

**Executive Response to the  
Final Report of the School Food Task Group - Update**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To present the executive's response to recommendations 5 & 6 of the final report of the School Food Task Group.
2. To update the Committee on progress with the implementation of the School Food Task Group's other recommendations.

**Actions Required of the Committee**

3. To note the executive's responses to recommendations 5 & 6 of the final report of the School Food Task Group and to comment as appropriate.
4. To note the progress made with respect to implementation of the School Food Task Group's recommendations and to comment as appropriate.

**Background**

5. 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.
6. The task group was asked to give further attention to aspects relating to the strategy, including the challenges posed by the then new nutritional standards, the requirement that all secondary aged pupils will have access to practical cookery lessons from 2011, the principles underlying the new school catering contract and the role of the Schools Forum in these matters.
7. The findings and conclusions of the Task Group were endorsed by the Committee in March 2009. In July 2009, the Committee received executive responses to the report's recommendations (which are included below) and requested that the Chairman and Vice-Chair agree how their implementation would be monitored.
8. The Chairman and Vice-Chair therefore requested that the Cabinet Member for Children's Services provide further responses to recommendations 5 & 6 (initial responses having been given in July 2009), plus an update on progress with implementation of the Task Group's other recommendations.

## Recommendations, Executive Responses and Updates

### 9. Investment in School Meals since 2005

#### Background

- (a) At the time of the Task Group's review, the local authority and schools had taken advantage of a number of different government funding streams to upgrade school kitchen equipment, buildings and the school meals service in general – investing approximately £2.7m since 2005.
- (b) In addition, the opportunity to bid for funding from the Department for Children, Schools and Families for kitchen and dining room projects was taken in 2009, with 87 schools bidding for £3.3m, based on 50% match-funding from the schools' own budgets. Consequently, the total possible investment from this avenue of funding was £6.4m.
- (c) Despite this investment there were still a number of schools in the county without adequate facilities to provide the standard of schools meals required. The challenges facing a number of schools included outdated equipment, poor flooring, gas and ventilation problems and asbestos.
- (d) Further investment was 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.

#### Recommendation 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 and available, 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 11(j) of the main report).

#### Executive Response, July 2009

£1.674 million has now been received from DCSF to support school kitchen developments. This will be allocated proportionately to the original bid, as agreed with Schools Forum on 25 June.

Schools, where issues were identified in the 2008 kitchen survey, will be followed up during the summer of 2009 to establish what improvements have been made, and what improvements are still to be put into place. These matters will be considered as part of the general approach to a sustainable contract for school catering in Wiltshire, from April 2010.

## Update

In Autumn 2008, DCSF announced a 'one off' grant for schools that had no food technology accommodation/equipment and so would not be able to provide the required KS3 Food Technology.

An accommodation review, followed by discussions with individual schools, identified four Wiltshire schools that had no provision:

School	Grant £
Exeter House Special School	300,000
Downland School	50,000
Larkrise School	300,000
Bishop Wordsworth's C of E Grammar School for Boys	300,000

A successful bid was submitted to DCSF for each of the above schools and grants awarded as shown above. The grants were based on refurbishment of an existing area at Downland, and the construction of new facilities at the other three schools.

The projects at Downland School and Larkrise School are due to be completed this summer. The projects at the other two schools are part of a larger scale redevelopment of the school sites and currently it is anticipated that planning applications will be submitted for both schemes later this year.

Since the change of government, there is now uncertainty regarding the future levels of capital funding and therefore around Building Schools for the Future allocations.

A number of Wiltshire schools have worked in collaboration with Wiltshire College to develop facilities and programmes to run industry standard catering programmes (e.g. Avon Valley) and the new Oak school in Melksham is being built with these standards in place.

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

### Background

- (a) The National Healthy Schools Programme (NHSP) was the previous government's main way of delivering a 'whole school approach', whereby the whole school community (pupils, staff, caterers, parents, governors and providers) were involved in school food issues, helping to implement, monitor and evaluate the impact of healthy eating.
- (b) 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.
- (c) Healthy Schools Plus (HS+) is available to those schools who have already achieved National Healthy School Status - giving them the

opportunity to build upon this foundation and tackle the most pressing health issues. Schools undertaking HS+ select their Local Priorities, derived from Local Area Agreements and PCT plans; School Priorities, derived from an analysis of school and neighbourhood data; and priorities for Children in Challenging Circumstances, identified from an analysis of the school population. From these priorities the schools then agree their desired healthier behaviour outcomes and the actions required to achieve them.

