match-funding from the schools own budgets. Consequently, the total investment from this avenue of funding could be £6.4m. Confirmation of the success of the bid for this funding will be received in March 2009.
- (f) Despite this investment there will still be a number of schools in the county without adequate facilities to provide the standard of schools

meals required. For example, the maximum amount each school received from the Targeted School Meals Grant was £15,000, which helped them to buy new equipment and to make refurbishments. A complete re-fit for a new kitchen, depending on its size and condition could cost tens of thousands of pounds. .

- (g) The challenges still facing a number of schools include outdated equipment, poor flooring, gas and ventilation problems and asbestos. Assessment of gas equipment has recently been carried out and officers are in the process of informing schools of the level of risk they face if faults are not overcome - the worse case scenario being closure of the school kitchen.
- (h) These challenges and risks have implications for the viability of the council's school catering service, as access to and use of well maintained and adequately equipped kitchen and dining facilities are important for the continuation and sustainability of the service provided by in house or private contractors. Also, these challenges and risks can prove a disincentive to schools to continue providing a school meals service at all especially for those schools whose kitchen is used for providing meals to other schools.
- (i) Further investment is anticipated to come in the form of Building Schools for the Future funding – a total of £10m for Primary Schools over the next two years, and approximately £450m for Secondary Schools from 2012 at the earliest. Within the primary capital programme, schools will be rebuilt with up to date kitchens and dining areas. The outcome of the Building Schools for the Future revised expression of interest for secondary schools will be known this spring. Once again, when funding is secured it will enable the provision of new build and / or the refurbishment of existing facilities. Kitchen and dining areas will therefore be significantly improved.
- (j) The task group would like the committee to give further consideration to the challenges and consequent risks which schools face in Wiltshire from inadequate school kitchens and dining room facilities, bearing in mind the investment already made, but the need which still exists. The task group would like children's services scrutiny members to understand better how these risks will be managed, and how this will be funded, to ensure provision of the standard of school meals required by government and the future sustainability of school catering arrangements in Wiltshire (*recommendation 1*).

#### 14. *The "Whole School Approach"*

- (a) The National Healthy Schools Programme (NHSP) is the government's main way of delivering a 'whole school approach', whereby the whole school community (pupils, staff, caterers, parents, governors and providers) are involved in school food issues.
- (b) The healthy schools programme has been running for 10 years, and 3 years ago the government introduced 41 new criteria that schools

have to comply with to achieve 'healthy schools' status'. These criteria are categorised across four themes: Personal, Social & Health Education (PSHE), Healthy Eating, Physical Activity and Emotional Health & Wellbeing. The criteria includes the requirement that schools have a 'whole school food' policy that is developed through wide consultation, implemented, monitored and evaluated for impact.

- (c) As at the 1<sup>st</sup> February 2009, 72% of schools in Wiltshire had achieved healthy school status. The remaining schools had completed 38% of the criteria. This puts Wiltshire 7% above the national average and broadly in line with statistical neighbours. Over 80% of schools are anticipated to have achieved the status by December 2009.
- (d) In the absence of a national re-validation process to ensure that schools are maintaining good health schools' standards, the Government of the South West (GOSW) has commissioned a new initiative known as "Healthy Schools Plus", involving 15 local healthy schools' programmes in the region. Consequently, Wiltshire will receive £400,000 to implement this new initiative over the next three years to assist it in providing additional capacity within the healthy schools' team and to provide £1,750 per school. NHS Wiltshire has committed £250,000 to this funding – the rest has been allocated from GOSW's bid to the government's "Inequalities Fund".
- (e) The initiative will support schools in building and developing further their work on being a healthy school and in reaffirming their commitment to achieving the 41 NHSP criteria.
- (f) The initiative will also be supported by three additional local targets that will:
  - (i) address local priorities in the Wiltshire Children & Young People's Plan, including priorities relating to obesity, sexual health, drug and alcohol, and mental health
  - (ii) provide targeted work in areas with the highest health inequalities
  - (iii) provide opportunities for schools to address the needs of vulnerable children and young people
- (g) Healthy Schools' Plus will be launched in Wiltshire after Easter 2009 with a target to get 50% of the county's schools participating by 2011.
- (h) It is hoped that this new initiative will provide support for schools to meet the new Ofsted "pupil wellbeing" performance indicator that will be introduced in September 2009 to monitor schools' progress in matters such as healthy eating.
- (i) Support from a school's senior management team is often the key to ensuring a continued focus on the aims and objectives of the Healthy Schools Programme and the whole school food policy. Also, generally speaking, the application of a whole school food policy is easier to achieve in smaller schools particularly primary schools.

