

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report advises the Cabinet of progress on the Phase 1 Area Review of secondary school places in the Birkenhead and Bebington areas. Following the report from an independent consultant, this report puts forward a recommendation for an option for consultation, and comments briefly on some of the issues involved, including the proposed Academy at Birkenhead High School for Girls and the implications of the National Challenge.

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. As in the review of primary school places, the first stage of the Review has been to conduct a process where, on a confidential basis, meetings have taken place 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. This comprises the "pre-consultation" phase of the process.
- 1.2 The subsequent report to Cabinet of 26th June 2008 provided an update on the demographics for secondary schools in the Birkenhead and Bebington areas, based on the January Census 2008. The report and minute form Appendix A to this report.
- 1.3 Section 4 of the 26th June 2008 report raised the potential implications of the proposed new Academy at Birkenhead High School. At this time members agreed to await an independent assessment of Birkenhead secondary schools proposed by the Office of the Schools Commissioner, the outcome of the Feasibility stage of the Academy process, and more detailed information on the National Challenge programme, before recommending options to proceed to consultation in the Phase 1 area.
- 1.4 Recommendations for options to proceed to consultation can now be made. Considerable analytic and background material 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 2008. Use of this material indicated that it is not necessary to make recommendations at this time for changes to South Wirral High School, St John Plessington Catholic High School, Wirral Grammar School for Girls, Wirral Grammar School for Boys or Woodchurch High School, although changes to other schools may affect these schools and will need to be monitored.

2.0 Independent assessment of Birkenhead Secondary Schools

- 2.1 Following from paragraph 4.3 of the 26th June 2008 report, the Office of the Schools Commissioner appointed an independent assessor, Mr George Gyte, to work alongside the Authority in order to examine fully the wider implications of the establishment of the proposed Birkenhead High Academy in regard to Birkenhead schools. In view of the movement of pupils across the Birkenhead/Bebington border in both directions, Mr Gyte added the implications for Bebington High School to his considerations. He also considered with the Diocese of Shrewsbury the implications for the Catholic Aided sector.
- 2.2 George Gyte, of Gyte-Lawlor Ltd, currently works as an advisor to the Prime Minister's

Delivery Unit (PMDU) on the implementation of the National Strategies, Children's Services and the Childcare Strategy. He also works as an advisor to the DCSF on the London Challenge and latterly on the 14-19 Strategy and Building Schools for the Future. Previously he was Director of Education for the London Borough of Greenwich, and has acted as lead advisor to the Teacher Training Agency on headship qualifications and training. Mr Gyte led the development and implementation of the National Professional Qualification for Headship and the Leadership Programme for Serving Heads. Other former roles include: Chief Education Inspector at Northamptonshire Local Education Authority; a secondary headteacher in Cleveland and Director of the Centre for the Study of Comprehensive Schools at the University of York.

- 2.3 During early July 2008 Mr Gyte visited Rock Ferry High School, Prenton High School, St Anselm's College, Park High School, Bebington High School, Upton Hall School and Ridgeway High School, meeting with headteachers, several chairs of governors, staff and students. He also met with Cllr Phil Davies, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning, the Director of Children's Services and other local authority officers, as well as with Frank Field MP and the Director of Schools for the Catholic Diocese of Shrewsbury.
- 2.4 Subsequently, Mr Gyte's report, entitled "Independent assessment of the Wirral LA's context and secondary review" was submitted to the Director of Children's Services. The document is attached as Appendix C to this report.
- 2.5 The report identifies Wirral's existing and growing future surplus place issues and the need to respond to the National Challenge, reforms of 14-19 education, and the prospective Academy at Birkenhead High School. It lacks any discussion around the potential impact of Birkenhead High School establishing a single sex girls primary school in Birkenhead, or of how funding for any possible options would be provided.
- 2.6 The report proposes various options for Birkenhead secondary schools, including the establishment of one or more Academies, and National Challenge Trust schools. Suggestions are also made regarding various recent innovations in the secondary curriculum, such as Studio schools and 14 to 19 hubs.
- 2.7 As well as demographic and curriculum issues, many factors must be considered before making any decisions regarding school reorganization, including accommodation and site issues, the implications of the National Challenge, and Building Schools for the Future.

