

METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF WIRRAL

CABINET – 14th DECEMBER 2006

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

REVIEW OF PRIMARY PLACES PHASE 3: AREA REVIEWS OF GREASBY, HESWALL, LEASOWE, NORTH WALLASEY, PENSBY AND THINGWALL, SOUTH WALLASEY AND UPTON

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report advises the Cabinet of progress on the Phase 3 Area Reviews which have commenced following the instruction from Cabinet at its meetings on 16th March 2006 and 27th July 2006. The minutes of those Cabinet meetings are attached for Members' information as Appendix A to this report. As in previous phases, the first stage of the Reviews has been to conduct a process where, on a confidential basis, I have met with key stakeholders in each of the areas under review. These stakeholders included Ward Councillors as well as officers of the Diocese of Chester and Shrewsbury, headteachers and chairs of governors of schools potentially affected by the Reviews. Following these confidential discussions I am now in a position to make recommendations for options to be given further consideration in the second stage of the process. The balance of this report summarises these options, clarifies the process for their further consideration and comments briefly upon a number of the issues involved. In addition to the options described below there is considerable analytic and background material that was used as the basis for the identification of options; this is available for Members on request. A brief description of this material is included at Appendix B. Numbers on roll provided in this report are from the annual School Census of January 2006. This data will be updated during the process as and when validated January 2007 Census data becomes available.
- 1.2 In response to the Cabinet decision to review the small planning areas of Greasby, Heswall, Leasowe, North Wallasey, Pensby and Thingwall, South Wallasey and Upton, the following provides a summary of provision in each area and puts forward options for consideration.

2.0 Heswall

- 2.1 The small planning area of Heswall was included within the Phase 3 Area Review in order to ensure that we had looked coherently at provision across this region of the Wirral. This area is served by four schools: three community primaries and one CE Aided Primary. Numbers on roll at all the schools in this planning area have been relatively stable in recent years, against the general trend across the borough. None of these schools are small, or have high surplus places. We have looked carefully at this planning area to confirm that there is, in our opinion, no need at this stage to proceed with consideration of options for change.

3.0 Pensby and Thingwall

- 3.1 The small planning area of Pensby and Thingwall contains seven schools, five community, one Church of England Aided and one Catholic Aided Primary school. Of these, Irby

Primary, Dawpool CE Primary and Ladymount Catholic Primary are all relatively stable in terms of number on roll at around one form of entry, with few surplus places. Thingwall Primary School is a single form of entry primary school on an adjacent site to Stanley Special School. There are some surplus places at this school, and there is a temporary mobile on the site, which could be considered for removal in the future.

There are three community schools in the Pensby area. The Infant and Junior schools operate in separate buildings on the same site a short distance apart. Pensby Park is an all-through Primary school less than half a mile away. All three are small schools with relatively high levels of surplus places.

- 3.2 The following table shows the January 2006 census numbers on roll (NOR) at each of the three schools, the projected NOR in 2011, the capacity of the schools and the actual and projected surplus place percentages.

	Pensby Infant	Pensby Junior	Combined	Pensby Park	All three combined
2006 Net Capacity	120	176	296	120	416
2006 NOR	79	132	211	100	311
2006 Surplus place %	34.2	25.0	28.8	17.5	25.5
2011 NOR (projected)	85	112	197	102	299
2011 Surplus place % (projected)	29.2	36.4	33.5	15.0	28.1

The level of surplus places in the Pensby part of this small planning area is unacceptably high and projected to increase. Furthermore, the recorded surplus has been reduced considerably in recent years by introducing community, afterschool and playgroup provision. For example, Pensby Park Primary School was originally intended to accommodate 210 pupils. It is our view that some action should be taken to reduce provision either through closure(s) or amalgamation(s) of schools serving the area. This report sets out what I believe to be the practicable options. This area is due to receive a Phase 2 Children's Centre, the funding for which must be allocated within tight timescales.