- (j) Whilst recognising the many pressures placed on schools, and the good progress already made in embedding whole school food policies, the task group would want to see ongoing support for teachers, other nominated school staff, caterers and providers so that focus on such policies is maintained and continuous improvement is achieved through training opportunities (*recommendation 2*).

## 15. *The Challenges Posed by the New Nutrient Based Standards*

- (a) In October 2005, the Government appointed School Meals Review Panel published its report “Turning the Tables”. The report proposed radical changes to the quality and nutritional value of food served and consumed in school, and has resulted in new standards for school meals which are to be fully phased in by September 2009. As a consequence of the report, the School Food Trust (SFT) was appointed by government to take the recommendations forward. These recommendations are to transform school meals and food skills to improve health and education for school age children and young people.
- (b) The new standards cover all food sold or served in schools at lunchtimes.
- (c) The timetable for introducing the new standards is:
  - Sept 06 – interim food-based standards for school lunches
  - Sept 07 – food based standards for food other than lunch
  - Sept 08 – primary schools to meet new nutrient based standards for school lunches
  - Sept 09 – secondary and special schools to meet new nutrient based standards for school lunches
- (d) The food based standards which schools have been required to follow since September 2006, apply to food or food groups, e.g. fruit and vegetables, bread, oily fish, salt etc, and to the frequency and quantity permitted (*see Appendix 1 which is an extract from the SFT’s guide*).
- (e) The nutrient based standards which schools are now required to follow, apply to the nutrients (both minimum and maximum) which school lunches should contain, e.g. zinc, carbohydrate, protein, fibre, vitamins, calcium, saturated fat etc (*see Appendix 2 – extract from SFT’s guide*).
- (f) The council’s school food strategy has included strategic objectives regarding the implementation of these new standards, and the task group was asked to find out more about the challenges faced by schools from these standards.
- (g) The strategy since 2007 has been to provide support to schools in preparing for the new standards, and this has included regular communications, meetings and workshops. In addition, the SFT website and its guides and publications have been distributed and promoted to schools.

- (h) All schools currently in the Sodexo school catering contract are compliant with the standards, and Sodexo is currently working with the SFT to help in the national promotion of healthier school meals.
- (i) From feedback at the workshops and other surveys and audits carried out by the School Food Strategy Coordinator, the main challenges so far identified are:
  - (i) the cost to the school in analysing recipes and menus to ensure compliance with the new standards, including cost in staff time, use of a dietician or procurement of software specifically designed to analyse menus
  - (ii) the time it takes to check menu compliance, which sometimes requires extra research to confirm the nutritional value of a particular food item
  - (iii) the reliability / accuracy of menu analysis
  - (iv) the loss of creativity in the kitchen, as once menus are analysed they cannot be amended or adapted, without further analysis – this also impacts on the appeal factor of some dishes, with food being wasted rather than a little license being allowed to make it taste a bit better
  - (v) the need to meet the standards and cater for a variety of dietary and cultural requirements
  - (vi) uncertainty as to how menu compliance will be monitored and by who
  - (vii) potential risk of schools currently outside of the council's or other school catering contract, stopping their in-house arrangement and not providing a school meal service at all.
- (j) As part of its work, the task group visited a number of schools to discuss these challenges with teachers, catering staff and pupils, and to gain a better appreciation of the way in which schools are planning to meet the new standards, or the way in which they are already working to comply. In addition to the challenges listed at paragraph 15(i) above, the following were identified from the members' school visits:
  - i) the need to promote the new standards as part of a whole school food policy, co-ordinated by a responsible individual or group, so that these are consistently applied throughout the school curriculum and school day (this is good in some and not so good in others)
  - ii) the impact on the cost of the school meal and the concern that price increases will affect the up-take
  - iii) the food and nutrient based standards are only a part of the equation to improving children's diet and eating habits - the dining environment and organisation of the school lunch is another important factor
  - iv) the need to support catering staff in accessing training

