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Foreword by Chairman

When first considering this review, I was somewhat daunted as to the remit given to the Task Group. This was due to the comprehensiveness of the terms of reference and the concern surrounding school food from a national and a local perspective.

However, taking into account the recommendations of the interim report of the Sodexo School Catering Task Group and the Cabinet's subsequent consideration, the Task Group set about working within its terms of reference, following three key objectives:

- to consider how to promote and facilitate the long term benefits of healthy eating in childhood
- to assist in devising an effective and sustainable School Meals Strategy
- to assist in planning how best to provide school food in the future, in line with the Government's new requirements.

The Task Group's recommendations are based on these three objectives, and are a result of evidence gathered over eight months from research, interviewing officers, external partners, schools and other local authorities. The timetable of the review has had to take account of the delay in the publication of the Government's new nutritional standards. In addition, other time critical factors such as the appointment of the School Meals Strategy Co-ordinator, the release of Building Schools for the Future funds and the many competing priorities within schools have also influenced the outcome of this review.

Whilst appreciating the merits of giving children the right to choose what they eat at school, the Task Group consider that greater emphasis should be placed on the responsibility of adults to ensure that the choice is tailored towards more healthy foods, and that encouragement is given to influence children's attitudes and preferences.

The Task Group accepts that for many years eating of healthier food has been in decline, during which lifestyles have become accustomed to convenience food. However, there is evidence to suggest that attitudes and practice are beginning to change.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everybody who took part in this review and in particular the Scrutiny Officer, Karen Linaker, whose hard work has been much appreciated by the Task Group.

Finally, I would urge that the recommendations from this Task Group are implemented, in the hope that it will transform school food in Wiltshire for the benefit of the whole community.

Councillor Mrs Judy Rooke

Background to the Review

1. The terms of reference (see [Appendix 1](#)) and key objectives of the School Catering Scrutiny Task Group were derived from the interim findings and recommendations of its fore-runner – the Sodexo School Catering Scrutiny Task Group, and the subsequent response from the Council’s Cabinet and Schools Forum.
2. Sodexo Education Services Ltd was awarded a seven year contract in June 2001 to provide a number of support services to the Council, one of which was a school catering service to 119 schools in Wiltshire, the majority being primary schools.
3. In June 2004, the Council’s Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee considered Sodexo’s 2003/04 Annual Review report, and identified that of the services provided, the school meals service remained the most contentious and problematic. The key issues centred around value for money, the take up of meals and their quality and nutritional content. Also, schools were confused as to their responsibilities under the contract, what they should expect from the contract, and dissatisfaction regarding the effectiveness of communication between the partners of the contract.
4. As a consequence of the Committee’s considerations, a Scrutiny Task Group was commissioned to review the school catering element of the Sodexo contract, and assigned the following key work areas:
 - (a) to challenge the level and reasoning for the current take-up by schools and its collective implication for the contract
 - (b) to assess the innovations made by the contractor and the response to these;
 - (c) to balance the desires of children, adults and school governing bodies, including the content and variety of meals and the effective use of kitchen space;
 - (d) to identify and promote the potential long-term health and social benefits of school meals.
5. The Sodexo School Catering Scrutiny Task Group published its interim report and recommendations in May 2005 (recommendations listed at [Appendix 2](#)).
6. The Cabinet broadly accepted the interim findings and recommendations, and invited a new Scrutiny Task Group to undertake further work, and to do so in the context of promoting healthy eating in schools generally, in partnership with the Healthier Wiltshire and Healthy Schools Projects. Throughout the review, the Task Group have had regard to the recommendations of the School Meals Review Panel’s recommendations to Government (see [Appendix 3](#)), and to the requirement that local authorities devise and implement a School Meals Strategy.

Process of the Review

7. The School Catering Scrutiny Task Group has followed the following principles in carrying out this review:
 - (a) to contribute to the development of a Wiltshire School Meals Strategy;
 - (b) to make recommendations regarding current and future contract arrangements for school meals, recognising this to be key to the success of the School Meals Strategy;
 - (c) to work with representatives from the Healthier Wiltshire project, and the Council's Healthy Schools Programme Team to identify what should be built into the School Meals Strategy, having regard for the Government's new standards and approach to school meals and food technology, and to the aims and objectives of the Healthier Wiltshire Project and the Healthy Schools Programme; and
 - (d) to consider both the short and long term health, and socio-economic implications of transforming school meals.

8. The Task Group also had regard for the way in which the Council is already working to transform school meals in Wiltshire, through the activities of the:
 - (a) new School Meals Strategy Co-ordinator (appointed 24th March 2006);
 - (b) Healthy Schools Programme Team;
 - (c) Sodexo School Catering Contract Monitoring Group;
 - (d) Local Education Authority (LEA) Adviser for Design & Technology; and
 - (e) Healthier Wiltshire Project Board.

9. The Task Group's key lines of enquiry have focussed on the:
 - (a) long term health, and socio-economic benefits of healthy eating in childhood;
 - (b) Government's new requirements and funding for school food;
 - (c) current school catering provision and teaching of Food Technology in Wiltshire;
 - (d) work of the Healthier Wiltshire Project with the Healthy Schools Programme;
 - (e) how the School Meals Strategy for Wiltshire will be developed;
 - (f) successes and challenges facing the Sodexo School Catering Contract
 - (g) future of school meals in Wiltshire

National Context

10. The origins of the English school meals service can be traced back to the work of charities in the mid 19th century, with the first set of nutritional standards for school meals being set in 1941 and, following the 1944 Education Act, the ensuing 20 years seeing school meals being provided by the Government through LEAs.
11. In 1967, LEAs, with the introduction of the Rate Support Grant, were given full financial responsibility for the school meal service. This resulted in a loss of central control and enabled LEAs to exercise greater discretion over the meals provided and the pricing policy.
12. In 1980, the Education Act removed the obligation on LEAs to provide school meals (except for children entitled to free school meals), also removing the obligation for meals to be sold at a fixed price and for them to meet any nutritional standards. Free milk provision was also made discretionary rather than obligatory.
13. The 1988 Local Government Act introduced compulsory competitive tendering, obliging all LEAs to put school meals out to tender.
14. In 1999, the Education & Employment Select Committee published a report of its inquiry into school meals, recommending the introduction of quantified nutrient-based standards, to be monitored by Ofsted as part of its inspection remit.
15. The National Healthy Schools Programme was launched in 1999 by the Department for Education & Skills (DfES) and the Department of Health to reduce health inequalities in school, promote social inclusion and raise school standards. All schools are expected to achieve healthy school status by 2009.
16. In 2000 funding for school meals was delegated to all secondary schools. Primary and special schools were given the right to opt for delegation. The NHS Plan for investment and reform of the health services included a government commitment to introduce a National School Fruit Scheme (by 2004), giving every child in nursery and infant school a free piece of fruit each school day.
17. In 2001 minimum nutritional standards for school meals were re-introduced.
18. In 2004, the DfES, the Department of Health, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs published the *Healthy Living Blueprint for Schools*. This included a proposed review of the nutritional standards for school meals, inclusion of more nutrition teaching in the curriculum and increasing physical activity in the school timetable.

The Department of Health published the white paper *Choosing Health*, which outlined the future public health agenda, making a firm commitment to revise primary and secondary school meal standards and to extend standards to all food served in schools.

19. In 2005, following a media campaign by the chef Jamie Oliver, the DfES announced a number of measures to improve food in schools, including training

school catering staff in healthy eating, the inclusion of school food in the Ofsted inspection programme, and the development of standards for processed foods used in school meals.

The Secretary of State for Education and Skills commissioned an independent group of professionals, including dietitians, nutritionists, headteachers, governors, catering and industry professionals to form the School Meals Review Panel and to recommend tougher nutritional standards for school lunches.

The Department of Health (in March) published *Delivering Choosing Health* making a commitment to bring into force new statutory requirements for primary and secondary school meals by 2006.

Additional commitments were made for Ofsted to inspect food in school, for the setting up of the School Food Trust to advise parents and schools, to publish guidance for governors about their responsibilities regarding school food, and to strengthen the Healthy Schools Programme.

2005 (in April) saw the launch of the Food In Schools programme to assist schools in implementing a whole school approach to healthy eating and drinking, including advice and resources on breakfast clubs, packed lunches, vending and tuck shops, dining rooms, cooking clubs, growing clubs and water provision. Then in September, the Government allocated £220m for schools and local education authorities to raise the quality of school meals.

