
SCHOOL FOOD SCRUTINY TASK GROUP

REPORT OF A MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 9 DECEMBER 2008 AT COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE

Present:

Members: Peter Fuller, Rebecca MacDonald Carole Soden

Officers: Sarah King (School Food Strategy Co-ordinator), Karen Linaker (Scrutiny Support Officer), Sarah Peters (Corporate Contracts Officer), Mike Swabey (Head of Procurement & Contract Management)

Other: Alan Bowley (Contract Director – Sodexo)
*Jane Brain (Representative from the School Nutrition Action Group [and Operations Manager of Avenance])
*Stephen Holder (Head of Marketing – Sodexo)
* also actively involved in the School Food Trust

APOLOGIES

1. Apologies for absence were received from Patrick Coleman, John English and Mollie Groom.

REPORT OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

2. Members noted the report of the previous meeting and that all matters included were scheduled to be taken forward and considered at the task group's future meetings.

SCHOOL FOOD STRATEGY CO-ORDINATOR'S REVIEW OF THE CURRENT STRATEGY

3. Sarah King delivered a presentation which outlined the areas of the school food strategy which the task group had been asked to further evaluate, and updated members on progress made against these areas of the strategy (see copy of slides on pages 8 – 12). In discussing the issues raised in this presentation, the following additional points were made:

Nutrient Based Standards (NBS)

- (a) the objective relating to this aspect of the strategy was ongoing (see minute 4 below)

- (b) a new “School Lunch Grant” from the government, available from 2008-11, was intended to assist schools in implementing these new standards

how many / which schools in Wiltshire will need to make plans to build or share modern food technology facilities

- (c) (see minute 9 and 10 below) – an ongoing objective of the strategy was to pursue how to assist schools in teaching all young people about healthy eating and how to prepare a healthy meal
- (d) government funding was available to assist schools in this, and recently a bid had been submitted for four schools in Wiltshire

what was the impact of making learning to cook and understand the principles of diet and nutrition an entitlement for 11-18 year olds?

- (e) (see minutes 6 - 8 below) – a specific objective was being added to the strategy to promote to schools the use of the “Licence to Cook” programme, which was intended to assist schools in working towards the government requirement, that from 2011 all secondary school pupils would be entitled to lessons on learning to cook and understand the principles of diet and nutrition
- (f) from initial analysis, Sarah had identified that only a few schools were currently using the “Licence to Cook” programme, despite the offer of training and support
- (g) as part of the task group’s work, it would visit Pewsey Vale School where this programme was being used and led by a teacher who was a lead practitioner for the programme
- (h) primary schools were already active in teaching children about healthy eating and cooking, and this was currently being assisted by the government’s “lets get cooking” initiative

the principles underlying the council's new school catering contract

- (i) the strategy included a number of objectives relating to this which were ongoing – with the procurement process for this new contract commencing in 2009
- (j) the task group was due to consider this aspect of its terms of reference on the 10th February
- (k) working with local producers and farmers remained an objective of the strategy, and a number of well received events had already taken place to promote this in 2008. The council’s economic development team was researching how to take this objective forward
- (l) as part of the Healthy Schools Programme, schools were expected to record where they sourced food from

what is the role of the Schools Forum in promoting the council's school food strategy

- (m) a new objective relating to the role of the Schools Forum would be added to the strategy, bearing in mind its influence in regard to policy, resources, contract, and monitoring and evaluation matters, in relation to school food
- (n) this aspect of the task group's terms of reference was scheduled for consideration on the 10th February

general

- (o) approximately £875,000 of government funding was made available for a three year period in 2005 - 08 to improve the school meals service in Wiltshire, and members were under the impression that schools were asked to bid for this funding on the basis that they would use it to develop a more sustainable service and one which would be self-sufficient
- (p) members asked Sarah to provide information as part of the task group's work to clarify where and how this money had been spent and whether or not it was delivering a more sustainable / self-sufficient meals' provision, or whether there was a need to provide further funding and to encourage schools to work more collaboratively

AGREED to note the points made in the presentation, and to ask Sarah to provide further information in respect of (o) and (p) above.

