

REPORT TO CABINET

Title: **BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE**

Date: 26 March 2009

Member Reporting: Councillor Quick

Contact Officer(s): Ben Wright, Education Planning Officer, ext 6572

Wards affected: All wards

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1.1 This report concerns the development of the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme in the Royal Borough. The national BSF programme, intended to renew all secondary school provision by 2020, has been running for several years. Following a review of this programme the DCSF have now announced a new national timetable, which has implications for the Royal Borough. These are detailed in this report. All appendices are available on the Borough website, in Members' Rooms, Group Rooms and from Democratic Services.
- 1.1.2 This report also gives details on the outcome of the Royal Borough's consultation with pupils, parents, governors, staff and other stakeholders on the future of secondary (including middle and upper) school provision in the borough.
- 1.1.3 The report also starts to identify some of the funding issues that will inevitably arise if the borough's schools are to benefit from an investment approaching £200m.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS: That:

- i)* **The Royal Borough commits to the necessary initial preparatory work to allow the authority, if so invited, to submit Readiness to Deliver documentation in early 2010.**
- ii)* **The financing of the initial preparatory work to be agreed by the Leader, the Lead Member for Children's Services, the Lead Member for Finance, the Corporate Director for Children's Services and the Head of Finance.**
- iii)* **The Royal Borough commits to developing specific proposals for achieving educational transformation through the BSF programme in the Borough's secondary, middle and upper schools. The responses to the consultation will play a key role in the development of those proposals.**

What will be different for residents as a result of this decision?
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Residents can expect to benefit from a rebuilding programme that will see half of the secondary schools in the Royal Borough rebuilt and the remainder substantially
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remodelled or refurbished by 2020. This will provide children and young people with greatly improved school buildings, which in turn will help improve outcomes for all children. The recommendations in this report will help ensure that the Royal Borough is ready to enter the programme when invited by the DCSF.

3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Background

3.1.1 This report details:

- the new national programme for BSF and the implications for the Royal Borough; and
- the outcome of the consultation with pupils, parents, governors, staff and other stakeholders on secondary school provision in the Royal Borough.

3.1.2 This report considers the above topics in turn. Unless specifically noted otherwise, the term 'secondary' refers to middle, upper and secondary schools throughout this report.

3.2 The new National Programme for BSF and implications for the Royal Borough

Background to BSF

3.2.1 BSF is a national secondary school renewal programme, begun by the government in 2003 and intended to run until 2020. The expectation is to enable local authorities not only to completely renovate their secondary schools but also to transform education "in a way that best serves the local community for generations to come".

3.2.2 The main BSF programme for the borough was thought to be still some way off, but in Spring 2008 the government reviewed the delivery of BSF. They concluded that many local authorities simply do not have the capacity to implement projects involving large numbers of secondary schools (five to ten) at a time. It was recognised as being particularly difficult for smaller local authorities.

3.2.3 Local authorities were invited, therefore, to submit revised 'submissions of interest' based on smaller groupings of schools by the end of November 2008. This was considered by the Cabinet on 23rd October 2008 and it was recommended that a revised expression of interest be submitted, and that it should initially be focused on the five Maidenhead secondary schools. The expression of interest also identified a follow-on project for the Ascot/Windsor schools that start later on.

The revised BSF Programme

3.2.4 The DCSF have now considered the revised expressions of interest from local authorities around the country and announced a new national timetable.

3.2.5 The DCSF wrote to all local authorities on 2nd March 2009 with their indicative prioritisation of the revised national programme for Building Schools for the Future. In this letter the DCSF emphasised that the lists are preliminary and that the actual order in which projects are started in BSF will take into account a range of other factors. The most crucial will be where authorities are unable to demonstrate

readiness to deliver, and so request a delay to their start.