- v) some schools feel that the nutrient based standards have been introduced too quickly and that schools are still trying to apply the food based standards.
- (k) Whilst the majority of schools outside of the Sodexo contract are intending to comply with the new standards and will either facilitate this through use of software or help from a dietician, there is a minority which are still undecided as to how to proceed or who have decided not to comply.

16. *Cooking Lessons (Food Technology)*

- (a) The task group was asked by the committee to consider the impact of the government's requirement that all secondary aged pupils would be entitled to learn how to cook and understand the principles of diet and nutrition from 2011.
- (b) The school food strategy's objective 'education and training' includes a number of measures which relate to food technology, and improving pupils' knowledge and skills in cooking healthy food. The measures are intended to ensure that:
  - (i) all young people leaving school will have been taught how to cook healthy meals
  - (ii) the general good quality of teachers' skills in food technology would be improved further, both in primary and secondary schools
  - (iii) where possible, schools will grow their own produce.
- (c) In considering the impact of this government requirement, the task group was informed that the general standard of food technology lessons is good overall in Wiltshire, with some schools being outstanding. In addition, the task group was informed that the national shortage of food technology teachers was not reflected locally.
- (d) Building on this generally good provision, schools in Wiltshire are responding positively to the government's requirements and expectations regarding food technology and are involved in various initiatives to further improve performance, including the Licence to Cook programme for secondary schools and the Lets Get Cooking project for primary schools.
- (e) As part of its work, the task group interviewed the food technology teacher from Pewsey Vale School about her involvement as a lead practitioner for the south west for the Licence to Cook programme, and visited the school to see her conduct a food technology class. During this visit, the task group was given the opportunity to cook with a year 9 class and held discussions with staff and pupils about food technology, how it sits within the whole Design & Technology



curriculum, and how some of the practical issues associated with cooking are overcome, i.e. the cost of ingredients.

- (f) Additionally, the Secondary Adviser for Design & Technology helped the task group to explore the potential impact of the government's requirement.
- (g) The potential impact could be:
  - (i) the need for careful adjustment and balance of subjects taught within the Design & Technology curriculum to ensure that the minimum requirement of 16 hours of food technology is achieved per year.
  - (ii) if the requirement is extended from key stage 3 to key stage 4, schools will need to recruit additional food technology teachers, and adapt the curriculum to make space for more food technology lessons
  - (iii) the need for further investment in food technology equipment and facilities (see paragraph 17 below).
- (h) The task group also enquired about activities to engage parents in cooking, recognising the important role that parents as well as schools play in encouraging children to eat healthily. The task group was informed that the initiatives to facilitate parent involvement in Wiltshire included the Lets Get Cooking project in primary schools, family learning days in all schools, healthy eating events in children's centres, the Food in Schools Programme and the Healthy Schools Programme.
- (i) Whilst encouraged by the wide variety of activity ongoing in Wiltshire to improve children and their parents' cooking skills, the task group highlighted the need for robust monitoring arrangements to be in place to measure the impact of this activity. Members were informed that there were a number of national and local targets relating to childhood obesity that would inform these monitoring arrangements (recommendation 3). Also, members were informed that the Wiltshire Obesity Strategy, the Healthy Schools Programme, the Children & Young People's Plan, the Local Area Agreement and the Local Agreement for Wiltshire would each play a role in helping the authority and its partners to measure the benefits of healthy eating and cooking initiatives.