CHALLENGES POSED BY THE GOVERNMENT'S NUTRIENT BASED STANDARDS

- 4. Sarah King delivered a presentation (see copy of slides on pages 13 – 17), which explained what the nutrient based standards (NBS) were, and how they were being introduced to schools. In doing so, she listed the challenges which these new standards posed, and highlighted the support which the local authority was giving to assist schools. In discussing the issues raised in this presentation, the following additional points were made:
 - (a) there was a worrying number of schools, following Sarah's initial enquiries, which were either not intending to comply with the NBS or which had not yet taken any decisive action to
 - (b) it was as yet unclear what the sanction was for non-compliance
 - (c) whilst Sarah was not aware of any particular school which intended to stop providing school food as a consequence of the challenges posed by the NBS, this was still a concern
 - (d) Jane and Steve, in their work with the School Food Trust, explained how the Trust's objectives were being worked through, including how best to ensure compliance with the NBS, i.e. through good practice sharing networks and communication
 - (e) there was also a risk that the new NBS would make the use of smaller, more local, school food contractual arrangements unviable, although there

were examples in the county where smaller contractors were working successfully with schools to deliver the new standards

- (f) the government's School Food Grant (2008/11) was proving helpful for some schools, i.e. in employing a dietician and staff to carry out the menu analysis, which was known to be a time consuming aspect of implementing the new standards
 - (g) the new standards meant that providers needed to strengthen their promotion of menus to ensure improved understanding and to maintain uptake
 - (h) in addition to the challenges listed in the presentation slides, schools also needed to make provision for different diets, i.e. vegetarian, cultural, religious or for medical reasons. The new standards made this diverse provision even more challenging
 - (i) the NBS were concerned with what food was provided as the primary focus, and what pupils actually want to eat, was the secondary focus – this posed a further challenge
 - (j) feedback from analysis also indicated that there was a risk of the NBS stifling creativity
 - (k) it would be useful to know what school caterers in Wiltshire, with the exception of Sodexo, used as their source guide for menus, i.e. were schools using the old recipe book previously issued when the council operated its own school meals service?
 - (l) it would seem more beneficial if school menus could be analysed and verified as compliant by one central resource, instead of individual schools having to take on this responsibility
5. Members also received a presentation from Sodexo (see copy of slides on pages 18 – 21), which explained how it was supporting schools in implementing the NBS. The following additional points were made:
- (a) school meals played a part in education for the pupil and the parent, and were not simply about delivering the right nutrition - the chairman of the School Food Trust had invited Sodexo to assist it in promoting this message
 - (b) the NBS were more likely to be implemented with success if approached from a 'whole school food' stance
 - (c) in addition to the NBS, there was also a voluntary code of practice for drinks
 - (d) whilst the new standards did not apply to packed lunches, schools were choosing to include provision within their own policies to cover this
 - (e) Sodexo had raised with the School Food Trust how challenging the new NBS were, and had made a plea for retailers to stock produce which

provided an appealing alternative to those foods not considered to meet the new standards

- (f) despite the challenges, support for the new standards was beginning to improve, with school food providers developing their own methods of compliance
- (g) whilst demand for school food had significantly reduced as a consequence of Jamie Oliver's campaign, overall trends were beginning to recover now, despite the introduction of the new standards
- (h) a number of years of improved education about the benefits of healthy eating looked as if it was beginning to have a positive effect, with the challenge of selling healthier food not being as great as when the drive first began
- (i) Sodexo was fully compliant with the new standards, following a careful process of negotiation and partnership working with suppliers, manufacturers and schools
- (j) Sodexo had produced a 'healthwise roadmap' which it used when meeting with headteachers to discuss how to implement the standards
- (k) Sodexo had also produced an 'ecowise roadmap' intended to help schools meet the government's vision for sustainable schools.

AGREED to note the points made and discussed as part of the presentations delivered, and to take forward key issues to the task group's final report.

WHAT IS THE GENERAL IMPACT OF MAKING LEARNING TO COOK AND UNDERSTAND THE PRINCIPLES OF DIET AND NUTRITION AN ENTITLEMENT FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS?

