

Cabinet

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Monday, 11th February, 2008.

Present: Cllr Ken Lupton(Chairman), Cllr Mrs Jennie Beaumont, Cllr Robert Cook, Cllr Alex Cunningham, Cllr Terry Laing, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Mrs Mary Womphrey

Officers: G. Garlick (CEO); A. Baxter, J. Morrison (CESC); J. Danks (R); N. Schneider (DNS); H. Dean (ACE) D.Bond, S. Johnson, M. Henderson (LD) V. Rutland (PPC)

Also in attendance: Cllr Maureen Rigg, Cllr Alan Lewis, Cllr Steve Walmsley, Cllr Barry Woodhouse, Cllr Mick Eddy, Cllr Tina Large, Cllr Mrs Alison Trainer, Cllr Andrew Larkin, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr Ross Patterson, Cllr Mrs Lynne Apedaile and Cllr Mrs Hilary Aggio

Apologies:

CAB Declarations of Interest 122/07

Cllr Nelson declared a personal non prejudicial interest in this item as he served on the Board of Governors at Norton School and Frederick Natrass School and had a child who attended Blakeston School.

Cllr Cook declared a personal non prejudicial interest in this item as he served on the Board of Governors at Norton School and Blakeston School.

CAB Proposals for Building Schools for the Future (BSF) 123/07

Members considered a report that detailed responses, following consultation, on options for Building Schools for Future and recommended preferred options for future school organisation in the Borough.

Cabinet noted that, under the criteria set out by government, Stockton-on-Tees was to enter the BSF investment programme at two points. The integrated service areas of North Stockton and Central Stockton would enter at wave 6 with funding to begin in 2010. Billingham and the South of the Borough (Eaglescliffe, Ingleby Barwick, Thornaby and Yarm) would enter between waves 10 and 12 (funding in 2014 at the earliest). A bid had been made to Partnerships for Schools (PfS – the national BSF delivery agency) to combine the two waves to create a single BSF programme for the Borough. A response to this bid had been expected in December, but PfS had announced a review of the prioritisation criteria for waves 7 to 15 in the spring. That review was unlikely to be completed before April, and a response to the Council bid was now expected after the review was completed.

In the view of the BSF Project Board, the Council's draft strategy should address the needs of the whole Borough until the outcome of the combined-wave bid was known. PfS agreed with this view. If the combined-wave bid was not successful, the strategy would be amended, before submission, to concentrate on the Wave 6 area.

Cabinet noted that it had previously agreed that consultation should take place on two options for each of the four integrated service areas: Billingham, North Stockton, Central Stockton, and South of the Borough.

Members noted the main means of consultation:-

- A Future Learning booklet was distributed to homes throughout the Borough. Copies were sent to all schools, colleges and other partner organisations, and placed in libraries, GP surgeries, SureStart children's centres and main Council buildings. The booklet included a questionnaire to be returned by Freepost to an independent company for analysis. The booklet was also available on a dedicated area of the Council website, and an online response form was provided.
- Meetings were held at each mainstream secondary school for governors, staff, parents and the general public.
- Presentations were also made to Renaissance and the four area boards.

Members were provided with details of the views and comments expressed during the consultation.

Cabinet was informed that the Office of the Schools Commissioner (OSC), part of the government Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), had a specific remit to ensure that local BSF plans increased diversity in the range of school types and improved choice for parents and students. The OSC had indicated that innovative solutions would be expected for schools where fewer than 30 % of students achieved five or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C including maths and English. The options in these cases were:

- (a) closing the school and sending the pupils to more successful schools;
- (b) replacing the school with an Academy;
- (c) linking the school with a stronger school through a federation or joint trust arrangement.

Recent school performance figures and Ofsted inspection grades were provided to Members and it was noted that Blakeston, The Norton, Thornaby Community School were not reaching the 30% GCSE target including maths and English and Billingham Campus had been placed in special measures by Ofsted. The possibility of replacing these four schools with Academies therefore had to be considered.