## 17. *Investment in Food Technology Equipment & Facilities*

- (a) The Secondary Adviser for Design & Technology provided reassurance to the task group that overall, schools in Wiltshire had food technology facilities and equipment which ranged from 'adequate' to 'very good'. However, to meet the government's target that by 2011 all secondary schools should have their own, or have access to others', up to date food technology facilities and equipment, assessment of the level of need for further investment will be required (recommendation 4).

- (b) There are four schools in Wiltshire which had met the criteria for the most recent government funding stream made available for food technology equipment and facilities, these include:

<u>School (for pupils of secondary age)</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>Scheme</u>
Bishop Wordsworth's Grammar School for Boys	300,000	New Build (09/10 – 10/11)
Downland Special School	50,000	Improved Equipment (09/10)
Exeter House Special School	300,000	New Build (09/10 – 10/11)
Larkrise Special School	300,000	New Build (09/10 – 10/11)

- (c) From 2008 – 2011, almost £22b of capital funding is available nationally to improve school buildings, including food technology areas. Major capital programmes such as Building Schools for the Future (BSF) should now be ensuring that adequate food technology areas (including practical kitchens) are addressed in local authority plans. In addition, schools have access to devolved capital funding. The government expectation is that, where BSF funding does not provide for improved facilities, the installation of food technology areas and extending/improving existing facilities will usually be funded as a priority from the devolved capital budget.
- (d) The task group would like officers to clarify what is the baseline of current standards in food technology and its effectiveness in teaching young people how to cook healthily before further investment is made, so as to ensure meaningful measurement of the benefits derived from future investment (*recommendation 5*).

18. *The Principles Underlying the Council's New School Catering Contract*

- (a) The current legal framework governing the provision of meals in schools was established in the School Standards & Framework Act 1998, which legislated that local authorities were obliged to consult with schools on the delegation of responsibilities for the provision of school meals and for the maintenance of school kitchens. In Wiltshire the decision to delegate both of these responsibilities to all schools was made in April 2001.
- (b) This decision coincided with the development and tendering of a new contract for facilities management for the whole of the council, and this was intended to include school meals' provision. The proposed contract included provision for investment in and development of the school meals' service infrastructure as well as the direct provision of meals. The viability of these provisions was dependent upon a sufficiently large number of schools taking up the contract. In the

event, only 119 schools out of the 180 initially expressing an interest actually took up the option – leading to a renegotiation and restructuring of the contract conditions.

- (c) Following the council's decision in 2008 to extend the original contract with Sodexo for a further 2 years, the 109 schools in the contract at that time were offered the opportunity to remain in the contract until 2010. Only 79 schools chose to do so, with the remainder taking services in house, finding alternative contractors, or ceasing to provide school meals.
- (d) As detailed in paragraph 12 above, following a high profile media campaign, the government introduced funding for a number of initiatives to improve the quality of school meals, and paragraph 12 details the main impact which this funding had in Wiltshire.
- (e) A major thrust of current government policy has been the development of statutory nutritional standards for school meals, as well as a new national performance indicator (NI 52) for school meal take up. These standards are also linked to the 'healthy schools' and obesity targets. Focus has also been on linking the actual provision of meals with curricular provision (see paragraph 15), working with parents and in children's centres.
- (f) An additional local and national issue is the inconsistent provision of kitchen / servery facilities in schools, reflecting both individual school management decisions and the difficulties of maintaining and equipping increasingly obsolescent buildings and plant. The funding referred to in paragraph 12(e) and 12(i) above will go some to addressing this in Wiltshire.
- (g) A further related and more recent issue is that of the long term viability and financial sustainability of the school meals' service, particularly in small schools. To some extent this has been masked by the funding and support initiatives of the past few years, but there is now evidence that some of those schools which have embarked on innovative approaches are now finding these difficult to sustain as changes of personnel and loss of initial enthusiasm begin to impact. These difficulties are compounded by the overall economic pressures on small businesses – particularly catering businesses who are finding the school market does not provide a sufficient return and in some cases are ceasing to trade.
- (h) There are consequently a number of significant issues which need to be resolved in the near future with regard to the direction of school meals. These include (recommendation 6):
  - (i) clarifying the role of school meal provision within broader approaches to healthy schools, parenting and obesity strategies
  - (ii) developing links between school meals and curriculum provision
  - (iii) determining and monitoring the significance of the performance indicator (NI 52) on school meal take up within

the overall performance management frameworks of the Wiltshire Council and the Children and Young People's Trust Board