### Recommendation 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 achieved through training opportunities (see paragraph 12(j) of the main report).

### Executive Response, July 2009

No additional funding has been identified, as the School Lunch Grant is required to be devolved directly to individual schools, however, the Healthy Schools team will be working with the partnership Nutrition Action Group to establish programmes of training and support.

### Update

Wiltshire now has 86% of schools with National Healthy School Status and this is expected to be above 90% by the end of 2010. This is higher than the national average and above the DCSF milestones set for this year. The Personal Development Education Team are actively targeting those schools yet to engage with the programme.

Wiltshire now has 54% of schools participating in Healthy Schools Plus (HS+), the second highest figure nationally. The training provision referred to has now been subsumed into the Healthy Schools Plus support for schools involved. All schools involved in HS+ have to focus on the theme of "Healthy Weight" as well as a priority of their own choosing. HS+ is funded entirely from NHS Wiltshire.

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

### Background

- (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 were to be fully phased in by September 2009.
- (b) From feedback at workshops and other surveys and audits carried out by the school food strategy coordinator, some of the main challenges so far identified from the new standards are cost and time in having to analyse menus and recipes, the reliability and accuracy of this analysis, and the loss of creativity in the kitchen. The Task Group's school visits identified further concerns (see paragraph 15j of the main report).

### Recommendation 3

That the cabinet portfolio holder for schools write to the School Food Trust to convey the concerns of some schools in Wiltshire, especially small rural primary schools, regarding the challenges that they are facing in implementing the nutrient based standards, and the potential impact this can have on the continuing viability of locally arranged small school catering contracts in particular (see paragraph 13(j)).

### Executive Response, July 2009

The Cabinet Member will be writing to the DCSF and the Schools Food Trust to indicate the views of the Scrutiny Committee.

## 12. **Cooking Lessons (Food Technology)**

### Background

- (a) The Task Group was asked by the Committee to consider the impact of the government's requirement that all secondary aged pupils will be entitled to learn how to cook and understand the principles of diet and nutrition from 2011.
- (b) The potential impact related to capacity within the Design & Technology curriculum, the need to recruit additional food technology teachers and to invest in equipment and facilities.
- (c) 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.

### Recommendation 4

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 14(i)).

### Executive Response, July 2009

This question was challenged in relation to its focus at a previous meeting. Its focus needs to be on attitudes to and patterns of healthy eating rather than cooking skills. I would suggest that a sample survey of children and parent who are involved in the range of food and health lifestyle activities being planned related should be conducted before and after the activities. This will provide a fair comparison of impact. This survey will need to be commissioned.

### Update

DCFS set up the 'Let's get cooking' project and some schools in Wiltshire have already taken this opportunity. Also, Wiltshire's Family Learning Team has delivered a Healthy Eating Programme.

The survey has not been commissioned – Wiltshire (Food Scrutiny Committee) would need to buy in the expertise to design and conduct the survey.

### 13. Investment in Food Technology Equipment & Facilities

#### Background

- (a) [At the time of the Task Group's review], schools in Wiltshire had food technology facilities and equipment ranging 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 was required.
- (b) 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) were available to ensure that adequate food technology areas (including practical kitchens) were addressed in local authority plans. In addition, schools have access to devolved capital funding.

#### Recommendation 5

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 15(a)).

#### Executive Response, July 2009

An assessment needs to be commissioned to design a specification of minimum standards in conjunction with DCfS guidelines and audit schools to identify any shortfall in provision.

#### Update

The survey has not been commissioned – Wiltshire (Food Scrutiny Committee) would have to buy in the expertise to design and conduct the survey. In terms of equipment and facilities all Wiltshire schools would be in a position to meet the government proposals with the exception of Bishops Wordsworth School. The key issue is if schools would have enough qualified staff to meet the increased demand.

(Please see the response to Recommendation 1 for details of the funding allocated to improving school catering facilities).

