

UPDATE ON THE NATIONAL BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE PROGRAMME

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Building Schools for the Future (BSF) was launched in February 2003. BSF aims at educational transformation through providing all secondary school pupils and teachers in England with 21st Century buildings and facilities.

Following consultations by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) reported to Cabinet on 26th June 2008, this report is to update members on recent developments in the BSF Programme.

The report also seeks permission to submit a revised expression of interest to DCSF, who have requested that the submission be with them by 30th November 2008.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Building Schools for the Future (BSF) is a long-term programme of investment and change in secondary school education that was launched by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) in February 2003. The programme creates an important opportunity to transform the way secondary schools function, developing buildings for the 21st century with teaching and learning to match and is delivered by Partnerships for Schools (PfS). Partnerships for Schools (PfS) was established in 2004 by the DCSF to deliver BSF. The role of PfS is to ensure that investment in secondary schools is based on robust educational strategies and that BSF schools and Academies are well designed, are built on time at a reasonable cost to the taxpayer, and are properly maintained over their lifetime.
- 1.2 In order for Local Authorities to participate in the BSF programme they must be able to demonstrate that they are ready to establish a long-term strategy for change based upon BSF, an integral component of which links buildings with teaching and learning via the use of Information Communications and Technology (ICT). In addition, secondary schools provide a major resource for local communities, and as such, the new and refurbished facilities delivered by BSF should be designed for shared community use wherever appropriate. In line with the "Every Child Matters" agenda, every BSF school will be an extended school, offering additional or dual use facilities, such as sport halls, libraries, nurseries and ICT resources. BSF offers a great opportunity to integrate schools into wider regeneration projects, repositioning our schools at the heart of communities. These broad aims support the Corporate Strategic Asset Review and the Strategic Development Plan for Cultural Services in Wirral.
- 1.3 BSF will ultimately reach every part of the English maintained secondary school system, including:
 - 11-16, 11-18 and upper schools
 - middle schools deemed secondary, and secondary and all-age special schools

- all categories of secondary schools – community, voluntary controlled, voluntary aided, foundation, trust and academies.

1.4 In order to have the optimum effect on teaching, learning and hence attainment at the beginning of the programme, funding was initially targeted at areas with the lowest attainment at GCSE level and highest levels of deprivation, measured by eligibility for free school meals (FSM). The Council was invited to place an Expression of Interest at that time, which it did in December 2003, a copy of which is included in Appendix 1.

2.0 Wirral Position

2.1 From the original consultation in 2003 all authorities have been given an indication of which BSF wave they have been placed in and provisional timescales for each wave. The criteria for allocation to the current BSF waves is based upon deprivation (FSM) and examination performance. Wirral has been allocated Band D, Wave 12, which currently indicates an entry into full BSF around 2015. This later entry date reflects the recent investment in Wirral secondary schools through PFI, Aided school investment, other capital schemes and overall examination and deprivation factors in the national context.

2.2 Subsequently, local authorities in the later waves of BSF have been allocated capital funding for a “One School Pathfinder” secondary school re-build. Woodchurch High School is the selected school and design work is underway, with a target completion date of September 2010 for a full school transfer to the new building.

2.3 Currently local authorities are being admitted to BSF on an annual basis, to the original wave timescales, the process being managed by the national body, PfS. Under existing plans, Wave 7 will be launched early in 2009 with funding on stream from 2011.

3.0 DCSF Consultation on the Future BSF Schedule

3.1 In April 2008 DCFS published a consultation on the management of waves 7 to 15 of BSF, which ran until 4 July. The proposals in the consultation reflected the learning from the early waves and the aim to ensure delivery of the programme through flexible management. Options discussed in this consultation included:

- i) setting additional prioritisation criteria, but retaining educational and social need as a tie-breaker;
- ii) starting all authorities not already in the programme with a priority project as soon as practicable;
- iii) revising project sizes to make the programme flexible;
- iv) emphasising readiness to deliver as the factor which will start projects in the programme.

3.2 Details of Wirral responses to this consultation were approved by Cabinet on the 26th June 2008, a copy of which is included as Appendix 2.

3.3 Following consideration of the responses to the consultation, Ministers have agreed that local needs could be reflected in how authorities propose projects, and that social

and educational need will remain the highest criteria in how the programme is prioritised, as well as its readiness to deliver.

