

**Children and Young People  
Select Committee**

**School Organisation Plan**



**24 April 2008**

Children and Young People Select Committee  
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council  
Municipal Buildings  
Church Road  
Stockton-on-Tees  
TS18 1LD

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## **SELECT COMMITTEE – MEMBERSHIP**

Councillor Harrington (Chair)  
Councillor Eddy (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Broughton  
Councillor Mrs Cains  
Councillor Coleman  
Councillor Frankland  
Councillor Miss Inman  
Councillor Lewis  
Councillor Sherris

## **CO-OPTED REPRESENTATIVES (when considering education matters)**

### Diocesan Representative

Mr M Frank

### Parent Governor Representatives

Mr P Beach  
Mr R Cash

### Non Voting Co-opted Representatives

Mr D Campbell  
Mr G Davies  
Mr R G Lupton  
Mr B Percival

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Committee thank the following contributors to this review.

Matthew Clifford, Principal Planning Officer  
John Hegarty, Planning and Policy Development Officer (CESC)  
Betty Johns, Assistant Education Officer – Pupils and Students  
Julia Morrison, Head of School Effectiveness  
Steve Turner, Head of Information and Forecasting, Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit

Contact Officer

Graham Birtle, Scrutiny Officer  
Tel: 01642 526187  
E-mail: [graham.birtle@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:graham.birtle@stockton.gov.uk)



## Foreword

On behalf of the Children and Young People Select Committee, we are delighted to present this report on the review of the Primary School Organisational Plan.

The review was undertaken to test how robust the Primary School Organisation Plan is and Members of the Committee were provided with a copy of the current Primary School Plan, plus numerous statistical tables supplied by the JSU used in forecasting pupil places. The Committee would like to thank John Hegerty, Children, Education & Social Care (CESC) and Steve Turner, Joint Strategy Unit who explained to Members how the statistics are collected, converted into pupil places, how past and current trends are monitored and the implications of domestic planning applications in forecasting pupil places. The Committee also heard evidence from Betty Johns (CESC) regarding school admissions and Matthew Clifford, Development & Neighbourhood Services (DNS) providing information from the Spatial Planning Unit.

The Committee recognised the commitment of Officers within CESC in dealing with and planning pupil places. What became clear during this review is that a greater working relationship should develop between CESC and the Spatial Planning Unit from DNS to enable school places to be forecast much more effectively in the future. This provided one of the recommendations of the committee.

On behalf of the CYP Select Committee, we would like to thank

- Everyone who gave evidence and contributed to the review.
- Julia Morrison who was the link officer from CESC for her support and professional knowledge during this review.
- Graham Birtle for his research and organisation enabling the review to be carried out within the timescale available.
- Nigel Hart, Fiona Shayler and Michael Henderson who supported the committee through its meetings.

But importantly, as Chair and Vice Chair of the Children and Young People Committee, we would like to thank the Members of the committee, including the co-opted members, who contributed so enthusiastically to this review. Without their contributions and support, this review would not have been possible.







## Original Brief

### What are the main issues?

The decline in pupil numbers has continued. More than 1000 primary school places in Stockton Borough have been removed in the last two years, and further action is planned to avoid an excess of surplus places. The rate of decline in the primary school population is now beginning to slow, and the fall is starting to affect secondary schools.

### The Thematic Select Committee's overall aim/ objectives in doing this work is:

To assist the allocation / location of long-term school provision in Stockton Borough's primary and secondary schools.

### The possible outputs/outcomes are:

To assist the delivery of first class educational provision across the Borough of Stockton, which sees improved educational achievement and outcomes for all children and young people.

To assist the achievement of improved GCSE results, key stage results and schools' value added scores.

### What specific value can scrutiny add to this topic?

Assist the determination of school need and location based on the changing demographic nature of Stockton Borough.

To ascertain the accuracy of information used for formulating consultation for the BSF programme.

