

**Halesowen Area Committee 3 July 2007**

**Report of the Director of Children's Services**

**Answers to Questions regarding Cradley High School**

**Purpose of Report**

1. At a previous meeting Halesowen Committee Members asked several questions about Cradley High School recorded as Minutes 83 (a), (b) and (c). These questions and other issues are addressed in this report.

**Background**

2. On 7 February the independent School Organisation Committee approved proposals to close Cradley High School with effect from 31 August 2008. Implementation of the closure proposals require pupils currently in Years 7, 8 and 9 to transfer to alternative secondary schools by 1 September 2007. Year 10 pupils will continue into Year 11 to complete their statutory education at Cradley High School and leave in the summer of 2008.

**Finance**

3. Dudley receives funding for education directly from government based largely on the number of pupils attending schools and early years settings in the January prior to the start of the new financial year in April. Cradley High, like all other schools, receives a share of this government allocation in accordance with the locally agreed Fair Funding Scheme, and again based on the number of pupils attending the school. The 2007/8 budget setting for Cradley High has to take account of pupil movements between schools. Consequently, Cradley will receive the pupil related elements of the budget from April to August based on the January 2007 census of the pupils in Years 7 to 11: a total of five year groups. From September to March 2008 Cradley will have only one year group and the pupil related budget will be much lower. This represents a fall of approximately 75% in pupil related funding. The pupil related funding for other year groups will transfer to alternative secondary schools. As the pupil related element is by far the largest element of the school budget, this is a very significant issue for Cradley High School.

4. The non pupil related elements of the budget such as premises costs have been allocated to Cradley High School for the whole financial year.
5. Most secondary schools will allocate around 80% of the total budget to staff salaries and related costs. In 2006/07 Cradley allocated 83% to staffing, 10% to surplus and services and 7% to premises costs. In January 2006 Cradley had 48 full time equivalent teachers for 666 pupils. The transfer of pupils by the end of August 2007, and the pupil related budget to alternative schools, means that the current level of staffing will not be required or be affordable from September.
6. This in year pressure is in addition to the budget difficulties already existing. In December 2006 the 2006/7 budget was forecast to be in deficit by end of March by around £194k including school budget and trading accounts for Leisure and Adult Education. The outturn figures for end of financial year 2006/07 showed a school budget deficit of £85K and a school trading account (Leisure and Adult Education) deficit of £75K, a total deficit of £160K. These deficits are carried forward. The 2007/08 budget allocation is £253K lower than in 2006/07 resulting in a financial position of around £413K less.
7. In February 2007 Schools Forum approved transitional support from the 2007/8 budget in three areas
  - £75 contribution towards uniform costs for each pupil transferring from Cradley to alternative schools after the School Organisation Committee decision (8 February)
  - Support for secondary schools for additional administration and induction costs
  - Salary protection if required for staff moving to posts at a lower rate of pay.

### Staffing

8. There are two main priorities to balance.
  - The need to reduce staffing by around 75 – 80% by September to ease budget pressure for the last 7 months of this financial year
  - The need to ensure the Year 11 curriculum is supported with appropriately qualified and experienced staff from September 2007 to August 2008

Considerable progress has been made.

9. Dudley is required to make an annual return to the Department for Education and Skills about teaching staff. The return compiled on 18 January 2007 records forty two FTE teaching staff at Cradley High School with a pupil:teacher ratio of 11.9:1. This compares very favourably with the borough secondary school average of 15.1:1.

10. From September 2006 to the end of May (resignation date for new teaching posts in September) twenty five teachers have already left or will take up alternative posts by September 2007. Fifteen of these moves are to Dudley schools. There may be some further movement as secondary schools find themselves short of staff after the May resignation deadline for teachers and little prospect of recruitment normally for September. The reduction in teaching staff is confirmed at around 60% and is likely to rise further.
11. Cradley High School is expecting around twelve to thirteen of the existing teaching staff to remain in post from September. A curriculum model has been agreed with the school to ensure that pupils can continue their studies with familiar, experienced and skilled staff. Arrangements are in place to ensure all relevant subject areas are suitably staffed. A meeting will be arranged for parents of Year 10 pupils as soon as these details are confirmed.

### Pupils

12. In January 2007 there were 226 pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. After School Organisation Committee made the decision, parents were asked to express preferences for alternative secondary schools. Discussions continued over a number of months with schools to maximise the number of places allocated to preferences.
  - 114 pupils have been allocated first preferences.
  - 22 pupils have been allocated second preferences.
  - 14 pupils have been allocated third preferences.

The remainder have been allocated places at schools where no preferences were made. These include those who made preferences for one or two schools only such as Earls and/or Windsor.

13. Most parents expressed preferences before the deadline. Efforts have been made to ensure returns from all parents. A few of these parents have expressed intention to make alternative arrangements including schools in other authorities and home education. The final allocations will be confirmed when appeals have been considered
14. Arrangements for school admissions changed many years ago to open enrolment. Parents can express preferences for any school in Dudley, in other authorities or to elect for home education. Dudley as the admissions authority for community schools and as co-ordinator of the admission arrangements for other schools, publish the admissions criteria and procedure annually. The allocation of places to pupils transferring from Cradley was completed in accordance with these criteria and letters sent to parents on 18 May. No parents were refused

places under this process prior to this date. Parents were informed of their right of appeal.

15. The allocation of places agreed with schools is set out in the table below. Parents expressed preferences for around fifteen schools including some in other authorities.

School	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Total
Castle High	1	3	5	9
Earls High	1	6	6	13
Hillcrest	5	10	6	21
Holly Hall	0	5	5	10
Leasowes	4	12	12	28
Pedmore	9	6	6	21
Redhill	2	5	5	12
Ridgewood	0	1	0	1
Thorns	10	10	11	31
Windsor	5	7	3	15
Wordsley	0	4	7	11
Total	37	69	66	172

16. All pupils will be supported through the transition into their new schools. Arrangements are in place to support those with special educational needs, English as an additional language or pastoral support. The alternative schools have been planning induction arrangements for several months.

#### Leisure and Community Facilities

17. Cradley High School is located on a site adjacent to an open area of recreation space. The playing fields, sports hall and changing rooms are used by a number of sports clubs. Discussions are taking place with the Council's Directorate of the Urban Environment on options for maintaining this provision from September 2008.
18. The school buildings have experienced several acts of vandalism and theft. Additional measures have been introduced to ensure that all users and the building remain secure.

#### Law

19. The Provisions relating to school closures and the information contained in the report are contained in the Education Acts.

#### Equality Impact

20. The report takes into account the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy and whilst there are no direct implications for children and young people in noting this report, any decisions made by the relevant body in relation to the closure of Cradley High School will impact on those groups.
21. This report will have no specific effect on children and young people. There is not requirement for consultation with children and young people or the involvement of children and young people in noting the report.

### **Recommendations**

22. The Halesowen Area Committee Members are asked to note the contents of this report.



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### ***List of Background Papers***