

## CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**29 NOVEMBER 2012**

**REPORT OF CORPORATE  
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

### **CABINET DECISION**

**Children, Education and Social Care – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Ann McCoy**

#### **STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN SCHOOLS AND SECTOR-LED SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

1. Summary

This report updates Cabinet on local developments in relation to sector-led whole system school improvement and outlines the current approach to structural change. This report also includes a proposed Memorandum of Understanding with Northern Education Trust (draft, subject to approval by Northern Education Trust).

2. Recommendations

1. Members note the developments set out in the Position Paper (Appendix One)
2. Members to approve the Memorandum of Understanding with Northern Education Trust

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

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. 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 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 as described in paragraph 16 of the code, in any business of the Council he / she must then in accordance with paragraph 18 of the code, 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 and the business: -

- Affects the members financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code, or

- Relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to the member of any person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code.

A Member with a prejudicial interest as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, may attend the meeting but must not take part in the consideration and voting upon the relevant item of business. However a member with such an interest may make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to that business before the business is considered or voted on, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under a statutory right or otherwise (**paragraph 19** of the code)

Members may participate in any discussion and vote on a matter in which they have an interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, where that interest relates to functions of the Council detailed in **paragraph 20** of the code.

### **Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

It is a criminal offence for a member to participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which he / she has a disclosable interest (and where an appropriate dispensation has not been granted) **paragraph 21** of the code.

Members are required to comply with any procedural rule adopted by the Council which requires a member to leave the meeting room whilst the meeting is discussing a matter in which that member has a disclosable pecuniary interest (paragraph 22 of the code).

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**STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN SCHOOLS AND SECTOR-LED SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

**SUMMARY**

This report updates Cabinet on local developments in relation to sector-led whole system school improvement and outlines the emerging approach to structural change. This report also includes a proposed memorandum of understanding with Northern Education Trust (draft, subject to approval by Northern Education Trust).

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Members note the developments set out in the Position Paper (Appendix One)
2. Members to approve the Memorandum of Understanding with Northern Education Trust

**DETAIL**

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. In Stockton, these changes have prompted an ongoing dialogue and debate that has focused upon how schools, the local authority and key stakeholders can retain the strong ethos and culture of 'Campus Stockton' in the new 'operating environment'. These discussions have been particularly meaningful in recent months as some schools have grappled with the issue of academy conversion, wither through choice as a good or outstanding school, or when seeking a sponsor route, as a less successful school.
4. A group of headteachers and college leaders have worked with local authority officers to draft and agree a position statement on the issues of structural change and sector-led school improvement. This position statement is attached to this report (Appendix 1). It sets out a

shared vision that acknowledges the need to change but stresses a strong conviction that partnership and collaboration, which is very strong across Stockton schools and partners, must be maintained as it is essential to delivering improved outcomes for the children and young people of the Borough. In Section 2 the national policy context is outlined, with clear reference to the Schools White Paper 2010 and The Education Act 2011. This section also includes the local context which describes 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 outlines 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 is set out. This includes an explanation of the approach to, and characteristics of, local solutions. This section also describes the approach that will be taken in relation to external school improvement partners. Section 5 is an explanation of how the partnership will operate and it includes a description of the various working groups that will lead on key themes.

5. The document outlined above has been circulated amongst headteachers and principals, chairs of governing bodies and other key stakeholders, including Trade Unions/Associations. It will be the subject of a range of presentations and workshops, feedback from which will be incorporated into a version of the document that will be finalised for adoption by partners and stakeholders. The working arrangements will be in place from January 2013, although the degree and rate of change will be reflected in membership and remit.
6. The contribution of the Council to the Campus Stockton Collaborative Partnership is indicative of the commitment it has 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 is a clear and tangible demonstration of the importance of children and young people of the Borough and the belief that they are best served through partners working together. The Council is also committed to working with other key stakeholders who operate in this way and who share similar values, where it believes they can bring additional value and expertise and contribute to local solutions.
7. Northern Education Trust is an approved Department for Education Academy Sponsor. It is 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 is the development and achievement of young people that is central to the vision. Northern Education Trust sets out a commitment to understand the community context within which any sponsored Academy operates and it will work to promote community cohesion and economic regeneration. Northern Education Trust is committed to working in local authority areas where there are shared values and aspirations for young people.
8. This report includes a proposal to put in place a Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and Northern Education Trust. The proposed Memorandum of Understanding (attached to this report at Appendix 2) will utilise what is best of both organisations and provide the basis for securing strategic local solutions for schools in challenging circumstances.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

9. There will be financial related considerations for the Council linked to the academy conversion programme. However, there are no specific financial implications in relation to the proposals in this report.

## LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10. The proposed Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and Northern Education Trust has been drafted in recognition of the significant benefits that can be achieved through two organisations with complementary objectives working together or coordinating their activities to achieve a greater impact on outcomes for young people than could be achieved independently.
11. The Memorandum of Understanding utilising powers contained in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 (the “general power of competence”) will therefore promote and enable both the Council and Northern Education Trust to target resources more efficiently and with greater flexibility because of the coordinated strategic approach.
12. The governance arrangements for different forms of partnership working are determined by their legal form. In this instance the partnership is strategic rather than directly operational (albeit that there are clear but distinct operational benefits to each organisation) and therefore no services are procured by the Council. Because of this the Council has been able to identify Northern Education Trust because of its strategic fit with the Council’s own objectives, rather than having to identify North Education Trust ability to comply with a specification of requirements through a procurement process.

## RISK ASSESSMENT

13. The implications for Council of these proposals are categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

## SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

14. The implications for the Sustainable Community Strategy will be considered alongside the statutory guidance relating to the Act upon publication.

## EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

15. This report is not subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment because the guidance relating to the Act has not yet been published and therefore impact cannot be assessed.

## CORPORATE PARENTING

16. Upon the publication of guidance relating to implementation of the Act implications for corporate parenting will be considered.

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Education related? Yes

Background Papers None