4.0 PfS Invitation to submit a Revised Expression of Interest for BSF

- 4.1 Following this latest consultation each authority has been asked to review its original Expression of Interest (EOI) and consider revising it. Clearly the Wirral EOI from 2003 does not take account of changes in the pupil population, national and local initiatives since 2003 and the LA Secondary Reviews. It therefore requires revision and re-submission to PfS. The deadline for submission is 30.11.08. The revised EOI will then be considered by PfS as part of drawing up a revised National Project Priority list by early in 2009. LA's with high priority schemes will then be invited to provide evidence of their readiness to deliver and be able to show a robust 'Strategy for Change' for their secondary school provision.
- 4.2 The revised Expression of Interest requires:
- i) A summary of the LA's Strategic Plans for the delivery of secondary education transformation and evidence of consultation of these plans (2 sides of A4),
 - ii) A map showing the location of all secondary schools,
 - iii) An explanation of the methodology used to prioritise schools, demonstrating links to ministerial prioritisation,
 - iv) A completed PfS spreadsheet showing the local prioritisation of schools into groups of around five schools for the initial Priority project wave and around seven for follow on project waves. This spreadsheet envisages three waves:-
 - Top Priority Project (around five schools) - up to £80m approx.
 - First Priority Follow-on project and - up to £100m approx.
 - Second Priority. Follow on project.
 - Further waves can also be submitted.
 - v) An initial assessment of the LA's readiness to deliver a local BSF programme.
- 4.3 There is no longer a requirement for geographical coherence for a project wave i.e. the five schools in the Top Priority Project do not have to be in one geographical area. All secondary schools should be considered, including Voluntary Aided, PRU's, special schools and hospital schools. Follow on projects should reflect some geographical coherence.
- 4.4 PfS would prefer to have full details on every school. However it will be acceptable to anonymise details "if there are local sensitivities around school organisation proposals". Where an LA is aiming for an early start on a project PfS expect any reorganisation proposals to already be in the public domain. LA's can if they wish provide details on their existing schools but leave the columns on the spreadsheet relating to investment plans and projected numbers on roll blank at this stage, the information to be submitted when PfS asks the LA for readiness to deliver information.
- 4.5 BSF is about much more than building condition and the overall aims nationally for BSF are required to be a key factor in prioritising works. Alongside this is the need to reflect the national priorities and needs criteria, linking these in turn to the local context, in particular the agreed secondary review process.

4.6 The national prioritisation criteria are:

- a) social and educational need, including:-
 - national challenge schools
 - less well performing schools
 - areas of deprivation
- b) building need (suitability and/or condition)
- c) contributing to local or regional regeneration, including opportunities for co-location with other public services
- d) school reorganisation
- e) sustainable communities, new housing and population growth.

4.7 In terms of national prioritisation of each LA's Top Priority project, Ministers intend the "focus of prioritisation to remain on social and educational need". For educational need the most recent data on GCSE performance, including English and Maths will be used and for social need the Tax Credit Indicator (TCI) will be used rather than FSM data. TCI data was not available at the start of BSF.

4.8 Upon receipt of the revised Expressions of Interest, PfS will check the data and maps and once any queries have been dealt with will:

- bring together nationally the Priority projects (up to five schools) from each authority
- bring together all the First Follow on projects from each authority
- bring together nationally all the Second Follow on projects from each authority, and so on.

4.9 Each of the national project lists – Priority, First Follow on, Second Follow on etc. will be prioritised nationally and ranked, ie there will then be a separate national, ranked list for each project group. Ministers will then decide on the balance nationally between Priority projects and Follow on projects, Priority projects being those from LA's not yet in a full phase of BSF (eg. the position on Wirral) and Follow on projects from all authorities.

4.10 PfS anticipate that in Spring 2009 they will announce the national priority lists and identify funding to deal with the next urgent projects. At this stage, those LA's with the most urgent projects will be invited to demonstrate "Readiness to Deliver" and will have 6-8 weeks to respond to this invitation. The LA's Readiness to Deliver will be assessed by PfS, and if deemed appropriate the project will proceed with funding from 2011/12. If the LA's readiness is felt to require further development, the approval to proceed will be held until PfS requirements are satisfied.

4.11 It is therefore possible that an authorities' Priority Project will be ranked amongst the most urgent nationally, will be allocated funding but may not receive the funding from 2011/12 due to the authority deciding it is not ready to deliver against PfS criteria and/or PfS deciding the authority is not ready. The national priority ranking would remain the same but the project would be "held" or "bumped" until the PfS Readiness to Deliver criteria were satisfied.

4.12 PfS measure Readiness to Deliver against the following elements:

- the LA's Strategy for Change in secondary education
- the LA's Estate Strategy for schools
- the LA's Commitment to the BSF model, including the creation of Local Education Partnerships to procure the works
- the Project Management structuring Board and project team are adequate

- the required Project Support Network, both internal to the council and external advisers is understood and there is agreement to allocate staff and fund external advisers, (PfS estimate 3% of capital allocation is needed for this; funded by the LA)
- there is corporate support and capacity for the project, including member support and “buy in”
- consultation to date is appropriate and plans for further consultation with all relevant bodies are in place
- appropriate Risk Management arrangements are in place
- appropriate arrangements are in place for any joint working.

