

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 29TH NOVEMBER 2007

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

PROVISION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES – FUTURE STRATEGY

Executive Summary

This report provides a summary of the position in respect of secondary school places and describes recent developments, the current position and issues for the future. It identifies a significant increase in secondary surplus places over the medium term if further action is not taken and proposes a phased review of secondary school provision, involving schools and stakeholders, to identify any further opportunities for the removal of surplus places.

1.0 Background

1.1 There are four elements in looking to plan future secondary school requirements across the Borough. These are, firstly, the numbers of children expected to enter school over the next seven years; secondly the capacity of the current stock of secondary schools, individually and in areas, thirdly the impact of school size on standards, and finally a series of factors with implications for place provision. These include developments within the Education System: for example, those arising from the Children Act and Extended Schools, Building Schools for the Future and the need for diversity in school provision, the duty to respond to parental preference, and external factors which impact on secondary school numbers; for example, Housing Market Renewal and new housing developments.

2.0 Pupil Numbers

- 2.1 The projection method for Years 7 to 11 in secondary schools is as follows. In order to calculate the Year 7 intake for each future year, the actual number of pupils in Wirral primary schools is rolled forward to their equivalent Year 7 intake year, then multiplied by 101.7 to reflect a historical increase at this transition point which is related to movement to the maintained sector from independent schools. Individual school Year 7 intakes are then based on the previous three years Year 7 intake figures. Years 8 to 11 at each individual school are simply rolled forward.
- 2.2 Post-16 projections are not the focus of this report, however, for completeness, Year 12 pupil numbers are calculated from Year 11 actual numbers at individual schools (excluding schools without sixth forms), to which the individual school's historical staying on rate is applied. In a similar manner, Years 12 and 13 are calculated from the actual number on roll for the previous year, using the historical staying on rate.
- 2.3 The number of secondary age pupils has already begun to fall, following as a natural consequence of the longstanding falling roll in primary schools, and will continue to fall in the future, based upon numbers of actual pupils now in primary schools which will

translate into intakes up to 2014. Total secondary numbers on roll, actual and projected, to 2014 are as set out below.

	YEAR	PUPILS	ANNUAL CHANGE
	ACTUAL	2000	20599
2001		20995	+396
2002		21109	+114
2003		21432	+323
2004		21331	-101
2005		20955	-376
2006		20581	-374
PROJECTED	2007	20051	-530
	2008	19474	-577
	2009	19005	-469
	2010	18573	-432
	2011	18221	-352
	2012	17848	-373
	2013	17545	-303
	2014	17164	-381

The numbers set out above are for secondary age pupils (11 – 16) in mainstream schools, e.g. not including pupils in special schools or maintained sixth form provision. Actuals are as at the January Census.

2.4 The above figures illustrate a significantly falling school roll across the Borough. The levels of reduction are not evenly distributed between areas, or between individual schools within areas. The table below shows 11 to 16 numbers on roll at January 2007, and projected to 2014, by area.

	2007	2014	% Projected Fall
Birkenhead	5936	4868	18%
Wallasey	5536	4617	17%
Bebington	4550	4032	11%
Deeside	4029	3647	10%

The numbers set out above are for secondary age pupils (11 – 16) in mainstream schools, e.g. not including pupils in special schools or maintained sixth form provision. Actuals and Wirral areas are as at the January Census.

2.5 Pupils attending Wirral secondary schools over the next seven years already exist in Wirral primary schools. Migration is minimal, and while individual school rolls may vary, it seems reasonable to conclude that over the next seven years almost 3,000 fewer pupils will require 11 to 16 school provision, continuing a trend which has already resulted in over 1,300 fewer pupils in the system in 2007 than there were in 2003. The average size of a Wirral secondary school is around 1000 pupils, with a range of 645 to 1560.

3.0 School Capacity and Surplus Places

3.1 Establishing the projected number of pupils is the first step in planning ahead, the second step is the calculation of the capacity of both individual schools and overall LA capacity, in order to try to achieve the best match between need and provision, whilst at the same time retaining some flexibility to allow parental preferences to be considered.

