

CONSULTATION STRATEGY FOR FUTURE LEARNING OPTIONS BOOKLET

Purpose of consultation

This is initial consultation to present possible options for school organisation through Building Schools for the Future. The purpose at this stage is to gauge opinion on these options and allow any other options to be put forward.

Some of the options involve changes such as enlarging a school, transferring a school to a different site, closing a school, or opening a new school. Changes like these require a process of statutory consultation. This present exercise is not part of that statutory process, and no changes of that kind could be made as a result of it. Statutory consultation is likely to take place at a later stage, depending on the outcome of this exercise and further decisions by Cabinet.

Consultation with elected members of the Council

In accordance with the agreed Concordat for Communication and Consultation with Members, all members will receive a copy of the options booklet in the form to be considered by Cabinet. A briefing session including a presentation and seminar will take place on 18 September. Any members unable to attend that session will receive copies of the presentation and options paper by email, and will be invited to a second seminar at a convenient time.

If consultation is agreed by Cabinet, all members will receive a copy of the published options booklet before general distribution. Members may raise queries with officers at any time.

Members will also be consulted directly on ward-specific issues.

Methods of consultation

1. Distribution of an options booklet

Content of the booklet

The options booklet will be based on the paper submitted to Cabinet on 27 September. Options for each area of the borough will be clearly set out and illustrated with maps. An independent market research company has been commissioned to design a questionnaire to be included in the centre of the booklet. This will describe the options and allow sufficient space for comment on each option. Space will also be provided for additional options and general comment. To facilitate analysis, respondents will be asked to state their postcode and status in relation to education (i.e. student, parent, governor, staff etc.) The questionnaire will fold for posting to a Freepost address.

The cover of the booklet will describe the availability of the content in other languages and formats.

Copies will be sent to:

Every household in the borough

Every primary, secondary and special school in the borough

Every further education college and public library in the borough

Stockton-on-Tees Secondary Headteachers and Principals' Group

Stockton-on-Tees Primary Headteachers' Group

The Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle

The Diocese of Durham

The Diocese of Middlesbrough

The Diocese of York

The Tees Valley Learning and Skills Council

NETA

University of Teesside

University of Durham Stockton Campus

Stockton-on-Tees Children's Trust Board and its thematic groups

Stockton-on-Tees Youth Assembly and PIC Network

North Tees Teaching Primary Care Trust

North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Trust

Stockton-on-Tees Voluntary and Community Sectors Children and Young People
Steering Group

Stockton-on-Tees Youth Assembly

Renaissance and the four Renaissance Area Boards

The Renaissance thematic boards

Community Empowerment Network

BME Network

Community Cohesion Sub-group

St Ann's Development Board

Parkfield/Mill Lane Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder Board

Stockton Disability Advisory Group

Unions and professional associations representing school staff

Parish Councils and Town Councils within the borough

Neighbouring local authorities in Darlington, Durham, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough,
North Yorkshire, and Redcar and Cleveland

The Members of Parliament for Stockton North and Stockton South

The Members of the European Parliament for Northeast England.

2. ViewPoint and Youth ViewPoint

The options booklet and questionnaire will also be sent to the two established residents' panels through the ViewPoint and Youth ViewPoint mechanisms.

3. Meetings to discuss options

Meetings of school governing bodies

Discussion of the options paper will be an agenda item at meetings of the governing bodies of all secondary mainstream and special schools. Senior officers of the Authority will attend. Where no meeting is scheduled within the consultation period, a special meeting will be arranged.

Individual governors of primary schools may attend any of the public meetings.

Meetings for school staff

Secondary headteachers have agreed that an initial meeting will be arranged at each mainstream secondary school for all categories of school staff. The headteachers will present the options paper for discussion.

Representatives of staff unions and professional associations will receive copies of the options paper. If this consultation leads to consideration of any firm proposals requiring statutory consultation, staff representatives will be invited to attend meetings at that stage.

Meetings open to parents, carers, pupils and the public

After the meetings of governing bodies and staff have taken place, one meeting will be held at each mainstream secondary school open to parents, carers, students and the general public. The dates, times and venues of these meetings will be arranged in consultation with the schools to ensure the best possible turnout. Meetings will be publicised by letters sent to the home addresses of registered pupils, and by posters displayed at school entrances. Ward Councillors will be asked to publicise meetings in their newsletters and at Ward Surgeries. Voluntary and community organisations will be invited by letter to attend. A senior officer of the Authority will chair each meeting, present the options, record opinion and answer questions. All statements made will be recorded and forwarded to an independent market research company for analysis and inclusion in the final report. Members of staff and governors of primary schools may attend any of these meetings.

Meetings of other bodies

Copies of the options booklet will be sent to a wide range of partner bodies as set out above. It is for those bodies to decide whether they wish to discuss the options booklet at one of their regular meetings, or to arrange a special meeting to discuss it. If requested, the Authority will endeavour to ensure the attendance of an appropriate officer where possible.

4. Media briefings

Selected journalists have been invited to briefings on 18 September. A press release has been prepared for distribution immediately afterwards. The secondary headteachers and principals' group has agreed a press statement for their own use in response to any media enquiries when the options paper becomes public. A report on the outcome of consultation will be released to the media.

5. Council website

A BSF/Future Learning area will be created on the Council website with a direct link from the home page and links to the national DCSF and BSF websites. All future communications on BSF, including the options booklet and regular updates, will be available for download. A facility for direct electronic responses to this consultation will be created through the website.

Involving all residents of the borough

Building Schools for the Future has a potential impact on all residents of the Borough. Therefore it is important to consult as many groups as possible, including residents from all diversity strands (disability, age, race, faith, gender and sexual orientation). The Council's Diversity Team and Consultation and Research Team will be asked to advise on this process using their existing community network links.

Timescale for consultation

Meetings will take place during the period 6 October to 16 November. The options booklet will be distributed during mid-October. The closing date for responses will be 19 November.

Analysis and reporting

An independent market research company will analyse all returned questionnaires (paper and electronic) and the comments recorded at all public meetings. . A full report will be made to Cabinet on 17 January 2008 and placed on the Council website. A summary of the report will also be published in Stockton News.