

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an update of the progress so far with regard to the development of the two new Academies in Birkenhead. The report seeks approval for the two Expressions of Interest and for commencement of the statutory consultation process for closure of the three secondary schools affected by the Phase 1 proposals.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 At its meeting of 29th November 2007, Cabinet instructed that Phase 1 of the Secondary Places Review should comprise schools in Birkenhead and Bebington (Wirral South).
- 1.2 Phase 1 has resulted in a complex option for consultation including the establishment of a mixed Academy and a Boys Academy, linked to the closure of three existing schools – Ridgeway High School, Rock Ferry High School and Park High School. This was reported to Cabinet on 19th March 2009.

2.0 Overview of the Academies Process and Progress So Far

- 2.1 Following the approval by Cabinet at the March meeting of the proposals for the Secondary Review of School Places, the Office for the Schools Commissioner (OSC) worked on a Statement of Intent for each Academy. This outlines the intention of the Minister for Schools to establish the two academies in Birkenhead. The LA was asked to provide the OSC with some background information about the schools and their context and each of the sponsors were asked to provide information about themselves and what they would bring to each Academy. There was a delay in us receiving the Statements of Intent as a result of a change in the Minister for Schools and Learners in early June. We received the two Statements of Intent on 8th July 2009.
- 2.2 The confirmation of the Statements of Intent also confirmed the sponsor teams for the two Academies. These are:

Mixed Academy

University of Chester (lead sponsor)

Wirral Metropolitan College

The Local Authority

Boys' Academy

David Hughes (lead sponsor)

University of Liverpool

Birkenhead Sixth Form College

The Local Authority

- 2.3 The next stage in the process was for each of the Academy sponsor teams to put together an Expression of Interest. The lead sponsor oversees this process. The New Projects Division of the DCSF identifies an external consultant to support the process. The consultant for the Wirral Academies was appointed by the DCSF in early July 2009 and the first meeting between herself and the sponsors took place on the 27th and 28th July 2009. In her timeline the Expressions of Interest are due to be submitted for Ministerial decision later in October once they have been approved by the DCSF Operations Board on 6th October 2009.

- 2.4 The meetings on 27th and 28th July triggered a range of actions. The LA was asked to provide the consultant with data and information about the existing schools, demographics, standards and so forth. Quite a large part of the DCSF template for the Expression of Interest (EOI) contains this information.
- 2.5 Each of the sponsor teams was charged with producing a Vision Statement as part of the Expression of Interest for their Academy. The process for producing the vision statement has taken place over August and early September, via meetings and electronic communication.
- 2.6 Following this process, the consultant has pulled together the data sections using the information from the LA and the Vision statements and then worked on a covering commentary.
- 2.7 As part of this process, the governing bodies of the three existing schools have been invited to a meeting where each of the sponsor teams have been able to present their vision statements and invite comments. Each governing body, on the same evening, was asked to formally meet and minute their response. As the model is for 3 schools becoming 2 academies, each governing body was asked to produce a response to each of the EOIs. It is not a requirement that the existing governing bodies approve the EOIs, but the process does require that they are given an opportunity to express their views.
- 2.8 At the Cabinet meeting of 1st October 2009 the Cabinet is being asked to approve the two EOIs as both the LA and as a sponsor.
- 2.9 Once the sponsors have all agreed and signed the EOIs and Cabinet has also approved they will then be submitted to the Minister for Schools and Learners for his approval.
- 2.10 Once the Minister for Schools and Learners has approved the EOIs, the third stage commences which is called the Feasibility Stage. This stage is about more detailed planning for the Academy, agreeing curriculum structure, leadership and management arrangements, staffing requirements, starting planning processes regarding buildings, planning ICT, deciding key policy statements and so on. The DCSF appoint a Project Management Team to support the sponsors in this process. The current timeline has this commencing in November and being completed early spring 2010.
- 2.11 The Feasibility stage also includes the formal consultation with stakeholders on the establishment of the two new Academies, as well as the pre-statutory consultation on the closure of the predecessor schools, which is discussed in more detail in Section 4 below.
- 2.12 The outcome of this stage will be a further submission to the Minister for approval who, if he approves, signs the Funding Agreement.
- 3.0 **Expressions of Interest**
- 3.1 The Vision Statements as part of the Expressions of Interest for each of the two proposed Academies will be presented by the sponsor teams to Cabinet as part of this report. The draft Expressions of Interest are included as Appendix 1 (Boys) and Appendix 2 (Mixed). It should be noted that these documents are draft and may contain comments and minor items of missing information that will be rectified before submission to the DCSF Operations Board.
- 4.0 **Consultation on Closure**
- 4.1 In order to establish Academies on existing school sites, it is necessary to follow the statutory procedures to close the existing community secondary schools. The process must to be completed before the Funding Agreement with the DCSF can be signed.
- 4.2 The two Academies are due to open in 2010, with pupils on roll at the existing three schools transferring to the new Academies. In order to meet this timeline, it is anticipated that the funding agreement between the sponsor teams and the DCSF to finance the two Academies will be signed by April 2010. For this to happen, it is necessary for the Council to secure the necessary approvals to close the existing schools as community schools before this date.

