

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
20 September 2006

**CABINET MEMBER RESPONSE TO THE
SCHOOL CATERING SCRUTINY TASK GROUP
FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The School Meals Strategy Coordinator, Sarah King, has been in post since the beginning of May and has already begun to implement many of the recommendations set out in the Task Group report. These include:

Under Long Term Benefits of Healthy Eating in School:

Recommendation 1: gathering evidence on the effect of healthy eating policies on other aspects of school performance.

Recommendations 2 a and b: Working with the manager for children's centres manager to develop healthy eating policies.

Recommendation 2c: Working with individual schools on the provision of fresh water systems.

Recommendation 2d: Working with the Young People's Support Service towards healthy school accreditation.

Recommendation 2e: Contributing to general education programmes on healthy eating and nutrition, including giving talks to schools and parent groups and undertaking a number of media interviews.

Under School Meals Strategy

Recommendations 3 and 6: The Strategy Coordinator has already produced a draft school meals strategy document, in conjunction with the multi agency school nutrition action group, which has already been the subject of internal consultation within the County Council. A fuller consultation with schools will take place during the autumn term. The strategy includes a detailed monitoring and evaluation process.

Recommendation 4: The Coordinator is working with a number of schools in different parts of the County to identify areas of good practice and possible development. This will include the targeting of remaining school meals grant towards those areas with the greatest social economic need.

Recommendation 8: An action plan is currently being prepared in conjunction with the school meals strategy document, and will be subject to the same consultation process. This includes work to implement different strategies for the provision of hot meals in those schools which are currently without kitchen facilities, joint work with other authorities on developments such as the Food Standards Agency Food Bus and provision of training, the development of food learning partnerships and the encouragement of schools to grow fruit and vegetables. She has also

made links with suppliers both within and beyond the County and is in discussion with other authorities as to the possibility of broader procurement.

In this context, I would also strongly commend to the Cabinet **recommendation 5**, that a non-executive member be appointed to the Healthy Eating Alliance sub group of the Healthier Wiltshire Project Board and **recommendation 7**: Reaffirming the commitment of the Cabinet to all schools in Wiltshire becoming healthy schools by 2009.

Future of School Catering in Wiltshire

The Task Group report sets out a timescale for consultation with all relevant stakeholders with regard to the new school catering contract, as set out in **recommendations 9, 10 and 11**. Discussions are taking place with the School Services sub group of the Schools Forum, with the Primary Heads Forum (PHF) and the Wiltshire Association of Secondary and Special School Headteachers (WASSH) to ensure that the new contractual arrangements meet as closely as possible the requirements of schools and to encourage schools to participate in the new arrangements, as proposed in **recommendation 12**. These discussions will also include consideration of catering in the Children's Centres, as at **recommendation 13**.

Finally, although I have to declare an interest in this regard, I strongly welcome the Task Group's **recommendation 14** concerning the lifting of the ban on the cooking and serving of beef in Wiltshire schools.