PfS has urged LA’s to be realistic in their self-assessment of their Readiness to Deliver.

5.0 The Wirral Position in Respect of the PfS Invitation to submit a Revised Expression of Interest for BSF.

The 2003 initial Expression of Interest, which ranked Wirral in Band D, Wave 12 with a 2015 start was based on exam performance data and social deprivation using FSM figures. Clearly there was no phasing or grouping in the original submission as the intention at that time was that all the school projects would have one starting date for an authority of Wirral’s size. The prioritisation ranking was therefore based on the exam performance and FSM data for the Borough as a whole. The 2003 submission was also made at a time when one High school was being re-built under PFI, seven other High schools were undergoing major refurbishment under PFI, two High schools had recently received significant capital investment under a City Challenge initiative and two Catholic Aided High Schools were receiving significant levels of targeted capital investment following on from the closure of St Benedict’s Catholic High School.

- 5.1 Clearly, given the Ministerial and PfS prioritisation criteria, Top Priority schemes which include schools with the greatest social and educational need, as defined by PfS, will have the greatest chance of early prioritisation and funding.
- 5.2 Applying the national criteria to the local, current Wirral context is not easy. The secondary review process, the Academy proposals, the special school review, the background of a falling secondary roll and the implementation of national initiatives, particularly the 14-19 agenda, all require consideration in prioritising work at individual schools.
- 5.3 However here is a correlation between the PfS social and educational prioritisation criteria and Phase 1 of the LA Secondary review in Birkenhead/Bebington, which in turn relates to the Academy proposals. This forms a rationale for the bulk of the LA’s Top Priority group of schemes to have its basis in the Phase 1 Secondary review area, possibly grouped with the most urgent Secondary Special provision.

Whilst such a Top Priority group would appear to have the best match to the PfS criteria, such a submission would mean that school project works in other areas of Wirral become “Follow On” projects under the PfS framework.

- 5.4 A possible grouping of schemes therefore could be:

Top Priority/Initial group of schemes (five schools approx)	Birkenhead/Phase I review Special, most urgent
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First Priority Follow on Project
(seven schools approx)

Phase 2 of local secondary review
Key Suitability and Condition shortfalls in
other secondary schools and other Special
Schools

Second Priority Follow on Project

Other Suitability and Condition needs
Outstanding works/provision at PFI schools
Outstanding Suitability at 2 Catholic Aided
schools

5.5 Such a grouping as set out above would:-

- i) make the strongest links between BSF and the local review
- ii) make the strongest links between BSF and the Academy proposals
- iii) address some of the most urgent imbalances in the quality of accommodation and the scale of provision against need
- iv) mean that those schools which have enjoyed very significant recent capital investment, particularly the eight PFI and 2 Catholic Aided High Schools which have received around £100m of investment since 2000, are in the final wave.
- v) mean that special provision is included in the earliest waves, which not only links with the Special review process, but also reflects the relatively low levels of recent investment in special schools compared to many of the mainstream secondary schools

5.6 Clearly any final listing would have to take account of the outcomes of the key consultations on the Academy proposals, the LA secondary review and the LA special Review. At the time of writing this report work is in progress in drawing up a proposed list of priorities.

6.0 Financial implications

6.1 The initial Projects put forward are estimated at £80 million of work at approximately 5 schools with follow on projects estimated at £80-100 million each. This does not include the estimated £27 million of capital investment for Woodchurch High School as part of the "One School Pathfinder" project.

6.2 Capital funding would be from DCSF/PfS, any funding shortfall between the DCSF/PfS formulaic allocation and the actual cost of building the school is expected to be met by the Local Authority from other capital sources. PfS envisage, the majority of schemes being delivered through Local Education Partnerships (LEPs) which have funding contribution requirements on LA's. The LEP requirement will be subject of a further report to Cabinet

6.3 The DCSF/PfS have developed a national procurement framework for BSF, including the "One School Pathfinder" schemes. All local authorities are expected to procure the new school within the national framework unless they seek to "opt out" of the process. Opt outs will only be allowed where the local authority can demonstrate at least comparable Best Value. The DCSF/PfS have produced a series of exemplar designs for new schools and it is the DCSF/PfS expectation that these will be used wherever possible, adapted as necessary to suit local conditions. A standardised procurement

route and the exemplar designs are intended to support local authorities in implementing this initiative and are seen as key factors in achieving Best Value.