- 6. In discussing this particular aspect of the task group's terms of reference, members noted that the Secondary School Adviser for Design & Technology would attend the 29th January meeting to further explain the impact for schools in Wiltshire.
- 7. Additionally, members noted that a visit to Pewsey Vale School would be organised for the task group to witness a food technology lesson and to see the "License to Cook" programme being put into practice.
- 8. In the meantime, members were asked to note the following, as clarification concerning the government's requirements for the teaching of practical cooking and for pupils' understanding in terms of diet and nutrition:
 - (a) food technology will become a compulsory key stage 3 curriculum entitlement for every 11-14 year old from September 2011 - this move comes as part of the joint obesity strategy which Alan Johnson and Ed Balls launched on the 23rd Jan 2008

- (b) the curriculum will be delivered through food technology lessons, involving practical cooking lessons and classes on diet, nutrition, hygiene and healthy food shopping
- (c) nationally, around 800 new food technology teachers will be trained over the next three years, and another 150 teachers will enter the profession through employment based routes. There will be a programme to train Higher Level Teaching Assistants who will specialise in cooking
- (d) a non statutory cooking entitlement – “License to Cook” – for 11 to 16 year olds starts in September 2008. The programme will be offered to all secondary schools with additional support and training by March 2009 so that all pupils are entitled to learn cooking, whether or not their school currently offers food technology. This means that everyone gets the opportunities, whether in cooking clubs, activity weeks or normal lessons, until food technology becomes compulsory as part of the curriculum in 2011. The programme can be introduced on a phased timetable basis
- (e) for some schools without practical food facilities, there will have to be alternative arrangements made on a local basis, i.e .working with a local college, another school, summer school, activity week or Lets Get Cooking Club (programme for primary schools)
- (f) “Licence to Cook” is designed to be fully integrated with the new key stage 3 programme of study for design and technology: food. It is a minimum entitlement for all students in secondary schools, and it is intended that most schools will deliver “Licence to Cook” through their existing modified key stage 3 schemes of work
- (g) the resources and suggested practical activities in the “Licence to Cook” programme have been trialled in lead practitioner schools (Pewsey Vale School in Wiltshire being one of these schools)
- (h) the emphasis is on practical cooking skills, but there is a online training tool also. The learning areas include basic cooking skills, diet and nutrition, wise food shopping and hygiene and safety
- (i) the “License to Cook” programme is funded by the DCSF, but individual schools need to make decisions about how ingredients will be sourced for students
- (j) for some schools, the increase in practical lessons may require increased technician support. Food teachers will also need to investigate how the programme is to be integrated into the curriculum, how the funding will be managed and implications for staffing.

AGREED to note the above and to await further information on the 29th January, in particular clarification concerning the new leaving age requirement, and how the new practical cooking entitlement from 2011 would impact on secondary school pupils over the age of 16.

HOW MANY AND WHICH SCHOOLS IN WILTSHIRE WILL NEED TO MAKE PLANS TO BUILD OR SHARE MODERN FOOD TECHNOLOGY EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES?

9. Members noted that the Head of School Buildings & Places would attend the 29th January meeting to discuss this aspect of task group's terms of reference. In the meantime, members were asked to note a brief report which listed the three special schools and one secondary school in Wiltshire that had been selected to bid for government funding to improve their food technology facilities.
10. In discussing this brief report, members enquired about the criteria used to select these schools and whether or not there were other schools in need of funding.

AGREED to note the report and to await further clarification at the January meeting on the criteria used to select the four schools for this current round of funding, and on whether or not other schools were in need of funding to improve their food technology facilities and to get them ready for the new government requirement, as detailed in paragraph 8 above.

NEXT MEETING

11. Members noted that their next meeting would take place on the rising of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee on the 29th January, at (approximately) 1.30pm, and would include a working lunch.
12. Members also noted that Karen would be arranging a series of school visits during January.

(Duration of meeting: 11.15 am to 1.05 pm)

*This record was produced by Karen Linaker, Scrutiny Support Officer, 01225 713056
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