- (iv) supporting schools in maintaining services and meeting statutory nutritional guidelines
  - (v) ensuring the financial sustainability of school meals services
  - (vi) maintaining the viability of the existing physical infrastructure and equipment of school kitchens
  - (vii) ensuring compliance with all relevant necessary health and safety legislation – especially that related to food safety
  - (viii) developing commissioning and contracting arrangements for school meals services, including clarifying the respective roles of schools and the local authority and, where appropriate, supporting schools in commissioning and contracting.
- (i) The Department for Children and Education will be discussing these with strategic partners in NHS Wiltshire, Schools Forum, and the Children and Young People's Trust Board with a view to developing a shared approach to commissioning the school meals service which can inform the tendering process for 2010 (*recommendation 6 & 7*).
- (j) The shape of future contract arrangements will be influenced by key lessons learnt from the perspective of both schools and providers. In particular schools want arrangements to be as flexible as possible to accommodate individual school requirements. Whereas providers in particular want greater clarity over the council's investment plans for school kitchen and servery infrastructure, and over any "additional outputs" that would need to be costed in to contracts including use of school produced ingredients, special events and greater involvement of parents.
- (k) One of the options being explored as part of the re-tendering process is to offer a core set of services from which schools can choose any number of features, as opposed to one overall service that schools were locked in to for a period of time.
- (l) Having considered the above principles which underlie the future of school meals' provision in Wiltshire, the task group would like to see the following built into the revised arrangements (*recommendation 8*):
- (i) a proactive approach from the provider in marketing its services and generating good uptake of school meals
  - (ii) provision of organic, locally grown food, and environmentally sustainable practices
  - (iii) flexibility to provide other school food related services such as breakfast clubs
  - (iv) provision for children's centres
  - (v) regard for the long term benefits of healthy eating
  - (vi) strong links with the priorities of NHS Wiltshire, i.e. the obesity strategy
  - (vii) auditing practices to help measure the impact of improved diets, and of improved school catering kitchen / servery / dining room infrastructure

- (viii) regard for best practice and a contract that could be adapted to incorporate lessons learnt
  - (ix) regard for the improvements requested by Ofsted at any given time
  - (x) support for 'whole school food' policies and practices
  - (xi) an ongoing programme of training for school caterers and designated teachers to ensure standards in health and safety, nutrition and continuous improvement.
- (m) In addition, noting that the timetable for the re-letting of the school catering contract was due to commence at the end of March 2009, the task group would like the children's services scrutiny committee to nominate one of its members to sit on the procurement board for this project (*recommendation 9*), and to recommend that a school representative also be invited to sit on the board (*recommendation 10*).

#### 19. *The Role of the Schools Forum in Promoting the School Food Strategy*

- (a) From discussions with the Chairman of the Schools Forum, the Chairman of the Primary Heads Forum and the Chairman of the Wiltshire Association of Secondary & Special School Heads, the task group has identified that the main ways in which the Schools Forum promotes the school food strategy is through financial support and contractual oversight.
- (b) Consequently, the Schools Forum will be a consultee in the procurement process for the re-letting of the school catering contract.
- (c) One of the ways in which the task group would like to see the Schools Forum influence new school catering arrangements is to explore the possibility of schools buying into a central resource for the purposes of menu and recipe analysis, support and advice on food hygiene, health and safety and kitchen maintenance, bearing in mind the time and money spent by each school on attending to these issues (*recommendation 11*).

### **Recommendations**

1. That officers provide a detailed report to the children's services scrutiny committee in September 2009, on the assessment that has been and will be carried out to identify the outstanding challenges and risks facing schools in Wiltshire from inadequate school kitchens and dining room facilities. This report should also detail the plans in place to manage these challenges and risks and the consequent funding and resources that will be needed, to ensure the provision of the standard of school meals required by government and the future sustainability of school catering arrangements in Wiltshire (*see paragraph 13(j)*).

