

## CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

### AGENDA ITEM

### REPORT TO CABINET

11 FEBRUARY 2008

### REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

## CABINET DECISION/KEY DECISION

**Children and Young People – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Cunningham**

### PROPOSALS FOR BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE (BSF)

1. Summary

Consultation has taken place on options for school organisation under BSF. Almost 4,000 written responses were received. The views expressed are summarised in **Appendix 1** to this report. A public meeting was held at each mainstream secondary school, and these were attended by a total of around 1,300 people. **Appendix 2** summarises comments made at these meetings.

The Office of the Schools Commissioner (OSC) has commented on the suggested options in line with that agency's focus on increasing the diversity of school provision. Taking account of certain aspects of school performance information in **Appendix 3** to this report, the OSC has identified four schools in the borough where change will be expected. These are Billingham Campus, Blakeston, The Norton, and Thornaby Community School. The OSC will not approve a BSF Strategy for Change that retains these schools in their present form.

The BSF Project Board has considered all the responses to consultation and the views expressed by the OSC. This report recommends preferred options for school organisation in each integrated service area.

Officers will enter formal discussions with government agencies at a series of meetings beginning on 19 February. These discussions will lead to a draft Strategy for Change Part 1, which will set out in broad outline the scope of our BSF programme. That draft strategy will be offered for stakeholder consultation and Cabinet agreement before submission to government in the summer. Until the outcome of our bid to combine the two BSF funding waves is known, planning for the draft strategy will cover the entire borough.

Members are reminded that no changes can be made to any schools on the basis of the consultation that has already taken place or any proposals described in the Strategy for Change. Any change such as establishing a new school or closing an existing school must follow a statutory process of consultation and decision-making laid down in the Education and Inspections Act 2006. A request to Cabinet to authorise that consultation will be made at a later stage, depending on the outcome of the bid to combine the two waves, and on the government response to the draft strategy.

The provision of post-16 education and training in the borough is good. This is the case in terms of diversity, number of places, breadth of curriculum and quality of teaching and learning. It is proposed therefore to recommend 11-16 arrangements in the Academies.

## 2. Recommendations

Members are asked to agree 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).

## Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

Following a preparatory meeting on 19 February, Stockton-on-Tees will expect to enter the national BSF programme at a Remit Meeting in April. At the April meeting a draft Strategy for Change Part 1 must be presented, including initial proposals for reorganising schools to meet local and national objectives. The draft Strategy will be subject to further consultation and submission to Cabinet, probably in June, before submission for formal assessment by government.

## 4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (**paragraph 8**) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same

purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;

- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

and must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (**paragraph 12 of the Code**).

**Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.**

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**CABINET DECISION/KEY DECISION**

**PROPOSALS FOR BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE (BSF)**

**SUMMARY**

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The Office of the Schools Commissioner (OSC) has commented on the suggested options in line with that agency's focus on increasing the diversity of school provision. Taking account of certain aspects of school performance information in **Appendix 3** to this report, the OSC has identified four schools in the borough where change will be expected. These are Billingham Campus, Blakeston, The Norton, and Thornaby Community School. The OSC will not approve a BSF Strategy for Change that retains these schools in their present form.

The BSF Project Board has considered all the responses to consultation and the views expressed by the OSC. This report recommends preferred options for school organisation in each integrated service area.

Officers will enter formal discussions with government agencies at a series of meetings beginning on 19 February. These discussions will lead to a draft Strategy for Change Part 1, which will set out in broad outline the scope of our BSF programme. That draft strategy will be offered for stakeholder consultation and Cabinet agreement before submission to government in the summer. Until the outcome of our bid to combine the two BSF funding waves is known, planning for the draft strategy will cover the entire borough.

Members are reminded that no changes can be made to any schools on the basis of the consultation that has already taken place or any proposals described in the Strategy for Change. Any change such as establishing a new school or closing an existing school must follow a statutory process of consultation and decision-making laid down in the Education and Inspections Act 2006. A request to Cabinet to authorise that consultation will be made at a later stage, depending on the outcome of the bid to combine the two waves, and on the government response to the draft strategy.