On the 19th May, the Education Secretary published revised nutrition guidelines which included a ban on meals high in salt and fat, made two portions of fruit and vegetables with every meal a minimum requirement, and restricted deep-fried food to two portions a week. The School Food Trust will oversee the implementation of the new standards.

Wiltshire Context

20. The school meals service was run, up until June 2001, as an in-house council service by Wiltshire Direct Services. Since then, the service has been provided and managed by Sodexo Education Services Ltd, under contract.
21. As a delegated function, the freedom allowed to schools in providing school meals has led to a mixed picture of service delivery in Wiltshire. Schools either:
 - (a) are part of a group contract organised and managed by the County Council with the catering then provided by Sodexo Education Services
 - (b) employ their own staff directly to deliver the school meals
 - (c) tender their catering individually to a private sector contractor
 - (d) have arranged to provide meals by working in partnership with other schools
 - (e) have chosen to close their lunch service and provide the minimum legal requirement of a sandwich meal to those with an entitlement to free school meals.

Summary of Evidence

Long Term Health & Socio-economic Benefits of Healthy Eating in School

22. Section 8 of the former Sodexo School Catering Scrutiny Task Group Report lists a number of findings which relate to the long term benefits of healthy eating in school. In continuing to examine this aspect of the review, the School Catering Scrutiny Task Group received information from researchers from the University of the West of England (UWE). This information included reference to a number of recent statistics regarding the eating habits of children which highlight some of the ways in which long term health can be affected as a result, for example:
- nationally, 1 in 5 boys and 1 in 4 girls are overweight or obese
 - in Wiltshire, approximately 14% of the school pupil population is obese
 - nationally, 1 in 5 school pupils do not include any fruit or vegetables in their diet
 - 50% of girls have iron intake below the recommended levels
 - 25% of girls aged between 11 – 14 years have low calcium intake
23. The evidence drawn on by the researchers from the UWE suggested that poor diets in school age children, in the long term can lead to:
- osteoporosis
 - diabetes type 1 and 2
 - coronary heart disease
 - obesity
 - hypertension
24. Additionally, this evidence suggested that some of the short term effects can be:
- dehydration
 - lack of concentration
 - irritability
 - behaviour changes

25. With regard to the socio-economic benefits, the researchers suggested that the evidence was mainly anecdotal, although no less conclusive, and that, as more schools implemented healthy food policies and practices, this evidence would gain increased credibility.
26. There is evidence found in numerous studies over a period of years (Appendix 4 lists a selection of those studies), that, where dietary deficiencies exist, considerable improvements, both in behaviour and performance, accrue quite rapidly after a change to a better quality diet. This research has been carried out in schools, prisons, and in different countries. Given the considerable expenditure on behaviour problems in the young (£7.8m in 2005/06 in Wiltshire for children with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD)), and the desire to achieve the highest possible academic standards, there is every reason to expect that by paying more for school diets, the investment would at least assist in reducing expenditure on behaviour problems.
27. Work has already begun in many mainstream schools in Wiltshire to improve children's eating habits through the Healthy Schools Programme, but further progress could be made by encouraging the County's Young People's Support Service to achieve Healthy School status. Additionally, there is scope for the Council to develop a wider programme of education on healthy eating and nutrition, by linking the work that is taking place to promote the Healthy Schools Programme with the Children's Trust Board's desire to improve the emotional well-being of all children.
28. These issues notwithstanding, it is important to note that generally the more successful programmes where healthy eating has been encouraged, have tended to be in closed institutions such as prisons, where it is possible for the authorities to have a significant degree of control over the diet of individuals. Such a level of control would be less possible to impose within the school setting and it is important to have regard to the overall context of lifestyle and eating habits outside school, as well as the choices which young people make as to their school meals.
29. A second important element to note is the responsibility of individual school headteachers and governing bodies in determining their policies with regard to school meals provision, and the complexity of funding arrangements. For example, any additional funding for school meals would need to come from the individual school's budget.

New School Food Standards and Funding

30. In response to a national increase in child obesity, the Government introduced a Public Service Agreement target in 2004 to:

*“...halt, by 2010, the year-on-year increase in obesity among children under 11 in the context of the broader strategy to tackle obesity in the population as a whole.”*¹

1. Department of Health, National Standards, Local Action. Health & Social Care Standards and Planning Framework, 2005-06 – 2007-08

31.



The drive to improve school meals is one of five key government programmes that are contributing to the delivery of this target, funded by over £1bn for 2005 – 2008. £220m has been assigned to the school meals programme, with the aim of improving the quality of school meals so that, as a minimum, they meet new nutritional standards that will become mandatory from September 2006. Local

authorities and schools have discretion within the context of an agreed strategy to spend the grants to meet local needs. The DfES has however indicated that standards are unlikely to be met unless expenditure on ingredients rises to 50p per meal in primary schools and 60p per meal in secondary schools. Those schools in Wiltshire that are signed up to the Sodexo School Catering Contract spend 54p on a primary school meal and 65p on a secondary school meal. Responsibility for maintaining and monitoring the standards rests with individual schools, and this forms part of the Ofsted inspection programme.

32. The School Meals Review Panel published its report “Turning the Tables: Transforming School Food – Recommendations for the Development & Implementation of Revised School Lunch Standards” in October 2003 (see [Appendix 3](#) for list of recommendations).
33. The report recommends redesigning the nation’s school menus to set new minimum standards by September 2006 and for the introduction of even more stringent nutrient-based standards for essential nutrients, vitamins and minerals, for primary school meals by 2008 and for secondary schools by 2009.
34. The £220m over the three years will assist in the implementation of the recommendations, and new or upgraded school kitchen facilities will be made a priority in the Government’s Building School for the Future funding programmes.
35. However, key concerns amongst school teachers and LEAs, remains the affordability, sustainability and suggested timetable for the drive to improve school meals, particularly when viewed in the context of the many other current government initiatives and strategies for schools.
36. For the next three years, primary schools in Wiltshire will each receive a direct allocation of approximately £1,100 per annum and secondary schools approximately £2,000 per annum. In addition, the Council received a central allocation in the form of a Targeted School Meals Grant of £244,782 in 2005/06 to develop:
- a strategy for improving school meals provision, but also to focus on encouraging schools to ensure that any food consumed in school is healthy
 - appropriate local partnerships involving schools and health services
 - links with healthy schools programme and other health initiatives
 - a lead team to drive forward the transformation of school meals

37. As a result of this funding, a number of initiatives have been implemented:
- a new post will be created in the Healthy Schools Team, jointly funded through the Healthy Schools Initiative and Targeted School Meals Grant to develop healthy eating policies with schools
 - a further post has been created to coordinate the school meals strategy
 - schools have been invited to bid for additional funding from the Targeted School Meals Grant to develop innovative approaches to school meal provision
 - a detailed audit of the current position of school meals in Wiltshire
38. In response to the invitation to bid for additional funding from the Targeted School Meals Grant, 72 project proposals were received from 66 different schools, of which 54 have been funded by amounts ranging from £4,570 to £15,000. Two projects were considered to be particularly innovative. These were a primary school which was involved in local sourcing and supply of meals to other local schools and the other a secondary school which will be introducing a computer-based ordering system for lunches and a “smoothie” juice bar to improve the take-up of healthy foods. These received funding of £18,000 and £21,250 respectively.
39. Work continues with the initiatives listed at paragraph 35, and the Government’s new school food standards, to be implemented from September 2006, will have additional implications for the way in which the school meals service in Wiltshire is provided and managed.

Current school meals provision and teaching of Food Technology in Wiltshire schools

40. One of the key findings of the “Turning the Tables” report was that schools should audit their food service and curriculum and develop a whole school food and nutrition policy, to be made available to parents and carers, covering teaching practical cooking skills in the context of healthy eating, and through links with local producers, improved knowledge of growing and producing food.
41. The School Meals Strategy Co-ordinator will be carrying out this audit to assist with the devising of the Strategy. In doing so, she will draw on the results of the “Baseline Survey of School Meals Provision in Wiltshire” completed for the DfES in October 2005. A summary of the key findings from this survey follow in Tables 1, 2 and 3. The Council’s Healthy Schools Team published a revised framework for schools to use in devising their own whole school food and nutrition policy in September 2005.

Figures listed in Tables 1, 2 and 3 are drawn from 2005/06 data.