### Who will the panel be trying to influence as part of their work?

Children's Trust Board, Schools, BSF Board, Cabinet.

### What category does the review fall into?

Policy Review

Policy Development

External Partnership

Performance Management

Holding Executive to Account



## 1.0 Executive Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 Planning pupil places has become more important as overall pupil numbers decline across the country and requires local knowledge and interpretation of data. The gathering and analysis of this data and information can be complex and difficult.
- 1.2 The School Organisation Plan provides information about the schools maintained by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council. It provides the number of places available in schools in each part of the borough, the number of pupils in them, and projections for pupil numbers for the next five years.
- 1.3 There are three aspects to school organisation planning. The first is the statutory duty to ensure that the borough as a whole has sufficient primary and secondary school places to meet the needs of pupils aged 5 to 16. The second is to ensure that there is not an excessive level of surplus school places and the third is the management of any change in school provision that may arise from a shortage or surplus of school places.
- 1.4 To carry out the three functions successfully it is recognised that accurate information needs to be available. The Committee was therefore asked to scrutinise the information being received by Stockton Council's Children, Education and Social Care department to ensure confidence in the process especially as decisions were beginning to be made for the Building Schools for the Future programme.
- 1.5 The primary source of information is the School Census taken electronically in January each year. This records the name, date of birth and home address of every pupil on roll at each maintained school in the borough.
- 1.6 Stockton Borough has experienced a decline in pupil numbers in primary schools which means that pupil numbers in secondary schools are now beginning to decline. It is expected that it will be necessary to remove up to 1500 secondary places. The pupil number projections also take account of planned housing developments in several parts of the borough which could see the creation of up to 2,000 new homes over the next five years.
- 1.7 The Committee also heard that parental preference significantly affects the size of the Y7 group at a number of schools. Some schools are very popular and cannot accommodate all the additional pupils who wish to attend them. School admissions allocate school places and ensure that admission numbers are adhered to both in the main round of admissions and with through year transfers, to ensure that places are filled and parents receive their preferred school if at all possible.
- 1.8 The Committee learned that there is close liaison with the Officers responsible for Planning School Places, Management Information Systems, Asset Management and School Admissions in order to ensure the management of admission numbers within the Borough.
- 1.9 **The Committee recommend that consideration is given for the Parent Partnership Officer and the Independent Choice Adviser to be closely aligned in order to further improve the advice given to parents.**
- 1.10 **The Committee recommend that CESC and DNS introduce appropriately timed formal meeting arrangements to improve each others awareness of planning proposals and the impact this has on school places.**

- 1.11 The location of housing is also a main factor which can determine the variability between schools. Typically, areas with substantial new house building under way are experiencing significant increases in numbers because they normally attract a rather higher proportion of younger adults often with younger families of primary school or pre-school age.
- 1.12 In order to assist the school organisation plan the Committee wanted to identify the specific allocation for family housing within the overall housing allocation for the Borough. It was told, however, that the allocation for the Borough in the draft Regional Spatial Strategy is not divided into categories e.g. x = family housing, y = executive housing etc.
- 1.13 Whilst there may be a mix of housing types and tenures it does not provide an accurate number of young people that can be found in any one type of property, it can only provide an estimation that can be used with other data available when attempting to identify school populations.
- 1.14 The Committee recommend that a 'traffic light' system is introduced and increased use of project management techniques are used by CESC and DNS to show when developments are likely to have a significant impact on school places.**
- 1.15 The Committee recommend that CESC ensure that spatial planning information is used effectively to inform the School Organisation Plan.**
- 1.16 A major factor that had also to be considered during this review was the imminent impact of consultation that had begun for Building Schools for the Future (BSF), a long-term capital programme to transform educational opportunities by refurbishing or replacing secondary school buildings. The integrated service areas of North Stockton and Central Stockton will enter at wave 6 (early in 2008) with funding to begin in 2010. Billingham and the South of the Borough (Eaglescliffe, Ingleby Barwick, Thornaby and Yarm) will enter between waves 10 and 12 (funding in 2014 at the earliest).
- 1.17 The Committee wishes to add its support to the initiative that would see the amalgamation of both BSF funding waves promised to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.**
- 1.18 The methods of consultation were closely examined by the members of the Committee as they had either experienced difficulties with receiving written information or had concerns about the public meetings that were held to gather parental views.
- 1.19 The Committee recommends that CESC determine arrangements that will improve the information, distribution and consultation process for the next stage of the BSF process.**
- 1.20 A Future Learning public meeting was held at each of the 14 mainstream secondary schools. The Committee was pleased that meetings had been arranged, primarily aimed at parents of pupils attending secondary schools but felt that it could have been useful to target parents of primary school pupils who may be more affected by BSF. The Committee, however, recognises the work and professionalism of officers in this emotive subject in attempting to improve the dialogue with parents about BSF.