- 3.2 The capacity of secondary schools is calculated by the DCSF Net Capacity method, used by all Local Authorities. This method replaced two former measures of school capacity, the Standard Number capacity (SN) and the More open Enrolment (MoE) method, which produced anomalies and variations year on year. When first introduced in 2002/2003, the Net Capacity method resulted in reductions at some schools and increases in others. It seems likely that the Net Capacity method will continue to be used by the DCSF and LAs in future years. There is little scope for “paper” reductions in surplus places using this method.
- 3.3 The Council is required to monitor surplus places, both by the DCSF and by the Audit Commission. The Audit Commission recommends that surplus places overall should be no higher than 10%. Below 4%, there may be little scope for parents to exercise their right to express a preference, while above 10% the Council is considered to be wasting resources supporting empty space, rather than directly funding education. In the most recent Supply of School Places return to the DCSF, the overall surplus percentage for secondary schools was calculated at 11%.
- 3.4 DCSF also uses the number of schools with more than 25% and more than 30 surplus places as a measure of how effectively the LA is managing places. In January 2007, two of Wirral’s 22 secondary schools were in this category. The Authority is obliged to make a statement about schools in this category, stating how and when the surplus place issue is to be addressed, or if no action is to be taken, the reasons for this decision.
- 3.5 Wirral is already above the Audit Commission’s recommended 10% maximum for surplus places, and has two schools in the 25% and 30 places category. No action is taken to address these issues, and applying the pupil projection methods given in 2.1 and 2.2 above, the overall Wirral surplus place percentage in secondary schools will increase to 23% by 2014, more than double the Audit Commission’s maximum acceptable level.
- 3.6 With regard to the DCSF 25% and 30 places measure, it is estimated that the number of schools exceeding this benchmark would rise to a third of secondary schools by 2013/2014.
- 3.7 Projections for percentage surplus and numbers of schools exceeding the 25% and 30 places measure by area are given in the table below.

	2007 number on roll	2007 Capacity	% 2007 Surplus	% 2014 surplus (projected)	No. schools with 25% & 30 places
Birkenhead	6340	7539	16	30	4 out of 7
Wallasey	6572	7612	14	27	1 out of 5
Bebington	5486	5977	8	18	1 out of 5
Deeside	5190	5496	6	14	1 out of 5

The numbers set out above are for secondary and post-16 age pupils (11–19) in mainstream schools, e.g. not including pupils in special schools. Actuals are as at the January Census.

- 3.8 In 2007, the two areas upon which the falling roll has had most impact are Birkenhead and Wallasey. It should however be noted that surplus places are projected to increase in all parts of Wirral.
- 3.9 As in the primary school sector, there are a number of methods of removing surplus places.
- Re-allocation of space within schools for non-core purposes, such as extended services and other community provision.

- Removal of temporary accommodation.
- Changes in accommodation to meet the needs of a changing curriculum
- Proposals for school re-organisation where other measures are insufficient to reduce surplus capacity to an acceptable level.

3.10 The intention is that these methods will continue to be applied but increasingly it is the final one which will have most relevance.

View of the Schools Forum

3.11 Members should note that in June 2005 the Schools Forum passed the following resolution:

“Resolved - That Wirral Schools Forum recognises that the local education authority has a duty to maintain and fund schools in an efficient and effective manner. This implies that the number of schools should reflect the pupil population and the needs of Wirral communities, which could mean the amalgamation or closure of schools for the efficiency and effectiveness of the service.”

4.0 School size, funding and standards

4.1 Funding is delegated to the governing bodies of individual schools based on a multi-factorial budget formula, the principal component in which is the Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU). Consequently, schools with more pupils on roll will clearly have a larger budget, while schools with fewer pupils will receive a smaller budget.

4.2 The budget formula ensures that all schools have sufficient resources to operate, regardless of size, although increasingly difficult compromises have to be made as schools get smaller – see further comment below. Smallness alone would not cause any school to become financially unviable. What does happen is that small schools draw in a greater share of the resource per pupil from the total available for distributing among all schools. Since the total sum available for spending on all our children does not increase if we choose as an Authority to organise our children in more schools than is necessary for the efficient and effective delivery of education, it follows that the maintenance of small schools, where this is not necessary, comes at the expense of all other children.

4.3 Larger schools can employ more staff, and through division of labour, employ more specialist subject teachers. Smaller schools may only require a small amount of teaching in certain subjects, and face compromises in terms of the range of subjects they are able to offer, and the grouping arrangements they are able to employ.