Table 1 (Findings from the Baseline Survey of School Meals Provision in Wiltshire)

Q1.	Do you delegate the funding for school meals to your schools?	A1.	Yes, for primary, special and secondary schools
Q2.	How much is delegated per pupil eligible for free school meals per day?	A2.	£1.60 – primary school pupil £1.83 – special school pupil £1.91 – secondary school pupil
Q3.	What type of school meals service do you provide?	A3.	Mixed service provision (see paragraph 21 above)
Q4.	What school meal provision is offered?	A4.	See Table 2 below
Q5.	Where is the food prepared?	A5.	See Table 3 below
Q6.	Do you operate a milk scheme?	A6.	Yes
Q7.	What is the net average cost across the area of ingredients for an average two course meal?	A7.	54p
Q8.	What is the average percentage of pupils who purchase a school meal on a typical school day?	A8.	21.1% for primary schools 40.1% for secondary schools

Table 2 (Findings from the Baseline Survey of School Meals Provision in Wiltshire)

School	No. of Schools	Hot/cold food: any pupil	Cold food only: any pupil	Hot/cold food: FSM pupils only	Cold food: FSM only	Other
YPSS*	4	1	2	0	0	1
Primary	212	155	12	3	23	19
Special	6	5	1	0	0	0
Secondary	29	28	1	0	0	0

**YPSS is the County's Young People's Support Service*

Table 3 (Findings from the Baseline Survey of School Meals Provision in Wiltshire)

School	No. of Schools	Hot / cold food prepared from scratch in school	Cold food only prepared from scratch in school	Hot / cold food prepared elsewhere and transported to school	Hot / cold food prepared elsewhere and transported 'ready to eat' to the school	Other
YPSS	4	1	2	0	0	1
Primary	212	110	19	26	24	33
Special	6	5	0	1	0	0
Secondary	29	29	0	0	0	0

42.



With regard to the teaching of practical cooking skills in the context of healthy eating, the Task Group was informed that the standard of this teaching has been rated as good or very good in Ofsted inspection reports for the last five years.

However, whilst all secondary schools with the exception of two, are well equipped to teach Food Technology (FT) less than 5% of the County's total number of primary schools contain a classroom permanently equipped for this purpose.

43. Two possible measures to improve the standard and consistency of Food Technology provision across all schools in Wiltshire have been considered by the Task Group:

- (a) a School Cooking Bus
- (b) Food Partnerships

44. School Cooking Bus



Launch of the FSA Cooking Bus at Southfield School, Hatfield

This idea is based on a successful working model already developed by the Food Standards Agency (FSA), to promote healthy eating and improve food hygiene. The FSA gives priority to schools in low income areas, reflecting its commitment to take into account the needs and views of disadvantaged groups and to reduce inequalities by enabling and encouraging disadvantaged and vulnerable people to improve their diets.

45. The Cooking Bus travels around the country teaching school children about the benefits of eating a well-balanced diet and showing them how to prepare appetising food safely and to appropriate health and hygiene standards.
46. A potential local alternative to the FSA Cooking Bus was also explored, prompted by the suggestion that Wiltshire County Council work in partnership with other local authorities in the South West, in particular Gloucestershire County Council, to share the costs of leasing a cooking bus for the region.

47. Food Partnerships

Based on a model developed by the DfES Food Partnership, the Wiltshire LEA Adviser for Design & Technology is developing a proposal which would see secondary schools working with their feeder primary schools to:



- a) increase the opportunity for young people to learn about healthy food and how it impacted upon their lives and bodies;
 - b) enhance the skills and capability of primary school teachers to teach FT and health eating;
 - c) develop 'food learning partnerships' between secondary schools and their primary schools and the local food industry;
 - d) provide high quality training and ongoing support within each food partnership; and
 - e) teach young people how to prepare and cook accessible healthy meals
48. Mindful of the considerable costs involved in setting up and sustaining a food partnership, the Task Group nonetheless maintain that such a proposal could help to improve further the standard and provision of FT classes in Wiltshire, subject to funding being secured and catering staff and mid-day supervisory assistants being actively involved in the partnerships.
 49. During the review, the members of the Task Group carried out a number of school site visits, in order to witness first hand the different approaches to the provision of school meals and to the facilities available for the teaching of FT. 14 schools were visited and a summary of the observations made are recorded below in Table 4. A copy of the structured questionnaire, which the Task Group used when carrying out the school visits, is attached at Appendix 5.

Table 4 (Findings from the Task Group's series of school visits)

School	Number of Pupils	Model of provision	Length of break	Water provision	FT provision
Abbeyfield Secondary	813	PFI: sub contracted service	45 mins per sitting	Fresh	Very good
Abbey Meads Primary*	343	Contract with private provider	60 mins	Fresh	Good
Aldebury & West Grimstead Primary	181	Sodexo	60 mins	Fresh	Good
Lacock Primary	58	Sodexo	30 mins lunch / 30 mins play	Fresh	Good but limited facilities
Luckington Primary	42	Local pub, freshly cooked	30 mins lunch / 30 mins play	Drinking fountains	Good but limited space – intend to grow a vegetable garden
Malmesbury Secondary	1199	PFI: sub contracted service	50 mins lunch / 20 mins play	Fresh	Very good
Mere Primary	170	Own on site provision	60 mins	Fresh	Good
Sherston Primary	162	Sodexo	60 mins	Fresh	Good
St Augustine's Secondary	963	Own on site provision	45 mins	Fresh	Excellent
St Edmunds Secondary (Girls)	812	Own on site provision	60 mins	Fresh	Inadequate
St Laurence Secondary	1139	Own on site provision	90 mins	Fresh	Very good
Westbury Leigh Primary	369	Sodexo	60 mins	Drinking fountains	Good
Wingfield Primary	69	Packed lunches only	60 mins	Drinking fountains	Ok
Wootton Bassett Secondary	1592	PFI: sub contracted service	45 mins per sitting	Fresh	Good, but limited space

* A Swindon Borough Council School, reputed for its good practice



The Healthier Wiltshire Project

50. A Community Strategy for the County of Wiltshire, running from 2004 – 2014 is entitled “Creating a County Fit for our Children, and the Healthier Wiltshire Project has been devised as one aspect of that strategy to:

“..make Wiltshire the healthiest county in which to live by 2014.”

51. One of the three main ways in which the Healthier Wiltshire Project was working to improve the health and wellbeing of the population of Wiltshire was to increase the amount of exercise taken and to encourage healthier eating. The local Primary Care Trusts’ involvement in the Project is intended to help address health inequality issues and ensure that sufficient attention is given to supporting communities with the worst health and deprivation. Using information from the Department for Children & Education, secondary schools in Wiltshire have been ranked in accordance with the deprivation levels of the communities they serve. This information has been made available to support the work of the Healthy Schools Programme in targeting available resources.
52. A sub group of the Project Board is the Healthy Eating Alliance (HEA), one activity of which will be to devise and implement an action plan to improve the health and wellbeing of the population at all life stages. The HEA has recently been established by the Public Health Departments of Kennet & North Wiltshire, and West Wiltshire Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), with a remit to oversee all aspects of healthy eating schools.



Wiltshire Healthy Schools QUALITY MARK

staff to ensure that any work planned is appropriate and is supported by the whole school community for sustained improvement. The Programme focuses on the following themes:

- Personal, Social & Health Education
- Sex and Relationships Education
- Drug Education
- Emotional Health & Wellbeing
- Healthy Eating
- Physical Activity

The Healthy Schools Programme

53. The Healthy Schools Programme aims to support schools to develop the health and wellbeing of its pupils and staff through a “whole school approach”, which involves consultation and engagement with pupils, parents and

54. Standards are set for each theme by the National Healthy Schools Programme and schools are accredited as a “Healthy School” once they have achieved them.

55. In September 2005 the national standards for healthy eating within the Programme were strengthened, requiring a “Healthy School” to:

- (a) identify a member of the senior management team to oversee all aspects of food in school;
- (b) ensure provision of training in practical food education for staff, including diet, nutrition, food safety and hygiene;
- (c) have a whole school food policy
- (d) involve parents and pupils in guiding food policy and practice within the school



(e) have a welcoming eating environment that encourages the positive social interaction of pupils

(f) ensure healthier food and drink options are available and promoted in breakfast clubs, at break and at lunchtimes

(g) have meals, vending machines and tuck shop facilities that are nutritious and healthy and meet or exceed National Standards and work towards the latest DfES guidance on improving the school meals service

(h) monitor pupils’ menu and food choices to inform policy development and provision

(i) ensure that pupils have opportunities to learn about different types of food in the context of a balanced diet, and how to plan, budget, prepare and cook meals. Understanding the need to avoid the consumption of foods high in salt, sugar and fat and increase the consumption of fruit and vegetables;

(j) have easy access to free, clean and palatable drinking water; and

(k) consult pupils about food choices throughout the school day

56. By December 2006 it is expected that at least 50% of all schools nationally (124 in Wiltshire) will achieve the standards, and by 2009 all schools will be involved in the programme (248 in Wiltshire). At the end of 2005, 135 schools in Wiltshire were involved in the programme, including the 91 already accredited as Healthy Schools. The County Council is committed to the requirement that all schools in Wiltshire attain Healthy School status by 2009.