2. That the Department for Children & Education ensure that there is ongoing funding and support for teachers, other nominated school staff, caterers and providers so that focus on the aims and objectives of the 'whole school approach' is maintained and continuous improvement is achieved through training opportunities (see paragraph 14(j)).
3. That the Department for Children & Education clarify for schools as soon as possible how the impact of activities to improve children and their parents' cooking skills will be monitored (see paragraph 16(i)).
4. That the Department for Children & Education carry out a thorough assessment to identify which schools will need to make improvements to their food technology equipment and facilities to meet the government's requirement from 2011. The outcome of this assessment to be reported in detail to the children's services scrutiny committee in September 2009. This report to include information on the funding and resources required and available to make these improvements (see paragraph 17(a)).
5. That, in the same report requested in recommendation 4, officers clarify what is the baseline of current standards in food technology and its effectiveness in teaching young people how to cook healthily and understand nutrition on a broad basis, before further investment is made, so as to ensure meaningful measurement of the benefits derived from future investment. Officers to carry out this work in consultation with the chairman and vice chairman of the committee (see paragraph 17(d)).
6. To support the Department for Children & Education's decision to discuss with strategic partners in NHS Wiltshire, Schools Forum and the Children & Young People's Trust Board the significant issues which need to be resolved in the near future with regard to the direction of school meals' policy in Wiltshire, noting that this is with a view to developing a shared approach to commissioning the school meals' service to inform the tendering process for 2010 (see paragraphs 18(h) and (i)).
7. That the Department for Children & Education discuss with partners as a matter of urgency the future funding arrangements for the school food strategy co-ordinator, bearing in mind the continuing national and local priorities associated with healthy eating and the proposals to develop a shared approach to commissioning the school meals' service (see paragraphs 18(h) and (i)).
8. That, in noting the principles which underlie the future of school meal's provision in Wiltshire, the Department for Children & Education request that consideration be given by the procurement project board of building in the following to the revised arrangements (paragraphs 18(a) to (l)):
  - (a) a proactive approach from the provider in marketing its services and generating good uptake of school meals
  - (b) provision of organic, locally grown food, and environmentally sustainable practices
  - (c) flexibility to provide other school food related services such as breakfast clubs
  - (d) provision for children's centres

- (e) regard for the long term benefits of healthy eating
  - (f) strong links with the priorities of NHS Wiltshire, i.e. the obesity strategy
  - (g) auditing practices to help measure the impact of improved diets, and of improved school catering kitchen / servery / dining room infrastructure
  - (h) regard for best practice and a contract that could be adapted to incorporate lessons learnt
  - (i) regard for the improvements requested by Ofsted at any given time
  - (j) support for 'whole school food' policies and practices
  - (k) an ongoing programme of training for school caterers and designated teachers to ensure standards in health and safety, nutrition and continuous improvement.
9. That a children's services scrutiny committee member be appointed to sit on the procurement project board for the re-letting of the new school catering contract. This to be agreed in March 2009 and reaffirmed in July 2009 (see paragraph 18(m)).
10. That the procurement project board invite a school representative to sit on the board as soon as possible (see paragraph 18(m)).
11. That, as part of the procurement process, the Department for Children & Education, with reference to the Schools Forum and other relevant local authority departments and partners, explore the potential benefits of providing a central resource to carry out the necessary menu and recipe analysis, support for health and safety, food hygiene and advice on kitchen / servery maintenance (see paragraph 19(c)).

## **Conclusion**

This report and its recommendations will be submitted to the children's services scrutiny committee for consideration on the 12<sup>th</sup> March 2009. Subject to the committee's adoption of the recommendations, this report will be issued to the Cabinet Member for Education & Youth Development and the Cabinet Member for ICT, Procurement & Partnerships and a formal response requested.

**Rebecca Macdonald**  
**Chairman – School Food Task Group**

---

*Report Author: Karen Linaker, Scrutiny Support Officer, 01225 713056*