

REPORT:	Executive Board
DATE:	21 December 2006
REPORTING OFFICER	Strategic Director – Children & Young People
SUBJECT:	Building Schools for the Future
WARDS:	Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

BSF aims through substantial capital investment to transform secondary educational standards by providing 21st century learning environments. Halton Borough Council has submitted an application for entry into Wave 5 of the Building Schools for the Future Programme. If the Council's bid for Wave 5 is successful, it must complete a re-organisation of its secondary provision by September 2007, the start date for Wave 5 Projects.

- 1.2 The aim of any proposal will be to reform and redesign the pattern of secondary education, its curricula and schools' infrastructure to best serve the Borough's communities for decades to come.
- 1.3 Any proposed secondary school re-organisation will be a matter of considerable public interest, concern and debate (see Appendix 1 for an outline of the school organisation process and timescale). It will also have an impact on the wider community, transport and opportunities for extended use of school premises.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That:

- 1a **The Chief Executive be given delegated powers, in consultation with the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People, to produce a draft organisation plan for secondary provision.**
- 1b **The draft organisation plan be published for consultation with schools and other stakeholders.**
- 1c **A further report be submitted to Executive Board outlining the results of the consultation.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Building Schools for the Future is a national programme through which funding is available for investment to transform all schools or units that teach secondary age pupils. Funding is either in the source of conventional capital (capital grant and borrowing) and/or PFI credits. The BSF programme will not only renew Halton secondary provision but will make a major contribution to the regeneration of the borough attracting an estimated level of capital investment of between £90 and £100 million.
- 3.2 In order to attract this major source of capital investment all the revenue costs of the project must be met locally. It is estimated that between £800,000 and £1 million per

year revenue funding is required. Therefore, as part of 2007/2008 budget process a bid for growth has been submitted for BSF revenue costs. In addition, those secondary and special schools within the BSF Programme will be asked to make a contribution towards the project totalling £300,000 to cover costs up to March 2008.

3.3 In October 2006 the Council submitted its Strategy for Change Part 1 in which it was required to demonstrate its readiness to delivery BSF. A key element of the submission was Halton's vision for secondary provision, its appreciation and understanding of its main educational challenges and objectives and the contribution BSF could make. As part of the preparation for entry into BSF the authority has had to consider whether the children and young people of Halton are best served by the current arrangement of schools, or whether an alternative arrangement would offer additional benefits.

3.4 In determining the most appropriate secondary school provision a range of factors require consideration. These include:-

- The demographic changes in Halton such as declining pupil numbers overall. There has been a general trend nationally in recent years for the number of births to decrease. Without taking any action there would be more unfilled secondary places in Halton. Maintaining surplus secondary provision does not represent the most effective use of limited resources and can cause serious educational problems.
- The impact of declining pupil numbers is uneven across the borough with some schools continuing to remain full, as they are both popular and successful. Parents, therefore, actively seek places for their children at such schools. This results in a greater loss of pupils at schools perceived to be less successful.
- With declining pupil numbers and funding, less popular schools tend to face increasing challenges in providing and sustaining a consistently high quality of education for their pupils. Inequalities in provision tend to increase which can impact on both standards and the quality of opportunities that children in less popular schools can experience.
- In Halton further action is required to improve pupil performance at all key stages but in particular in Key Stage 4 and post-16.
- Data on current and future housing developments has had to be factored into forward planning
- Half of the Halton schools were built in the 1950s and 1960s and have significant issues in terms of their condition and their suitability.
- Consideration is needed of schools as a catalyst for regeneration, a community resource offering extended services and inclusive learning.

3.5 In order to plan numbers and types of secondary school provision within the borough the authority has had to provide a ten-year pupil forecast. By allowing for a 10% school surplus, estimates for 2016 are in the region of 7,500 11-16 pupils. The data analysis has then been configured on the basis that there are two distinct learning communities within the Borough, Runcorn and Widnes with roughly 3750 pupils in each community.