57. The guidance received with the funding information for the Government's *Transforming School Meals* agenda states that schools must use a whole school approach to audit, monitor and improve the quality of food and drink available on school premises. As part of this schools are required to develop a whole school food policy and this is also a requirement of the Healthy Schools Programme. Individual schools must consult with pupils, parents and staff to construct a policy which will seek to:

- (a) set out a coordinated approach to food and drink and increase the availability of healthier options;
- (b) reinforce appropriate messages relating to food and drink, e.g. ensuring consistency between food and drink provision and the formal curriculum;
- (c) keep the entire school community engaged in the process;
- (d) establish working partnerships within the school working towards a common goal;
- (e) ensure sustainability of any improvements made in the school; and
- (f) communicate the school's shared vision and ethos relating to food and health to parent, staff, governors, pupils and other stakeholders.

58. The Wiltshire LEA Health Team is responsible for the training and support for schools in working towards the Healthy School status. The Team will be promoting and using with schools the Government's *Food in Schools Toolkit* to help schools establish a whole school food policy, develop healthier breakfast clubs, tuck shops, vending machines, lunchboxes and cookery clubs, to facilitate the provision of water, growing clubs and improved dining room environments.



59. The Council's Healthy Schools Programme Co-ordinator and the School's Branch Health Team have been helping to facilitate regular School Nutrition Action Group (SNAG) meetings for partner organisations to discuss and share information relating to good practice in healthy eating in Wiltshire schools. The Council's School Meals Strategy Co-ordinator will Chair future meetings of the SNAG, which will become the steering group for the development and implementation of the Strategy.

60. In order to maximise the potential of joint working between health and education partners in Wiltshire in response to the national call for improved food in schools, the SNAG and the Healthy Eating Alliance (HEA) sub group of the Healthier Wiltshire Project will work together to achieve the aims and objectives of the School Meals Strategy.

61. Recognising the role of the elected member as an equal partner with others in Wiltshire, wishing to improve school food, the Task Group consider it appropriate to request that a non-executive member of the County Council be appointed to sit on the HEA and to have an active involvement with the School Meals Strategy.

Wiltshire School Meals Strategy

62. A condition of the Targeted School Meals Grant is that local authorities should develop appropriate local partnerships, to make effective and appropriate links with healthy schools programme activities and to develop an overall strategy for this purpose. In order for the strategy to facilitate improvements in school meals that are affordable and sustainable for the long term, the School Meals Review Panel recommends that it should be devised and implemented as a partnership with all key stakeholders, including school staff and pupils, parents and governors, catering staff and local food producers.
63. The Wiltshire School Meals Strategy Co-ordinator was appointed on the 24th March 2006 with responsibility for the development and implementation of the Strategy. The Co-ordinator will work in partnership with the Council's Healthy Schools Programme and the Healthier Wiltshire Project.
64. As part of its review, the Task Group received evidence from a number of organisations, schools and local authorities in the South, as a good practice sharing exercise to inform members' recommendations on the School Meal Strategy. Consequently, some of the key components the Task Group would like to see considered in the devising of the Strategy are:

A Partnership Approach

Mindful of the information provided by Gloucestershire County Council's School Meals Strategy Co-ordinator, there is a need to develop and implement the Strategy in partnership with schools, headteachers, pupils, parents, governors, catering staff/managers, local and main food suppliers and the media

Help Children to Re-connect with the Food Supply Chain

Local and national organisations, including farms, existed to help schools and local authorities re-connect children to the food supply chain, through farm visits, demonstrations and by providing children with the means to develop fruit and vegetable gardens in school, or at the very least to plant seed pots in the classroom.

Sustainable Procurement of a School Meals Service and Local Food

Not only when re-letting the School Catering Contract, but also when advising and supporting schools in making individual arrangements for the provision of school meals, the Strategy should help to promote sustainable procurement and have regard for the benefits afforded by the use of local food. This should be achieved through partnership working with other local authorities in the South and South West and through exploring a possible link with the Taste of the West initiative of a one-stop-shop food ordering / supply / distribution system.

To Facilitate a 10% Increase in Take Up of School Meals

This is one of the recommendations of the School Meals Review Panel and has been a key consideration of both the former Sodexo School Catering Scrutiny Task Group and this Task Group. It is hoped that through the partnership approach to the Strategy, heightened awareness and improved respect for school meals can be achieved.

Sodexo School Catering Contract

65. The contract with Sodexo Education Services Ltd will expire at the end of March 2008. The current School Meals Service with Sodexo is provided as part of a bigger contract that includes a Welfare and Community Meals Service. This arrangement has caused a number of problems and it is therefore likely that the Welfare and Community Meals Service will be tendered separately in the future. As a result, more options for the future provision of school meals will be available than at the start of the current arrangements.
66. The Sodexo School Catering Scrutiny Task Group carried out a focussed review of the contract, whereas the School Catering Scrutiny Task Group has tended to focus on wider issues regarding the need to improve school meals and to introduce healthier eating practices in schools.
67. However, in the process of its review, the Task Group received an update regarding Sodexo's progress in promoting healthy eating education in schools, and its work at Sherston Primary School and Fitzmaurice Primary School.
68. Healthy Eating Education & Promotional Activities



Collection of cartoon characters: Bof, Peaches, Gym, Crystal and Lez the watch-dog

These activities focus on the following themes, which are depicted and made more appealing to children through the use of cartoon characters, displayed on menu boards, newsletters and other promotional material:

- (a) the need to eat a balanced diet
- (b) the need to take more exercise
- (c) the need to eat five portions of fruit a day
- (d) the need to eat less sugar
- (e) the need to drink more water

The themes are linked to the school curriculum and celebrity chefs and actors are used to raise children's awareness of healthy eating and lifestyle messages.

69. Sherston Primary School – Enhanced Menu Offer

An enhanced menu offer initiative at Sherston Primary School began in 2004 following a parents' survey which found that 92% of parents would like the school lunch menu to improve, even if this meant higher costs. This initiative, and the introduction of Sodexo's latest main menu options, has helped to improve meal take up.

70. Sodexo has offered this initiative to other schools, but there have been concerns about the level of subsidy required and the potential stigmatisation of free school meal pupils.

71. Fitzmaurice Primary School – Working with Parents

In response to requests from parents that they be given a greater say in what meals were provided to their children at Fitzmaurice Primary School, Sodexo had developed a one week set menu running over six weeks which included a range of healthy meals, which comprised higher cost ingredients for three days of the week and lower cost ingredients for the other two days.

72. This partnership approach with parents had helped to increase meal take up and Sodexo was confident that the approach could be replicated in other schools, subject to it receiving the same level of support and assistance from parents and pupils.

73. In response to the promise of new school food standards, Sodexo have been introducing more healthy menu options and decreasing the amount of processed and breaded foods in its meals. These improvements have led to the need to review the price of school meals, in particular the cost of a free school meal. Following a series of contract negotiations regarding costs of primary school meals, the Schools Forum have agreed that the price of a free school meal, currently £1.44, should rise in line with the amount delegated to primary schools to £1.68 from the 17th April 2006.

The Future of School Meals in Wiltshire

74. As described in paragraph 21 of this report, delegating the function of school meals provision in Wiltshire has led to a mixed picture of service delivery. The style of service also differs between primary and secondary schools, i.e.:

(a) primary schools offer a set-price, two-course, set meal with some limited choice in each course, which can be:

- cooked and served on sites where schools have a kitchen
- regenerated where there is not kitchen and space allows
- cooked in a nearby school and transported hot to a school with no kitchen

(b) secondary schools have a kitchen on site where a cash cafeteria service is offered with items priced individually.

75. This mixed arrangement presents a number of practical problems when contemplating future tender strategies and procurement options. The major difficulty is establishing a range of common benchmarks and a common specification which can be tendered.