There are a number of possibilities which could potentially resolve the surplus place and small school issues within these three schools and achieve a better match of provision to current and future pupil numbers.

3.3 **Option A: Closure of Pensby Park Primary School**

This option would mean ceasing to maintain this school. The number on roll at this school

is very low (100) with little prospect of improvement given the available current and projected number of pupils in the Pensby area.

All Pensby Park pupils could be accommodated at Pensby Infant and Junior schools using existing accommodation, although consideration could be given to replacing some of the temporary mobile or HORSAs accommodation with new build, or a totally new build school.

Pensby Infant and Junior school would remain open in their existing buildings as separate schools. The catchment zone of Pensby Park Primary would be combined with the existing zone for Pensby Infant and Junior schools.

3.4 Option B: Amalgamate Pensby Infant and Pensby Junior

In this option, Pensby Infant and Junior would close, and a new all-through primary school would open utilising both existing buildings, with a single headteacher. The existing school buildings are adjacent on the same site. On current numbers on roll, this would create an all-through primary school of around 210 pupils, which is one form of entry.

While this option does not automatically remove surplus places, there are educational, organisational and financial benefits to all-through primary education. Parents would no longer have to go through the admission process twice in primary phase. An all-through school helps staff to develop an in-depth knowledge of every child's individual needs and abilities from the start of statutory education. Key Stage 1 and 2 staff will be able to plan together to build on children's prior learning. There would be more opportunities for younger and older children to work together and act as mentors and buddies to each other, which will support their personal and social development. Children would no longer have to change schools at age 7, avoiding the dip in progress which is sometimes seen when pupils transfer from Infant to Junior schools. Assessment of children's attainment and tracking of individual progress from age 4 to 11 is uniform and consistent, and schools can design and plan a whole school curriculum covering the full primary age range.

Costs associated with maintaining separate institutions would be saved, with the savings being fed into the overall schools budget for the benefit of all Wirral pupils.

No changes would be required to existing catchment zones. As an all-through primary school with shared facilities, there may be scope to remove some of the existing high maintenance mobile and HORSAs accommodation, which would reduce surplus places and running costs at the new school. Consolidating to a single building with some extension work, or into an entirely new build school could also be considered.

Under this option, Pensby Park Primary School would remain open.

3.5 Option C: Amalgamate Pensby Infant and Junior, and close Pensby Park Primary School

As in Option B, the Infant and Junior schools would amalgamate to form a new all-through primary school. Pensby Park Primary School would close, and the catchment area of the new primary school would include the former catchments of Pensby Infant/Junior and Pensby Park. There would therefore be a single all-through primary school serving the Pensby area, with a number on roll of around 310 pupils.

No new building work would be required at the Pensby Infant/Junior site. Pupils currently attending Pensby Park Primary School could in our view be readily accommodated. In January 2006, Pensby Infant and Junior schools had 62 surplus places, on their existing Net capacity. The two schools have four classrooms in mobile or HORSAs accommodation which are used as after school or community provision. Returning just two of these classrooms into use as such would generate sufficient capacity to accommodate pupils from all three existing schools, if they chose to do so. Extension/refurbishment to existing buildings, consolidation into an existing building, or a complete new build school could also be considered.

3.6 **Option D: Amalgamate all three schools onto a single site**

In this option, all three schools would be closed. A new primary school would then open. Where the existing schools are on separate sites, the Council would usually prefer the new primary school to be on a single site, which would require at minimum some new building extension work, whichever site is chosen. A total new build primary school could also be considered. The new primary school could operate on existing sites while this building work is going on.

- **A1: the current Infant site**
- **A2: the current Junior site**
- **A3: the current Pensby Park site.**

Former pupils of all three schools would be guaranteed a place at the new school, although some may choose to transfer elsewhere, subject to the availability of places. On the most recent numbers, this would produce a school of around 310 pupils. The catchment zones of the schools would be combined to form the zone for the new primary school.