4.4 Earlier in 2007, under the guidance of a seconded headteacher, a group of curriculum deputy headteachers representing different types of school met to discuss issues of curriculum viability. The group acknowledged that compromises were necessary as the number pupils in each year group reduced, limiting not only the breadth of subject choice available to pupils, but also placing pressure on teachers to teach outside their subject area, and on the school to employ more part-time staff, as well as limiting grouping arrangements and creating timetabling difficulties. The outcome is reported as Appendix A.

4.5 Given the diverse nature of Wirral's secondary school provision, the group's view was that a definite size beyond which a school was no longer viable was impossible to determine. However, the group agreed that the compromises became increasingly difficult for cohorts approaching 100 pupils.

- 4.6 National research on secondary school size has been scarce, but a study carried out in 2002 suggests that the optimum cohort size for a comprehensive school is between 175 and 200 pupils. For an 11 to 16 secondary school, this would result in between 875 and 1000 total pupils.
- 4.7 Other Councils who have already begun reviewing their secondary school provision have produced various optimum sizes, often with a range rather than a fixed number. Local context and population patterns are inevitably a factor in the variation between local authorities. Sefton Council, which is one of Wirral's statistical neighbours, have stated that they "will not be prescriptive on the issue on school size", but that as a guide they consider that 11 to 16 schools should have at least 90 pupils per year, and 11 to 18 schools at least 120. This is not dissimilar to the 100 pupil figure agreed by the Wirral working group.
- 4.8 With regard to organisational viability there can be no question that small schools face greater challenges. This of course does not mean that at any one time a particular small school cannot produce excellence through having outstanding teachers. In many parts of the country it is a clear necessity to maintain small schools because the alternative would be that children be transported, perhaps for a number of miles, to the nearest school. Authorities who have such schools receive additional funding from the government which enables them to spend more on these schools without it being at the expense of others, in order for them to be organisationally viable. Wirral does not receive this element of grant.
- 4.9 No Wirral secondary school is currently in an Ofsted category of concern, however were to this to occur, this could trigger a school review as there is a duty to consider whether schools in these categories should be closed or amalgamated with another school.
- 4.10 In thinking about how to provide the best educational opportunities for Wirral's future children and young people, we must give consideration as to whether we have not only the right number of schools, but the right size of schools to meet the needs of Wirral's secondary school population.

5.0 Other factors impacting on school capacity

- 5.1 Other factors can be broadly grouped into changes to communities in Wirral which impact on pupil numbers and the debate about the nature and form of secondary education provision and the subsequent implications for school size, structures, inter-school relationships and locations, which has been brought about by the Children Bill and other recent and proposed legislation.
- 5.2 Looking firstly at changes to communities in Wirral, the biggest changes impacting on school provision over the next ten years are likely to come from the Housing Market Renewal Strategy in the Birkenhead, Tranmere, Rock Ferry and Seacombe areas. Once future options are brought forward to the Council and the community, then more detailed work will be undertaken to assess the implications for secondary school places and provision and consider options for the future to complement, integrate with and support the Housing Market Renewal Initiative (HMRI). However, it is unlikely that this will have a significant impact on pupil numbers.
- 5.3 Clearly, sufficient "spare" capacity has to remain in the system to deal with local growth fluctuations as a result of new development. The number of pupils generated on average by new housing developments is lower than is often thought to be the case; the Audit Commission recorded a range of three to six pupils per year group for every one hundred new homes built in their 1997 study 'Trading Places'. Added to this is the situation that family movement within Wirral means

that some children moving to new developments will already be on roll at a Wirral secondary school. The current planning development rules for parts of Wirral are also a factor to be taken into account, for example, the restrictions on new housing.