76. The existing arrangement with Sodexo comes to an end in March 2008 and preparations are being made to agree a proposed timetable for the re-letting of the contract, as detailed in Table 5 below. In finalising the timetable it will be important to build in sufficient time and opportunity for stakeholder consultations, and in particular to allow schools to play a part in shaping and implementing the contract, a key aspect of which will be the length of the contract's term. The Task Group would like to see stakeholder consultation with other advisory groups, especially the Healthy Eating Alliance and the Wiltshire School Nutrition Action Group. Also, the Task Group would like the stakeholder consultations to be led in such a way that does not compromise

the outcome, but which gives due consideration to the expert advice of the Central Procurement Unit and the aims and objectives of the School Meals Strategy and the Healthy Schools Programme. As part of the re-letting process, a scrutiny member will also be appointed to the Procurement Project Board.

Table 5 (Proposed timetable for the re-letting of the school catering contract)

June 2006	Schools Forum (Review of existing contract and introduction to reletting)
June – July 2006	Stakeholder Review Meetings
September 2006	Commence Stakeholder Consultations
December 2006	Industry Consultation (Safe Market Testing)
December 2006	Consultation with the Healthy Eating Alliance
January 2007	Complete Consultations and Initial Market Testing
Late January 2007	Consultation with Schools Forum
January 2007) February 2007)	Draft Contract Specification, etc.
March 2007	Consultation with Schools Forum
March 2007	Final Stakeholder Consultations and Complete drafting of documentation
April 2007	Issue EU Indicative Notice
May 2007	Place Formal Contract Notice
May 2007) June 2007)	Pre Qualification Stage and Contractor Open Days
End June 2007	Complete Qualification Process
End of June 2007	Consultation with Schools Forum
Early July 2007	Final Contractors Open Day
End July 2007	Issue Invitation to Tender
Mid November 2007	Tender Return Date
Early December 2007	Contract Award and 2 week “standstill” period
Early December 2007	Consultation with Schools Forum
Mid December 2007	Commence Contract Handover Arrangements
December 2007) March 2008)	Workforce Consultations/TUPE Handover
January 2008	Consultation with Schools Forum
1 st April 2008	New Contract Starts

77. Possible procurement options include:

Table 6 (Possible procurement options for school meals)

In-house Provision	(a) A new contract procured from an outside provider by the Council; or (b) The re-introduction of a Council run school meals service
Consortium Arrangements	Where a number of schools work together in managing their own provision
Tactical Contracts	A very specific contract to suit client requirements, e.g. where a number of schools wish to provide organic food or local food, or more specific to the size of the school
Partnering Contracts	Where the contractor works as a partner with one school to not only provide meals but to work in partnership to upgrade the school's kitchen and dining facilities
Framework Agreement	An overarching contract, available to all premises, offering a minimum standard contract, with a number of enhanced options. These options could relate to the choice of menus, the degree of flexibility permitted in the length of the contract term with any one school, the cost and quality of the food.
Concession or Franchise Arrangement	Where a school would grant to a private company or provider the right to utilise the revenue or cash flow from a kitchen or food outlet. This might appeal to some of our larger schools where all food would come from a branded or themed outlet.
Mixture of the above or others	-
Do Nothing	Where the existing contract ends and schools absorb the incumbent catering staff and facilities and then make their own arrangements

78. The tendering discussions will need to take account of emerging good practice, Government Guidelines, the work of the newly appointed School Meals Strategy Co-ordinator and guidance from the School Food Trust.

79. In the course of the review, the Task Group identified the following matters which will need to feature in discussions for the future procurement of the school meals service in Wiltshire and for the development of the School Meals Strategy:

(a) the increased cost of an improved school meals service and how this will impact upon low income families

Data included in a report produced by Pricewaterhouse Coopers on the “Economic Costs of Implementing Caroline Walker Trust Recommendations” regarding the need for improved minimum nutritional standards for school meals details the various costs involved, including:

- ingredients
- preparation time
- training
- refurbishment
- marketing and education
- software and assessment of nutritional information
- waste
- contractual management and risk

The resultant increased cost to the pupil per meal is illustrated in Table 7 below:

Table 7

(Economic costs of improving minimum nutritional standards for school meals, as compiled by Pricewaterhouse Coopers)

	Primary School Pupil	Secondary School Pupil
Initial year’s increase	23p to 27p	26p to 35p
Recurrent years’ increase*	22p to 27p	24p to 32p

*the recurrent estimate is marginally lower than the initial year’s estimate due to the reduction in staff training and reduced need for contract renegotiation

(b) increase in take up of school meals, as mentioned at paragraph 62, particularly in the take up of free school meals

A key aim of the Healthier Wiltshire Project is to address health inequality issues and ensure that sufficient attention is given to supporting communities with the worst health and deprivation. In working to transform the school meals service in Wiltshire, the School Meals Strategy Co-ordinator and the Healthier Wiltshire Project should work together to ensure that priority is given to individual schools and communities in most need, not just to ensure sufficient take up for the viability of contractual arrangements, but in order to influence the eating habits and lifestyles of children in the County.

(c) cashless payment system

The Task Group would like consideration to be given to the benefits of utilising a cashless payment system when developing options for the future of the school meals service in Wiltshire. Particularly as these benefits can assist with minimising the stigma associated with free school meals, improve the efficiency of the service and provide management and monitoring tools which could help to enhance systems in line with higher standards and expectations.

Four secondary schools have included proposals for the development of a card-based cashless payment system in the process of bidding for project funding from the Targeted School Meals Grant. These schools have been encouraged to devise a joint project, in partnership with a fifth secondary school to develop a pilot project funded by a £40,000 grant.

(d) increased monitoring and inspection, including the monitoring of food safety standards

The present school catering contract relies on contractor self-monitoring, with client monitoring limited to a “light touch” review of Sodexho systems and a limited number of spot checks to operational kitchens.

Current client monitoring resources are restricted to 0.5 full time equivalent (fte), and the main areas of monitoring activities are the inspection of food at the service point, the inspection of general hygiene and cleanliness of kitchen facilities and responding to individual matters of concern.

Schools have been critical of current contract monitoring arrangements, because of perceived differing standards delivered across the County, and a concern that support was not available for service improvement and innovation.

The Sodexho School Catering Scrutiny Task Group’s recommendation that this resource be increased to 1fte has not been implemented because of a lack of available resources. However, the School Catering Scrutiny Task Group would like to reiterate the importance of making sufficient provision for client monitoring in future contractual arrangements, and that this be set, at least, at 1fte.

To address concerns regarding the monitoring of food handling and hygiene in schools outside of the main school catering contract, the School Meals Strategy Co-ordinator will audit the current lack of food safety training and knowledge, to establish the extent to which further support and training is needed. Part of the Targeted School Meals Grant for 2006/07 has been set aside for the provision of food safety training.

(e) better training and respect for catering staff

The School Meals Review Panel recommended in its report to Government that:

“Catering staff need to be central to the whole school approach. Their practical skills should be valued and utilised to the full, and they should be represented on groups like School Nutrition Action Groups.”

During the course of the review, the Task Group learnt that Gloucestershire County Council was exploring options for the building of a regional catering staff training centre.

(f) kitchen and dining room refurbishment



The improvements needed in school catering arising from the Government’s new standards and approach to school meals will require investment in new and upgraded kitchen and dining room facilities. However, much of this investment will be restricted until the Council

receives its allocation of Building Schools for the Future funding. Imaginative use of existing resources will be needed in the meantime.

As a result of invitations to bid for project funding from the Targeted School Meals Grant, six primary schools, initially requesting assistance to build new kitchen facilities, have been grouped together to form one project to explore further the possibilities of mobile kitchen technology.

(g) sustainable procurement and local food

As detailed at paragraph 62, it will be important for future school catering arrangement to work towards sustainable procurement, and to be sufficiently flexible to facilitate local supplier innovations which could benefit the whole school food approach.

(h) national standards for healthy food

Government’s new school food standards, to be implemented from September 2006, will have additional implications for the way in which the school meals service in Wiltshire is provided and managed, both in terms of the arrangements for any new school meals contract and for the development and implementation of the School Meals Strategy.

(i) improved standards also needed for Children's Centres

The Task Group received information from the Council's Manager for the Development of Children's Centres which raised the need for improved food and nutritional standards for children aged 0 – 5 years, in addition to all school age children and young people. Consequently, the Task Group would like to see future catering services for Wiltshire County Council being able to provide the same standard and quality of food to Children's Centres as to schools.