All three sites are Council owned, and future uses of the building and/or site could be considered. Any proposed sale of all or part of any site declared surplus to requirements would be subject to the regulations on the sale of school playing fields, and the Council's own planning regulations. All three sites are within the West Wirral planning permission restriction area for new housing development.

Diocesan Issues

3.7 A recent communication from the Anglican Diocese of Chester, attached as Appendix C indicates that they would be interested in expanding Church of England school provision in the Pensby area. We are informed by the Diocese that the local church has good links with all three existing schools. In 2006, 13% of the combined community/CE primary pupil population of Pensby attended various Church of England primary schools, principally Dawpool CE Primary in Thurstaston and St Peter's CE Primary in Heswall.

3.8 While any voluntary or foundation school may be established with a religious character, it is not possible for any school to gain, lose or change religious character through the change of category process. To effect a change from, for example, a community school to a voluntary school with a religious character, the LA would need to publish a proposal to

close the community school, and the Diocese would bring forward a linked proposal to establish a new voluntary school.

- 3.9 Consultation on options involving the establishment of a new primary school through amalgamation (B, C, D) could broaden to include the additional possibility of any new school opening as a Voluntary Aided or Controlled Church of England primary school, rather than as a Community primary school, although this could mean there would no longer be a Community primary school in Pensby. There may also be site transfer issues to resolve between the Council and the Diocese of Chester.

4.0 Greasby

- 4.1 The small planning area of Greasby contains four schools, one all-through community primary, a separate Infant and Junior school, and one Catholic Aided Primary school.

All four are viable schools in terms of number on roll. Our Lady of Pity Catholic Primary School is a relatively large school serving a wide area of several combined Parishes. Surplus places in this planning area are predicted to increase over the next five years, particularly as the falling rolls of recent years move through into Greasby Junior School.

- 4.2 Brookdale Primary School has made an initial enquiry regarding the possible expansion of an existing pre-school, and discussions will take place shortly as to the feasibility of this scheme. If implemented, this should remove some surplus places “on paper”, but there are ensuing effects on the school’s budget and admission number which must be analysed.

	Greasby Infant	Greasby Junior	Combined
2006 Net Capacity	189	308	497
2006 NOR	171	279	450
2006 Surplus place %	9.5	9.4	9.5
2011 NOR (projected)	181	230	411
2011 Surplus place % (projected)	4.1	25.4	17.4

- 4.3 The Council does not have a policy of amalgamating separate Infant and Junior schools into all-through primary schools. However, the Authority will look at Infant and Junior schools to see if they should amalgamate as opportunities arise, for example, when an area is reviewed, or when a headteacher retires. In this instance, the headteacher of Greasby Infant School is retiring at the end of this academic year.

- 4.4 Where the existing Infant and Junior schools are on separate sites, the Council would usually prefer the new primary school to be on a single site, which might involve some building work. The new primary school could operate on both sites while this work is going on.

A: Amalgamate Greasby Infant and Greasby Junior at the Infant site

B: Amalgamate Greasby Infant and Greasby Junior at the Junior site

In both options, both existing schools would close, and a new all-through primary school would open with a single headteacher and governing body. Former pupils of both schools would be guaranteed a place at the new school, which on current numbers on roll would have around 410 pupils, which is approximately two forms of entry.