## 2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 Planning pupil places has become more important as overall pupil numbers decline across the country. Most LAs therefore have to address ways of reducing surplus places. This becomes particularly critical where the LA is entering a Building Schools for the Future (BSF) wave, as BSF funding is based on 10-year projections of secondary pupil places and provides an opportunity for authorities to address a number of school organisation issues, such as:
- amalgamating, closing, decreasing and increasing size of schools
  - re-locating/co-locating schools
  - reviewing school age ranges
- 2.2 Planning pupil places requires local knowledge and interpretation of data. The gathering and analysis of this data and information is complex and difficult, given that it is usually held by different LA departments and/or sections within individual LA departments, as well as external bodies, such as health authorities and individual schools. Bringing together all of the available data and interpreting it in the light of local knowledge helps to produce realistic long-term projections of the school places that are needed especially in order to receive BSF funding.
- 2.3 Planning pupil places enables the local authority to ensure that it has:
- schools of the right size
  - identified any need for a new school(s)
  - identified any need for closures/amalgamations/federations
  - identified the need for different categories of schools so as to ensure choice and diversity, for example, co-ed/single sex, church schools, academies, foundation/trust status
  - identified the need for any relocations or co-locations to ensure schools are in the right place.
- 2.4 For primary schools the local authority needs to:
- project places needed in each primary school for at least the next three years (Stockton's School Organisation Plan projects places for 5 years)
  - ensure projections take into account the existing Numbers on Roll (NOR) and places in schools, schools' admissions numbers and consequent surplus places or overcrowding in schools.
- 2.5 The local authority also needs to take the following into account.
- Any small- or large-scale housing and regeneration schemes – most LAs have child yield factors that they use according to the type of housing based on house size.
  - Local knowledge about popularity of schools, as assisted by analysis of data provided by the LA's admissions team on parental preferences for schools.
  - Changes to the LA's schools as a result of reorganisations, any relocations and/or adjustments to catchment area and admissions numbers, and any recent or planned capital works, regeneration or temporary accommodation provided on school sites, all of which can affect both the places available and the popularity of a school.

- Changes to schools, creation of new schools and closures of schools in neighbouring LAs, which might impact on parental preferences and need for places.
- 2.6 The process of projecting secondary school places is very similar to that for primary schools. It is somewhat easier in that there are seven year-groups of children already in the secondary schools' feeder primary schools. The complication is predicting to which secondary schools these children will transfer. But LAs usually have historical data on transfers from primary schools to each secondary school.
- 2.7 The process of projecting the secondary school places requires the local authority to take the following steps.
- Project forward the numbers of children transferring to secondary schools from their feeder primary schools, adjusting for the likely transfer rates to each secondary school (or use a similar data-based way of predicting numbers coming through to secondary).
  - Adjust these predicted numbers in light of changes that can affect both the places available and the popularity of schools, for example, reorganisations, relocations, adjustments to catchment areas and admissions numbers, and recent or planned capital works or temporary accommodation provided on school sites.
  - Take into account changes to schools, creation of new schools and closures of schools in neighbouring LAs, which might impact on parental preferences and need for places.
  - Adjust numbers in the light of small- or large-scale housing and regeneration schemes.