The provision of post-16 education and training in the borough is good. This is the case in terms of diversity, number of places, breadth of curriculum and quality of teaching and learning. It is proposed therefore to recommend 11-16 arrangements in the Academies.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to agree 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 would 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). Egglecliffe School would transfer to a new building at Allens West for 1,050 students (plus sixth form).

## DETAIL

### Two waves of BSF funding

1. Under the criteria set out by government, Stockton-on-Tees is to enter the BSF investment programme at two points. The integrated service areas of North Stockton and Central Stockton will enter at wave 6 with funding to begin in 2010. Billingham and the South of the Borough (Egglecliffe, Ingleby Barwick, Thornaby and Yarm) will enter between waves 10 and 12 (funding in 2014 at the earliest). A bid has been made to Partnerships for Schools (PfS – the national BSF delivery agency) to combine these two waves to create a single BSF programme for the borough. A response to this bid had been expected in December, but PfS has announced a review of the prioritisation criteria for waves 7 to 15 in the spring. That review is unlikely to be completed before April, and no response to our bid is now expected until the review is completed.
2. On 5 December PfS announced that formal discussions with government agencies on the content of our Strategy for Change Part 1 would take place at a series of meetings beginning on 19 February. In the view of the BSF Project Board, our draft strategy should address the needs of the whole borough until we are informed of the outcome of the combined-wave bid. PfS agrees with this view. After discussion with government and possible amendment, the draft strategy will be offered for further consultation and consideration by Cabinet before a final document is submitted to government in the summer. If the combined-wave bid is not successful, the strategy will be amended before submission to concentrate on the Wave 6 area.

### Consultation on possible options for school organisation

3. On 27 September 2007 Cabinet agreed that consultation should take place on a range of options developed in consultation with secondary headteachers, college principals, the Tees Valley Learning and Skills Council, and the Education Directors of the two Anglican and two Roman Catholic dioceses. Two options were suggested for each of the four

integrated service areas: Billingham, North Stockton, Central Stockton, and South of the Borough.

4. In order to raise public awareness of the consultation process, individual media briefings were given to the Evening Gazette and Northern Echo and press releases were issued before and during the consultation period.
5. The 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. A BSF email address was created to allow questions to be asked and views to be expressed. 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.
6. The Future Learning booklet did not reach every household in the borough. Where a missed address was notified, special deliveries were arranged, and the distribution company helpfully provided complimentary advertising to further promote awareness of the consultation. A more effective distribution method will be sought for the next stage of BSF consultation.
7. An independent company, NWA Research, was commissioned to receive and analyse the questionnaires. **Appendix 1** is a summary of the company's report. This summary, and the full report, are available to view on the Building Schools for the Future area of the Council website
8. One public meeting was held at each of the 14 mainstream secondary schools. All meetings followed the same format. A PowerPoint presentation set out the national and local context for BSF and repeated the options described in the Future Learning booklet. This was followed by an open session for comments and questions. **Appendix 2** provides a summary of the comments made at these meetings. This summary is also available on the Council website.

#### Issues arising from the consultation process

9. Some communities found it difficult to accept the need for any change. It was even suggested that individual schools might wish to opt out of BSF altogether. This is not possible: the programme must include all secondary schools.
10. It is important to avoid raising unrealistic expectations of what may be achieved with the estimated £150 million capital funding. This amount was calculated by a formula intended to allow 50% new buildings, 35% remodelled buildings, and 15% to receive only minor refurbishment. These figures are based on the needs of the projected number of students in 2018, not on the number of students, or schools, that we have now. This funding allocation is likely to allow four or five complete rebuilds. In broad terms, this might mean only one completely new school building in each integrated service area.
11. Many of those consulted expect the Authority to challenge the prescriptive rules for BSF imposed by government. Officers are prepared to challenge where appropriate (for example, with our bid to join the two separate funding waves) but the experience of other authorities is that challenge is ultimately fruitless and leads to delay.
12. The questionnaires and public meetings demonstrated support for two important factors that will need to be considered:

- (a) the need to promote sustainable modes of travel and a reduced carbon footprint;
- (b) the important place of a secondary school in its community, whether that community is defined by geography or by faith.

