

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**CABINET
MONDAY 18 DECEMBER 2000 AT 9.30 A.M.**

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
MONDAY 18 DECEMBER 2000 AT 2.15 P.M.**

Agenda Item No:

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PROVISION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES IN SOUTH WEST HERTS

Report of Director of Education

Author:- Stephanie Luxford, Education Planning Manager (Tel: 01992 555864)

Executive Member:- Keith Emsall

Local Members :- T I Ambrose, G Burrow, F Button, A R Choudhrey, M D Colne,
P V Goggins, M Green, J A Hobday, A Kilkerr, B J Lamb, A Lee,
J E Price, G A G Pulman, E A Rafferty, M Tomlinson, B A York

1. Purpose of Report

- (i) To update members on work undertaken to date to resolve the issue of provision of secondary school places in South West Herts, and to consider the recommendations of the Schools Provision and Resources Panel in that regard.
- (ii) To seek authorisation for officers to proceed with further discussions with schools, and to the development of feasibility studies into the package of proposals recommended by the Panel; the outcome to be reported to the Children, Schools and Families Select Committee on 28 March and then back to Cabinet and Executive Committee on 23 April 2001 for decisions to be taken.

Given the need to press on with the discussions with schools and the necessary development work there will not be time to refer this to the Select Committee for comment. However the views of the Committee Spokesmen have been sought. The Conservative and Labour groups concur with the report. The comments of the Liberal Democrat group are attached as Appendix 1.

1. Background

A Working Group established by the former School Provision and Resources Panel has developed an area strategy for the provision of future Secondary School Provision in South West Herts and their recommendations were considered by the School Provision and Resources Panel on 23 November 2000.

The strategy seeks to:

- provide two forms of entry of additional school places , as far as possible achieving geographical balance of investment;
- contributing to the raising of levels of achievement, particularly in the lowest performing schools;
- enable full consideration to be given to the need to continue to retain the former Langleybury School.

2. Principles

The Working Group agreed that additional places should be provided by expanding well performing schools (where this is physically possible) whilst not losing sight of essential investment in under-performing schools where inadequate facilities/equipment inhibit performance.

They also said this should not result in more out of county children being drawn into the County. They, therefore, asked Officers, in their discussion with the schools that might be considered for expansion, to ensure co-operation in devising admission criteria to ensure that this additional investment benefits Hertfordshire children.

3. Proposed Package

In light of the geographical need, site constraints and willingness of schools to reconsider admission criteria, the Panel recommended that there be further discussions with schools and the development of feasibility studies into a package including:

- expansion of Rickmansworth School by 1FE(on the assumption that Rickmansworth deliver promised changes to their admission criteria);
- expansion of Queens' School by 1FE;
- provision of essential accommodation at Bushey Hall and Westfield Schools to maintain existing admission numbers.

It was agreed that feasibility work should also take into account the possibility of expanding Rickmansworth School by more than 1FE.

The Panel also agreed that officers responsible for the current county-wide review of the home to school transport policy should be made aware of the particular difficulties in South West Herts.

4. Raising levels of achievement

The Panel's attention was drawn to the significant impact that the selective admission criteria of the highest performing schools in South West Herts have had upon the ability of intakes at the other schools in the area.

They noted that Rickmansworth School had sustained high levels of achievement and that when value added data was taken into account Queens' School and Westfield School did better than expected. Furthermore a building project at Queens School, including extending the science accommodation, would enable the School to meet its key objective to raise results in science which would automatically and dramatically raise the school's overall examination performance.

The Panel was also informed that Year 7 intakes at Bushey Hall School for the last 2 years had seen a significant increase in ability and therefore it is anticipated that results will improve as these cohorts move through the school.

Although no formal decision has yet been taken about the future of the Langleybury site, the indications are that it will not be needed again as a school.

5. Financial Implications

The aim of the review is to achieve the best set of proposals within a "Basic Need" allocation of £2.87 million that has already been secured for DfEE.

Background information referred to by the author.

Report to School Provision and Resources Panel - 23 November 2000.

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COMMENTS FROM THE LIBERAL DEMOCRAT GROUP

- We are concerned with new DfEE money for “basic need” places so the money should go for new places in high performing schools, exclusively, not offering parents additional places in lower performing schools
- It is clear, therefore, that the proposals are incompatible with this.
- For both Conservative and Labour Parties, National policy is to expand good schools popular schools schools performing well.
- Pupils and Parents in Rickmansworth don’t want places in Bushey. They want high quality places created in schools near to where they live.
- At least 4 divisions under pressure (represented by Cllrs B Lamb, G Pulman, I Ambrose and P Goggins). (Need to take in account high number of parents not getting first preferences in four divisions: Rickmansworth, Chorleywood, Croxley and Langleybury). There were at least 90 unsuccessful pupils last year.
- Need to enter into dialogue with St Clement Danes, Chorleywood, which should be a serious consideration for more places as well as Rickmansworth.
- Concerns about places for Abbots Langley children because of Leavesden Aerodrome housing development. Impact unknown – need for Langleybury in future?
- 1 FE in Rickmansworth is insufficient to meet demand. There might be economies of scale if this school could take 2 forms of entry extra.
- Promise when Langleybury closed – put into mothballs and would be reopened if numbers rose and places were in short supply.
- If it is not to be reopened – places need to be provided in those areas under pressure, e.g. Rickmansworth/Croxley Green/Langleybury.
- This is an opportunity for Hertford County Council to reduce cross-region travelling. Too many pupils currently have to travel long distances into Watford/Bushey to schools they did not choose. We can greatly reduce this traffic by wise planning now.

There is demonstrably no shortage of school places in Watford/Bushey where there are 10 schools within a very short radius from the centre point.

Equally demonstrably there is an acute shortage in the County division mentioned above.

Priorities for expansion should be Rickmansworth and Clement Danes, with Parmiters as a third if funds permit.