

The Cabinet - 13 June 2007

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Investing in the Future - Transforming Secondary Education

Purpose of Report

1. This report sets out the progress made so far in preparation for the national Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme and the steps that are being undertaken to ensure successful and early inclusion in the programme.

Background

2. The BSF programme is intended to renovate or rebuild all secondary schools in the country by 2015 in order to transform secondary education. BSF brings together all of the secondary school capital programmes supported by the DfES.
3. The DfES has structured the BSF programme over 15 years with around 10 local authorities commencing in each year. These groups are referred to as 'waves'. In February 2005 indicative forward planning information was issued by the DfES suggesting Dudley would be included in Waves 7-9. This is consistent with Dudley's ranking against deprivation and attainment of between 70 and 90 out of 150 authorities. Dudley could expect to receive BSF funding in 2010/11 (Wave 7), 2011/12 (Wave 8) or 2012/13 (Wave 9).
4. Preparation for BSF will require a great deal of work to ensure that there is a clear strategy for transforming secondary education in Dudley supported by widespread consensus and commitment from all key partners.
5. Birmingham, Coventry, Sandwell, Solihull and Wolverhampton were included in Waves 1-3 or 4-6. Walsall has received substantial capital investment through other programmes and is scheduled for Waves 7-9. This presents a significant challenge for Dudley with regard to recruitment of school staff as many of these authorities will be able to offer modern fit-for-purpose accommodation. There is also a risk to pupil numbers in some parts of Dudley particularly where new schools or academies are established close to the Borough boundaries.

6. While the published information does not specify a start date for Dudley within the period 2010 to 2013, there are a number of indications that point to Dudley's involvement from 2010/11. These include:
- DfES-initiated visits from the Schools Commissioner responsible for 'choice and diversity' and a key link in the DfES approval routes for BSF;
 - the Black Country Challenge bid to government, which requires all partner Local Authorities to be in the BSF programme;
 - Dudley's established track record and national profile through successful developments such as the Dudley Grid for Learning, the Halesowen Pathfinder Trust, and our work on involving children and young people in decision-making;
 - outstanding progress with Specialised Diplomas and the 14-19 curriculum, in partnership with colleges.

7. The BSF programme is highly complex and incorporates several stages each with specific DfES controlled approval points. The first stage includes the development of a strategic vision that includes all of the major government policy areas such as personalised learning, specialist schools and diversity. In Dudley, the next stage in developing the strategic vision will begin formally on 11 June with a joint event for secondary schools, special schools, colleges, the Learning and Skills Council, senior officers from Council Directorates, and health authorities. A series of consultation events will continue through until October including Area Committee Meetings, Clinical Forum Workshop (Health), the Children's Trust (the Children and Young People's Partnership), engagement of children and young people, MPs, union secretaries, Black Country Consortium and other neighbouring authorities. This stage needs to clearly identify:

- the overall vision for transforming secondary education;
- what is proposed for individual schools;
- how and when the capital programme will be phased;
- how the project will be managed;
- evidence of commitment by the Council and other stakeholders.

In order to secure entry into BSF Wave 7, this information needs to be with the DfES by December 2007.

8. The BSF programme provides a wide range of opportunities for improving educational provision and the DfES will be particularly focussed on how the

proposals will transform secondary education provision and create facilities fit for 21st century education. 'Transformation' will need to be clearly evident in ambitions for significantly improved outcomes for children and young people. There are a number of significant challenges that Dudley's proposals will need to address:

- Improving educational outcomes for all
- Promoting diversity of provision;
- Promoting collaborative working between schools and with colleges;
- Ensuring fair access and choice;
- Promoting personalised learning;
- Integrating education with other services for children, such as health;
- Developing integrated provision between primary and secondary;
- Ensuring the number and size of schools required in the context of local demography.

Finance

9. Inclusion in the BSF programme will attract government capital funding in excess of £200 million. The DfES Primary Capital Programme is expected to attract in excess of £45 million. The Black Country Challenge is seeking to attract further substantial investment.
10. The cost of work so far has been met from within existing budgets. The experience of Local Authorities in the first Waves demonstrates that there are very significant costs involved in establishing sufficient capacity for effective project management, securing high quality specialist financial and legal advice and other professional fees. Initial estimates suggest that the costs will be in the region of £1m per year for three years until the projects are underway and resources are released by the DfES. These estimates are in line with the costs of setting up the Paragon Project, the PFI scheme that has rebuilt Summerhill School and Colley Lane School. Proposals are being developed that will secure this level of funding from capital receipts.
11. The DfES is requiring local authorities to set up a Local Education Partnership (LEP) to procure each project unless there is a sound case for making alternative arrangements. There are different models of LEPs emerging but in summary they

are joint venture arrangements with shares held by the local authority, a private partner and Partnership for Schools (set up by the DfES for BSF).

Law

12. The Council provides its Education Service predominantly under the Education Acts and may do anything which would be incidental or conducive to or which would facilitate the discharge of its functions under section 111 of the Local government Act 1972 including for instance the formation of JVCs.

Equality Impact

13. 'Investing for the Future – Transforming Secondary Education' is intended to transform the range of learning opportunities from early years to adulthood. It will improve the outcomes set out in Every Child Matters for all children and young people. Children and Young people will be asked to comment on the prospectus at the next stage.

Recommendation

14. It is recommended that the Council agree to include the project management costs of up to £3m in the capital programme.
15. It is recommended that up to £3m of the sale proceeds from the disposal of property within the control of the Directorate of Children's Services be earmarked to fund the project management costs associated with the development of the BSF scheme for Dudley. Should these proceeds not materialise then alternative funding will need to be identified within the Directorate of Children's Services.
16. It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services be asked to bring forward proposals to the Cabinet by the end of 2007 with a view to successful inclusion of the Borough's schools in Wave 7 of BSF, starting in 2010.



.....
John Freeman
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Ray Watson
Telephone: 01384 814203
Email: lin.burford@dudley.gov.uk

List of Background Papers

15 June 2005

Cabinet Report Learning for the Future – Proposals for Governance Arrangements

13 December 2006

Cabinet Report Investing in the Future – Transforming Secondary Education