

CABINET – 26th JUNE, 2008

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

**BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE (BSF)
CONSULTATION ON MANAGEMENT OF BSF FOR THE FUTURE WAVES 7-15 WAVES**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides details of a DCSF Consultation Paper on the later waves of Building Schools for the Future and sets out proposed responses to the consultation from Wirral, as an authority which is currently in Wave 12 (2015 full start). The report is for approval to allow a response to the DCSF by the closing date of 4th July 2008.

1.0 Background

The original DCSF consultation on BSF is now five years old and led to fifteen waves of investment which started in 2005/6. BSF is a national, key strategic programme intended to “create a new approach to capital investment for transforming secondary schools” (DCSF).

- 1.1 From the original consultation 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 (free school meals) 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 secondary schools through PFI, Aided school investment and other capital schemes and overall examination and deprivation factors in the national context.
- 1.2 Subsequently, LA's 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.
- 1.3 Currently LA's are being admitted to BSF on an annual basis, to the original wave timescales, the process being managed by the national body, Partnerships for Schools. Under existing plans, Wave 7 will be launched early in 2009 with funding on stream from 2011.

2.0. DCSF Consultation

The current DCSF consultation document relates to managing waves 7 to 15 and deciding the order in which those authorities not yet in the full programme will join BSF.

- 2.1 Briefly, the consultation document proposes:

- i) All LA's in the later waves will have a chance to join BSF as soon as they have strong plans to deliver at least an initial streamlined project of four or five schools, including any under-performing schools and those in pockets of deprivation.
- ii) There would be a wider range of criteria to decide how projects should be prioritised, including school projects related to areas with major social regeneration and development projects, schools with poorest infrastructure to avoid short term "patch and mend", areas where wider community facilities are planned, including children's centres, extended school facilities and broader provision for young people and areas of major school reorganisation, where investment is needed to address standards, or increase parental choice, for example introducing federations, trusts and academies.
- iii) LA's would join BSF in a rolling programme when they are ready, rather than waiting for formal year on year launches.
- iv) Some projects will no longer be required to include schools in the same geographical part of the LA area, giving LA's greater flexibility to invest in schools and target funding exactly where it is needed.
- v) LA's should work closer with neighbouring Authorities in setting up the required Local Education Partnership (LEP's) to get the most efficient procurement planning and building programmes in place".

2.2 The DCSF proposals set out above aim to reflect developments since the start of the BSF programme, in particular:

- the inclusion of secondary special schools
- revised DCSF Building Bulletin Standards for Secondary Schools (BB98 Secondary and BB102 Special) which are more generous in terms of space
- introduction of sustainability targets
- revised national requirements for ventilation, acoustics, energy use and fire safety
- development of Every Child Matters, personalised learning, extended schools, federations and trusts and the December 2007 Children's Plan.

The proposals also reflect lessons learned by the DCSF and Partnerships for Schools (the national body set up to manage BSF) in the implementation of BSF to date.

3.0 Proposed LA response to the DCSF Consultation

3.1 A copy of the DCSF Consultation Response Form is attached as Appendix 1, setting out the eleven questions being presented by the DCSF.

3.2 Subject to Cabinet approval, it is proposed to respond positively to the proposals in the Consultation for the reasons set out below:

3.3 Having a wider set of criteria for prioritisation in addition to deprivation and examination performance could allow Wirral earlier entry to the main BSF programme, particularly as one of the new criteria could be "areas of major school reorganisation". (Question 1) It seems logical that educational and social need should remain the "tie breaker" when two projects are evenly balanced and resources mean they have to have staggered starts (Question 2).