3.0 Options in relation to the National Challenge

- 3.1 As reported to Cabinet in June 2008, six Wirral secondary schools have been identified as part of the National Challenge, three of which are included in the Phase 1 review area. They are: Ridgeway High School, Park High School and Rock Ferry High School. The remaining three schools fall within the Phase 2 review area. They are Wallasey School, Oldershaw School and Pensby High School for Boys.
- 3.2 School improvement plans in relation to these six schools were submitted in accordance with DCSF requirements by 31st July 2008. The Local Authority received feedback from the National Strategies and the DCSF on 17th September, and was required to submit any revisions for those elements of the school plans requiring funding by 30th September 2008. All six schools are currently reviewing their plans. Agreement on the school improvement plans, allocation of National Challenge Advisers and supporting resources is now close to completion and will be completed by the time of this Cabinet meeting.
- 3.3 Draft GCSE and equivalent examination results for 2008 are now available, and the table below shows the following outcomes:

School	2007 CVA	2007 %	2008 %	2008 Estimate FFT B
Park High	1014.9	23	26	26
Ridgeway High	1037.2	27	38	28
Rock Ferry High	1000.2	18	23	21
Oldershaw	1028.8	28	18	22
Wallasey	996.2	29	30	42
Pensby High School for Boys	992.0	26	25	44
<i>Bebington High</i>	<i>988.6</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>38</i>

Percentages in the table above relate to the National Challenge criteria for pupils achieving 5 or more A* to C grades at GCSE and equivalent, including English and Maths. FFT B Estimate for 2008 is based on similar schools nationally in terms of prior attainment and economic deprivation. 2007 KS2 to KS4 Contextual Value Added (CVA) is shaded where performance was below average, unshaded where performance was average or above.

Bebington High Sports College (*in italics*) is not a National Challenge school, but is included in the table for completeness since it is referred to in the Gyte report.

- 3.4 Four schools have increased the percentage of students gaining 5+ A*-C GCSE grades including English and Maths, but there are still four schools below the 30% floor target. Ridgeway High School has exceeded the 30% National Challenge target in 2008, however the DCSF and National Strategies have indicated that Ridgeway should remain part of the National Challenge as part of ensuring sustainability.
- 3.5 In relation to the National Challenge, the Gyte report suggests that within Phase 1 of the secondary school review, Bebington High and Ridgeway High should be considered for closure, reopening either as one or more Academies or National Challenge Trusts in order to “bring new ambition, partners and sponsors to help drive up improvement and raise attainment at a pace”.
- 3.6 Ridgeway High School already has Foundation status without a Trust. Bebington High School has formally begun the consultation process to become a Foundation school with a Trust, although not a National Challenge Trust. As part of this consultation, the governors of Bebington High School have asked whether the Council would like to become part of the proposed Trust. I shall bring a further report to Cabinet shortly to explore this and other issues to do with school governance so that a view can be taken.

National Challenge Trusts

- 3.7 National Challenge Trusts (NCTs) are intended as partnerships between National Challenge schools and successful schools or other education providers such as colleges or universities. In the same way as existing Trust schools, NCTs will be local authority maintained schools supported by a Trust with charitable status. The NCT enables those schools that do not have the capacity to reach the set target by 2011 to work towards sustainable improvement through collaboration with strong educational and/or business partners.
- 3.8 Unlike standard Trusts, the decision to create a NCT is triggered by local authority intervention rather than by the school. The Trust must represent a radical option for transforming the school, with a clear focus on school improvement and with the involvement of at least one strong education partner – which may be a school or a non-school education partner such as a Higher or Further Education college. Governance arrangements should allow the strong education partner to take over the running of the weaker school through the Trust appointing a majority of the governors, which is not generally the case with existing Trusts.
- 3.9 Up to £750,000 in funding over 3 years (or up to £1 million in the case of secondary modern schools – non selective schools in selective areas) is available to support National Challenge Trust schools where the NCT has been approved as part of the local authority’s National Challenge strategy. This funding cannot be used for capital works, but could go towards project management, legal costs, additional staff costs in partnering schools, recruitment of specialist teachers and senior staff, as well as staff restructuring and voluntary redundancy

packages.