- 3.2.6 The first list issued by the DCSF relates to the initial project of five schools that local authorities not already in the programme intend to do. For the Royal Borough this project relates to the five Maidenhead secondary schools. There are 70 authorities on this list, prioritised according to educational and social need. The Royal Borough is 67th on this list.
- 3.2.7 Unfortunately, the DCSF letter gives no indication about how many authorities in the list of 70 will be approached to enter the programme this year or next. There have been discussions with **4ps** (see paragraph 3.2.10 below for explanation of 4ps), however, and they have indicated that the DCSF expect 40 authorities from the list to be invited to submit 'readiness to deliver' documentation this year, and a similar number next year.
- 3.2.8 4ps have also indicated that they feel that this is ambitious, and suggest that the Royal Borough should expect to be invited to enter the programme, but proving readiness to deliver, early in 2011. A start in 2011 would allow greater time for planning of the programme, but would also delay implementation.
- 3.2.9 The DCSF letter also prioritised subsequent 'follow-on' projects in five further waves. The Royal Borough has only one follow-on project, comprising all of the Ascot, Windsor and Datchet/Wraysbury middle, secondary and upper schools. This project is ranked 80th out of 95. Again, there is no information from the DCSF about timescales for the follow-on projects. The DCSF letter is included as Appendix G to this report.

Support from 4ps

- 3.2.10 The national scope of the BSF programme means that there are a number of organisations providing support to local authorities in the BSF programme. One of these is 4ps, a Local Government Authority (LGA) body involved in local authority project delivery. 4ps have now held two briefings with Royal Borough officers and headteachers in order to provide an overview of the purpose, structure and processes involved with BSF. The main points made by 4ps are that:
- The BSF programme is not simply about new school buildings, but about educational transformation. If the DCSF are not convinced that a local authority's plans will deliver that transformation, funding will not be approved;
 - The programme will involve other community partners, including health, libraries, leisure and community services, for example;
 - ICT will be an integral part of the BSF programme;
 - Initial estimates suggest the cost of the programme for all thirteen secondary schools may be as much as £197.6m. There is likely to be an affordability gap of up to 10% (i.e up to £19.76m) between the funding provided by the DCSF and the cost of the borough's BSF programme;
 - The options for funding this gap will inevitably include increased borrowing and/or ensuring that the review of school provision takes advantage of whatever opportunities arise to generate capital receipt;

- New build elements (i.e. projects involving 75%+ total rebuild) are likely to be funded via PFI credits. Refurbishment/remodelling projects are likely to be design and build; and
- Development and delivery of the programme by local authorities typically costs a minimum of £3.5-4m over the first three years, which must be found from within borough resources. These costs will be classified as revenue costs and represent a sum equivalent to 2% on Council Tax over three years. It is important that options are considered, therefore, which defray these costs over a longer period.

Recommendation No. 1

3.2.11 Clearly, whether the Royal Borough is invited to enter the BSF programme in 2010 or 2011, there is a substantial amount of planning work to be undertaken. Experience from the Holyport Manor One School Pathfinder Project shows that a longer planning period can bring substantial gains. Cabinet agreed, on 23rd October 2008, that:

“The Royal Borough commits, from within its existing resources, additional funding to allow for the preparation of the Readiness to Deliver documentation. In due course the Royal Borough will also commit the further funding necessary to set up a fully-staffed BSF Project Team”.

3.2.12 In light of the revised national timetable is further recommended that:

3.2.13 *The Royal Borough commits to the necessary initial preparatory work to allow the authority, if so invited, to submit Readiness to Deliver documentation in early 2010.*

Recommendation No. 2

3.2.14 The immediate financial implications for 2009/10 are as yet unclear, but there is likely to be a need for additional staffing resources to undertake the necessary initial preparatory work.

3.2.15 Discussions with other local authorities who have already entered the programme suggest that the Royal Borough can expect to spend up to £200k in the 2009/10 financial year on additional staffing costs. Direct comparisons with other authorities are difficult at this stage because the way in which the programme is being delivered has changed, and because the projects currently underway have involved ten, rather than five, schools in each.