(j) removal of the ban on serving beef in schools

In response to the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) crisis in the 1980s, and the risks to humans from eating cattle infected with BSE, in line with national controls, Wiltshire County Council banned the serving and cooking of beef in its schools. Following the lifting of the European Union export ban on British beef in May 2006, the Council will reconsider its policy on the serving and cooking of beef in Wiltshire schools.

Key Findings of Review

Long Term Benefits of Healthy Eating in School

1. There is evidence to suggest that improved diets and eating habits in school age children leads to long term health and socio-economic benefits. There is potential therefore for the Council to evaluate how best to invest in transforming school food in order to make savings in other services (paragraphs 22 – 29).

Governments New Requirements for School Food to be Realised through a Partnership Approach and by a Sustainable School Meals Strategy

2. Wiltshire's School Meals Strategy will be developed and implemented by a School Meal's Strategy Co-ordinator, in partnership with the Healthier Wiltshire Project and the Healthy Schools Team, drawing on consultation with parents, teachers, governors, pupils, catering staff and local food producers (paragraphs 62 – 64).
3. Wiltshire already has a number of schools with well developed healthy eating policies and practices, which could be used as models for other schools to follow (paragraphs 69 – 73).
4. The teaching standards and facilities for Food Technology lessons in Wiltshire schools are variable, especially within the primary sector. Pewsey Vale Secondary School has established a 'food learning partnership' with its feeder primary schools with support from the Design & Technology Association, and there is potential for this to be modelled in other areas (paragraphs 42 – 48).
5. A number of other local authorities in the south west are already exploring how to implement the new school food standards and to use this opportunity to explore more innovative procurement methods, including the use of local and organic produce (paragraph 64).
6. There is a will amongst local farmers to work with local authorities both to supply schools with fresh produce and to assist in education activities intended to re-connect children to the local food supply chain (paragraph 64).

The Future of School Catering in Wiltshire

7. Future arrangements for the provision of school meals in Wiltshire will need to be based on a stronger partnership approach with all key stakeholders (paragraph 76).
8. As part of the whole school food approach, future arrangements need to help children re-connect with the food supply chain (paragraph 79).
9. Future contractual arrangements should give consideration to the merits of sustainable procurement and purchase of local food (paragraph 79).

10. Increased costs arising from improvements in school meals will need to be carefully managed to minimise risks such as a drop in meal take up (paragraph 79).
11. Future contractual arrangements should be assigned sufficient resources for the monitoring and inspection of the contract (paragraph 79).
12. Consideration will need to be given to improved training and conditions for catering staff, the use of cashless payment systems and to assigning resources to the refurbishment of kitchen and dining room facilities (paragraph 79).

Recommendations

The Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee will be asked to consider the Task Group's report and endorse its recommendations on the 9th June 2006. The report and recommendations will then be submitted to Cabinet to consider at its 25th July 2006 meeting. Due to the implications for children's education, health and wellbeing of improving school food, the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee and the Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee will each consider the Task Group's report and recommendations respectively on the 14th June and the 28th June.

Long Term Benefits of Healthy Eating in School

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Request that the School Meals Strategy Co-ordinator gather evidence over the next 12 months, and draw on the good practice of a number of Wiltshire schools that have already adopted effective healthy eating policies, with regard to the view that the cost of improving the diets of school aged children leads to savings in other areas of public spending. For example, by reducing the number of children with behavioural needs, expenditure in certain areas of educational provision can be reduced.
2. With immediate effect:
 - (a) include in the terms and conditions of contracts for the management of Children's Centres, a requirement to engage with parents and children in adopting a healthy lifestyle
 - (b) monitor the effectiveness of services provided by Children's Centres to ensure that parents and children are engaged in adopting a healthy lifestyle
 - (c) request that all schools install fresh water systems, so that pupils have easy access to free, clean and palatable drinking water
 - (d) request that the Wiltshire Young People's Support Service work towards the Healthy School accreditation
 - (e) develop a wider programme of education on healthy eating and nutrition, linking the work that is taking place to promote the Healthy Schools Programme with the Children's Trust Board's desire to improve the emotional well-being of all children.

School Meals Strategy

Cabinet is recommended to:

3. With immediate effect, ensure that the School Meals Strategy is devised and implemented as a partnership between the Healthier Wiltshire Project, the Healthy Schools Programme, other partners from the health sector, headteachers, pupils, parents, governors, catering staff/managers, local and main food suppliers and the media.
4. Request that the School Meals Strategy Co-ordinator, in working to transform the school meals service in Wiltshire, work with the Healthy Schools Team and the Healthier Wiltshire Project, to, by the end of 2008, ensure that priority is given to individual schools and communities manifesting the most socio-economic need.
5. Endorse the recommendation that a non-executive member be appointed to the Healthy Eating Alliance sub group of the Healthier Wiltshire Project Board, to play a key role in helping to devise and implement the School Meals Strategy.
6. Commencing from September 2006, agree rigorous and regular monitoring arrangements, to track and influence the progress of the new School Meals Strategy and its effectiveness in transforming school meals in Wiltshire.
7. Reaffirm its commitment to the requirement that all schools in Wiltshire become "Healthy Schools" by 2009.
8. Request that the School Meals Strategy Co-ordinator work with key partners to develop an Action Plan to implement the School Meals Strategy and to produce guidance for schools in order to support this. The Strategy and Action Plan should include, inter alia :
 - (a) by the end of 2006, explore the feasibility of the use of mobile kitchen/s for a number of those schools in Wiltshire without kitchen facilities or the means to provide hot cooked food, either as a temporary measure or for a fixed term;
 - (b) by the end of 2006, make an application to the Food Standards Agency's Food Bus, with a view to this being targeted to work with a set of schools demonstrating the most need for assistance with regards to the teaching of Food Technology; and / or
 - (c) by the end of 2006, work with Gloucestershire County Council to explore the viability of local authorities in the south west sharing the cost of leasing their own School Food Bus;
 - (d) by September 2006, develop proposals with the LEA Adviser for Design & Technology, for the setting up of Food Learning Partnerships in Wiltshire, as a model intended to improve the provision of Food Technology classes in all schools, subject to the availability of funding and to catering staff and mid-day supervisory assistants being actively involved;

- (e) by April 2007, encourage and support schools to grow their own fruit and vegetables or, at the very least, to plant seed pots in classrooms;
- (f) by April 2007, draw on the potential of existing resources and facilities within the County to develop innovative solutions to meet the requirement for improved training and skills for catering staff, but also work with other local authorities in the South West to explore ways in which this requirement can be achieved through a partnership or regional approach;
- (g) by September 2007, work with other local authorities in the South West to explore the benefits of establishing a link with providers and procurement agencies with a view to this assisting with the procurement of food from the region for school meals.

Future of School Catering in Wiltshire

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 9. Carry out extensive consultation with all relevant partners before agreeing the terms and conditions of any new school catering contract;
- 10. Once the stakeholder discussions commence regarding the re-letting of the contract, develop the monitoring and contract management arrangements, to be resourced by at least 1fte, and funded by an appropriate levy on schools entering the contract;
- 11. Ensure that robust and effective systems are in place before any new contract begins, which include payment systems, ordering, change control, performance management, knowledge management and accurate assessment of the outcomes expected;
- 12. If a new contract is agreed, continue to actively market the catering service to all schools and children's centres, building on earlier stakeholder consultations, to achieve maximum take-up and smooth transition from existing arrangements to the new.
- 13. To include in the terms and conditions of any new School Catering Contract that the contractor provide services to the County's Children's Centres, in addition to its schools, both in terms of providing healthy food and in assisting with other activities in the centre relating to the education, supply and cooking of good food.
- 14. With immediate effect lift the ban on the cooking and serving of beef in Wiltshire schools.

