

To: All Members of the County Council  
All Chief Officers

From COUNTY SECRETARY'S  
DEPARTMENT

Ask for David Roberts  
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**CABINET**  
**11 FEBRUARY 2002**

**MINUTES**  
**ATTENDANCE**

**MEMBERS OF THE CABINET**

D A Ashley, D Beatty, R J M Ellis (Chairman), G D Game, R I N Gordon, M H T Janes, D B Lloyd, D E Lloyd, J M Pitman, I E M Tarry.

Other Members present:

D E Billing, F W Clayton, D W Hills, T G M Kent, R Mays, P A Ruffles, R J Smith, B A York.

Upon consideration of the agenda for the Cabinet meeting on 11 February 2002 as circulated, copy annexed, executive decisions were reached and are recorded below:

*Note: No conflicts of interest were declared by any member of the Cabinet in relation to the matters on which decisions were made at this meeting and set out below, with the exception of the declaration made by David Beatty and noted under Minute 2 below.*

**1. MINUTES**

The minutes of the Cabinet held on 28 January 2002 were confirmed as a correct record.

**2. MUSLEY INFANT SCHOOL, WARE - proposed closure**  
(Forward Plan Ref. A012/02)

**Conflict of Interest**

David Beatty declared his interest in relation to the matter under discussion arising from his position as a governor of the nearby Tower Primary School. He remained in the meeting room but took no part in the discussion or voting.

**Decision**

- (1) That the Council start statutory processes for the closure of Musley Infant School on 31 August 2003 and that a statutory notice be published to that effect.
- (2) That, in the event of there being no statutory objections to the closure, the Director of Children, Schools and Families be authorised to confirm it .

**Reasons for the decision**

Musley Infant School was considered a good school, well supported by its parents. The quality of education was not in doubt. However, it did not have a nursery class, nor an associated junior school. So continuity of education during the Foundation stage of the National Curriculum and from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 was difficult.

The School roll was 23 children; and it was the most expensive primary school in the County. Pupils were recruited from all parts of Ware. Over the nine schools in Ware/Great Amwell, there were 270 spare places (14%). Despite planned house building in Ware, the overall demand for places was forecast to remain at around the current level and there was no confidence that the numbers would increase to the level that would be educationally sound.

**Any alternative options considered and rejected**

None

3. **CHARLESTON PADDOCKS, MOTORWAY SERVICE AREA, SOUTH MIMMS - authorisation of a planning application for the construction of a replacement winter maintenance depot**  
(Forward Plan Ref. A031/02)

**Decision**

That the submission of a planning application for the construction of a replacement winter maintenance depot at Charleston Paddocks, Motorway Service Area, South Mimms (as shown on Plan A appended to the report), be approved.

**Reasons for the decision**

The Highways Agency wished to occupy the existing depot in order to carry out winter maintenance of the M25 and A1(M). The Agency was also hoping to share the depot with four police authorities for the provision of a combined traffic control centre. The salt barn in the depot was fully used by the County Council and was too small to enable shared use with the Highways Agency.

Other than the site at Charleston Paddocks, the County Council had not been able to identify any other site for a new county depot. Until such a depot was provided the County Council would be unable to make the existing depot available to the Highways Agency and police authorities.

If planning permission for the new depot could be obtained it would be possible for the County Council to consider disposal of the existing depot to the Highways Agency and development of the replacement depot for the County Council.

It was necessary to submit a planning application for construction of a replacement Winter Maintenance depot. Although the site of the new depot was within the Green Belt, it was considered that there were very special circumstances that justify the development.

#### **Any alternative options considered and rejected**

The possibility of the County Council and the Highways Agency sharing the existing depot's facilities had been investigated. However, this had been ruled out as the existing salt barn was fully utilised by the County Council and there was no spare capacity. The County Council had also investigated whether there were any alternative sites available but no suitable site had been identified. As such the County Council was unable to release the existing depot to the Highways Agency or to share its use with them.