- 4.5 Parents would no longer have to go through the admission process twice in primary phase, and children would no longer have to change schools at age 7, avoiding the dip in progress which is sometimes seen when pupils transfer from Infant to Junior schools. An all-through school helps staff to develop an in-depth knowledge of every child's individual needs and abilities from the start of statutory education. Key Stage 1 and 2 staff will be able to plan together to build on children's prior learning. There would be more opportunities for younger and older children to work together and act as mentors and buddies to each other, which will support their personal and social development. Assessment of children's attainment and tracking of individual progress from age 4 to 11 is uniform and consistent. Schools can design and plan a whole school curriculum covering the full primary age range. Once on a single site, parents with children in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 would only make a single journey rather than take children to two different sites. Costs associated with maintaining separate institutions would be saved, with the savings being fed into the overall schools budget for the benefit of all Wirral pupils.
- 4.6 Alterations to catchment zones would not be required, but there may be grounds to clarify and consolidate a portion of the Greasby Infant/Junior catchment area which overlaps with that of Brookdale Primary School.
- 4.7 The Greasby Infant building could accommodate the pupils from both existing schools with some extensive new building work (four to five classrooms) combined with internal alterations. The total site area is about 20% below the DfES recommended minimum size for a school of 410-420 pupils. Other facilities within the existing building would need to be enhanced, e.g. the hall.
- 4.8 The Greasby Junior site could accommodate all the pupils from both existing schools with some internal alterations; however there is a temporary mobile classroom block on the Junior site, and the opportunity could be taken to replace this with three new build classrooms as an extension to the school building. There is an existing pre-school playgroup operating at Greasby Infant school which would also need to be relocated if the Junior site were used. The total site area is above the DfES recommended minimum size for a school of 410-420 pupils.
- 4.9 Both sites are Council owned, and future uses of a building and/or site could be considered. Any proposed sale of all or part of a site declared surplus to requirements would be subject to the regulations on the sale of school playing fields, and the Council's own planning regulations. Both sites are within the West Wirral planning permission

restriction area for new housing development.

- 4.10 Support from the Governing bodies has proved critical to the success of previous Infant/Junior amalgamations, and we await feedback from the Governing bodies of both schools as to the viability of this option.

5.0 Upton

- 5.1 The small planning area of Upton contains three schools, a community Infant and Junior school, and one Catholic Aided Primary school.

- 5.2 All three are viable schools in terms of number on roll. Surplus places in this planning area are below 10%, and predicted to remain relatively stable over the next five years. As this planning area contains an Infant and Junior school, the amalgamation of these to form an all-through primary school should be considered.

	Overchurch Infant	Overchurch Junior	Combined
2006 Net Capacity	297	412	709
2006 NOR	265	374	639
2006 Surplus place %	10.8	9.2	9.9
2011 NOR (projected)	278	341	619
2011 Surplus place % (projected)	6.6	17.3	12.7

5.3 Amalgamate Overchurch Infant and Overchurch Junior school

In this option, both schools would close and a new all-through primary school would open utilising the existing buildings, with a single headteacher and governing body. All former pupils would be guaranteed a place at the new school. Based on current numbers on roll, the new school would have around 640 pupils – a relatively large primary school in Wirral terms.

The benefits set out in paragraphs 3.4 and 4.5 above would pertain. This amalgamation would have little impact on surplus places, but some financial return would be made to the overall school's budget. For example, the new school would receive a single lump sum, and would have one headteacher, not two. Efficiency savings would be fed back into the overall schools budget for the benefit of all Wirral pupils.

As the new school would use the existing buildings, no additional building work would be required in order to amalgamate the two schools, which share the same site. No amendments to catchment areas would be required.

5.4 Support from the Governing bodies has proved critical to the success of previous Infant/Junior amalgamations, and we await feedback from the Governing bodies of both schools as to the viability of this option.

6.0 **North Wallasey**

6.1 The small planning area of North Wallasey contains seven schools, including five community primary schools and two Catholic Aided primary schools. None of these schools are small, or have high surplus places. There is some temporary mobile accommodation which may be able to be removed, and discussions will take place with the schools concerned. We have looked carefully at this planning area to confirm that there is, in our opinion, no need at this stage to proceed with consideration of options for change.

7.0 **South Wallasey**

7.1 The small planning area of South Wallasey contains seven schools, including six community primary schools and one Catholic Aided primary school. There is also a Nursery school, Brentwood Early Years Centre.

