

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET - 24th JUNE 2010

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

REVIEW OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES PHASE 2: PENSBY HIGH SCHOOL FEDERATION UPDATE

Executive Summary

Following Cabinet's meeting of 1st October 2009, the governing bodies of Pensby High School for Girls and Pensby High School for Boys have undertaken a consultation on establishing a hard federation between the two schools. This report updates Cabinet on the governing bodies decision to proceed with a hard federation, the first such between Wirral schools, from 4th May 2010.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 At its meeting of 1st October 2009, Cabinet approved the division of Phase 2 of the Secondary Places Review into two phases – Phase 2A comprising the Wirral West area and beginning in Autumn 2009, Phase 2B including schools in the Wallasey area, due to begin in Autumn 2010.
- 1.2 As stated in section 9 of that report, the falling secondary roll, whilst impacting on all schools in the Phase 2A area, was particularly acute in the Pensby area. The possibility of a federation was discussed. It should be noted that while there may be benefits and efficiencies to be made by federated schools, federation by itself has no direct impact on surplus places.
- 1.3 The procedure for schools to federate is outlined in the Guidance on the School Governance (Federations) (England) Regulations 2004.
- 1.4 The governing bodies of the two Pensby secondary schools instigated a joint group to investigate the possibilities of various kinds of federation, and held several meetings, including discussions with officers over the following months. This resulted in an agreement that a consultation would be held on a hard federation between the two schools. The outcome of that consultation, and the governing body decision, is the subject of this report.

2.0 The Consultation

- 2.1 The governing bodies, assisted by the Authority, produced and distributed a consultation document in order for all stakeholders to have access to relevant background information and have the opportunity to comment and respond. This document is attached as Appendix A.
- 2.2 The consultation was advertised in the local newspaper, and on-line via the Wirral Learning Grid and both school's individual websites. Consultation meetings were held at Pensby Boys on 24th February 2010, and at Pensby Girls on 25th February 2010, as well as informal drop-in sessions at both schools.

Pensby Boys

- 2.3 The meetings at the Boys school were attended by 4 people. Twenty-four responses to consultation were received, of which 21 were for the proposal, and 3 against.
- 2.4 Of those who were against the proposal, two gave no reason, and one stated they would prefer a mixed (amalgamated) school.

Pensby Girls

- 2.5 The meetings at the Girls school were attended by 4 people. Thirty-five responses to consultation were received, of which 29 were for the proposal and 6 against.
- 2.6 Of those who were against the proposal, concerns were raised about the possibility of a future amalgamation, about mixed sex teaching in Key Stage 4 and potential compromises in single sex education. There were also concerns about loss of experienced staff and about any drop in standards at the Girls school.

3.0 The Decision

- 3.1 Following the closure of the consultation on 19th March 2010, the two governing bodies met separately to discuss the outcome on 20th April 2010, followed immediately by a joint governing body meeting at which the decision was to proceed with the hard federation proposal to dissolve the existing governing bodies and reconstitute a single governing body on 4th May 2010. The governing bodies joint report is attached as Appendix B.
- 3.2 It should be noted that federation between two or more schools is a decision for the governing bodies of those schools, not for the Council.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Both schools retain their separate budgets, although they may decide to share some proportion of their budgets by agreement of the single governing body.
- 4.2 Federation of these two schools does not remove surplus places, which represent a waste of resources. In 2010, Pensby High School for Boys had 31% surplus places, while Pensby High School for Girls had 11% surplus places. By 2014, both schools are projected to have more than 25% surplus places. The issue of surplus places remains to be addressed through various structural solutions which will be considered as the Phase 2A review continues.

5.0 Staffing Implications

- 5.1 Existing staff of both schools remain employees of the Local Authority, and remain in post at implementation of the federation. The single Governing body expects to move to a single staffing structure over the course of two academic years as opportunities arise.

6.0 Equal Opportunities Implications/Health Impact Assessment

- 6.1 It is essential to plan school provision across the Authority so that it is both efficient and effective in the interests of all pupils.

6.2 An equality impact assessment will be carried out on this report.

7.0 Community Safety Implications

7.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

8.0 Local Agenda 21 Statement

8.1 The removal of old, inefficient accommodation contributes to Council principles and targets in respect of Agenda 21.

9.0 Planning Implications

9.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

10.0 Anti-Poverty Implications

10.1 The redistribution of funding released by school reorganisation, in combination with the Authority's intention to realign the schools budget to give higher levels of funding to schools with high levels of deprivation, as well as improved accommodation, goes towards raising aspirations and narrowing the attainment gap for vulnerable groups.

11.0 Social Inclusion Implications

11.1 School re-organisation and transforming accommodation through the forthcoming Building Schools for the Future programme and other schemes, provides opportunities to promote joint agency work to promote co-ordinated solutions for pupils and their families.

12.0 Local Member Support Implications

12.1 Secondary school re-organisation and potential surplus place removal have relevance to all Wards.

12.2 The secondary schools named in this report are located in the Pensby and Thingwall Ward.

13.0 Background Papers

Audit Commission Report: Planning School Places in Wirral September 2004.
School pupil number returns, January 2010 (Annual Census return to DCSF).
School Net Capacity Calculation, July 2009, to DCSF requirements.

Consultation Documents

Other data held in Department including that provided by Wirral Health Authority.

14.0 Summary

14.1 The two Pensby secondary schools have now entered into a hard Federation, which should enable the two schools to work together more closely under a single governing body, building on the existing joint sixth form arrangements and safeguarding viable secondary education for both girls and boys in Pensby as rolls fall in forthcoming years. It is vital for the Government's Building Schools for the Future (BSF)

programme to begin thinking early how capital funding can be targeted most effectively. The federation by itself does not resolve the surplus place issue in secondary schools in Pensby, however this contribution towards wider secondary school re-organisation in Wirral is also a step towards meeting the challenge of demonstrating Readiness to Deliver for BSF, which is then followed by drawing up a Strategy for Change and an Outline Business Case articulating the Council's vision for transforming secondary school provision.

15.0 Recommendations

That the outcome of the Pensby High School Federation consultation and governing body decision be noted, and that Cabinet's congratulations be given to both governing bodies on their decision to become Wirral's first hard federated schools.

Howard Cooper
Director of Children's Services