- 5.4 In addition to these “practical” factors regarding pupil numbers and premises capacity there is a need to set the places debate into a framework which considers not only pupil numbers but links provision to the aims, principles and aspirations for secondary education in Wirral, thereby providing a template for consideration when looking at individual schools, groups of schools or provision across larger areas.
- 5.5 It is also important that Aided school provision is considered in overall school place planning in any area. Across the borough, there are two all-ability mixed sex Catholic Aided secondary schools, and two single sex Catholic Aided grammar schools. There is no Church of England secondary school. There will be a continuing need to work in partnership with the Diocesan Bodies in looking at future capacity needs in the secondary sector. The generally falling roll may impact unevenly, to some extent, on Aided and community schools.
- 5.6 In the future, curriculum changes may alter some of the issues and ease some of the difficulties, for example, increased flexibility at KS3 may reduce the need for specialist teachers and facilities. The introduction of specialised diplomas at 14 to 19 may also lead to a change in staffing arrangements and facilities. We cannot determine the full impact of curriculum changes at this point in time, however these changes are unlikely to change the fact that smaller schools are unable to provide the breadth of choice for pupils that larger schools can.
- 5.7 The Government has recently announced their plans to require young people to remain in school, training or workplace training until the age of 18 from 2013. In 2006, Connexions estimated that 1,210 or 10% of young people aged 16 to 19 in Wirral were NEET (Not in Education, Employment and Training), which is above the average proportion of NEET young people across the North West region (8.9%), but below the Merseyside regional average (10.8%). The document “Raising Expectations: Staying in education or training post-16 – from policy to legislation”, available at: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19/documents/Raising%20Expectations.pdf> sets out the economic and social imperatives behind the change. The first age group to be affected will enter secondary school in September 2008. The change does not, however, mean that pupils would be forced to stay in school or continue with academic lessons, as the definition also includes vocational and further education college courses, as well as apprenticeships and work-based learning. The change in the participation age is unlikely to have a significant impact on overall numbers on roll in school-based provision.

6.0 **Academy and Independent School developments**

- 6.1 Birkenhead High School is a 3 to 19 fee-paying independent school for girls, operated by the Girls Day School Trust (GDST) and sited at Devonshire Place, Prenton. There are currently around 640 girls on roll across the age range, including 96 in post-16 education. The school draws pupils from across Wirral, with a small number travelling from out of borough. The admissions arrangements have recently been altered to enable boys to be admitted to the 3 to 7 age range.
- 6.2 In early October, it was announced that the GDST had approached the Academies division of the DCSF with a view to becoming an Academy from September 2009.

The school has released a statement via its website which can be read at: <http://www.gdst.net/birkenheadhigh/>

- 6.3 This application is at an early stage, and there has yet to be a full formal consultation which must involve the Authority. If it is approved by the Academies Division, the school would become an all girls Academy with approximately 900 free places for girls aged 3 to 19. Parents of existing pupils will no longer be required to pay fees. The school intends to phase admissions by admitting new pupils only to F2 (Reception), Year 7 and Year 12 (sixth form) in the first year, with all other year groups remaining unchanged in terms of “in-filling”. The school intends to select 10% of pupils in Year 7 on the basis of aptitude in music. All other places would be allocated on the basis of a “fair banding” system, the details of which are currently unclear.
- 6.4 The school indicates that there would be two forms of entry to F2, and four forms of entry to Year 7. Currently classes in primary phase have up to 20 pupils, whilst classes in secondary phase have no more than 24 pupils. The Academy would admit girls only up to age 16, but there is a possibility of boys being admitted into the Sixth Form department.
- 6.5 Shortly after the GDST announced their intention to apply for Academy status, the independent Birkenhead School (Boys) announced that it will become a co-educational school from September 2008. Ahead of this date, they have stated that girls will be admitted to Foundation 2, Year 1 and Year 2 (Key Stage 1) from January 2008, to Years 3 to 5 from April 2008, and to Year 6 and the Senior school from September 2008. They will remain independent, and retain their fees and selection system. Further detail is available via the school’s website. <http://www.birkenheadschoo.co.uk/news/coed.htm>
- 6.6 Changes to the independent school sector, creating more mainstream places for girls, is likely to have an impact on both primary and secondary school places and pupil numbers, particularly in schools in the local area to Birkenhead High School, (although the Academy proposal is to draw pupils from the wider Wirral area). There are four secondary schools within two miles of Birkenhead High School which admit girls, they are Park High, Prenton High for Girls, Ridgeway High and Woodchurch High Schools. Upton Hall School, a Catholic Aided grammar school for girls is just over 2 miles away. St Anselm’s Catholic Aided College is within 2 miles, and may be affected if boys are admitted to the new Academy’s Sixth Form. Other schools further afield may also be impacted if this change is approved.
- 6.7 It would be prudent to invite representatives from Birkenhead High School to participate in the pre-consultation exercise referred to in section 10 below.

