

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting29th November 2012

1. Title of Item/Report

Structural Change in Schools and Sector-Led School Improvement

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report on local developments in relation to sector-led whole system school improvement and outlined the emerging approach to structural change. The report also included a proposed memorandum of understanding with Northern Education Trust (draft, subject to approval by Northern Education Trust).

The context for educational change was set out in the Schools White Paper 'The Importance of Teaching' which was presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Education in November 2010. This comprehensive and radical plan included significant structural change, particularly in relation to the escalation of the Academy programme. The aspiration was for all schools to be academies by 2015. The opportunity for schools to convert was extended to outstanding schools, and later, good schools with some outstanding features, and also to primary and special schools as well as Pupil Referral Units. Arrangements for less successful schools followed, requiring such schools to secure the support of a 'sponsor' that could provide and sustain school improvement capacity. This could be a recognised provider of school improvement or a local outstanding school.

The Schools White Paper also set out the emerging approach to school improvement which would be rooted more in schools supporting one another and new providers of school improvement services and less in local authority school improvement services, although local authorities could continue to offer school improvement as a traded service. The introduction of Teaching Schools and the call for applications from schools with outstanding teaching and learning aligned with this new approach to school improvement.

In Stockton, these changes had prompted an ongoing dialogue and debate that had focused upon how schools, the local authority and key stakeholders could retain the strong ethos and culture of 'Campus Stockton' in the new 'operating environment'. These discussions had

been particularly meaningful as some schools had grappled with the issue of academy conversion, whether through choice as a good or outstanding school, or when seeking a sponsor route, as a less successful school.

A group of headteachers and college leaders had worked with local authority officers to draft and agree a position statement on the issues of structural change and sector-led school improvement. The position statement was attached to the report. It set out a shared vision that acknowledged the need to change but stressed a strong conviction that partnership and collaboration, which was very strong across Stockton schools and partners, must be maintained as it was essential to delivering improved outcomes for the children and young people of the Borough. In Section 2 the national policy context was outlined, with clear reference to the Schools White Paper 2010 and The Education Act 2011. The section also included the local context which described the success realised and the challenges facing the education community in Stockton as well as the emerging developments in relation to structural change and school improvement. Section 3 outlined the plan to deliver sector led school improvement with key priorities around building capacity and developing expertise, maximising resource and sharing decision making in terms of school intervention and support. In Section 4 the approach to structural change was set out. This included an explanation of the approach to, and characteristics of, local solutions. This section also described the approach that would be taken in relation to external school improvement partners. Section 5 was an explanation of how the partnership would operate and it included a description of the various working groups that would lead on key themes.

The document outlined had been circulated amongst headteachers and principals, chairs of governing bodies and other key stakeholders, including Trade Unions/Associations. It would be the subject of a range of presentations and workshops, feedback from which would be incorporated into a version of the document that would be finalised for adoption by partners and stakeholders. The working arrangements would be in place from January 2013, although the degree and rate of change would be reflected in membership and remit.

The contribution of the Council to the Campus Stockton Collaborative Partnership was indicative of the commitment it had to maintaining and developing the strong and productive relationship with schools, colleges and other providers of education across the Borough. This commitment to the Campus Stockton brand and philosophy was a clear and tangible demonstration of the importance of children and young people of the Borough and the belief that they were best served through partners working together. The Council was also committed to working with other

key stakeholders who operated in this way and who share similar values, where it believes they can bring additional value and expertise and contribute to local solutions.

Northern Education Trust was an approved Department for Education Academy Sponsor. It was a not-for-profit organisation committed to supporting academies and to helping them improve because of the belief that first class education gives young people life chances and choices. In the mission statement of the organisation it was the development and achievement of young people that was central to the vision. Northern Education Trust set out a commitment to understand the community context within which any sponsored Academy operated and it would work to promote community cohesion and economic regeneration. Northern Education Trust was committed to working in local authority areas where there were shared values and aspirations for young people.

The report included a proposal to put in place a Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and Northern Education Trust. The proposed Memorandum of Understanding was attached to the report and would utilise what was best of both organisations and provide the basis for securing strategic local solutions for schools in challenging circumstances.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The developments set out in the Position Paper be noted.
2. The Memorandum of Understanding with Northern Education Trust be approved.
3. Reasons for the Decision

To update members on emerging strategic developments in the relationships between local authority, schools and colleges and external partners involved in school improvement and academy sponsorship.
4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.
5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

Councillor Nelson declared a personal interest in respect of this item as he was on governing body at Frederick Natrass School.
6. Details of any Dispensations

Not applicable.

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

Midnight on Friday, 7th December 2012.

Proper Officer
03 April 2012