### 3.0 Background

3.1 The School Organisation Plan provides information about the schools maintained by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council. It provides the number of places available in schools in each part of the borough, the number of pupils in them, and projections for pupil numbers for the next five years. The Plan also includes the Council's policies on school organisation, and new procedures introduced by government for making changes such as opening, closing or enlarging schools.

3.2 The decline that has taken place in pupil numbers in Stockton Borough's primary schools over the last five years is now slowing down. Higher numbers of births in the last three years mean that pupil numbers are likely to start rising again at the end of this decade. The decline in pupil numbers experienced in primary schools means that pupil numbers in secondary schools are now beginning to decline. It is expected that they will reach their lowest in 2016 and then rise gradually. Overall it will be necessary to remove up to 1500 secondary places. The pupil number projections take account of planned housing developments in several parts of the borough. This could create up to 2,000 new homes over the next five years.

#### 3.3 Primary schools

From 1 September 2007 the Council maintains:

- one infant school for children aged 4 to 7
- one junior school for children aged 7 to 11
- fifty-nine primary schools for children aged 4 to 11. Twelve of these receive additional funding:
  - one for children with complex physical and medical needs
  - two for children with spoken language difficulties
  - three for Key Stage 1 pupils with complex learning needs
  - six for children at Key Stage 2 with a range of learning difficulties
- one special school for children aged up to 11 with a range of special educational needs (Ash Trees School)
- one special school for children aged 5 to 16 with a range of emotional and behavioural difficulties, including children with Autism (Westlands School)
- one pupil referral unit for primary-age pupils temporarily excluded from school (Greengates).

#### 3.4 Secondary schools

In the secondary phase, the Authority maintains:

- twelve schools for pupils aged 11 to 16. Two of these receive additional funding:
  - one for children at Key Stage 3 and 4 with complex physical and medical needs
  - one for Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils with visual impairment
- two schools for pupils aged 11 to 18
- one special school for pupils aged 11 to 18 with a range of complex special educational needs (Abbey Hill School)
- one special school for children at Key Stage 3 and 4 with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties (King Edwin School)
- one special school for children aged 5 to 16 with a range of emotional and behavioural difficulties, including children with Autism (Westlands School)
- one pupil referral unit for pupils temporarily excluded from school (Bishopton Centre).

### 3.5 Primary school places

The table below shows the total capacity of all primary schools in Stockton-on-Tees and the actual number of pupils in January 2006 and January 2007. Pupil numbers for 2008 to 2012 are based on projections supplied by the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit (JSU). "Net surplus" is the difference between total capacity and total pupils on roll.

January →	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
<b>net capacity</b>	<b>16626</b>	<b>16610</b>	<b>16610</b>	<b>16430</b>	<b>16430</b>	<b>16430</b>	<b>16430</b>
<b>pupils</b>	<b>14931</b>	<b>14620</b>	<b>14525</b>	<b>14484</b>	<b>14618</b>	<b>14715</b>	<b>14959</b>
net surplus	1695	1990	2085	1946	1812	1715	1471
<b>surplus %</b>	<b>10.2%</b>	<b>12.0%</b>	<b>12.6%</b>	<b>11.8%</b>	<b>11.0%</b>	<b>10.4%</b>	<b>9.0%</b>

3.6 Pupil numbers have been in decline for several years, but an increase in the number of births in each of the last three years points to a likely increase in primary pupil numbers by 2010. It is too early to say whether this is a short-term change or the beginning of a long-term trend. Action is being taken at a small number of schools to reduce overall capacity during 2008. This reduction will bring the level of surplus places below a target of 10% during the five-year life of the Plan. The situation is monitored annually and further action taken if pupil numbers fall below the forecasts.