Two of these primary schools are small, Kingsway Primary (153) and Poulton Primary (149). Four have more than 25% surplus places – these are Egremont (36%), Kingsway (25%), Poulton (28%) and St Joseph's Catholic Primary, Wallasey (29%).

The level of surplus places in this small planning area is unacceptably high and projected to increase. It is our view therefore that some action should be taken to reduce provision in this area. This report sets out what I believe to be the practicable options which could potentially resolve the surplus place and small school issues within these schools.

7.2 **A: Closure of Poulton Primary School**

In this option, Poulton Primary School would be closed. Places would be allocated to former Poulton pupils at other local schools according to parental preference, subject to the availability of places.

In January 2006, there were 149 pupils at Poulton Primary School. At alternative schools within a one mile radius of Poulton Primary, there were 418 surplus places. The catchment zone of Poulton Primary would be divided between neighbouring schools, St George's Primary School and Park Primary School. Dependant on parental preference, additional accommodation may be required at Park Primary School.

The Poulton site is Council owned, and future uses of the building and/or site could be considered. Any proposed sale of the site would be subject to the regulations on the sale of school playing fields and the Council's planning regulations.

7.3 **B: Amalgamate Park Primary School and Poulton Primary School on either site**

In this option, Park Primary School and Poulton Primary School would be closed. A new community primary school would then open either at:

- **B1: The Park Primary site**
- **B2: The Poulton Primary site**

Former pupils at both schools would be guaranteed a place at the new school, although some may choose to transfer elsewhere, subject to the availability of places. The catchment zones of Park Primary School and Poulton Primary School would largely be zoned to the new school, in combination with additional re-zoning at the boundaries, particularly between the existing Poulton Primary zone and the St George's Primary zone.

Based on current numbers on roll, the new school would have 385 pupils on roll. Poulton Primary can accommodate up to 350 pupils in the existing building and would require the least new building work in order to accommodate all the pupils from both former schools. Park Primary would require more significant work, involving three or more new build classrooms. The opportunity could also be taken to replace two single mobile classrooms already situated on the Park site. The new primary school could operate on one or both sites while this work is going on.

Both sites are smaller than the DfES recommended minimum for a school of this size. The Park Primary site, however, benefits from the adjacent playground and playing fields which form part of Central Park.

Both sites are Council owned and future uses of the building and/or site which would be declared surplus to requirements could be considered. Any proposed sale of the site would be subject to the regulations on the sale of school playing fields and the Council's planning regulations.

7.4 C: Closure of Kingsway Primary School

In this option, Kingsway Primary School would be closed. Places would be allocated to former Kingsway pupils at other local schools according to parental preference, subject to the availability of places.

In January 2006, there were 153 pupils at Kingsway Primary School. At alternative schools within a one mile radius of Kingsway Primary (excluding those in Birkenhead), there were 480 surplus places. The catchment zone of Kingsway Primary would be divided between neighbouring schools, Riverside Primary, Somerville Primary, and Poulton Primary.

The Kingsway site is Council owned, and future uses of the building and/or site could be considered. Any proposed sale of the site would be subject to the regulations on the sale of school playing fields and the Council's planning regulations.

7.5 D: Amalgamate Kingsway Primary School and Riverside Primary School

In this option, Kingsway Primary and Riverside Primary would be closed. A new school would then open on either site, or on a new site. Former pupils at both schools would be guaranteed a place at the new school, although some may choose to transfer elsewhere, subject to the availability of places. On current numbers on roll the new school would have around 470 pupils.

- **D1: On the Riverside site**
- **D2: On the Kingsway site**
- **D3: On a new site**

The existing buildings at either existing school site would require a significant extension of 5 to 8 classrooms in order to accommodate all former pupils of both schools. Situated in an urban area, both sites are below the DfES recommended minimum site area for a school of this size, the Riverside site being larger than the Kingsway site, which is quite restricted.

