

REPORT TO: School Forum

DATE: 15th October 2013

REPORTING OFFICER: Operational Director – Children’s Organisation and Provision

SUBJECT: Academy Update

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The aim of this report is to summarise the academy conversion process, outline the implications for the local authority and the schools it maintains and introduce a fee from schools to cover the costs incurred by the Council.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That School Forum

2.1 approve the introduction of a fee of £5,000 for schools converting to academy status.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 Halton Borough Council recognises it is a matter for each school to determine whether academy status is right for them. To ensure that schools are clear on the process and the implications it is asked that the Operational Director Children’s Organisation and Provision is contacted and invited to meet with the Governing Body prior to any decision to convert to academy status.

3.2 In Halton a number of schools have now converted to academy status. The Council has worked with each school to try and secure a smooth conversion, however, our experience is that each conversion is different and all have been both complex and time consuming, particularly, for the staff within the Council.

3.3 The timeline for conversion for each school varies depending on the complexity of the conversion. Recent conversions within Halton have varied between 5 months and 10 months. To avoid unnecessary delays schools seeking to convert to academy status are advised to make early contact with the Council .

3.4 In recognition of the additional advice and support schools require, the DFE provide a one-off lump sum of £25,000 towards the costs of conversion. Many schools use this funding to employ legal support, seek advice on employment, land and assets, contracts, establishing a Trust and financial arrangements.

3.5 However, no additional funding is provided by the DFE to cover the additional costs incurred by the Council in each schools conversion. Legal, HR, financial, property services, estates, health and safety, audit, insurance, school improvement and children’s organisation and provision Officers are

involved in the conversion process. For Community and controlled schools as the Council is the employer there are a range of employment issues to be resolved including the TUPE. In addition, any landowner issues, joint use etc must be resolved prior to conversion. A commercial transfer agreement must also be agreed between both the school, council and the DFE prior to conversion.

- 3.6 In addition to the support provided by Council Officers, on a number of occasions it has been necessary for the local authority to commission specialist external consultants to address particularly complex issues. It is therefore proposed that to ensure a contribution towards the costs the Council incurs and to ensure that support to other maintained schools is not compromised it is proposed to introduce a fee of £5,000 for each academy conversion.
- 3.7 The Education Building Development Officers Group conducted a survey of authorities on cost recovery for academy conversion. Of the 16 authorities involved in the survey 6 already had some form of cost recovery in place and a further 6 were interested and/or discussing cost recovery. The costs recovery models differed from an hourly charge to a flat rate of £5,000.
- 3.8 Halton will continue to provide the opportunity for academies to continue to purchase a range of services back from the Council. Except where otherwise agreed, the charges for these services will be at full cost recovery rate.

4.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Academy Conversion cost recovery – responses from query through EBDOG to other LAs	Rutland House Floor 2	Ann McIntyre – Operational Director – Children’s Organisation and Provision