Cabinet noted that for these schools (as for all schools in the borough) the Strategy for Change must include ambitious targets for improvement over ten years, and all government agencies must be convinced that these targets were attainable. In the opinion of the OSC, a school's governance arrangements were crucial to this, and a Strategy for Change that retained these four schools in their present form would not be approved by OSC for BSF funding.

It was explained that, taking account of all the responses to consultation and the views expressed by the OSC, the following preferred option for each of the four integrated service areas had been identified by the BSF project Board:-

- North Stockton - that North Stockton should have a new 900-place 11-16 Academy and that Bishopgarth School should be refurbished for 750 pupils on

its present site. Bishopsgarth would remain a community school and would retain its special unit for pupils with physical disability. A Transport Impact Assessment would be commissioned to identify and address sustainability issues.

- Central Stockton - that subject to a Transport Impact Assessment and appropriate mitigation measures being put in place, Ian Ramsey School (1,050 places) should be transferred to share a campus with Grangefield (1,050) and Our Lady & St Bede's schools (750). No changes would be made to the governance arrangements of these schools. They would remain separate schools, each with its distinct identity and governing body.
- Billingham - that the Authority would aim to retain three schools in Billingham. St Michael's Catholic School would be transferred to a new building on the Billingham Campus site. Campus School would be replaced by an 11-16 Academy. They would remain separate schools, each with its distinct identity and governing body. Northfield School would be refurbished on its own site.
- South of the Borough - that Egglecliffe School should transfer to a new building on its Allens West site, with 11-16 capacity reduced from 1175 to 1050. Conyers School should be refurbished for 1,050 11-16 pupils on its present site. Both schools would retain their sixth forms. All Saints School should be enlarged from 600 to at least 750 places. An 11-16 Academy, possibly with co-located Catholic and community provision in Thornaby for 1,200 students, should be explored with the Diocese of Middlesbrough and government agencies.

Members of Cabinet and other Members of the Council present asked questions for clarification and discussed the preferred options at length. Members of the public present were also given the opportunity to contribute. During discussion a number of areas of concern were raised, these included:-

- proposed formation of academies in Thornaby, Billingham and Norton
- suitability of the Allens West Site
- support for schools that may need to be closed.
- continued transport of children from Ingleby Barwick to schools in Yarm and Egglecliffe

Cabinet considered that the preferred options identified were the best available to the Council at present, however, they were flexible, subject to statutory consultation and could be amended if considered appropriate. Cabinet noted that lessons had been learned from the initial consultation that would assist during the statutory process.

The importance of getting useful information about each option, to Council Members, and facilitating their access to relevant Council Officers was highlighted.

Cabinet noted that, following approval of preferred options, a draft Strategy for Change Part 1 would be developed in discussion with the government. It was anticipated that Cabinet would be asked to approve the draft strategy for statutory consultation at a meeting during June 08.

RESOLVED that Officers prepare a draft BSF Strategy for Change Part 1, for discussion with government, and that the following preferred options for school organisation be included:

1. North Stockton should have two secondary schools. The Norton School and Blakeston School should be replaced by an 11-16 Academy with 900 places. Bishopsgarth School should be refurbished for 750 (plus special unit for students with physical disability).

2. Central Stockton should have three schools with some shared facilities on a single campus (subject to a Transport Impact and Mitigation Assessment). Governance arrangements for these schools (Grangefield, Ian Ramsey, and Our Lady & St Bede's) will remain unchanged. Total capacity would be 2,850 places.

3. The Authority will aim to retain three schools in Billingham. St Michael's Catholic School would be transferred to a new building on the Billingham Campus site. Campus would be replaced by an 11-16 Academy. Northfield School would be refurbished on its present site. School sizes will be subject to further discussion.

4. In the South of the Borough, an 11-16 Academy, possibly with co-located community and Catholic provision, will be explored. All Saints School in Ingleby Barwick would be enlarged from 600 to at least 750 places. Conyers School would be refurbished on its present site for 1,050 students (plus sixth form). Eggescliffe School would transfer to a new building at Allens West for 1,050 students (plus sixth form).