A new school is always very attractive to potential parents and therefore would be likely to fill (thus the zone becomes highly significant). This could clearly have an impact upon neighbouring schools, including Egremont Primary and Somerville Primary. The area will shortly be under consultation by the Housing Market Renewal Initiative (HMRI). Although the capital cost of building a new school would be relatively high, option D3 may be seen as contributing positively to regeneration.

Both sites are Council owned, and future uses of buildings and/or sites could be considered. Any proposed sale of the site would be subject to the regulations on the sale of school playing fields and the Council's planning regulations.

7.6 E: Closure of Brentwood Early Years

Brentwood Early Years Centre is an LA maintained nursery school. In January 2006 there were 59 2 and 3 year old children registered, or 30 full-time equivalents (FTE).

If Brentwood Early Years were to be closed, equivalent Early Years provision would need to be replaced in the local area. Two schools in the area are currently without a Foundation 1 (Nursery) class – Somerville Primary School and Park Primary School. Kingsway Primary School has a part-time nursery which could be expanded if required. Analysis of where children attending Brentwood live, and where they subsequently choose to go to school indicates that Somerville Primary School is the most strongly associated community primary school, although significant numbers of children are drawn from other areas, including Park and Poulton's catchment zones.

Other potential actions in this area

7.7 Reduce capacity at Egremont Primary School

The Foundation stage classes (F1 Nursery and F2 Reception) at Egremont Primary School are currently housed in a stand-alone annexe, formerly the Sandon Family Centre.

The school has expressed an interest in moving the Foundation classes into the main building. In combination with a reduction in the admission number from 72 to 60, this would have the effect of removing Net capacity and thereby surplus places. Total surplus places at this school would be likely to remain high, however.

Future suitable uses of the Foundation Annexe building could be considered, subject to the Council's planning regulations. No changes to catchment zones would be required.

7.8 Reduction in capacity at St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Wallasey

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School (Wallasey) has a current capacity of 329, and in January 2006 had 235 pupils on roll, generating 94 surplus places (28.6%). The maximum capacity of the building, if all former classrooms were in use as such, is 455 pupils.

This school was placed in the Ofsted category of Special Measures in March 2006. This places a duty on the Authority to consider whether the school should be closed or amalgamated with another school. This is the only Catholic Aided school in this planning area, and there would be insufficient places in alternative Catholic schools within a reasonable distance to accommodate all the pupils from St Joseph's, if it were to close.

The Authority is in discussions with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Shrewsbury regarding ways of re-using or removing accommodation at this school in order to significantly reduce surplus places.

7.9 Relocation of Bambi Pre-school

Bambi Pre-school is an Ofsted registered children's daycare provider which has been operating for more than 30 years, including more than 10 years at Manor Trust Community Centre, Gorsey Lane, Wallasey. In 2005, it catered for 60 children between the ages of 2 and five years. The pre-school will shortly need to find alternative premises, preferably within the local area.

Two schools in the area are currently without a Foundation 1 (Nursery) class – Somerville Primary School and Park Primary School, although both have existing pre-school provision on site. Relocation of Bambi pre-school could be considered within all options for the South Wallasey area. If Option E were to proceed, the stand-alone Foundation Unit at Egremont Primary School would be vacant and may be suitable, either as long-term or short-term accommodation.

Discussions with potential schools and Bambi Pre-school will take place as a matter of urgency.

- 7.10 A mobile replacement scheme and staffroom extension are currently at the planning stage at Somerville Primary School. The extent of this scheme is dependant on the outcome of other options for change in this area. Consolidating Somerville into a single building would reduce long-term expenditure incurred by the school as a result of no longer maintaining expensive mobile accommodation. A pre-school playgroup operates from a third mobile on the Somerville site, and consideration could be given to extending the programme to incorporate the private Early Years provision into the main school building.

8.0 Leasowe

- 8.1 The small planning area of Leasowe contains three schools, two community primary schools and one Catholic Aided primary school. There is also a Nursery school, Leasowe Early Years and Adult Learning Centre. One of the community primary schools, Leasowe

Primary School, occupies a new building funded by the Council's PFI programme.