3.2.16 The Royal Borough will, therefore, need to establish the programme of work necessary and identify the required resources more fully as a matter of urgency, and so it is further recommended that:

3.2.17 *The financing of the initial preparatory work is to be agreed by the Leader, the Lead Member for Children’s Services, the Lead Member for Finance, the Corporate Director for Children’s Services and the Head of Finance.*

3.3 Consultation on the future of secondary school provision in the borough

3.3.1 One key element of the BSF programme is the involvement of stakeholders at every stage. This, together with the lengthy timescales involved in developing proposals

for change at secondary schools, meant that the Cabinet agreed (on 23rd October 2008) to consult with pupils, parents, governors, staff and other stakeholders over winter 2008/09.

- 3.3.2 Consultation started on Monday 1st December 2008 and finished on Friday 16th January 2009. The consultation document can be found as Appendix A to this report. 24,000 paper copies of the document were distributed to parents of all primary and secondary school pupils in the borough. Secondary schools made an electronic version of the document available to their pupils, and there was an online version available for general use on the borough's website.
- 3.3.3 The consultation document did not contain any specific proposals for change at individual schools. Instead, it asked a number of questions relating to what respondents thought about the borough's secondary schools, their accommodation, whether or not they should be larger and so on. It was intended that this would then provide some parameters from within which specific proposals could be developed.
- 3.3.4 The consultation did also include, for Maidenhead residents, a question concerning possible changes to the secondary school designated areas in the town. This issue is not addressed in this report, but is in the 'Determination of School Admission Arrangements (including changes to Maidenhead Secondary School Designated Areas), September 2010' report, also being considered by Cabinet on 26th March 2009.
- 3.3.5 The full analysis of the consultation is given as Appendix B to this consultation. The executive summary from that document is repeated below. This document is to be published on the borough's BSF website pages.
- 3.3.6 Copies of the individual responses are available to view in the Member's Room.

Executive Summary of Consultation Responses

Responses received

- 3.3.7 Out of a total of 539 responses, **484** have been accepted for the purposes of this analysis. Well over half of these are from those connected with Maidenhead schools. Responses have been received from people connected with 45 of the 62 schools in the borough.

Schools in the Royal Borough

- 3.3.8 We asked respondents what they felt could be improved in the borough's schools (aside from the buildings) and a significant number mentioned the behaviour of pupils. It is also felt that schools need more after-school facilities and that more should be done to improve the quality of teaching staff.

Quality of School Accommodation

- 3.3.9 Many respondents are critical of the accommodation of the borough's secondary schools, particularly the appearance and the condition of general teaching areas. Also of concern are playing fields and sports facilities, toilets and excessive use of temporary classrooms.

Single-sex schools

- 3.3.10 There is support for more single-sex provision (particularly for girls) in Maidenhead, but less in Ascot or Windsor. There is, however, significant support for more co-educational provision in Windsor, (**70%** of those connected with Windsor schools and answering the question) where it is asserted that there is no choice for parents.

School sizes

- 3.3.11 There is little support for larger schools in the borough, with **64%** of respondents against. This opposition is largely due to (i) a perception that larger (and therefore fewer) schools would make it more difficult for pupils to walk to school, thus worsening traffic congestion; and (ii) a perception that larger schools have worse behavioural records, poorer staff/pupil relationships and worse results.
- 3.3.12 There is, however, more support for the idea of using new sites, perhaps on the edge of town, for improved schools.

Schools with religious status

- 3.3.13 **60%** of respondents are against more schools in the borough with religious status, and **69%** are against more use of religious criteria to determine which children should be offered places in the borough's secondary schools. Many respondents feel that religious schools are socially divisive and/or that religion has no place in schools.
- 3.3.14 At the same time, there is clearly some appetite for more religious status secondary schools, particularly of Catholic or Muslim denomination.

