

Appendix 1



<u>Committee and Date</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Paper</u>
Council		
20 June 2008		
10.00am	Public	

Independent Policy Commission – Primary School Organisation Terms of Reference

Chair of Policy Commission

Neil Kinghan

Summary

This report sets out the draft Terms of Reference for the Policy Commission and includes details of the proposed membership of the Policy Commission and the suggested method of operation.

Background

1. Following my appointment as Chair of the Policy Commission, I was tasked with reporting to Council on the following issues:
 - a. The membership of the Commission which needed to include experts in education, rural issues and, finance/ local government.
 - b. The scope and Terms of Reference for the Policy Commission.
 - c. A recommended method of operation for the Policy Commission.
2. The following people have accepted an invitation and agreed [pending Council's decision] to join the Policy Commission:
 - a. Louise Stoll – Visiting Professor at the Institute for Education, University of London
 - b. Margaret Clark – Rural Adviser to Business and the Community, Former Director at the Commission for Rural Communities
 - c. Tony Travers – Director of a Research Centre at London School of Economics and Adviser to the House of Commons Select Committee for Schools, Children and Families on local government finance.
3. The Policy Commission will review the issues relating to the organisation of primary schools in Shropshire; as set out below, and will make recommendations to a cross-party reference group of the County Council on the timetable set out below.

4. Terms of Reference

4.1 Financial Issues

- 4.11 The financial implications of retaining the existing organisation of primary schools (subject to the amalgamations which have been the subject of formative consultation closing on 2 May 2008);
- 4.12 The possibilities for securing the resources for meeting the costs of the existing organisation, from Government, the County Council's budget, or elsewhere;
- 4.13 The funding implications of alternative options for primary school organisation (including the possibility of further amalgamations, federation and closures);
- 4.14 The funding formula in Shropshire and the case for changing it to ensure it is fair to all schools;
- 4.15 The prospects of capital funding for school reorganisation;
- 4.16 The possibility of bringing forward secondary school reorganisation and its financial implications;
- 4.17 The data on which the primary school projections are based.

4.2 Educational Issues

- 4.21 The educational benefits, and disadvantages for children, of retaining the present number of small schools in Shropshire (subject to the amalgamations which have been the subject of formative consultation closing on 2 May 2008);
- 4.22 The implications for teachers, head teachers and school governors of the existing organisation of primary schools and of possible changes to it;
- 4.23 The impact of mixed age classes on the education of children in the schools where they are used;
- 4.24 The educational impact of amalgamations, federations and closures, on all the schools affected and on new schools that may be created and on the overall network of schools;
- 4.25 Admissions policies for primary schools in Shropshire.

4.3 Social, Community and Environmental Issues

- 4.31 The social and community role of primary schools for the community they serve, and the implications of closure and/or reorganisation for those communities;
- 4.32 The impact on children of small social cohorts in schools where they apply;
- 4.33 The implications for children's travel of possible changes to the organisation of primary schools;
- 4.34 The potential environmental impact of possible changes to the organisation of primary schools;
- 4.35 The implications for the balance of faith orientated schools within the network.

5. Timetable

5.1 The Policy Commission's provisional timetable is as follows:

23rd June – 12th September 2008 – invitation to teachers, head teachers, governors, diocesan representatives, parents, town and parish councils, residents and other stakeholders to give written evidence to the Commission on the issues raised in the Terms of Reference. (A list of stakeholders is attached at Appendix 2).

October 2008 – first report to Shropshire County Council cross-party reference group on the emerging issues coming out of the written evidence.

November 2008 to January 2009 - the Commission will hold hearings in five locations across the County to take oral evidence.

February 2009 – progress report to Shropshire County Council cross-party reference group.

June 2009 – final Commission report to Shropshire County Council cross-party reference group to follow (Shropshire Council) elections.

5.2 A short article has been included in the current edition of the 'Shropshire' magazine that will be distributed to households from the 9th June advising the public of the establishment of the Policy Commission and making them aware of the website: www.shropshire.gov.uk/policycommission. An email address has also already been set up at policy.commission@shropshire.gov.uk for the submission of evidence. It is proposed that the evidence submitted during the course of the Policy Commission will be stored in the Reference library.

6. Cross Party Reference Group

The proposed membership of the cross-party reference group is:

- The Leader of Shropshire County Council;
- Children and Young People's Services Portfolio Holder;
- Schools Support Champion;
- Children and Young People Services Chair of Scrutiny Panel;
- Children and Young People Services Vice Chair of Scrutiny Panel.

This constitutes 3 Conservative, 1 Liberal Democrat, and 1 Labour.