Glossary

BESD	-	Behaviour, Emotional & Social Difficulties
DfES	-	Department for Education & Skills
FSA	-	Food Standards Agency
FSM	-	Free <i>School</i> Meals
FT	-	Food Technology
FTE	-	Full Time Equivalent
HEA	-	Healthy Eating Alliance
LEA	-	Local Education Authority
NHS	-	National Health Service
PCT	-	Primary Care Trust
PRU	-	Pupil Referral Unit
SNAG	-	School Nutrition Action Group
UWE	-	University of the West of England
YPSS	-	Young People's Support Service

**SCHOOL CATERING SCRUTINY TASK GROUP
TERMS OF REFERENCE**

- (1) Develop robust and evidence based recommendations, taking forward the findings of the Interim Report (May 2004) and Cabinet's subsequent response.
- (2) Work with the Healthier Wiltshire Project and the Council's Health Promotion Team to ensure that the review's recommendations are fully informed by the Healthy School's initiative and other related initiatives being progressed by the Wiltshire Strategic Board.
- (3) Work with the Director for Children & Education to ensure that the authority is ready to meet the requirements of new Ofsted inspection criteria regarding school food from September 2005.
- (4) Work with the Director for Children & Education to devise a strategy to improve school meals provision in Wiltshire, as detailed in the DFES letter "School Meals Funding for 2005/06", ensuring that all appropriate partners and particularly schools are fully represented and involved in developing the strategy and associated implementation proposals.
- (5) Make recommendations as to how the strategy should approach the Government's requirement to begin the reintroduction of universal hot meals provision, where it does not exist, by September 2008.
- (6) Consider the short term implications for the current contract of the White Paper "Choosing Health: making healthier choices easier" and the School Meals Funding 2005-06 DFES letter, working with the Central Procurement Team, Sodexo and schools to understand the extent/estimated cost of the implications with a view to recommending that a programme of investment be devised and implemented. Recommendations stemming from this aspect of the Task Group's work to be submitted to the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee as soon as possible.
- (7) Explore the cost and benefits of increasing the monitoring and inspection of the current service.
- (8) Explore further how meal take-up can be improved, and whether or not/how a financial incentive could be introduced to support these improvements.
- (9) Evaluate options (including cost and benefits) for the future procurement of the school catering service.
- (10) Learn from best practice examples, how to ensure that all relevant parties are involved in the consultation regarding future service provision in order that all are fully appreciative of the terms of the new service, and each partners' roles and responsibilities within the new contract.
- (11) Engage with parents and carers to update them on the work of the Task Group and how the Council is taking positive steps to improve service provision.
- (12) Appoint five members to serve on the reconstituted Task Group with responsibilities, as follow:

Members	Committee	Responsibilities
Bobbie Chettleburgh Mollie Groom Judy Rooke	Management	Contract Performance
Rebecca MacDonald	Children's Services	Consultation and negotiation with schools, pupils and parents
John English	Health	Health and social benefits

- (13) To prepare a report within 6 months of the Task Group's first meeting for consideration by the Management Committee, in the first instance

**SODEXHO SCHOOL CATERING SCRUTINY TASK GROUP
RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1) That the promotion of healthier menus be strongly recommended, whilst recognising the autonomy of schools. That, following completion of the inspection of all kitchen facilities and a thorough consultation with Sodexho, school staff, parents and pupils, consideration be given to financing the necessary additional costs, such as equipment and facilities, catering skills and time, either with forthcoming government and/or new council funding. This should be done alongside reducing the availability of unhealthy options.
- 2) That the Council determine an additional source of funding of £5,774 to be allocated to smooth out losses made by schools under the consortium fee with reducing pupil numbers on roll.
- 3) That the findings from the review of commercial rebates between the council and Sodexho ensure those supplier kitchens are properly compensated.
- 4) That further work be done by the Task Group on the proposal to provide a financial incentive to encourage schools and Sodexho to increase take up, as well as ways in which Sodexho can reinvest in the school meals service.
- 5) That consideration be given to raising the free school meal allowance in line with paid meal prices and that encouragement be given to children entitled to take them up. That the Government be lobbied to provide funding for cashless systems to remove stigma surrounding free school meals.
- 6) That there is detailed communication with all schools and Sodexho on the issues arising from this report, to ensure responsibilities are made clear and expectations are accurate.
- 7) That Sodexho be encouraged to create more innovative approaches that encourage pupils to choose healthier options, taking into account the suggestions made.
- 8) That more regular and thorough monitoring and inspection regimes be carried out to ensure a more consistent quality in schools
- 9) That the work currently taking place through the Healthier Wiltshire and Healthy Schools Projects be linked and related to the new Ofsted requirements.
- 10) That the current policy on beef be revisited, with consideration given to its re-introduction in schools within the current contract.
- 11) That sufficient time be allowed for future negotiations and consultation with school staff, parents and pupils and potential contractors during the new tendering stage.
- 12) That in future, the council move towards a contract with more locally sourced and organic food, where possible, and away from reconstituted products, and that nutritional standards be enhanced in line with forthcoming Government guidelines and the Caroline Walker Trust guidelines.
- 13) That the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee reconstitute the task group (albeit with new members) to take the findings of this review forward.
- 14) That the subject be considered again in a year, following the Sherston pilot and potential new Government guidelines in September 2006.

SCHOOL MEAL REVIEW PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS

The standards

Recommendation 1: The nutrient and food and drink standards proposed in this Report should be adopted and applied to the provision of school lunches.

Recommendation 2: Food provided at lunchtime in schools should meet the combination of nutrient and food-based standards over a period of five consecutive school days.

Recommendation 3: Schools should aspire to achieve the highest quality of provision, which is a hot meal, cooked on-site, from fresh and seasonal ingredients. Whilst we accept that this level of provision is not possible to achieve in all schools at present, we recommend that schools work towards this.

Recommendation 4: At present only the school lunch standards are statutory. The Panel recommends that pre-school and children in other settings, should be similarly protected. It recommends that the Government, as a priority, supplements these lunch standards with standards for other food and drink service provision: break-time snacks, breakfast and after school clubs.

Recommendation 5: The panel recommends to schools that, from September 2006, the food standards be applied to lunch time and that similar standards for 'processed foods'; 'confectionery and savoury snacks'; and 'drinks' be applied to tuck shops, vending and other similar food services. The panel recognises that meeting the voluntary Target Nutrient Specifications for processed foods will require some product development and therefore may take longer.

Recommendation 6: School caterers should ensure that choice is available for all children right through to the end of lunchtime service in order that children eating later in the food service are not disadvantaged.

Recommendation 7: There should be easy access to free, fresh, chilled drinking water throughout the school day.

Recommendation 8: The procurement of food served in schools should be consistent with sustainable development principles and schools and caterers should look to local farmers and suppliers for their produce where possible, tempered by a need for menus to meet the new nutritional standards and be acceptable in schools.

Recommendation 9: The standards should be reviewed in 2011. At this time the standards should be applied to food consumption as well as food provision.

Recommendation 10: The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) should encourage schools to adopt the voluntary target nutrient specifications circulated for consultation by the Food Standards Agency.

Delivering Change

Catering:

Recommendation 11: Schools and caterers should conduct a needs analysis (skills, equipment, preparation time) and train all relevant staff (including catering staff and midday supervisors) to ensure they are able to support pupils in making healthy choices.

Recommendation 12: Catering staff need to be central to the whole school approach. Their practical skills should be valued and utilised to the full, and they should be represented on groups like School Nutrition Action Groups.

Schools:

Recommendation 13: All schools should audit their current food service and curriculum, and develop, implement and publish a whole-school food and nutrition policy. The Panel recommends that schools' whole-school food policies should be made available to parents and carers and be referred to in the school prospectus and school profile.

Recommendation 14: All children should be taught food preparation and practical cooking skills in school in the context of healthy eating. Far more emphasis should be placed on practical cooking skills within the curriculum space currently devoted to Food Technology, and the KS3 review should consider this.

Recommendation 15: Supply links between local producers and schools should be strengthened, with improvements to children's knowledge about growing and cooking food. Schools should be encouraged to visit farms, ideally where some of their food is produced.

Recommendation 16: Whole-school food policies, developed through partnerships, should include consideration of the impact of packed lunches and food brought into school. However, where parents and carers wish to continue with packed lunches, guidance is available from the Food Standards Agency.

Getting started

Recommendation 17: The introduction of the new standards should be phased in over a period of time to allow the necessary preparation. Implementation will be more difficult in some schools (e.g. where there is a cash-cafeteria food service). The new standards should be fully achieved as soon as possible, and at the latest, for all primary schools by September 2008 and for all secondary schools by September 2009.

Recommendation 18: Schools and local authorities should aim for complete take-up of free school meal entitlement; and schools should aim to have at least 10% increase in school meals take-up by the end of the implementation period.

Recommendation 19: Further tools and guidance need to be developed, tested, and made available as early in the implementation process as possible. The DfES should take the lead on this.

Recommendation 20: The Food Standards Agency (FSA) should make its food composition data, including any relating to non-milk extrinsic sugars, widely available in an electronic format. This will provide information on foods and nutrients contained in the standards, expressed using analytical or calculation methods which reflect the needs of the standards.