3.7 The government has announced that from 2009-10 the possibility of receiving additional funding under the Primary Capital Programme. Funding is likely to be on a much smaller scale than the secondary *Building Schools for the Future* programme, but over time this will enable unsuitable primary school buildings to be upgraded or replaced and further excess capacity to be removed if necessary.

### 3.8 Secondary school places

The following table gives similar information for the secondary schools in Stockton-on-Tees.

January →	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
<b>net capacity</b>	<b>13603</b>	<b>13472</b>	<b>13472</b>	<b>13472</b>	<b>13472</b>	<b>13472</b>	<b>13472</b>
<b>pupils</b>	<b>12614</b>	<b>12441</b>	<b>12113</b>	<b>11758</b>	<b>11396</b>	<b>11244</b>	<b>10951</b>
net surplus	989	1031	1359	1714	2076	2228	2521
<b>surplus %</b>	<b>7.3%</b>	<b>7.7%</b>	<b>10.1%</b>	<b>12.7%</b>	<b>15.4%</b>	<b>16.5%</b>	<b>18.7%</b>

3.9 The decline in primary school pupil numbers over the past seven years is now starting to affect secondary schools. During the five years covered by the School Organisation Plan, pupil numbers in secondary schools are forecast to fall below 11,000. The lowest point is projected at 10,409 in 2016. In the long term, numbers are expected to return to around 11,000. In order to provide some margin for possible future population growth and to increase choice for parents, it seems likely that the overall need after 2010 will be for about 11,500 secondary places overall. This means that up to 2,000 places will need to be removed. This will be achieved through the *Building Schools for the Future* programme from 2009-10.



#### **4.0 Evidence/Findings**

- 4.1 The Committee learned that there are three aspects to school organisation planning.
- 4.2 The first is the statutory duty to ensure that the borough as a whole has sufficient primary and secondary school places to meet the needs of pupils aged 5 to 16.
- 4.3 The second element is to ensure that there is not an excessive level of surplus school places. This is not a statutory obligation, but it is important for three reasons:
1. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) monitors the level of “surplus places” at every school and requires a report on any school where the level reaches 25% of capacity;
  2. The percentage of primary and secondary schools in the borough with 25% or more unfilled places is a key performance indicator for Ofsted and the Audit Commission;
  3. Falling school rolls may lead to an inefficient use of resources because funding for education received from government is based on the number of pupils, not the number of schools in the borough.
- 4.4 The third element is the management of any change in school provision that may arise from a shortage or surplus of school places. Statutory processes of consultation and decision-making must be followed taking into account guidance issued by the Secretary of State (DCSF) before reaching any decision.
- 4.5 To carry out the three functions successfully it is recognised that accurate information needs to be available. The Committee was therefore asked to scrutinise the information being received by Stockton Council’s Children, Education and Social Care department to ensure confidence in the process especially as decisions were beginning to be made for the Building Schools for the Future programme.

#### **Information relevant to school organisation planning**

##### **Birth Rate and Parental Preference**

- 4.6 The primary source of information is the School Census taken electronically in January each year. This records the name, date of birth and home address of every pupil on roll at each maintained school in the borough. This information is sent to DCSF, local diocese and the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit (JSU) which is commissioned annually by all Tees Valley authorities to inform local authorities of projections of future pupil numbers.
- 4.7 The Committee accept the difficulty to predict how future births will change and the resulting uncertainty demonstrates the importance of regularly reviewing the Pupil Projections, as is currently done. The JSU therefore continue to make use of other administrative data sources such as GP Registrations and Child Benefit Claimants to support estimates of pre-school numbers.
- 4.8 The total number of primary school pupils is projected to increase over the next 11 years from 14,621 (including special units) in Spring 2007 to around 15,100 in Spring 2018. The impact of lower births in the early to mid 1990s is

just beginning to feed through to numbers entering secondary schools. Migration is projected to remain fairly stable and will have little impact.

