

**Special Schools and Post-16 Special Educational Needs (SEN)
Provision Task Group**

Purpose of Report

1. To propose that the Committee establishes a task group with the following terms of reference:
 - (a) To establish the strengths and weaknesses of current special school and post-16 SEN provision in Wiltshire, taking into account the views of service users, parents and other stakeholder groups;
 - (b) To consider examples of best practice in special school and post-16 provision in Wiltshire and other authority areas;
 - (c) To make recommendations with respect to how special schools and post-16 SEN provision can be developed to ensure improved outcomes for Wiltshire residents with SEN.
2. To request further suggestions from members regarding the terms of reference listed above and how the Task Group can be most effective in undertaking its work.
3. To invite membership for the Task Group (NB. Non-Committee members with an interest in this area will also be approached as necessary).

Background

4. In January 2010, the Committee considered the proposals for SEN service development with respect to
 - provision in specialist learning centres (or 'resources bases')
 - SEN support services
 - SEN provision in mainstream primary schools
5. Following a public consultation on the proposals between February and May, the Committee undertook a rapid scrutiny exercise, making various recommendations regarding how the Council's public consultations could be improved in the future. The proposals for SEN service development were subsequently endorsed by Cabinet in July 2010 and will be confirmed after the expiry of the statutory notice period in December 2010.

6. As well as the aspects of SEN provision bulleted above, the proposals included some minor adjustments to the age ranges, capacities and designations of Wiltshire's special schools. However, a significant review of this area would not have been possible within the challenging timescale required by other elements of the review. With respect to post-16 SEN, the Council along with other authorities were due to take over responsibility for post-16 strategic planning from the Learning & Skills Council (LSC) on 1 April 2010 and the new national system was then still the subject of consultation. The Committee therefore resolved to defer consideration of establishing a task group to look at these areas until Autumn 2010.

Main Considerations

7. It is now appropriate to examine what special school and post-16 SEN provision is needed in Wiltshire and, as a second stage, look at how this could be provided. The Department for Children & Education (DCE) intends to conduct a review of these areas towards the end of 2012. This will be informed by the findings and principles of this scrutiny Task Group, which, following the timescale suggested below, would conclude its work in early 2012.
8. Establishing the Task Group now allows 12-18 months for Members to undertake an in-depth review of this area, before DCE begins work developing the SEN service using the principles established by the Task Group. This is an opportunity for the Committee to undertake the policy development aspect of its role, which is defined within its terms of reference.
9. It is suggested that the Task Group's work would include visits to special schools in Wiltshire, Wiltshire College, plus schools in other authority areas in order to gain a clear understanding of current provision and the ways in which it could be developed. The timescale also allows time to meet with SEN staff, school governors, parents and service users, allowing Members to gain a full understanding of the priorities and concerns of those with first-hand experiences of SEN provision.

Suggested timescale for the Scrutiny Review

November 2010	Task Group established
Winter 2011	Task Group meets to scope the review
Winter / Spring 2011	Task Group visits special schools in Wiltshire and talks to staff, governors, parents and children Task Group visits Wiltshire College
Spring / Summer 2011	Task Group visits 'best practice' special schools in other authorities and talks to staff, governors, parents and children
Late 2011 / Early 2012	Task Group meets to agree conclusions and recommendations
Late 2011 / Early 2012	Task Group reports to Select Committee

Late 2012	DCE begins review of special schools and post-16 SEN provision, informed by finding/principles of the Scrutiny review. Review of SEN provision in the North East of Wiltshire, including officer work with Swindon Borough Council. Further review of future demand for SEN provision.
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Proposal

10. The Committee is asked to:
- (a) Establish a task group with the terms of reference described in paragraph 1, making additions or amendments where appropriate
 - (b) Discuss how the Task Group can be most effective in undertaking its work.
 - (c) Agree provisional membership for the Task Group (NB. Non-Committee members with an interest in this area will also be approached as necessary).

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