7.0 Inclusion

- 7.1 Concurrent with the proposed review of mainstream secondary school provision, a seconded special school headteacher will be leading on an investigation of the future of secondary special school provision in Wirral. This will be the subject of a separate report to Cabinet.
- 7.2 Nationally, there has been an increasing emphasis on inclusive education, that is, the education of more children and young people with special needs within mainstream educational settings. There may be opportunities to locate special needs bases within mainstream secondary schools, or indeed to co-locate special schools with their mainstream counterparts.
- 7.3 The numbers of pupils involved are relatively small, and while this is an important accommodation factor to be considered, especially within the Council’s vision for

Building Schools for the Future, the impact on surplus places and school size is expected to be minimal.

8.0 Building Schools for the Future and PFI

- 8.1 The Council's Private Finance Initiative (PFI) has resulted in the rebuild or significant remodelling of 9 secondary schools and one primary school. A unitary charge is payable on these buildings for twenty-five years after the building is handed over to the Local Authority. This liability remains whether or not the building remains in use as a school, however it does not preclude options affecting schools occupying PFI buildings.
- 8.2 Due partly to Wirral's participation in PFI, the Council's place in the national Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme is in wave D, which means full participation by 2016. In advance of the full BSF programme, Wirral was invited to take part in a One School Pathfinder scheme to fully re-build one secondary school, and the rebuilding of Woodchurch High School was approved by Cabinet on 15th November 2006. Design and programme development are underway, architects and relevant Technical Services staff have been appointed to the scheme. Completion is anticipated in August 2009, with subsequent demolition of part of the existing buildings and ground works.
- 8.3 As part of the full BSF programme, the Council will be required to draw up a Strategy for Change and an outline business case articulating its vision for transforming secondary school provision and outlining the principles that would underpin the programme.

These principles are likely to include:

- Meeting the demands of 21st century learning activities and curriculum changes
- Access to ICT
- Inclusion
- Extended schools provision
- Specialist facilities
- Promoting physical and mental well-being

- 8.4 It is important to start planning and consulting early with schools, parents/carers and other stakeholders, and to begin thinking in depth about what modern schools should look like and where funding and work can be targeted most effectively.

9.0 Secondary Place Review Process

- 9.1 It is proposed that in addition to the existing measures set out in 3.9 above that a review of secondary school places is begun in Autumn 2007 to match current provision against future predicted need and draw up proposals for discussion and further consultation, leading to formal proposals, where appropriate. This will also enable the Authority to be prepared for BSF, and for any further "advance" projects that might arise of a similar nature to the current One School Pathfinder at Woodchurch High School.
- 9.2 Surplus places are currently highest in Birkenhead and Wallasey, lower in Deeside and Bebington. However preliminary analysis indicates that Birkenhead and Bebington have interlinked pupil populations at the secondary level, and consequently should be reviewed together in Phase 1 during 2007/2008. Wallasey and Deeside areas will then form Phase 2 of the Secondary review. Should a

school be placed in an Ofsted category of concern during this time, it may alter the timescale for schools in that area.

9.3 As in the on-going Primary Places Review, it is proposed that a review document be produced for each area, including the following information:

- (a) Relevant cabinet reports
- (b) Maps of the area
- (c) School data, including Aided provision.
- (d) Demographics and projections
- (e) Current school populations plotted by address.
- (f) Asset Management Data
- (g) Other services / provision currently located on school sites.
- (h) School performance data
- (i) Diocesan Body statement

This document would be used as the basis for pre-consultation discussions with school governors and headteachers, Diocesan Bodies, other Council departments and relevant external bodies, with a view to producing options for more formal consultation as appropriate.

9.4 The outcome of the pre-consultation, including any options for formal consultation, will be the subject of a future report to Cabinet. If Cabinet approves options for formal consultation at that stage, the next step would be to publish the options and hold wide consultation with stakeholders including parents/carers.

9.5 Following consultation, a further report will be brought to Cabinet, containing recommendations for next steps, which may include statutory proposals. The earliest date for implementation of such proposals would be September 2009.

9.6 The challenges created by the falling roll also offer an opportunity to make a significant investment and complete the transformation of Wirral's secondary schools, begun by PFI, to ensure that all pupils and their communities have access to high-quality secondary education, in high quality facilities, fit for purpose for 21st century education and provide stability in this sector for a significant period of time.

