

Cabinet**19 April 2004****SCRUTINY OF LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE REDDITCH REVIEW****Response of Miss June Longmuir, Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and Lifelong Learning**

1. The report as a whole is to be welcomed. It took a wide brief but found time and inclination to subject a number of areas to detailed scrutiny and produced a report which contains facts, figures and operational factors which on two counts contain a positive message for future review procedures and practices across other areas of the County, in particular the Wyre Forest Review. Secondly the monitoring of the effect of the review in Redditch itself and the probable need for small readjustments to complete its process in retrospect.

What did the Review Achieve?

2. Responses to individual recommendations and information leading up to them:

3. Although surplus places were removed what was not part of the exercise was the continued natural demographic decline of primary aged children, which supports recommendation 1 and will affect secondary aged children in the near future, making it clear that reviews will never be complete in themselves and must be ongoing as part of its monitoring by the LEA. The implications of pupils going across the border must not be lost and may well continue if Warwickshire still retains their Grammar Schools near to the border and the implications of the 2 tier system used by them can be seen to have any significance in parental choice.

4. I support recommendation one.

Pupil Achievement

5. The review, for all its upheaval, released tremendous energy on the part of staff and pupils, raised expectations and clearly gave new impetus to pupil performance.

6. Whilst Redditch still has a way to go, the GCSE results and the value added base of pupils has shown remarkable improvement. A more mixed pattern is evident in some Key Stage areas, which need to be evaluated and upgraded. However the fact that no schools are, at present, in Special Measures or in serious weaknesses must speak for itself. The time spent on consultation and unease felt by pupils and staff during the time lag was of concern but it is essential that sufficient time be allocated for public participation and good decision making. Long term effectiveness is more important than speed – I also believe it necessary that local County Councillors act neutrally during the

consultation and take part in decision making **after** they have local responses not before.

7. I have sympathy with Recommendation 2 and wish the first paragraph was a message learned throughout the County Council.

Employment

8. It is essential that staff are supported during times of turmoil and the report makes it clear that the operations taken by the LEA were as effective as they could be during the review period. However if reorganisation is to be successful the quality of staff building a new school ethos must be part of the positive benefit and should be considered carefully in any future operation. **I partly support Recommendation 3 but with hindsight some variation in operations may be necessary to emphasise quality.**

Governors

9. Totally support Recommendation 4.

Scrutiny Panel

10. Recommendation 5 a decision for the Panel and not for Cabinet members to comment.

Capital Works – Headteachers

11. Regardless of the extra work involved, no Headteacher would wish to delegate building projects entirely to LEA officers and architects without the opportunity to intervene. The implications of Recommendation 6 will depend partly on the size of the Review in question and the contractual terms of the financing of that Review, ie PFI, etc.

12. Recommendation 6 i I find too precise to fit a number of options but accept the implications it raises.

Resources

13. The Redditch Review must be evaluated in historic context, its capital needs at the time were based on revision of older buildings, additions and in most cases not replacements. History has moved on, the possibilities of PFI and of prudential borrowing, closer public private partnerships and recent government announcements for replacement secondary schools over the next 10 years are all part of future planning not past. Hence costs cannot be matched to achievement where differing capital processes are being used. The Council will use whatever is available to suit its needs at the time and to match cost of reviews past and present in precise money terms is not a measure of educational effectiveness.

14. Recommendation 6 ii and iii – sympathetic support but needs to be reflective of future capital funding.

Catchment Areas

15. This is a matter which will be under constant review – not only in Redditch but with growth and change across the County with the consequences of falling rolls in both Primary and later Secondary education.

16. Recommendation 7 – agreed but changing circumstances may well necessitate new working practices in the future, ie in the Secondary sector the involvement of the LSC, the relationship of that to the County Strategy to the 14-19 curriculum and the working relationship required between Schools at 14-16 and later to 6th form curriculum. The opening of new relationships between Schools and communities (Extended Schools) and Schools and Schools (Federated Schools).

17. Agreed Recommendation 7 as far as it goes but to widen its implications with new practices post Redditch.

18. Overall a valuable working document which will point the way to a more effective range of processes but recommendations not to be treated as policy decisions since we live in changing times and must learn the lesson without being fossilised by its outcomes.

19. Personal response in writing by the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and Lifelong Learning after verbal consideration on the final draft before publication.

June Longmuir

30 March 2004