- 4.9 The total number of secondary school pupils is projected to fall by 16% from 12,441 (including special units and 6th form) in Spring 2007 to around 10,400 by Spring 2014 before increasing to 11,000 by Spring 2018 and peaking at 11,300 by Spring 2021.
- 4.10 The new School Admission Code came into force in February 2007 and applies to all maintained schools and Academies. All local authorities are required to formulate and consult on a scheme for each academic year for co-ordinating admission arrangements for all maintained schools within their area. This is intended to simplify the admission process for parents whilst reducing the likelihood of any child being left without a school place. Stockton Council also provides advice and assistance to all parents of children of all ages in their area when they are expressing a preference of school for their child.
- 4.11 The Committee heard that parental preference significantly affects the size of the Y7 group at a number of schools. Stockton Borough is divided into areas known as 'admission zones' to which each school is assigned a zone and this relates to the surrounding housing. Some schools are very popular and cannot accommodate all the additional pupils who wish to attend from outside those schools' admission zones. The assumption, when projecting rolls beyond 2007/2008 in these schools, is that pupils are accepted up to an admission number for the school. In practice, events are unlikely to follow the projections exactly and the pattern of parental preference is liable to alter as perceptions of individual schools change.
- 4.12 In addition it is assumed that Macmillan Academy will take around 220 pupils each year who would otherwise have moved into the Y7 group in the secondary schools in various authorities. The admission zone of the academy includes Thornaby taking approximately 30 pupils from this area.
- 4.13 The Committee learned that there is close liaison with the Officers responsible for Planning School Places, Management Information Systems, Asset Management and School Admissions in order to ensure the management of admission numbers within the Borough. School admissions allocate school places and ensure that admission numbers are adhered to both in the main round of admissions and with through year transfers, to ensure that places are filled and parents receive their preferred school if at all possible.
- 4.14 The Committee recommend that consideration is given for the Parent Partnership Officer and the Independent Choice Adviser to be closely aligned in order to further improve the advice given to parents.**
- 4.15 The Committee recommend that CESC and DNS introduce appropriately timed formal meeting arrangements to improve each others awareness of planning proposals and the impact this has on school places.**
- 4.16 The net capacity assessment of a school is designed to calculate the number of pupils, that a school can reasonably accommodate based on the floor area of the premises. For primary schools this is based on the number and size of spaces designated as 'class bases' – for secondary schools it is based on the number, size and type of 'teaching spaces'. In both cases this is checked

against the total useable space available to ensure that the overall size of the school is neither too great nor too small to support the core teaching activities.

- 4.17 The department for Children, Schools and Families receives school census data and holds copies of net capacity assessments. The surplus places return compares the number on roll against net capacity at every school and calculates the level of unfilled places. The Authority is required to provide forecasts of future pupil numbers and a commentary on demographic trends. Where any school has at least 25% unfilled places the Authority must explain what action will be taken to reduce this. If the school is regarded by government as poorly performing, the option of closure must be considered.
- 4.18 More than 2000 primary places and 400 secondary places have been removed in Stockton Borough over the past five years. This has been achieved through the removal of temporary accommodation, conversion of former classrooms for other uses (e.g. ICT suites, staff workspaces, extended services accommodation) and reducing admission numbers. Four pairs of infant and junior schools have been amalgamated to create primary schools.
- 4.19 The 2007 surplus place return showed an overall level of 12.1% unfilled places in primary schools and 8% in secondary schools. No secondary school had unfilled places in excess of 25%. Five primary schools were in that position. One of these (Barley Fields) opened in 2006 and is not yet open to all age groups. One of the others (Redbrook) is due to close on 31 August 2008, while another (Hardwick) is to be replaced by a new building as part of a housing regeneration programme. The two remaining schools (Billingham South and Frederick Nattrass) are undergoing major capital works to reduce capacity significantly.