3.10 However following information from DCSF advisors, it now appears likely that none of Wirral's six schools within National Challenge would be eligible to receive National Challenge Trust funding. This advice has been received verbally and is subject to confirmation. As a consequence of this, it is not my intention to propose any change to these two schools at this time.

4.0 **Options in relation to Prenton High School and Birkenhead High School**

4.1 Mr Gyte reports on the concerns of Prenton High School for Girls regarding the establishment of an additional girls school in the area, and suggests that Prenton High School should be considered for Academy status "as a means of securing its future" which could include the establishment of a Sixth Form. He also says that the two girl's schools should "work towards a formal collaboration". There is no indication as to the nature or structure of any such arrangement. Normal sorts of formal collaborations might include:

- to establish a single girls Academy, possibly operating on two sites
- a "hard federation" under a single headteacher and governing body. Each school retains separate budgets, admissions and performance data, and is inspected separately by Ofsted.
- a "soft federation" with both schools retaining separate headship, governance and budgets, but with shared elements of governance or a joint strategic committee with delegated powers.

A table showing the different kinds of federation, and less formal methods of collaboration, is included as Appendix D. However, there is no provision under current legal frameworks for federations between Academies and other kinds of schools.

4.2 Federations can only be proposed by the Governing bodies of two or more schools. Any form of collaboration between the two girls' schools would require the co-operation of the sponsor of the Birkenhead High School Academy, the Girls Day School Trust (GDST), the governing bodies of both schools and the Local Authority.

4.3 The DCSF have now appointed PKF (UK) LLP as project consultants for the proposed Academy at Birkenhead High School. A Project Steering Group is being established, comprising PKF, the GDST as sponsor and various DCSF representatives. The Local Authority has also been invited to nominate a representative, and officers attended the first Steering Group meeting in September 2008 at Birkenhead High School. The required Stakeholder Group has also been established, and headteacher representatives from both Primary and Secondary schools have been requested.

4.4 The establishment of a second, state funded and non-selective girls' school in Birkenhead, bound by the Code of Practice for Admissions, presents considerable challenges. There would be a significant imbalance in the number of places available to boys and to girls in the borough, particularly in single sex schools. The two girls' schools would be only 1.5 miles apart and neither would be a large school; Prenton High has an admission number of 150 representing 5 forms of entry whilst the proposals for Birkenhead High envisage a growth from 60 to 100 pupils per year in the secondary department. At just over 3 forms of entry, this school would not be considered sustainable by the Authority.

4.5 This analysis suggests that in the event that the Birkenhead High proposals are agreed by the Secretary of State, it will be vitally important for both schools that a strong collaboration exists. Such a collaboration needs to be formal and needs to be capable of development as the pattern of pupil choice emerges. I recommend in this report that I be authorized to discuss such arrangements with the Girls Day School Trust and the DCSF. The Authority has not yet been consulted formally about the proposals but such discussions would inform the Authority's response.

5.0 Establishment of a new Academy

The Gyte report proposes an option for reorganisation of secondary school provision in the Birkenhead area involving the closure of Rock Ferry High and Park High schools, combined with the establishment of an Academy, suggesting that a new building for the Academy should be constructed, rather than utilising either of the existing sites.