- 4.3 The Local Authority undertakes formal consultations on the closure of the predecessor schools in order to make way for the new Academies. It is envisaged that this would take place in October-November 2009, with the outcome reported to Cabinet in January 2010. If it were then decided to proceed further, statutory notices would be published, followed by a six week representation period during which comments and objections can be made by any person or organisation in relation to the proposals. Council's Cabinet, as the Decision Maker, would then be asked to determine the notices taking into consideration the representations received, to decide whether the three predecessor schools should close, with a proviso that these closures are linked to the signing of the Funding Agreement.
- 4.4 The timetable below outlines the necessary stages of consultation for each school concerned. Consultation will involve staff, governors, parents and the local community at each affected school, as well as other statutory consultees set out in guidance.

| Action | Date |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Report to Cabinet | 1 st October 2009 |
| Formal closure consultation begins (6 weeks) | 21 st October 2009 |
| Formal closure consultation closes | 27 th November 2009 |
| Report to Cabinet | 14 th January 2010 |
| Statutory closure consultation begins (6 weeks) | 28 th January 2010 |
| Statutory closure consultation closes | 10 th March 2010 |
| Report to Cabinet | 15 th April 2010 |
| Funding Agreement signed | End of April 2010 |

- 4.5 At the same time, the sponsor teams undertake a non-statutory consultation on the opening of the Academies. The consultation outcomes are reported to the Secretary of State as part of the required documentation for the Funding Agreement.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from the report.
- 5.2 Capital funding for new and refurbished Academy buildings is from the national Building Schools for the Future programme. The responsibility to provide sites for Academies rests with the LA. There are likely to be significant costs in the management of the Academy programme and the transition stage which will be the subject of future reports.

6.0 Staffing Implications

- 6.1 There are none arising directly from this report.
- 6.2 The creation of Academies 2 and 3 will require significant staff transfers under TUPE, provision of staff matched to the transition arrangements and the management of the transfer from existing staffing structures to those of the new Academies.
- 6.3 Costs arising from redundancies agreed prior to establishment of the new Academies are shared between the LA and the DCSF. Any redundancy costs arising following the establishment of the Academies are to be met from the Academy's budget.

7.0 Equal Opportunities Implications

- 7.1 It is essential to plan school provision across the Authority so that it is both efficient and effective in the interests of all pupils.
- 7.2 An equality impact assessment will be carried out on this report.

8.0 Community Safety Implications

- 8.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

9.0 Local Agenda 21 Implications

9.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

10.0 Planning Implications

10.1 All capital works will be subject to the relevant national and local planning legislation.

11.0 Anti-Poverty Implications

11.1 The capital investment in new and refurbished Academy provision is intended to contribute to “narrowing the gap” which is one of the Council’s priorities.