Comment from the Office of the Schools Commissioner

13. The Office of the Schools Commissioner (OSC), part of the government Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), has a specific remit to ensure that local BSF plans increase diversity in the range of school types and improve choice for parents and students. The OSC has indicated that innovative solutions will be expected for schools where fewer than 30 % of students achieve five or more GCSE passes at grades A\*-C including maths and English. The options in these cases are:
- (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.
14. The DCFS Academies Prospectus published in May 2007 defines schools eligible for replacement by Academies:
- (a) any school where fewer than 30% of pupils achieved five or more GCSE passes at grades A\*-C including English and maths, or
  - (b) any secondary school judged by Ofsted to be inadequate.
15. Recent school performance figures are attached as **Appendix 3** to this report. Three schools in the borough (Blakeston, The Norton and Thornaby Community School) are not currently reaching the 30% GCSE target including maths and English. The possibility of replacing these three schools with Academies must therefore be considered.
16. The table in **Appendix 3** also gives the most recent Ofsted inspection grade for each school. There are four possible grades: outstanding, good, satisfactory or inadequate. Schools judged inadequate may be given a notice to improve or, in more severe cases, made subject to special measures. Since the consultation ended, Thornaby Community School has received a notice to improve, and Billingham Campus has been placed in special measures. There are therefore now four schools in the borough that meet the government's criteria for replacement by Academies. 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 are attainable. In the opinion of the OSC, a school's governance arrangements are crucial to this, and a Strategy for Change that retains these four schools in their present form will not be approved by OSC for BSF funding.

**A preferred option for each area**

17. New options put forward in written responses to the Future Learning booklet, at the public meetings or in discussions with government agencies have been considered by the Project Board. These are described in the following paragraphs, which look at each area in turn.
18. Capital allocations for BSF are based on recommended floor areas for school buildings given in DCSF Building Bulletin 98 (BB98). This document recommends teaching spaces designed to accommodate up to 30 pupils in a group. Secondary school buildings are usually planned to accommodate multiples of 150 students – one group of 30 in each of the

five year groups. For this reason, proposed school sizes in this report are all multiples of 150. This does not mean that schools will operate with class sizes of 30. That is a matter for headteachers and governing bodies to decide.

### **Wave 6 area - North Stockton**

19. The strongest message from consultation was that North Stockton should have two schools, one sited in the east of the area and the other in the west. More than 90% of written responses expressed this view.
20. This area includes two schools, Blakeston and The Norton, which have been judged by Ofsted to be satisfactory. Despite making good progress recently, however, neither school has reached the 30% GCSE target required and as such are judged by government to be underperforming. The Office of the Schools Commissioner will expect these two schools to be replaced with an Academy. The choice of site for the Academy will need to take account of travelling distances, methods of travel and projected student numbers including the likely impact of new housing developments in both areas. The latest data collected at the annual school census in January 2008 will be analysed in conjunction with Transport Impact Assessments for the two sites. A preferred site will be recommended for consultation when this work is completed.
21. The third school in North Stockton, Bishopsgarth, has been judged by Ofsted to be a good school, and one whose GCSE performance has consistently exceeded the criteria for replacement by an Academy. The school includes a special unit for pupils with physical disability. The Authority proposes to retain Bishopsgarth as a community school.
22. This is recommended as the preferred option for discussion with government agencies: that North Stockton should have a new 900-place 11-16 Academy and that Bishopsgarth 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 will be commissioned to identify and address sustainability issues.