- 5.1 Under this option, both Rock Ferry High School and Park High School would be closed. A new Academy would in the first instance open in the existing buildings.
- 5.2 A new building for the Academy would be considered a high priority for the Authorities Building Schools for the Future programme, or funding may be available via the national framework for Academies set up by Partnerships for Schools (PfS) subject to the availability of a suitable site. In many cases Academies open in the existing buildings of the schools they replace. The Government's aim is that new or refurbished buildings will be provided within three years of the Academy opening, although they acknowledge that some Academies replace schools that have already been rebuilt or refurbished.
- 5.3 SEN provision currently based at the Sanderling Unit at Rock Ferry High would be relocated either to the Academy, or to another secondary school.
- 5.4 The Authority would expect that pupils attending both former schools would be guaranteed a place at the new Academy, although parents may choose to apply for places elsewhere if they wish to do so, in which case places would be allocated subject to the availability of places and according to the Admissions Code. It is understood that this has always been the case where academies have been established elsewhere.
- 5.5 The Gyte report suggests the inclusion of a 14-19 "hub" (referred to as a vocational centre) and the inclusion of a Studio school (see 10.0 below) to expand the current offer available to students at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training).
- 5.6 As a new Academy, there is no requirement for a statutory competition, although extensive consultation would take place including the invitation of sponsors for the Academy.
- 5.7 Guidance suggests that lead sponsor appoints the majority of governors, and takes on the full responsibility for setting up the Academy, making key decisions about the strategic direction of the new school in terms of staffing, as well as the academic, curriculum and admissions strategy. Co-sponsors can provide support through educational or other expertise. In practice, it is understood that at least in some instances, all sponsors can be involved in making key decisions about the strategic direction of the new school. Sponsors can come from a wide range of backgrounds, including colleges, universities, individual philanthropists, businesses, the charitable sector, existing private schools, educational foundations and the faith communities. The Council could decide to be a co-sponsor of the Academy. The arrangements involve the formation of a entity to promote and manage the Academy to insulate it from the future destiny of the individual sponsors.
- 5.8 New Academies are normally expected to be 11 to 18 in age range, which differs from the position in the non-selective schools in Birkenhead, all of which are currently 11 to 16 schools, and this will require further investigation with the Academies division of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). Guidance indicates that the DCSF would need to be assured that the arrangements for post-16 provision for pupils leaving the Academy are as good in terms of accessibility and quality as those that could be provided by the Academy itself. The final decision on the establishment of an Academy is made by the Secretary of State.
- 5.9 Consultations are currently underway by the boards of both Birkenhead Sixth Form College and Wirral Metropolitan College for their own redevelopment and these two institutions are the progression routes for the majority of Rock Ferry High School and Park High School students, as well as those from Ridgeway High School and Woodchurch High School.

5.10 Should the Cabinet support the proposal for an Academy therefore, I recommend that the academy should be for the 11 to 16 age range with the possibility of incorporating the “hub” proposal in partnership with other schools, colleges and work based learning providers. The details of this development will require much further exploration with the institutions concerned and with the sponsor.

6.0 Nature of an Academy

6.1 Academies are non-selective state funded independent schools. These schools have one or more sponsors, and can have a religious character if this is set out by the sponsor. Staff are employed by the Governing body just as in Aided, Foundation and Trust schools, but unlike other kinds of schools, they do not have to follow the School Teacher’s Pay and Conditions document.

6.2 Ownership of the building and site is by the Academy company. The Academy is funded by the Academies Division of the DCSF, not via the Council, but the funding level is determined by reference to the LA budget formula, and is deducted from the Authority’s DSG (Direct Schools Grant).

6.3 As in Aided, Foundation and Trust schools, the Governing body is the Admissions Authority and must comply with the Admissions code. Academies have some flexibility with regard to the National Curriculum and do not have to follow the SEN code of practice.

6.4 Academies are inspected by Ofsted, as in all other categories of school, but any necessary intervention on standards is by the Academies division of the DCSF, not by the Local Authority.

7.0 Demographics

7.1 In January 2008, there were 689 pupils at Rock Ferry High School, and 868 at Park High School, 1,557 pupils in total. Between the two schools, there were 925 surplus places, resulting in 31% surplus places at Park High and 44% surplus places at Rock Ferry High School.

7.2 As the number of secondary age pupils falls over the next few years, the total number of pupils between the two schools is projected to fall from 1,557 in January 2008, to 988 by January 2013. If significant changes are not made to existing secondary school provision, this would produce 1,494 surplus places between the two schools, 55% empty places at Park High and 66% empty places at Rock Ferry High. This projection does not take into account the potential impact of a new Girls Academy at Birkenhead High School, which is likely to further reduce the total number of pupils available to attend neighbouring schools.

8.0 Site issues

8.1 As the Academy would open initially in the existing buildings of both schools, there are substantial ownership and land issues to resolve prior to the establishment of the Academy. The Academy Trust is expected to own the buildings and site in which the Academy is based, however Park High is part of the Council’s PFI scheme until 2031. Rather than reverting to Council ownership in 2031, ownership of the buildings and land would revert to the Academy Trust. Rock Ferry’s site is currently in Council ownership. A leasing arrangement would need to be agreed for one or both sites, otherwise ownership would be transferred to the Academy Trust at the inception of the Academy. The Council would like to ensure that ownership would revert to the Council.

