

**STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS**

**PROFORMA**

Cabinet Meeting .....27th September 2007

1. Title of Item/Report

Consultation on Building Schools for the Future

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report that informed of the next formal stage for Building Schools for the Future (BSF). The government had approved the Authority's BSF "Readiness to Deliver" document submitted with Cabinet agreement in October 2006. The next formal stage in the process would be the preparation of a "Strategy for Change" for submission in summer 2008. It was explained that the Strategy would cover the entire borough, and officers had opened discussions with government to explore the possibility of treating the borough as a single BSF area rather than two separate waves.

Members were advised that the Strategy must set out how BSF investment, estimated at £150 million for the borough, would be used to transform educational opportunities. A combination of local factors (including falling pupil numbers) and national policy imperatives (particularly the need to increase diversity in the range of school types) will require a different pattern of school provision in the future. It was noted that BSF funding could not be used to maintain the status quo. Meetings with secondary headteachers and other stakeholders had produced a range of possible options for changes to school organisation. It was emphasised that these were options, not firm proposals, and it was now time to consult more widely on them. It was not suggested that these were the only possible options: new options may emerge during the process. It was noted that no changes to schools could be made as a result of the initial consultation. If formal proposals for change became necessary, Cabinet would be asked to authorise full statutory consultation in due course. Members were provided with a copy of the Future Learning Options booklet and a copy of the consultation strategy for the booklet. Members requested that the proposed date for the distribution of the booklets to all households be forwarded to all Members.

Members were advised that the scale and complexity of BSF required input from appropriate external financial, legal, technical and specialist advisors. These could be selected from framework agreements set up

by the government's BSF delivery agency following a formal tendering process. The cost of these medium-term contracts would exceed the limit of officer delegation in the Council's procurement strategy (£50,000). Members were therefore asked to delegate appropriate powers to Chief Officers to enter contracts without further reference to Cabinet.

RESOLVED that:-

1. consultation should take place with school governors and staff, parents, carers and pupils, on possible school organisation options for Building Schools for the Future across Stockton-on-Tees.

2. authority to enter contracts with financial, legal, technical and specialist advisors where the cost of those contracts exceeds the £50,000 limit provided under the Council's procurement strategy, be delegated to the Corporate Director for Children, Education and Social Care, in consultation with the Lead Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.

3. Reasons for the Decision

Building Schools for the Future will bring an estimated £150 million of capital investment to Stockton-on-Tees. Release of this funding is conditional upon the submission and satisfactory assessment of a "Strategy for Change." This document must set out how the Authority proposes to spend the money in order to transform educational opportunities. As part of the preparation of the Strategy it is time to engage school governors and staff, parents, carers and pupils in debate about the future pattern of school provision across the borough.

The Authority needs to supplement its officer team with appropriate external expertise in the financial, legal, technical and specialist aspects of BSF. Companies of national and international standing have been selected by the government's BSF delivery agency following a formal tendering process. These framework agreements will allow the Authority to engage advisors without repeating the tendering process. The cost of these medium-term contracts would exceed the limit of officer delegation in the Council's procurement strategy (£50,000).

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

Councillor Cunningham declared a personal, non prejudicial interest in this item as he was a governor at Stockton Borough First Federation and All Saints

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.

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not applicable

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

Not later than midnight on Friday 5th October 2007

Proper Officer  
01 February 2007