Following meetings between the CYPD Senior Management Team, external specialist organisation consultants and Halton secondary Head teachers agreement was reached that the schools should be designed for no less than 900 11-16 mainstream pupils and no more than 1500.

- 3.6 Academy provision must be considered by authorities bidding for entry into the BSF.
- 3.7 The outcome of any consultation will be reported back to Executive Board. Consideration will then need to be given as to whether to continue with the initial proposals or whether these need alteration following consultation to ensure that Halton secondary provision is:-
- Viable and successful;
 - Able to play a full part in the regeneration of Halton;
 - Act as a community resource;
 - Provide extended school facilities; and
 - Are inclusive.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There is no revenue funding for the project. In some authorities the set up costs have been between £800,000 and £1million per year. Contributions are being sought from the two key partners, schools and the Council, towards the revenue costs.
- 4.2 In addition, to providing revenue funding for BSF, many authorities have made a contribution towards the capital costs of BSF schemes, as funding has not fully met requirements. A minimum of 50% of the capital receipts from the sale of land as a result of the programme must be re-invested.
- 4.3 To make most effective use of school premises joint funding with other partners is seen as essential. However, time to secure outline permission for this funding is short.
- 4.4 There are likely to be significant costs which will need to be met associated with the reduction of staffing such as voluntary retirement and severance, re-deployment and safeguarding.
- 4.5 There will be revenue implications to the establishment of an Academy within Halton as the running costs will be determined through top slicing the current DSG.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Support will need to be provided for those schools most directly affected by any re-organisation proposals, as they will be faced with a period of uncertainty and turbulence. This support will need to be available to schools to ensure that during the consultation and re-organisation process there is a continued focus on improving standards.
- 5.2 There will be significant staffing implications associated with any proposals. Support and guidance will need to be offered to those staff likely to be affected. It is proposed that a staffing protocol be developed with all parties taking collective ownership of the changes in schools. The protocol will identify the current workforce and future workforce requirements and seek to maintain valuable skills and provide safeguards to staff through the management of staffing reductions through natural wastage, re-deployment and voluntary measures where possible.

5.3 The impact of any proposals on the local community will need careful management to ensure the rationale and benefits of the re-organisation are clearly understood.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

6.1 Any proposal will deliver significant benefits for Children & Young People in Halton including:

6.1.1 A quality-learning environment in all the Boroughs schools.

6.1.2 Modern state of the art school buildings across the Borough.

6.1.3 Improved academic and vocational outcomes.

6.1.4 An investment of circa £100 million in new investment in education.

6.1.5 Create improved life chances throughout the Borough.

6.2 There is likely to be considerable concern within the local community and the press based on any proposed re-organisation proposals. The impact on the development of the CYPAN would need to be considered.

6.3 There may be a decline in standards at those schools most directly affected by any proposals.

6.4 Despite the any proposals secondary schools may seek Trust or Foundation Status.

6.5 Staff morale is likely to be adversely affected in any schools facing closure, retaining good staff and maintaining staff motivation may then become an issue.

6.6 BSF and School Re-organisation require significant capital and revenue funding without the appropriate level of resources the project will not be approved.

6.7 The consultation process will require a major investment in CYPD senior management time this may have an impact on key areas of work within the directorate.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 The school re-organisation proposals and BSF proposals will be aimed at providing learning environments where young people will want to learn and provide a major impetus to improving the learning outcomes for all children and young people. Any proposals will be aimed at securing diverse provision, choice and access, and promoting inclusion and integration of all Halton secondary provision.

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

Documents

Readiness to Deliver
Guidance for Local
Authorities in BSF Waves
4-6 (Dfes a& PfS) June
2006

Place of Inspection

Grosvenor House

Contact

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Resources

Building Schools for the Future- Halton- Strategy for Change (12th October 2006)

Strategy for Change – School Re-Organisation

Building Schools for the Future – a guide for school governors and head teachers

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