8.2 If at some later date either or both existing sites are declared surplus to requirements as a school, the Council would need to find an alternative use for the Park High buildings until 2031 or consider buying out of the PFI contract which is likely to be at high financial cost. Any proposed sale of either site would be subject to the regulations on the sale of school playing fields and the Council’s planning regulations. The distribution of any potential proceeds from a future site sale would be best agreed legally with the Academy Trust during the Feasibility

stage.

- 8.3 Both existing buildings are well within the size requirements for a secondary school accommodating the projected 900 to 1000 pupils. The present capacity at Park High is 1,250 pupils, and at Rock Ferry High, 1,232 pupils.
- 8.4 A preliminary study of possible sites in the Birkenhead area has been carried out, and initial findings are that there are a small number of sites of sufficient size in a suitable location. These sites are however likely to require the release of Unitary Development Plan designated Urban Green Space or the removal of playing fields from community use. This could be offset by designating all or part of one of the existing school sites as green space/playing field.
- 8.5 More in-depth study of potential sites for a new building to house the Academy will be carried out prior to the Building Schools for the Future programme. As a matter of urgency if the Cabinet support the principle of the establishment of a new Academy, a further report will be presented.

9.0 **Building Schools for the Future (BSF)**

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 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.
- 9.3 On 26th June 2008, Cabinet approved a positive response to a consultation on entry into an earlier wave of BSF for some projects. In order to qualify for early entry to the 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", which means that as well as committing to resource a BSF project team, the strategic vision must be in place and ideally that statutory decisions on re-organisation including closures and proposals for new schools or Academies should either have been made or be in progress.
- 9.4 The DCSF have subsequently asked for all Authorities not already participating in a full BSF programme to submit a revised expression of interest by 30th November 2008. This includes revised demographic data, a summary of the Authorities strategy for transformation and readiness to proceed, and will form the subject of a report to Cabinet later this month.

10.0 **Studio Schools**

- 10.1 The Gyte report mentions the inclusion of a Studio School within a new Academy in Birkenhead. This is a relatively newly launched concept in the UK, resulting from research conducted by the Young Foundation.
- 10.2 In essence, the studio school is aimed at 14 to 19 year olds, teaching the National Curriculum through interdisciplinary, enterprise-themed projects to prepare them for the world of work. The school operates one or more small businesses, and is staffed by a combination of teachers, and non-teachers with a business background. Studio schools are aimed at young people of all abilities wanting a more practical, entrepreneurial approach or those alienated by traditional education. Pupils would spend a minority of their time working in the school "business", with those over 16 receiving a wage, and can take either vocational or traditional qualifications.
- 10.3 The Gyte report indicates that this could be an option for pupils who are at risk of becoming NEET, although the Young Foundation states that studio school style education is unlikely to be suitable for pupils in Pupil Referral Units or those with complex and challenging needs.

These schools are not intended to replace conventional schools, being described as operating as a “school within a school” or in some documents as a small school with a comprehensive intake of up to 300 young people. Definitions of a studio school are varied, and would require further investigation in order to establish the benefits for young people in Birkenhead.

10.4 At present, the only studio school in operation is a pilot scheme between Barnfield College in Luton and two Academies which it sponsors. A group of around 30 students spend 2 days a week attending the College, studying business start-up and a vocational programme, with the remaining time spent at their home Academy.

10.5 Other Authorities reported to be interested in the Studio school concept are Newham, Barnsley, Blackpool, Kirklees, Oldham, Sheffield and South Tyneside. Contact has been made with the Principal of Barnfield College, and it is likely that a visit to the school will be made during the Autumn term.

11.0 Diocesan Issues

11.1 There is currently no Church of England secondary school in the Wirral area, and this should be considered as possibility within any options which create a new school.

11.2 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 relevant Diocese would publish a linked proposal to establish a new Voluntary Controlled or Aided school. Alternatively, a Diocese could act as a sponsor to an Academy, or as a member of a Trust for a Foundation school with a Trust.