Financial investment

Recommendation 21: The Secretary of State should take note of our concerns that low income families may be adversely affected by price increases, and investigate options for mitigating possible nutritional and economic risks.

Recommendation 22: Schools and local authorities must improve transparency and accountability in relation to how much they spend on school meals, including food cost per meal; uptake; free school meal numbers; nature of service; level of any subsidy; and any surplus generated by the service and how it is spent. This information should be presented in the whole-school food policy.

Recommendation 23: There should be no further degradation of service or provision by individual schools or local authorities from the current position, and kitchens should be a priority under 'Building Schools for the Future'. The DfES should undertake further work to consider the options for schools which no longer have their own kitchens. Schools and local authorities should be encouraged to reach the highest standards of provision and kitchens should be a priority in all schools' capital investment programmes.

Recommendation 24: Guidance on formulaic funding delivered to local authorities and schools should prioritise the renovation and refurbishment of kitchens and dining facilities.

Recommendation 25: The Government needs to ensure that current Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contracts and 'Building Schools for the Future' (BSF) initiatives do not impose barriers to the improvement of school food and also ensure that in future all school PFIs incorporate building specifications which enable the main meal to be cooked on the premises and practical cooking skills to be taught to all pupils. The Government should require all partners in PFI deals to be bound by the new standards. The existence of long-term contracts cannot be allowed to adversely affect the health of pupils in PFI schools.

Recommendation 26: The Panel suggests that kitchens and dining areas should be given priority within primary capital investment.

Recommendation 27: The economic costs of the changes should be modelled against the economic benefits. For example the benefits include: sourcing more food from local suppliers will benefit local economies and cut down transport and infrastructure costs; using more fresh ingredients will require longer kitchen assistant hours and this will benefit catering staff; the possible link between better nutrition, educational attainment and associated life-time earnings gain.

Recommendation 28: DfES has asked all local authorities to revise their asset management plan data by the end of this year. This information should show-up deficiencies in kitchen and dining areas but will not, due to timing, reflect then standards and approach recommended in this report. We recommend that DfES

should (i) consider what further work needs to be done to supplement the information gathered from current activity; (ii) use this information to ensure that kitchen and dining areas are a priority in capital spending programmes; and (iii) ensure that all future asset planning takes the new SMRP standards and approach fully into account.

Recommendation 29: In line with the Government's expectation that the transformation of school meals should be led by local authorities, we recommend that local level discussions recognise the desirability of phased – as opposed to sudden - price increases.

Recommendation 30: The Government should make school meals a priority during the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Recommendation 31: At appropriate intervals (eg. of 4 years) a nationwide evaluation of school food provision should be commissioned by DfES, to assess the types of foods and drinks available, their uptake and nutrient contribution to the overall diet. The evaluation should pay particular attention to provision for children who are nutritionally at risk. This evaluation should be timed for completion before the review of the standards in 2011.

Recommendation 32: The main approach to external monitoring and evaluation should be through the regular inspections carried out by Ofsted. This should be supported by evidence gathered from the in-depth inspections of a sample of schools carried out by HM Inspectors, supported by nutritionists. The Panel recommends further work should be conducted by Ofsted and DfES to use the pilot inspections planned for November 2005 to develop the methodology and a rigorous set of tools to support those inspections.

Recommendation 33: A checklist should be developed, as part of the package of further tools and guidance. It should be piloted to ensure it is effective in bringing about change and supporting implementation of the nutrient and food standards.

Recommendation 34: Local authorities should be required to collect and report annually on progress in achieving healthy school standards, provision and uptake of all (including free) school lunches, and steps being taken to work towards the achievement of school lunch standards e.g. use of nutrition software, checklists, smartcards, incorporation of standards in contracts. The DfES should collect and collate this data to provide a national overview of progress.

Recommendation 35: The School Food Trust should hold a database of standards compliant menus for schools to use at their discretion; and standard analysis services which would support schools in providing and analysing their own meals service.

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Benton D., Roberts G., 'The Welsh Experiment',
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SODEXHO SCHOOL CATERING SCRUTINY TASK GROUP

SCHOOL VISITS

Aims

- (1) To observe and discuss how school food is provided currently at the school, including lunch break, tuck shops and liquid refreshments
- (2) To observe and discuss the practical challenges of delivering an enhanced school food service
- (3) To discuss with school, parent, pupil and catering representatives
 - (a) their views and reactions to the Governments proposed new standards
 - (b) how they intend to respond to the new standards and approach to school food and the teaching of Food Technology

Suggested Structure of Visit

- (1) Approximately a one hour visit
- (2) Visit to commence approximately 30 minutes prior to the lunch hour - followed by 15 minutes to observe the lunch break, i.e. to see the kitchen and dining facilities and the way delivery of the lunch is managed, (perhaps being escorted by a pupil and a dinner lady, or a senior teaching staff member) – followed by a 15 minute de-brief with a senior member of teaching staff
- (3) Schools have been invited to include a representatives from one or more of the following in the visit:
 - teaching staff
 - pupils
 - parents
 - governors
 - caterers
 - mid day supervisory assistants (MDSAs)
- (4) Members of the Task Group are asked to record
 - (a) answers to the suggested questions on the attached questionnaire
 - (b) answers to any other questions they consider to be relevant to raise
 - (c) all other observations made during the visit

Follow Up from the Visit

- (1) Members of the Task Group are asked to submit a copy of their completed questionnaires to Karen Linaker as soon as possible after carrying out their visits
- (2) Karen to collate and summarise the findings of these visits, as recorded on the questionnaires, and to submit this to the March meeting of the Task Group
- (3) The Chairman is asked to write to each of the schools visited to thank them for taking part in the review (Karen to facilitate)
- (4) The findings from the visits and the Task Group's subsequent consideration of these at the March meeting will form part of the evidence for the final report

QUESTIONNAIRE

During the 30 minutes informal meeting with teaching, parent, pupil and catering representatives									
<u>LUNCHES</u>									
(1)	How are the school lunches provided? (please tick box below)								
	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 80%; padding: 5px;">(a) as part of the Sodexho Contract</td> <td style="width: 20%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">(b) by a local arrangement, i.e. with the nearby pub (please give brief description)</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">(c) there is no meal service, pupils bring in their own packed lunches</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">(d) other arrangement (please give brief description)</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	(a) as part of the Sodexho Contract		(b) by a local arrangement, i.e. with the nearby pub (please give brief description)		(c) there is no meal service, pupils bring in their own packed lunches		(d) other arrangement (please give brief description)	
(a) as part of the Sodexho Contract									
(b) by a local arrangement, i.e. with the nearby pub (please give brief description)									
(c) there is no meal service, pupils bring in their own packed lunches									
(d) other arrangement (please give brief description)									
(2)	How satisfied are each of the representatives with the current lunch service? (perhaps ask for the top three most / least satisfactory aspects and/or enquire as to what level of training and support the kitchen and catering staff receive and/or how many catering staff/cooks helped to provide the school lunch – how did this compare with the number of pupils who ate a school lunch?)								
(3)	How long is set aside for the lunch break?								
(4)	Is this long enough? (what are the arrangements to ensure efficient queuing and progress of pupils through the school lunch process?)								
(5)	Does the school foresee the need to extend the lunch break as a result of more traditional / healthier meals being provided? If so, what impact is this likely to have on the rest of the school day?								

TUCK SHOPS / REFRESHMENT BREAKS

(1)	If there is a tuck shop / refreshment break service – what type of refreshments does it provide, mainly crisps, sweets and chocolates, or balanced with more healthy options?
(2)	Who runs the tuck shop?
(3)	Is there a fresh water service in the school? If so, is it used well? If there is no such facility, would the school like to see this being introduced?

FOOD TECHNOLOGY

(1)	What facilities does the school have to teach Food Technology (FT)?
(2)	Are they regarded as sufficient?
(3)	How enjoyable / effective are these classes?
(4)	Will changes need to be made to meet possible new standards in the teaching of FT? If so, what?

During the 15 minute debrief with the senior member of teaching staff

(1)	What degree of change will be required to meet the proposed new standards for school meals (please tick as appropriate and provide a brief explanation for the option selected)
	(a) an unreasonable amount of change
	(b) a justified amount of change
	(c) slight change
	(d) no change
(2)	Does the school have a plan (however rudimentary) to meet the changes? If so, please give a brief description
(3)	Other questions prompted by the visit
(4)	
(5)	
(6)	