All three of these primary schools are small, and two have high levels of surplus places (Our Lady of Lourdes and Leasowe).

	Castleway	Leasowe	Our Lady of Lourdes	Planning Area
2006 Capacity	210	210	150	570
2006 NOR	192	140	93	425
2006 Surplus place %	8.6	33.3	17.5	25.4
2011 NOR (projected)	193	160	78	433
2011 Surplus place % (projected)	8.1	23.6	47.2	24.0

8.2 Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School was placed in the Ofsted category of Special Measures in January 2004, and was removed from the category in April 2005. Since then, under the leadership of the new headteacher, standards have improved considerably. Castleway Primary School was placed in the Ofsted category of Special Measures in March 2006.

8.3 The level of surplus places in this small planning area is unacceptably high, and these three schools are small in terms of number on roll. It is our view therefore that some action should be taken to reduce provision either through closure(s) or amalgamation(s) of schools serving the area. This report sets out what I believe to be the practicable options which could potentially resolve the surplus place and small school issues within these three schools.

8.4 **A: Closure of Castleway Primary School**

In this option, Castleway Primary would be closed. Places would be allocated to former Castleway pupils at other local schools according to parental preference, subject to the availability of places. Leasowe Primary could accommodate all former Castleway pupils if required with a combination of internal alterations and at least one new build classroom. Dependant on parental preference, Greenleas Primary School may require additional accommodation.

In January 2006, there were 192 pupils at Castleway Primary School. At alternative schools within a two mile radius of Castleway Primary, there were 814 surplus places (including schools in Birkenhead). The catchment zone of Castleway Primary would be divided between neighbouring schools, Leasowe Primary School and Eastway Primary School. Dependant on parental preference, additional accommodation may be required at Greenleas Primary School.

The Castleway site is Council owned, and future uses of the building and/or site could be considered. Any proposed sale of the site would be subject to the regulations on the sale of school playing fields and the Council's planning regulations.

8.5 B: Amalgamation of Castleway Primary School and Leasowe Primary School on either site

In this option, Castleway Primary and Leasowe Primary would be closed. A new primary school would then open on either site. Former pupils at both schools would be guaranteed a place at the new school, although some may choose to transfer elsewhere, subject to the availability of places. On current numbers on roll the new school would have 332 pupils.

- **B1: On the Castleway site**
- **B2: On the Leasowe site**

The existing buildings at either existing school site would require an extension of at least two classrooms in order to accommodate all former pupils of both schools. The Castleway site is substantially above the DfES recommended minimum for a school of this size. While Leasowe's existing site is slightly below the DfES recommended minimum, the building's co-location with Wallasey School may allow for some expansion of the existing playing fields.

The Castleway site is Council owned, and future uses of the building and/or site could be considered. Any proposed sale of all or part of any site declared surplus to requirements would be subject to the regulations on the sale of school playing fields, and the Council's own planning regulations.

Leasowe Primary School occupies a PFI building, which the Council has committed to lease for 25 years. Expanding the existing building would have further implications in terms of the PFI contract. It may be possible to find an alternative non-school use for the Leasowe building, if it were to be declared surplus to requirements.

Diocesan Issues

8.6 D: Closure of Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School

In this option, Our Lady of Lourdes Primary would be closed. The school is small (93 pupils), with high surplus places. Places would be allocated to former Our Lady of Lourdes pupils at other local schools according to parental preference, subject to the availability of places. While this is the only Catholic primary school in the Leasowe planning area, there are five other Catholic schools within a 2 mile radius, at which there were 185 empty places in January 2006.