- 3.4 In terms of BSF facilitating “joined up” services for children, young people and families (Question 3) we are seeking to develop some of these principles in the Woodchurch scheme, making the building “user friendly” in its layout for uses beyond core school activity, considering the potential of parts of the current building and further developing the schools PE facilities around the existing sports hall. This will build on work to date in the primary sector for example Children’s Centres, and other developments e.g City Learning Centres.
- 3.5 In relation to introducing greater flexibility into LA’s entering the main BSF programme (Question 4) this would be helpful to Wirral as it could allow for some projects to be brought forward from the current 2015 entry date. It would also provide a more manageable programme of four/five schools in the first phase. An earlier date for some works could be integrated with the outcomes of the secondary place review process and would also allow lessons and expertise gained through the development of the Woodchurch One School Pathfinder scheme (and prior to this eight school PFI project) to be applied to some projects earlier than 2015.
- 3.6 The DCSF are seeking views on joint authority working (Question 5) and barriers to working together. Any cross authority working with other Merseyside authorities would be against a background where there is a desire to build upon existing joint working into new areas of which this could be one. Authorities would be at different stages, some already being in early waves with work underway and there would be variations in the value and type of works e.g. amount of special school work, proportion of new-build/refurbishment and the types of secondary school provision. Reorganisation in Cheshire will also mean a smaller authority on Wirral’s southern border.
- 3.7 The proposals suggest smaller initial projects to get all authorities started in the full programme as soon as is practical. This will result in “follow on” projects. Experience from the early phases suggests bundles of four to eight school projects with a value of £100m approx (Question 6). This approach could be helpful to Wirral as a smaller authority, would allow progress on at least four projects ahead of the current 2015 start date. A series of bundled projects could also be more manageable within the changing secondary roll and the PFI contractual framework. It may mean some works extending beyond 2015 but these would be the lowest priority projects within the context of the investment to date and other continuing non BSF funding.
- 3.8 It will be the responsibility of each authority to prepare itself for entry to the full programme. Authorities “with projects at the front of the queue” will need to provide evidence that they are ready to proceed to the satisfaction of Partnership for Schools (PfS). LA’s will need to be ready to start “immediately and quickly”. PfS will provide an early indication of position in the programme, clear guidance on what is expected and support from the national 4Ps support organisation (Question 7 and 8). The need to satisfy PfS re readiness has resource implications as outlined in section 4 of this report but overall a phased programme of smaller bundles of projects over a longer timescale but with an earlier start date for the first projects would seem to have some advantages over the current full entry in 2015 position.
- 3.9 Questions 9 and 10 relate to Local Education Partnerships *(LEP’s) which are the delivery method for Building Schools for the Future, with the LA working with a private sector partner. The DCSF are seeking views on whether the LEP partner should be able to deliver other schemes in addition to schools “to deliver other authority projects and facilities for other services on school sites”. The ability of the LEP to take on additional work of a non BSF nature is seen as making the LEP more attractive

commercially, with continuity of work. As we are not yet in full BSF we have no experience of operating in an LEP with a selected private sector partner. Any widening of the work allocated to the LEP partner could have implications for other council departments and other bodies in jointly funded works. However the council do not currently have framework contractors for high value capital schemes and therefore the idea seems worthy of further consideration within the council's developing procurement strategy.

- 3.10 Question 11 seeks any additional comments. Following the deadline for consultation responses of 4.7.08, the DCSF intend issuing guidance on revised expressions of interest in August 2008 with LA's submitting revised expressions of interest by October 2008. Early in 2009, DCSF will announce a revised national programme, setting out the next tranche of LA's to provide evidence of readiness to deliver. Later in Spring 2009, the next tranche will be announced.
- 3.11 It is proposed, subject to Cabinet approval, to respond to the consultation as set above, with an overall positive response to the proposed changes to the BSF programme

4.0 Implications for the Council

An earlier start date than 2015 for some projects would be helpful in continuing the improvement of the secondary school estate and would build on experience gained to date on secondary school capital works.

- 4.1 The "bundling" of the schemes into four/five school schemes would be helpful in terms of management and contractor capacity. Experience with the nine school PFI scheme showed the demands of such a sized scheme, particularly when works do not go to plan and schools need additional support.
- 4.2 Potential for joint authority working could build on the four authority joint working over the last two years on the PFI scheme, or with similar sized authorities in the region.
- 4.3 A move to earlier readiness to enter the full BSF programme would require additional staffing resources to develop the Education Strategy and Business Cases and carry out all the required consultation with all stakeholders and develop the required partnership working. The existing team have a full range of existing commitments to PFI. One School Pathfinder (OSP), Primary Capital Programme (PCP), Childrens Centres, Extended Schools and a range of other capital works across an extensive programme and support services to schools. The expectation is that LA's will fund support teams for BSF programme development from local resources in anticipation of significant national capital investment. There are also capital requirements in setting up an LEP and, it is proposed that the future resource implications are the subject of a further report, following the DCSF issuing revised guidance in August 2008.
- 4.4 The proposal for LEP's to carry out the other works than just BSF would have wide implications for the Council. Again, it is proposed to report further on this, following the issuing of the revised DCSF guidance.

5.0 Financial and Staffing Implications

There are none arising directly from this report. It is proposed a future report will set out potential revenue and capital implications of an earlier entry than 2015 into full BSF.

6.0 Equal Opportunities Implications

There are none arising directly from this report.

7.0. Human Rights Implications

There are none arising directly from this report.

8.0 Local Agenda 21 Statement

BSF will enable better use of existing premises and rationalisation and renewal where appropriate.

9.0 Community Safety Implications

There are none arising directly from this report.

10.0 Planning Implications

There are none arising directly from this report.

11.0 Anti-Poverty Implications

There are none arising directly from this report.

12.0 Social Inclusion Implications

There are none arising directly from this report.

13.0 Local Member Support Implications

Building Schools for the Future is applicable to all secondary schools.

14.0 Background Papers

BSF Working papers held by CYPD Department
DCSF Consultation Papers, BSF Future Waves 7-15

15.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- i) that this report be noted
- ii) that the DCSF consultation be responded to in a positive manner with responses to the DCSF Consultation questions based on section 3 of this report.
- iii) that a further report on future waves of BSF and implications for the council be brought to Cabinet following further guidance from the DCSF later in 2008.

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