12.0 Financial Implications

12.1 There are none arising directly as a result of this report, though the proposed changes do have very significant implications. These will be explored in a further report as proposals become more specific and before decisions are taken by the Cabinet.

13.0 Staffing Implications

13.1 There are none arising directly as a result of this report. There are, however, important implications arising out of the proposals and these will be set out in a further report as proposals become more specific.

13.2 The staffing implications of entering Building Schools for the Future will be significant. Again, this will be the subject of a future report.

14.0 Equal Opportunities Implications

14.1 It is essential to plan school provision across the Authority so that it is both efficient and effective in the interests of all pupils. Consultation will need to address very carefully the impact of any preferred options on pupils which are served by the schools concerned. Attention has been drawn, for example, to the imbalance of boys’ and girls’ places earlier in the report and the need to plan for pupils having special educational needs.

15.0 Community Safety Implications

15.1 Rationalisation and refurbishment of schools allow the most vulnerable accommodation to be removed and other security improvements carried out.

16.0 Local Agenda 21 Statement

16.1 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.

17.0 Planning Implications

- 17.1 The relationship between housing development policy and school place provision is a factor in considering surplus place removal.
- 17.2 Any proposals after the consultation and decision making process for school re-organisation would be subject to the usual planning processes.

18.0 Anti-Poverty Implications

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

19.0 Social Inclusion Implications

- 19.1 School re-organisation and transforming accommodation through the forthcoming Building Schools for the Future programme and other schemes, provides opportunities to promote joint agency work to promote co-ordinated solutions for pupils and their families. There is scope for community participation in the design process of any new school buildings, raising the school's profile within the community.

20.0 Local Member Support Implications

- 20.1 The schools specifically mentioned in the report and appendices, and the Wards in which they are situated, which are Bebington, Claughton, Oxton, Rock Ferry, and Upton.

21.0 Background Papers

DCSF Supply of School places return

DCSF guidance on Surplus Place Removal

Pupil and Capacity data held by the LA

DCSF prospectus for Sponsors and Local Authorities - 400 Academies

DCSF strategy document "Back on Track - A strategy for modernising alternative provision for young people"

Barnfield College - www.barnfield.ac.uk/news.php?id=35

Young Foundation Studio Schools programme - http://launchpad.youngfoundation.org/fund/learning-launchpad/fund_home

22.0 Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- (1) the Director begins formal discussions with the DCSF and potential sponsors with a view to the establishment of a new Academy in Birkenhead.
- (2) Cabinet confirms that, in principle, the Council would wish to become a co-sponsor of the Academy.
- (3) detailed feasibility work begins with a view to establishing the size of the proposed Academy, its location and the probable impact on other schools in the borough in order to create an official Expression of Interest for an Academy.
- (4) in the light of (3), consultations begin on the closure of Rock Ferry High and Park High School in order to establish a new Academy for their pupils.

- (5) the Director undertakes formal discussions with the Girls Day School Trust and the DCSF to explore the future relationship between Birkenhead High School and Prenton High School and the relationship of both with the Authority.
- (6) no proposals are made at this time in respect of Woodchurch High School, Ridgeway High School, Bebington High Sports College, South Wirral High School, Wirral Grammar School for Girls, Wirral Grammar School for Boys or St John Plessington Catholic College, but that the impact of the other changes proposed is monitored.
- (7) that the revised Expression of Interest for Building Schools for the Future be the subject of a further report to Cabinet.

Howard Cooper

Director of Children's Services

CABINET

Thursday, 6 November 2008

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	S Foulkes (Chair)	
	Councillors	S Holbrook G Davies P Davies G Gardiner	M McLaughlin R Moon J Quinn J Stapleton
<u>In attendance:</u>	Councillors	J Crabtree F Doyle L Fraser P Gilchrist JE Green T Harney	S Mountney L Rennie J Salter H Smith C Teggin K Wood
<u>Apologies</u>	Councillor	S Kelly	

248 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th October had been printed and published. It was noted that Minute 213 (Land at The Warrens, Thingwall Road East) had been called in and would be considered by the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 10th November 2008.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be approved and adopted.

249 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The members of the Committee were asked 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.