### **Wave 6 area - Central Stockton**

23. Option A in the Future Learning booklet, transferring Ian Ramsey to share a campus with a regenerated Grangefield and Our Lady & St Bede's, was supported by 63% of the 1954 written responses received. Concerns remain over potential access problems with up to 2,850 students attending a single site, and a full Transport Impact and Mitigation Assessment will be undertaken.
24. Option B, to close Our Lady & St Bede's, was vigorously opposed by the Catholic community. The BSF Project Board has accepted the view of the two Catholic dioceses that the needs of the Catholic population of the borough would be best served by retaining three Catholic secondary schools of a size appropriate to the number of Catholic students in the area. Our Lady & St Bede's School would remain with a capacity of 750.
25. The governing body and foundation of Ian Ramsey School have put forward an option to retain that school on its present site. A recent structural survey has revealed a need for urgent remedial work to part of one Ian Ramsey's buildings, casting serious doubt on its long-term future. The BSF funding allocation for this area will not be sufficient to fund the degree of new building required to replace all three schools on separate sites. The creation of a campus arrangement with shared facilities is a more affordable option, as well as offering educational benefits such as easier collaborative working.
26. The OSC is satisfied that the three existing schools in Central Stockton offer good standards of education and a diverse range of school categories (one community school,



one Catholic voluntary aided school and one Church of England voluntary aided). OSC will not require any change to the governance of these schools.

27. This is recommended as the preferred option for discussion with government agencies: 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.

### **Wave 10-12 area - Billingham**

28. Option A, to retain three schools and transfer St Michael's to the Billingham Campus site, was preferred in the consultation process, although almost 25% of respondents did not express a preference for either option. Option B (to close Billingham Campus School) was not well supported. Campus School is well regarded by parents, and its closure would result in two very large schools in Billingham. The Authority has prepared an action plan in response to the disappointing Ofsted inspection report, and is confident that the headteacher can lead the school out of special measures. A third option suggested during consultation, to retain St Michael's School on its present site, would be more costly and would reduce the advantage of co-location with Campus, close to Bede College and the City Learning Centre.
29. OSC would prefer Option B (closing Billingham Campus) because this would increase the number of places in the more successful schools. OSC would however consider a three-school option if Campus were replaced by an Academy. The size of the three schools will require further discussion with the schools, diocese, PFS and OSC.
30. This is recommended as the preferred option for discussion with government agencies: that 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 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.

### **Wave 10-12 area - South of the Borough**

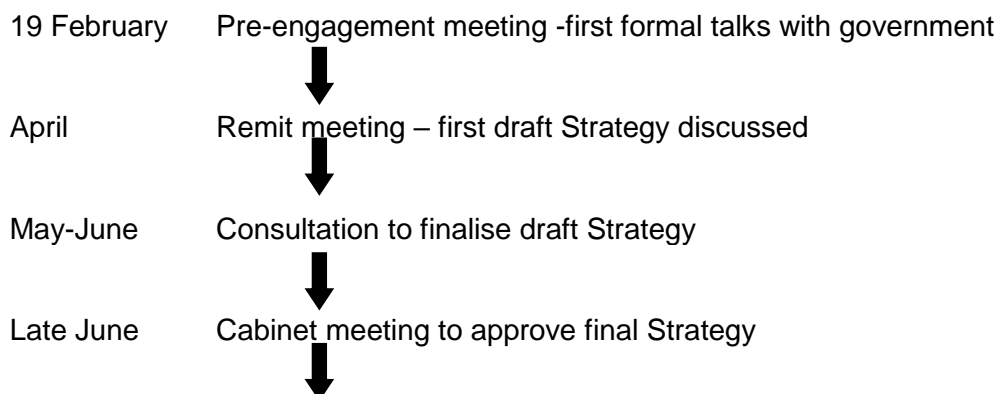
31. The option to transfer Eggescliffe School to a new building at Allens West was well supported, subject to keeping the sixth form on the same site as the 11-16 part of the school. This is possible if the number of students aged 11-16 is reduced by 125 to 1050. This reduction would be balanced by an increase in capacity at All Saints School in Ingleby Barwick. The OSC has indicated that it would consider a limited reduction in the size of Eggescliffe School in these particular circumstances.
32. There was clear support for the option to refurbish Conyers School on its present site.
33. Neither of the options for Thornaby was well supported. The Thornaby area does not have sufficient students for two separate schools, but the communities around those schools have not shown support either for combining to form a single school, or for operating separately within a shared building. The OSC will expect Thornaby Community School to be replaced by an Academy and has suggested that a single Academy for both Catholic and non-Catholic students should be considered. A joint Academy in Thornaby could create a school with sufficient students to ensure full curriculum provision, and at the same time retain the Catholic education that is valued so highly by members of the community. The governing bodies of St Patrick's primary and secondary schools have indicated their own intention to propose a separate Catholic Academy for 1,000 pupils aged 4 to 16. The OSC has indicated clearly that two Academies in Thornaby would not be supported by

government. The BSF Project Board therefore recommends that the idea of a single Academy including both community and Catholic provision should be explored in discussions with the schools, dioceses, PFS and OSC.

34. 387 responses from the South of the Borough area asked for a change in provision at Ingleby Barwick. 185 people suggested another school, and 75 suggested increasing the size of All Saints School. A further 77 asked for more school places without specifying a method, and 50 people asked for an end to transporting pupils by bus from Ingleby Barwick to schools in Yarm and Eaglescliffe. Under Section 14A of the Education Act 1996, the Authority is under a statutory duty to respond to any representations from parents about the quality or sufficiency of school provision. The following paragraph is a statement intended to be issued in response to these representations.
35. The Council has received and considered a number of representations from parents expressing the view that there are not sufficient secondary school places in Ingleby Barwick to meet the needs of all the students resident there. The size of All Saints School – 600 places – was the largest allowed by the government at the time because places were available at other schools in Thornaby and Yarm. The Council does not own any land in Ingleby Barwick suitable for building another secondary school. If a feasible and affordable site does become available within the timeframe of the BSF project, the options will then be re-appraised. All Saints School in Ingleby Barwick is a Church of England school, which belongs to the Diocese of York. The Council and the Diocese are exploring the possibility of enlarging All Saints. The present site could accommodate up to 750 students if the building were extended. Any larger extension would need additional land. Places will continue to be available for residents of Ingleby Barwick at Conyers and Egglecliffe schools, offering a high standard of education with safe and efficient transport provided by the Council.
36. The OSC is aware of the demand from parents for additional school places in Ingleby Barwick and understands the constraints of land availability. The OSC supports the intention to enlarge All Saints School and would be prepared to consider a corresponding reduction in capacity at Egglecliffe.
37. These are recommended as the preferred options for discussion with government agencies: 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.

### Next steps

38. A draft Strategy for Change Part 1 will be developed in a series of meetings with government agencies. The likely timetable is:



July

Strategy submitted to government

39. Members are reminded that the consultation that took place in October and November 2007 did not constitute statutory consultation as required by the Education and Inspections Act 2006. No changes can be made to any schools without two stages of statutory consultation. The report to Cabinet in June will seek authority to begin statutory consultation on proposed changes to school organisation.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

40. No implications at this stage.

#### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

41. No implications at this stage.

#### **RISK ASSESSMENT**

42. A risk assessment has been carried out for this stage of the BSF project. The proposal is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

#### **COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS**

##### **Economic Regeneration and Transport**

43. No implications at this stage.

##### **Safer Communities**

44. No implications at this stage.

##### **Children and Young People**

45. No implications at this stage.

##### **Healthier Communities and Adults**

46. No implications at this stage.

##### **Liveability**

47. No implications at this stage.

#### **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

48. A full Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out before any specific proposals for change are put forward.

#### **CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS**

49. The preferred options outlined in this report have emerged following widespread consultation and further discussions with the secondary headteachers, college principals, and the Tees Valley Learning and Skills Council. The Education Directors of the Anglican Dioceses of Durham and York, and the Catholic Dioceses of Middlesbrough and Hexham & Newcastle have also been consulted. All Ward Councillors have been briefed on the outcome of consultation.

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#### Background Papers

Cabinet reports dated 5 October 2006 and 27 September 2007.

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Not ward-specific.

Property

The investment of £150 million through the BSF programme will have a significant impact on the secondary school estate at a later stage.