### **Spatial Planning**

- 4.20 Whilst the birth rate and parental preference are major determinants of the changing demand for educational provision across the borough, the location of housing is also a main factor which can determine the variability between schools. Typically, areas with substantial new house building under way are experiencing significant increases in numbers because they normally attract a rather higher proportion of younger adults often with younger families of primary school or pre-school age. It is for this reason that the Committee was keen to take evidence from the Council's Planning Department.
- 4.21 The Spatial Planning team receive a spreadsheet from the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit in March each year. This contains information about residential developments in the borough, particularly the phasing of house building over time and the number of children each development would generate in school catchment areas. The Spatial Planning technician is then able to extract all the applications for 10 dwellings or more that have been approved and add these to the Pupil Projections spreadsheet.
- 4.22 In addition, the Spatial Planning Team maintains a spreadsheet which lists all current and approved applications for housing in the borough and records the start and completion of new dwellings. The data is sourced electronically from Planning and Building Control records in addition to the National House Building Council records which supplies building control services to developers. Where necessary, site visits are carried out to ensure the data collected is accurate.

- 4.23 The Committee questioned whether the housing data used could be improved and was pleased to learn that the Spatial Planning team intend to develop a comprehensive Microsoft-Access based housing database. This will enable data to be captured more efficiently, and will provide a comprehensive source for housing data which is currently contained in a number of different spreadsheets.
- 4.24 The Committee would welcome the development of a single database as it may help to reduce inaccuracies and the need to make statistical assumptions thereby assisting the pupil projection spreadsheet. A review of the Joint Strategy Unit's spreadsheet (April 2007) had shown that phasing for a number of developments was out of date and needed to be revised. In addition, more complex sites with numerous planning approvals, including revisions and variations would be monitored with greater accuracy.
- 4.25 The Committee, as well as reviewing past or current housing developments to determine the impact on school planning, was interested to learn about which major sites are expected to be the subject of a planning application within the next 6 months.
- 4.26 It was informed that a number of major building proposals will be the subject of planning applications including the Allen's West site in Eaglescliffe. That planning application is expected to propose 500 dwellings of which the majority will be family housing.
- 4.27 An existing planning permission, which is expected to be the subject of a revised application, is the North Shore project. This currently has planning permission for 480 apartments. The revised application is expected to be for 999 dwellings including 250 family houses.
- 4.28 In order for this information to assist the school organisation plan the Committee wanted to identify the specific allocation for family housing within the overall housing allocation for the Borough. It was told, however, that the allocation for the Borough in the draft Regional Spatial Strategy is not divided into categories e.g. x = family housing, y = executive housing etc. There is a general requirement set out in the national guidance on planning policy for housing that local planning authorities will facilitate a mix of house types and tenures.
- 4.29 Whilst there may be a mix of housing types and tenures it does not provide an accurate number of young people that can be found in any one type of property, it can only provide an estimation that can be used with other data available when attempting to identify school populations. As such, it relies on the experience and knowledge of officers within Stockton Council and external sources to provide the best estimates possible for what can increasingly be seen to be an art rather than a science.
- 4.30 The Committee recommend that a 'traffic light' system is introduced and increased use of project management techniques are used by CESC and DNS to show when developments are likely to have a significant impact on school places.**
- 4.31 The Committee recommend that CESC ensure that spatial planning information is used effectively to inform the School Organisation Plan.**

### **Building Schools for the Future**

- 4.32 A major factor that had also to be considered during this review was the imminent impact of consultation that had begun for Building Schools for the Future (BSF), a long-term capital programme to transform educational opportunities by refurbishing or replacing secondary school buildings. Stockton-on-Tees is to enter BSF early in 2008, with funding starting in 2010.
- 4.33 Funding is based on projected secondary pupil numbers in 2018 and is dependent upon submitting to government a Strategy for Change setting out how the Authority will use BSF funding – estimated at £150 million plus £15 m for ICT – to transform opportunities in the local area.
- 4.34 During this review consultation has taken place on options for school organisation under BSF. Almost 4,000 written responses were received. A public meeting was held at each mainstream secondary school, and these were attended by a total of around 1,300 people.
- 4.35 The Committee was provided with a presentation of the Cabinet report that highlighted the following:

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

- 4.36 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.
- 4.37 The preferred option is 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.