The following declarations were made:

Councillor Moira McLaughlin - a prejudicial interest in Minute 250 (Follow up of disclosure under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA)) due to a friendship with a potentially interested party and left the room whilst the matter was considered;

Councillor George Davies – a personal interest in Minute 252 (Secondary Review – Phase 1) due to his appointment as a governor of one of the schools mentioned in the report.

Councillor Steve Foulkes – a personal interest in Minute 251 (Progress towards the transformation of Adult Social Services) due to his wife's employment.

With the permission of the Chair, the Leader of the Conservative Group addressed the Cabinet. Councillor Green queried the support that would be available to enable staff to prepare an in-house bid and this was confirmed by the Director of Adult Social Services.

The Deputy Leader of the Council queried the transitional arrangements that would be in place to minimise any disruption to service users and the Director confirmed that they would be helped to develop where appropriate the services they required.

Resolved: That the proposals to outsource in-house provided services by open tender as set out in the report be agreed in principle, subject to a further report being brought to Cabinet outlining in particular the staffing, service and financial implications.

252 **SECONDARY REVIEW - PHASE 1**

The Director of Children's Services presented a report which advised the Cabinet of progress on the Phase 1 Area Review of secondary school places in the Birkenhead and Bebington areas. Following the report from an independent consultant, the report put forward a recommendation for an option for consultation, and commented briefly on some of the issues involved, including the proposed Academy at Birkenhead High School for Girls and the implications of the National Challenge.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning indicated that this was the start of a process that would be considered in manageable blocks. He was determined to raise standards in schools and felt that the proposal for new Academy in Birkenhead was an exciting option. He indicated that there would be thorough consultation with all Stakeholders and was pleased with the support of headteachers.

Councillor George Davies referred to the proposed Academy being for the age range 11-16 and it was agreed that the recommendation would be amended accordingly.

Resolved: That

- (1) the Director begins formal discussions with the DCSF and potential sponsors with a view to the establishment of a new Academy in Birkenhead with an age range of 11 to 16;**
- (2) Cabinet confirms that, in principle, the Council would wish to become a co-sponsor of the Academy;**
- (3) detailed feasibility work begins with a view to establishing the size of the proposed Academy and its location in order to create an official Expression of Interest for an Academy;**
- (4) in the light of (3), consultations begin on the closure of Rock Ferry High and Park High School in order to establish a new Academy for their pupils;**
- (5) the Director undertakes formal discussions with the Girls Day School Trust and the DCSF to explore the future relationship between Birkenhead High School and Prenton High School and the relationship of both with the Authority;**

(6) the Director brings back a further report to Cabinet on the implications of the above proposals on other schools and colleges;

(7) the revised Expression of Interest for Building Schools for the Future be the subject of a further report to Cabinet;

(8) the above recommendations be the subject of a detailed consultation exercise with key stakeholders and a further report be brought back to Cabinet on the outcome of this including any other suggestions raised during the consultation phase.

253 PROCUREMENT EFFICIENCIES

Cabinet on 12 December 2007 approved a projected procurement savings target of £2.25 million for 2008/09. The Director of Finance presented a report which informed Members of progress towards achieving the savings target and outlined future plans and targets for efficiencies, within the Procure to Pay (P2P) activity in line with the Procurement Strategy approved by Cabinet on 4 September 2008.

Resolved: That

(1) the procurement efficiencies delivered in 2008/09 be noted;

(2) the procurement efficiencies from corporate contracts estimated at £1.5m be agreed for 2009-10.

254 PROJECTED BUDGETS 2009 - 2011

At the request of the Chair, the Director of Finance provided the Cabinet with details of the Council's investments in Icelandic Bank.

The Director of Finance then presented the projected budgets for 2009-2011 to coincide with the period of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 (CSR).

It was reported that the Council had won an LGC Award for Investment Officer of the Year and the Cabinet requested that their congratulations be forwarded to the appropriate officer.

The Leader of the Council moved a motion, duly seconded, and it was –

Resolved: That

(1) In the light of the continued urgent need to close Wirral's £21million budget gap and avoid placing an unreasonable burden on Wirral's council tax payers, and in the light of the recommendations on Item 4, Progress towards the Transformation of Adult Social Services and Item 8 Procurement Efficiencies, Cabinet recommends the following to Council: