

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting5th October 2006

1. Title of Item/Report

Readiness to Deliver Building Schools for the Future

2. Record of the Decision

Cabinet considered a report relating to the Council's Readiness to deliver Building Schools for the Future.

It was explained that the Authority was required to submit new documentation for assessment by the Department for Education and Skills and Partnerships for Schools, the national body responsible for managing Building Schools for the Future (BSF). That assessment would determine when BSF funding would become available for the first phase of a development programme to rebuild, remodel or refurbish the secondary schools in Stockton. This would be followed (at a date to be announced) by a second phase covering schools in other parts of the Borough.

An officer working group had prepared draft documentation in accordance with DfES guidance. Building on existing strategies and meetings with headteachers, college principals and representatives of the local Learning and Skills Council, the draft submission summarised the steps already taken in planning for BSF and action proposed for the next twelve months. This would include setting up a project team to draw up detailed proposals for the future pattern of secondary education in Stockton, and offering those for consultation to stakeholders including school staff and governing bodies, parents and students, partner organisations and local communities. The draft submission was provided for Members consideration.

Cabinet were informed that the release of BSF funding also required a commitment by the Authority to accept the assumptions underpinning BSF as a national programme. These were:-

- a commitment to government policy aims such as diversity of provision (including academies, where appropriate), and parental choice;
- the use of PFI for most new-build projects, and a disposition towards outsourced Facilities Management;

- a managed ICT service (supply, maintenance and replacement of hardware and software);
- in most cases the use of a Local Education Partnership (LEP), a company formed by the local authority and a private-sector partner to deliver the local programme;
- commitment to fund a full-time project team and engage external advisers experienced in the financial, legal and technical aspects of the programme.

The experience of other local authorities – and the advice from DfES – suggested that any challenge to these assumptions was likely to be unsuccessful and could delay the release of funding. A draft letter confirming acceptance in principle was provided and it was indicated that the Leader and Chief Executive would need to sign it in order to confirm the Council's commitment in principle to acceptance of the assumptions.

Members noted that no funding support was available from Government for the costs of developing a local BSF project and engaging the necessary external consultant support. A regional adviser from the Public Private Partnerships Programme (a body of the Local Government Association) had suggested a figure of £500,000 in the first two years, rising to £1 million annually when the Council's programme reached the procurement stage.

RESOLVED that:-

1. the draft Readiness to Deliver document as appended to the report be submitted on behalf of the Authority to DfES and Partnerships for Schools on 13 October 2006;
2. that a letter confirming the Authority's commitment in principle to accept the national BSF funding and procurement model be signed by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive and be attached to the Readiness to Deliver submission;
3. that the following allocations to support BSF project management be considered as part of the budget-setting process:

£500,000 in 2007-08

£500,000 in 2008-09

£1,000,000 in 2009-10.

3. Reasons for the Decision

Local authorities expecting to join Building Schools for the Future in waves 4 to 6 (between 2008 and 2010) were required to submit prescribed documents by 13 October to the Department for Education and Skills and Partnerships for Schools, the national body responsible for managing BSF. These documents would inform an assessment of authorities' readiness to deliver a local BSF programme when funding was made available. An estimated £60 million was likely to be allocated for the schools in Stockton in waves 4 to 6.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

Councillor Mrs Cains declared a personal, non prejudicial interest in this item as she was Chair of Governors at Blakeston School.

Councillor Cook declared a personal, non prejudicial interest in this item as he was a Governor at Blakeston School.

Councillor Nelson declared a personal, non prejudicial interest in this item as he was a Governor at Norton School.

Councillor Leonard declared a personal, non prejudicial interest in this item as he was a Governor at Hardwick and Roseworth School.

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not Applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

By not later than midnight on Friday 13th October 2006

Proper Officer
09 October 2006