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

- 4.38 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. Option B, to close Our Lady & St Bede's, was vigorously opposed by the Catholic community.
- 4.39 The preferred option is 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**

- 4.40 The preferred option is 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

- 4.41 The option to transfer Egglecliffe 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. There was also clear support for the option to refurbish Conyers School on its present site.
- 4.42 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.
- 4.43 The concerns of parents from Ingleby Barwick were raised by the Committee as this had featured at the outset of this review, especially by some Members who represent this area. The view expressed was that there are not sufficient secondary school places in Ingleby Barwick to meet the needs of all the students resident there. The Council does not own any land in Ingleby Barwick suitable for building another secondary school and the BSF programme does not allow its monies to be used to purchase the necessary land which has resulted in the following options although it has been stated that if a feasible and affordable site does become available within the timeframe of the BSF project, the options will then be re-appraised.
- 4.44 The size of All Saints School – 600 places – was the largest allowed by the government in 1999 because places were available at other schools in Thornaby and Yarm. 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.
- 4.45 The preferred options are 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.
- 4.46 As is shown above 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 the bid is expected until the review is completed.

- 4.47 The Committee wishes to add its support to the initiative that would see the amalgamation of both BSF funding waves promised to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.**
- 4.48 The methods of consultation were closely examined by the members of the Committee as they had either experienced difficulties with receiving written information or had concerns about the public meetings that were held to gather parental views.
- 4.49 The Future Learning booklets were intended to be distributed to homes throughout the borough. Copies were also 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.
- 4.50 Committee members were aware that the Future Learning booklet did not reach every household in the borough. The Committee was informed that where a missed address was notified, special deliveries were arranged, and the distribution company provided complimentary advertising to further promote awareness of the consultation.
- 4.51 The Committee recommends that CESC determine arrangements that will improve the information, distribution and consultation process for the next stage of the BSF process.**
- 4.52 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.
- 4.53 The Committee was pleased that meetings had been arranged, primarily aimed at parents of pupils attending secondary schools. However, Members felt that due to the timescales involved for BSF that it could have been useful to target parents of primary school pupils who may be more affected by BSF.
- 4.54 The Committee recognises the professionalism of officers in this emotive subject in attempting to improve the dialogue with parents about BSF.





## 5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 The Committee's intention was to assist the determination of school need and location based on the changing demographic nature of Stockton Borough and to ascertain the accuracy of information used for formulating consultation for the BSF programme.
- 5.2 The unpredictability of birth trends and parental choice of schools is now better understood by the Committee which recognises and commends the work of officers involved in all aspects of the compilation of the School Organisation Plan.
- 5.3 Of particular interest to the Committee was the impact future housing provision will have on primary and secondary schools in the borough. Members were able to bring their local knowledge to the fore to scrutinise the important aspect that planning has to this review. As with the unpredictability highlighted above, the lack of certainty regarding the occupation of the various housing types means that the location of school-aged children can never be accurately forecast. The Committee therefore supports the work of officers within Stockton Council and external sources to provide the best estimates possible.
- 5.4 As with the housing provision mentioned above the way in which Ingleby Barwick has developed meant that the Building Schools for the Future programme was an important element of this review.
- 5.5 With initial consultation being undertaken by CESC ahead of the formal consultation arrangements for BSF the Committee was keen to learn what was being developed for the borough, especially in the south. The support given by the Committee for the planned financial arrangements as well as the recommendations to improve the next stages of consultation is intended to advance the way in which the BSF process can further improve the educational opportunities of the young people living and learning in Stockton Borough.