12.0 Social Inclusion Implications

12.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

13.0 Local Member Support Implications

13.1 Secondary school re-organisation has relevance to all Wards.

13.2 The three secondary schools named in this report are located in Claughton and Rock Ferry Wards.

14.0 Background Papers

14.1 Reference documentation and guidance on the Academy programme produced by the DCSF

Working papers for Academy 2 and Academy 3 held in the Children and Young People’s Department

Recommendations

- (1) That Cabinet approves the Expressions of Interest for the two Academies and their submission to the Minister of State for Schools and Learners.
- (2) That the Director of Children’s Services undertake all necessary formal consultations on the closure of the three predecessor schools as set out by guidance

Howard Cooper

Director of Children’s Services

CABINET

Thursday, 1 October 2009

Present: Councillor S Foulkes (Chair)

Councillors S Holbrook

G Davies

P Davies

G Gardiner

S Kelly

M McLaughlin

R Moon

J Quinn

J Stapleton

138 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The members of the Cabinet were invited to consider whether they had a personal or prejudicial interest in connection with any of the items on the agenda and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of such interest.

Councillor Foulkes declared a prejudicial interest in minute 141 (Review of Primary School Places - Phase 5) by virtue of him being friends with the caretaker at one of the schools referred to in the report.

Councillor G Davies declared a prejudicial interest in minute 143 (Review of Secondary School Places Phase 1) by virtue of him being a governor at one of the schools referred to in the report.

Councillor Quinn declared a personal interest in minute 142 (Review of Secondary School Places Phase 2) by virtue of her husband being a governor at one of the schools referred to in the report.

Councillor P Davies declared a personal interest in minutes 140 (Relocation of Gilbrook Primary School) and minute 143 (Review of Secondary School Places Phase 1) by virtue of him being a member of the governing body of Gilbrook Primary School and Wirral Metropolitan College.

Councillor Stapleton declared a personal interest in minute 142 (Review of Secondary School Places Phase 1) by virtue of her being a member of the governing body of one of the schools referred to in the report.

143 REVIEW OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES PHASE 1

(Councillors George Davies having declared a prejudicial interest in this item (see minute 138) left the room during its consideration.)

Cabinet were given an update of the progress so far with regard to the development of two proposed new Academies in Birkenhead. The Director of Children's Services sought approval for the two Expressions of Interest and for commencement of the statutory consultation process for closure of the three secondary schools affected by the Phase 1 proposals.

With the permission of the Chair, both David Hughes, lead sponsor of the proposed Boys' Academy, and Dr Colin Hankinson, representing the University of Chester, lead sponsor of the proposed mixed Academy, addressed the Cabinet and elaborated on both expressions of interest including their vision, ethos and specialisms for both academies. Both then responded to questions from Cabinet members.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning thanked the lead sponsors for sharing their visions with the Cabinet and remarked that this was potentially the best opportunity the authority would have to make a step change in the life chances of young people in Birkenhead. He also took the opportunity to pay tribute to staff of Park High, Ridgeway High and Rock Ferry High schools.

The Director, responding to members' comments, stated that the proposed scheme was designed to look in a holistic way at secondary education in Birkenhead and was a single package which could not be split into different parts. Consultation would have to take place over the proposed closure of each of the 3 schools at the same time as consultation on the successor arrangements for the 2 academies.

The Leader of the Council welcomed the opportunity to improve the life chances of children within Birkenhead by the proposed injection of funding for a brand new purpose built academy and for a mixed academy.

Resolved -

(1) That Cabinet approves the Expressions of Interest for the two Academies and their submission to the Minister of State for Schools and Learners.

(2) That Cabinet requests that the Director of Children's Services undertake all the necessary formal consultation processes and that these consider the proposals in their entirety, not just the individual elements under review.