#### **4. HITCHIN BRITISH SCHOOLS TRUST - proposed grant** (Forward Plan Ref. A032/02 )

##### **Decision**

1. That the County Council welcomes the progress made by the Hitchin British Schools Trust in its project to restore the historic school buildings.
2. That a grant be paid to the Hitchin British Schools Trust in recognition of this progress, the amount of the grant to be £54,000 plus a further sum calculated as one half the amount of interest owed by the Trust to the County Council on the date the grant is paid.
3. That the grant to be subject to:
  - (a) North Hertfordshire District Council agreeing to make a grant to the Trust of the same amounts, to be paid on the same day and upon the same terms,
  - (b) the Trust using the grant only to reduce its debt to HCC arising from its purchase of the Old British School,
  - (c) there being a successful joint sale with North Hertfordshire District Council of the lands at Storehouse Lane and Kershaws Hill, Hitchin, and
  - (d) the grant being paid as soon as possible after the proceeds of that sale have been received.

##### **Reasons for the decision**

The County Council sold the Old British School, Hitchin to the Hitchin British Schools Trust in 1994, with the purchase price to be paid in stages.

The Trust had been successful in gaining wide recognition of the importance of this historic building, with some fundraising and with stabilising the condition of the buildings and part renovation. However it had been unable to attract the further funding required to complete the project.

In particular the Trust had been unable to seek help from the National Lottery as not all of the instalments of the purchase price had been paid. The Trust has requested the County Council's assistance to clear the debt arising from the purchase.

The County Council and North Hertfordshire District Council own residential development land, adjoining the Old British School, which was once used in association with the Old School. Owing to the particular physical configuration of the individual land ownership's there was a particular additional financial benefit from a joint sale, as compared with individual joint sales. The additional capital receipts arising could be considered to be windfall gains arising from the co-operation on joint sale.

Subject to a successful joint sale of that land, it would be possible to consider the provision of grant to the Trust funded from the Council Council's share of the windfall gain.

There was an opportunity for the County Council and North Hertfordshire District Council to consider making grants to the Hitchin British Schools Trust funded from capital receipts arising from the joint sale of adjoining lands.

The Cabinet were very appreciative of the Trust's achievements to date in renovating the buildings.

**Any alternative options considered and rejected**

None

**5. FUNDING OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES - Stevenage Borough Council**

**Decision**

The Council notes Stevenage Borough Council's proposal to withdraw £170,000 of services from children in Stevenage, but recognises that this is a matter solely for the Borough Council to determine, particularly as the reference to the power of well being is one which they are just as entitled to use as the County Council.

**Reasons for the decision**

As set out in the decision above.

**Any alternative options considered and rejected**

None

**6. CAPITAL PROJECTS AT SCHOOLS – proposed amendments to the formula for school contributions****Decision**

1. That consultation with schools on the proposals outlined in the report be authorised.
2. That any revised arrangements be applied to new schemes included in the capital programme for 2002-03 and subsequent years.
3. That any consequential reduction in cost to the county funded capital programme be re-allocated towards additional CSF capital schemes identified by the Director for Children, Schools and Families in consultation with the Executive Member for Children, Schools and Families.

**Reasons for the decision**

The current formula took account of the condition of the school buildings, but that information was based on data which was only collected once every three years. It also took account of school balances, but that information could be used at an earlier stage in the process of prioritising the need for funding.

Because of the above constraints it was not possible to work out how much a school would be asked to contribute until the start of the financial year for which the funding had been allocated.

With a two year rolling programme (at least for minor works) schools know that they will have a project 12 months hence but they do not know how much they will be asked to contribute to the scheme until much nearer the time.

There was a certain “unfairness” in that school contributions were required for minor works but not major works.

Schools are receiving more devolved capital funding and therefore the Cabinet wanted to encourage a more widespread application of the policy for contributions to capital projects so that more schemes could be funded.

**Any alternative options considered and rejected**

None