6.4 Cost implications for staff and external advisor support are set out below.

7.0 Staffing implications

7.1 The DCSF/PfS “strongly encourage” local authorities to appoint an experienced design adviser to assist in creating the briefs. ICT specialist advice is also advised.

7.2 The initial review undertaken as part of the selection process for the One School Pathfinder Project (reported to Cabinet on 15th November 2006) compiled by staff in the Council’s Technical Services and Children and Young People’s Departments, supported by advice from the Planning Section and the Environment Agency identified that there would be a requirement for additional Council staffing resources and external support. The experience of the extensive PFI secondary school works and “One School Pathfinder” project also confirms that the process will create significant demands on school management and staff.

7.3 The existing team have a full range of existing commitments to PFI. One School Pathfinder (OSP), Primary Capital Programme (PCP), Children’s Centres, Extended Schools and a range of other capital works across an extensive programme and support services to schools.

7.4 A move to earlier Readiness to Deliver in the full BSF programme would require additional staffing resources to develop the Education Strategy and Business Cases, carry out all the required consultation with all stakeholders, develop the required partnership working and manage the procurement and delivery of the project. The expectation is that Local Authorities will fund support teams for BSF programme development from local resources in anticipation of significant national capital investment.

7.5 From guidance issued by PfS on Building Schools for the future and research undertaken into the types of teams created by other Local Authorities in order to deliver their programmes it is likely that the following posts would need to be created to form a full core team.

- Project Director – responsible for the overall delivery of the Wirral BSF Programme.
- Education Improvement Advisor – responsible for advising the project team on issues relating to educational transformation.
- ICT Advisor – responsible for advising the project on issues relating to ICT in Schools.
- Project Manager – responsible for the project management of the Wirral BSF Programme.
- Partnership Manager – responsible for drawing together the aims of the Children’s Plan in order to increase choice and diversity and ensure that BSF Schools are well used by the community, offer extended services and collocation of other services.
- Project Administrator – responsible for administration within the core team.

7.6 In addition to the core team additional resources would be required for an extended team. At present it is envisaged that relevant department and sections would be approached in order to provide these skills to the BSF Programme. The extended team is likely to comprise the following disciplines.

- Finance
- Legal
- Building Design
- Planning

7.7 The staffing requirements outlined in 7.4 & 7.5/6 could amount to around £500,000 per annum for a full team and ensure full “Readiness to Deliver”. A stepped approach could be taken to develop a team, with the associated gradation in moving to Readiness to Deliver probably over a longer timescale. These costs would need to be funded from the Councils’ budget and currently plans are being explored from within existing council overall resources. Initial discussions with the Director of Finance have explored the possibility of capitalizing the necessary funding. In addition, extend adviser costs are estimated at £250,000 per annum.

8.0 Equal opportunities implications

8.1 There are no adverse equality and diversity issues arising from this report.

9.0 Community safety implications

9.1 There will be community safety issues arising from the building and refurbishment of Wirral’s Secondary Schools safety / security issues will be addressed at the design stages wherever possible.

10.0 Local Agenda 21 implications

10.1 The new build will maximise modern building technology, energy conservation and wherever possible alternative energy provision and recycling of resources.

11.0 Planning implications

11.1 All works will be subject to Building Control and Planning approval.

12.0 Anti-poverty implications

12.1 The BSF Programme supports improved learning opportunities and should have a positive impact on poverty.

13.0 Social inclusion implications

13.1 The BSF Programme supports improved learning opportunities and accessibility issues and should have a positive impact on Social inclusion.

14.0 Local Member Support implications

14.1 The BSF Programme will affect all wards in the Borough.

15.0 Background papers

- Wirral Building Schools for the Future, Expression of interest - December 2003
- Report to Cabinet (15th November 2006) Building Schools for the future, One School Pathfinder Selection of School to be re-built.
- Report to Cabinet (26th June 2008) Building Schools for the Future, Consultation on management of BSF for future waves 7-15.

- DCSF Guidance for Local Authorities on revising and resubmitting expressions of interest for projects in Waves 7 to 15 of Building Schools for the Future – September 2008
- DCSF/PfS Readiness to Deliver – Guidance for Local Authorities in BSF Waves 4-6 – June 2006.
- DCSF/PfS/4ps An Introduction to Building Schools for the Future - 2008 Edition.
- Working papers held in the Children and Young People's Department.

16.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

That

- (1) the progress of the national Building Schools for the Future programme and local work towards inclusion in this programme of work be noted;
- (2) the request for an updated Expression of Interest from PfS be responded to in a positive manner based upon the principles of prioritisation with a response to the PfS as outlined in sections 4 and 5 of this report by the deadline of 30.11.08; and
- (3) BSF be the subject of a further report once national priorities have been announced, with the report to also include an update on financial implications within the council's capital programme.

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