The catchment of Our Lady of Lourdes covers the area between Reeds Lane in Leasowe and Wallasey Village. Other parts of the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes and English Martyrs are designated by the Diocese to Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Ss Peter and Paul's Catholic Primary School and St Alban's Catholic Primary School. The small number of parents choosing Catholic primary education living within the Wallasey Village

portion of the Our Lady of Lourdes catchment principally choose to attend either St Alban's Catholic Primary (6, 30%) or Ss Peter and Paul's Catholic Primary (9, 45%).

While the majority of parents choosing Catholic primary education living within the Our Lady of Lourdes catchment area chose Our Lady of Lourdes (73, 62%), a significant proportion of parents choose nearby Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School in Moreton (20, 17%) which had 70 empty places in January 2006. Sacred Heart has potential to increase the admission number and classroom provision with Governing body and Diocesan approval.

The Diocese of Shrewsbury has recently relocated the Interdiocesan Fuel Management Company into the former parent's room at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School, as a method of removing surplus places. However, this action has not reduced the Net Capacity of the school, as the parent's room was already discounted from the Net Capacity calculation. Surplus places at the school remain high.

The Our Lady of Lourdes building and site are owned by Trustees of the Diocese.

8.7 **E: Creation of a new joint denominational school**

We have had some initial discussions with the Anglican and Catholic Diocesan Bodies on the possibility of a joint denominational school in this area.

8.8 A submission has recently been received from the Diocesan Director of Education for the Catholic Diocese of Shrewsbury, attached as Appendix D. This proposes three options for consultation on the future of faith provision in the Leasowe area.

- A joint denominational 210 place (1 form of entry) primary school
- Expansion of Our Lady of Lourdes to 210 places, with an admission policy which admits children of any or no denomination or faith
- Maintenance of Our Lady of Lourdes at its current size, but with an admission policy which admits children of any or no denomination or faith

8.9 The Diocesan Director of Education for the Catholic Diocese suggests that the joint denominational school would be best placed at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School.

8.10 The Anglican Diocese of Chester has indicated that they would welcome an opportunity to work with the Catholic Diocese in the Leasowe area. Their submission is attached as Appendix C.

9.0 **Next steps**

9.1 If the Council decides to approve any or all of these options for further consideration, the next stage is to move to open consultation. This would involve publishing the options within the areas and inviting comments and suggestions from as wide a range of stakeholders as can be practicably achieved. Most critically this would involve the parents of children in the schools potentially affected. Consultation meetings would therefore be

held where views can be expressed directly to LA officers and the Cabinet member. We would also invite written comments. The outcome of these consultations would then be reported back to Cabinet for further consideration, as would any further options that had emerged during the process and the consultation.

10.0 Financial and Staffing implications

10.1 There are none arising as a result of this report. If options are approved for consultation, there will be further detailed reports that will set out all the implications.

11.0 Equal Opportunities Implications

11.1 It is essential to plan school provision across the Authority so that it is both efficient and effective in the interests of all pupils. Consultations on the options set out in this report will need to address very carefully the impact of any preferred options on pupils which are served by the schools concerned.

12.0 Human Rights Implications

12.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

13.0 Local Agenda 21 Statement

13.1 The provision of efficient and effective education is a vital part of serving local communities; inefficient use of resources is wasteful both in educational and physical resource terms.

14.0 Community Safety Implications

14.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

15.0 Planning Implications

15.1 There are none arising directly from this report. Any proposals that may arise out of the consultations recommended in this report would be subject to the usual planning processes.

16.0 Local Member Support Implications

16.0 The schools specifically mentioned in the report and appendices, and the Wards in which they are situated, which are West Kirby and Thurstaston, Heswall, Pensby and Thingwall, Upton, Greasby Frankby and Irby, Leasowe and Moreton East, Wallasey, New Brighton, Liscard and Seacombe.

14.0 Background Papers

14.1 Surplus place returns

DfES guidance on Surplus Place Removal

School Organisation Plan

Pupil and Capacity data held by the LEA

15.0 Recommendations

15.1 That consultations be undertaken regarding the options for re-organising primary school provision as set out in this report.

Howard Cooper

Director of Children's Services