9.7 The review process proposed in this report will enable the Council to be well-placed to make best use of BSF and other funding streams, by developing a comprehensive strategic vision for the future of secondary school provision in Wirral.

10.0 Financial Implications

10.1 Inaction will mean spending larger proportions of the overall schools budget on fixed costs, and consequently less directly on pupils. The decisions on school re-organisation emanating from the Primary Places Review have already demonstrated value for money and enabled the Authority to devote more resources to children's education in order to produce better quality outcomes, leading to higher standards and more efficient use of capital. The first three phases of the Primary Places Review will enable more than £500,000 to be redistributed each year which would otherwise have been spent on fixed costs.

11.0 Staffing Implications

11.1 Current staffing levels will need to be taken into account in determining the number and timescale of proposed area reviews.

12.0 Equal Opportunities Implications

12.1 It is essential to plan school provision across the Authority so that it is both efficient and effective in the interests of all pupils.

13.0 Community Safety Implications

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

14.0 Local Agenda 21 Implications

14.1 The removal of old, inefficient accommodation contributes to Council principles and targets in respect of Agenda 21.

15.0 Planning Implications

15.1 The relationship between housing development policy and school place provision is a factor in considering surplus place removal.

15.2 Any proposals that may arise out of options after the consultation and decision making process for school re-organisation would be subject to the usual planning processes.

16.0 Anti-Poverty Implications

16.1 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.

17.0 Social Inclusion Implications

17.1 School re-organisation and transforming secondary mainstream and secondary special accommodation through BSF 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 new school buildings through BSF, raising the school's profile within the community.

18.0 Local Member Support Implications

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

19.0 Background Papers

19.1 Audit Commission Report: Planning School Places in Wirral September 2004.

Asset Management Plan and Statement of Priorities.

School Census, January 2007

Supply of School Places return, August 2007, to DCSF requirements.

Other data held in Department

Recommendations

That

- (1) approval be given to the principle of a two phase review of secondary school provision beginning with pre-consultation with headteachers and chairs of governors in schools in Birkenhead and Bebington;
- (2) approval be given to invite representatives from Birkenhead High School to participate in the review from the pre-consultation stage onwards; and
- (3) options arising from this initial consultation be the subject of a further report to Cabinet with my recommendations for option(s) to proceed to wider, formal, consultation with all stakeholders.

Howard Cooper
Director of Children's Services

Minutes - Cabinet - 29 November 2007

Present

Chair S Foulkes

Councillors George Davies, PL Davies, G Gardiner, PJ Hackett, SA Holbrook, SE Kelly, M McLaughlin, RK Moon, Jean Quinn

In attendance: C Blakeley, S L Clarke, JE Green, SR Mountney, WW Smith

Minute 361 - CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND LIFELONG LEARNING: PROVISION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES – FUTURE STRATEGY

The Director of Children's Services gave a summary of the position in respect of secondary school places and described recent developments, the current position and issues for the future. His report identified a significant increase in secondary surplus places over the medium term if further action were not taken and proposed a phased review of secondary school provision, involving schools and stakeholders, to identify any further opportunities for the removal of surplus places.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning referred to the rationale for the review being similar to that for Primary School reviews. He felt that the process gave everyone the opportunity to get involved and thanked those staff that had been involved in the initial work.

The Leader of the Council referred to the additional factors that would be involved in the review of secondary school provision and indicated that he had been impressed with the work that had been undertaken to date and the links that had been made with Headteachers and Chairs of Governors.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group stated that whilst it was necessary to address the issue of numbers set out in the report, the additional factors for consideration needed to be set out.

The Director of Children's Services agreed to arrange a seminar for all members of the Council on the different governance arrangements in schools.

Minute Decision :

Resolved - That

- (1) approval be given to the principle of a two phase review of secondary school provision beginning with pre-consultation with headteachers and chairs of governors in schools in Birkenhead and Bebington;
- (2) approval be given to invite representatives from Birkenhead High School to participate in the review from the pre-consultation stage onwards; and
- (3) options arising from this initial consultation be the subject of a further report to Cabinet with recommendations from the Director of Children's Services for option(s) to proceed to wider, formal, consultation with all stakeholders.