#### Recommendation 6

That, in the same report requested in recommendation 5, 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 15(d)).

#### Executive Response, July 2009

The clarification of baseline standards has still to be commissioned. The majority of Wiltshire secondary schools (excepting Bishops Wordsworths) provide food technology to their students in Key Stage 3. Funding has been allocated to provide food rooms where current provision is either totally inadequate (3 schools) or non-existent (1 school).

#### Update

The need for individual Local Authorities to determine baseline standards has been removed with the publication of 'Food Technology Spaces in Secondary Schools' DCFS 2009 (ISBN 987-1-84775-435-6). The publication provides clear guidance on minimum standard and design requirements.

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

#### Background

- (a) [At the time of the Task Group's review], there are a number of significant issues which need to be resolved in the near future with regard to the direction of school meals (see paragraph 18(h) of the main report). These relate to the healthy schools agenda, parenting and obesity strategies, links with the curriculum, performance management, nutritional standards, financial sustainability of the service and kitchen / servery / dining infrastructure, commissioning and contracting arrangements.

#### Recommendation 7

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 16(h) and (i)).

#### Scrutiny Response

The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee agreed this recommendation on the 7 May 2009.

#### Update

A verbal update will be provided at the meeting.

#### Recommendation 8

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 16(h) and (i)).

#### Executive Response, July 2009

Discussions have taken place with NHS Wiltshire, but the overriding priority is for nutritional advice for all ages, not just in schools. No additional funding can be identified at this stage.

#### Update

There is still no funding identified to pay for a school food strategy coordinator. However, work through the Healthy Schools/Healthy Schools Plus initiatives is helping to support schools with healthy eating and the "whole school" approach. Wiltshire NHS is leading work linked to the Children and Young People's Plan's priority "Obesity, healthy eating and exercise", which includes the Healthy Weight for Life Strategy. This strategy covers all age groups and is monitored by the Wiltshire Health and Wellbeing Partnership. It includes specific actions to promote Healthy Growth and Development of Children including a variety of interventions to promote healthy eating both in schools and at home, e.g. Healthy Schools Plus with a focus on obesity and Family Learning programmes on healthy eating/cooking.

#### Recommendation 9

That, in noting the principles which underlie the future of school meals 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 16(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 where practicable, 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.



### Executive Response, July 2009

A programme of procurement board meetings will commence in the coming months. Further details in response to this recommendation will follow in time for the committee meeting.

### Update

The Procurement Project Board has still to be established as no clear direction regarding the future tender direction has yet been established. Since the previous report, the number of schools in the main corporate contract has dropped to 44 with many opting to make their own arrangements and several discontinuing hot meal service. Initial discussions with schools show that only 37 are now interested in a future suggested framework contract.

### Recommendation 10

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 16(m)).

### Scrutiny Response

Rebecca Macdonald (former parent governor representative of the committee, with experience in school catering contracts) has been appointed as a co-opted member of the committee to represent it at the procurement project board meetings.

### Recommendation 11

(Background: Following 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 identified that the main ways in which the Schools Forum promotes the school food strategy is through financial support and contractual oversight.)

That the procurement project board invite a school representative to sit on the board as soon as possible (see paragraph 16(m)).

### Update

This has not currently been progressed pending the discussions regarding the need in the future of a centrally negotiated core contract.

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

### Recommendation 12

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 17(c)).

#### Executive Response

This will be reported to the Schools Forum, via the School Services Sub Group, on 1 October 2009.

#### Update

Verbal update to be provided at the meeting.

### **Proposal**

16. Members are asked to:
  - a. note the executive's responses to recommendations 5 & 6 of the final report of the School Food Task Group and to comment as appropriate.
  - b. note the progress made with respect to implementation of the School Food Task Group's recommendations and to comment as appropriate.

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### **Background documents**

[Final Report of the School Food Task Group](#) (March 2009)

The Final Report is available to view at [www.wiltshire.gov.uk](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk) by clicking Council > Search Committee Documents > Search "School Food Task Group" > click "12/03/2009 - Children's' Services Scrutiny Committee (WCC) (8)"

'Food Technology Spaces in Secondary Schools' DCFS 2009 (ISBN 987-1-84775-435-6)

### **Appendices**

None