

(Extract of unconfirmed minutes of the Select Committee on Lifelong Learning held on 20 March 2001)

CALL-IN ON CABINET MEMBER DECISION S12/01 – FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR SECONDARY EDUCATION AT HATTERS LANE (HIGHCREST SCHOOL), HIGH WYCOMBE

The Cabinet Member for Schools, Mr M C Appleyard, attended the meeting with regard to the call-in of decision S12/01. The report highlighted the reasons for the need to address new arrangements at Hatters Lane (Highcrest School). Following the publication on 23 February of the notice of a decision to be taken, representations were received from Mr Greenburgh objecting to the proposed action and requesting the Lifelong Learning Select Committee to consider calling in the proposal for scrutiny. Mr Greenburgh's objections included:

- The proposed school is insufficiently different from the current provision and does not tackle the underlying problems;
- There is no requirements to provide sixth form education on that site;
- The proposed capital build does not address the needs of the school, such as upgrading the science and other teaching facilities;
- There is no evidence that other options have been pursued such as the outsourcing of provision, specialist status, or other alternatives to address the weaknesses identified in the OFSTED report.

During discussion with Mr Appleyard the following points were noted:

- In relation to a question on closing the school when pupil intake numbers fell to 71, and re-allocating pupils to other schools it was noted that closing Hatters Lane left the centre of High Wycombe with no secondary education. **ALL** pupils would travel to schools outside the area by bus incurring high additional cost in home to school transport. This would disadvantage the area and community still further.
- Since appointing a temporary Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher in November 1999 the standards of the school have shown improvement, leading to the opinion that a school would survive and flourish in the area.
- Pupils have responded well to the rigour and boundaries set by the Headteacher.
- The DfEE have made available £3m of the £3.5m costs, from money set aside for this type of project.
- In relation to comments on the expected number on role in September 2001 it was noted that the school will have four forms of entry, allowing for 120 pupils entering each year. It was noted this figure may not be reached immediately and

may take two years to achieve. Until four forms of entry over four years is achieved the school would not be full.

- Initially, a sixth form option will not be available. The key areas of education will concentrate on Keystage 3 and 4 at least until the school is moved out of special measures.
- In relation to comments on the quality of teaching and management it was noted that OFSTED described the teaching as poor. This had an adverse effect on attracting and recruiting new teachers. However, a lot of work was put in by the LEA, Advisors and the Headteacher with all senior appointments now filled for September 2001, together with a large number of the teaching posts filled. The new ethos of the school has attracted quality teachers.
- A schools success also depends on quality and calibre of management. Support has come from the Royal Grammar School, whose Headteacher sits on the Board of Governors.
- In relation to the wider picture the Report of the Wycombe Commission highlighted the need to look wider than just Hatters Lane by considering the feeder schools. From the report and the data collected, it was evident that primary education within the area needed addressing. Therefore three new two form of entry combined schools, with the possibility of PFI support, were proposed to be delivered in the near future.

The Committee thanked the Cabinet Member for Schools for attending the meeting.

Following discussion and analysis of all the evidence, it was agreed that no further action would be taken on the matter.

RESOLVED

That no further action be taken on the call-in of cabinet decision S12/01 – Future Arrangements for Secondary Education at Hatters Lane (Highcrest School), High Wycombe.