New routes to qualifications

- 3.3.15 Generally, the 14-19 reforms find support from the respondents to this consultation, with many stating that it is important that education routes should be provided for all pupils, whether vocational or academic. There is recognition that the existing model in the borough of school sixth forms may not be the most effective way to deliver the full four routes, but also concern that A Levels should not be devalued.

All-through schools

- 3.3.16 Opinion on the advisability of all-through schools is evenly split, with **39%** for and **38%** against. Many respondents state that the transfer of schools at age 11 (or 9 and 13 in Windsor) is an important learning experience for young people. There is also a feeling that all-through schools would lead to very young children mixing with teenagers in a school that would be very large.
- 3.3.17 Nevertheless, there is support for examining the idea further, with the Furze Platt schools identified as one option.

Academies

- 3.3.18 **26%** of respondents are in favour of academies, and **35%** against. Opinion against academies is much stronger amongst staff and governors than amongst parents and pupils. Respondents express concern at the possible involvement of business or faith bodies in state education and fear the creation of a two-tier education system.

There are, nevertheless, some suggestions for which secondary schools in the borough could become academies.

Any other comments

3.3.19 Aside from issues raised elsewhere, the most significant concerns of respondents to this are (i) the pattern of middle/upper school provision in Windsor (either the existence of a three-tier system and/or the lack of co-ed upper school provision in the town), and (ii) the fact that Maidenhead, not Windsor, is first in line for BSF funding.

Primary school provision

3.3.20 Respondents were given the opportunity to comment on any aspect of primary school provision in the borough. Although there many comments were made, they are not addressed in this report.

3.4 School responses

3.4.1 Four secondary schools submitted official responses, which can be viewed as appendices C to F to this report.

3.4.2 The information from this consultation can now be used to help the Royal Borough develop specific proposals for individual schools to bring about educational transformation as part of the BSF programme.

Recommendation No. 3

3.4.3 There is a substantial amount of information contained within the responses to the BSF consultation and it is recommended, therefore that:

3.4.4 *The Royal Borough commits to developing specific proposals for achieving educational transformation through the BSF programme in the borough's secondary, middle and upper schools. The responses to the consultation will play a key role in the development of those proposals.*

4. OPTIONS AVAILABLE AND RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 Options

	Option	Comments	Financial Implications
1.	Committing to being ready to enter the BSF programme early in 2010.	Despite the issuing of a new national timetable, it is as yet unclear when the borough will be invited to enter the BSF programme. Early in 2010 remains a possibility, however, and so the borough will need to be ready to do so if invited.	Revenue - Entry to the BSF programme will have significant revenue implications for the borough as running it could cost at least £3.5-4m over the first three years, and up to £200k in the 2009/10 financial year.

	Option	Comments	Financial Implications
2.	Committing to developing specific proposals for educational transformation.	The borough will not be allowed to enter the BSF programme without demonstrating exactly how it hopes to achieve educational transformation. The results of the public consultation provide a vital framework in which discussions with schools can now proceed.	Capital – In capital terms, the BSF programme could provide up to £200m to rebuild and refurbish all the secondary, middle and upper schools in the borough. There is, however, likely to be a funding gap of up to 10%.

4.2 Risk assessment

- 4.2.1 The biggest risk identified with regard to the BSF programme at this stage is that the borough will not have undertaken sufficient work to allow it to submit the 'Readiness to Deliver' documentation when requested by the DCSF. This could in turn lead to delay not just for the Maidenhead schools, but for Windsor, Ascot and Datchet/Wraysbury as well.

5. CONSULTATIONS CARRIED OUT

- 5.1.1 An initial consultation on BSF has been carried out, as described in section 3.3 above.

6. COMMENTS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

- 6.1.1 The Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel is meeting on Monday 23rd March 2009. Their comments will, therefore, be reported verbally to Cabinet.

7. IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1.1 The following implications have been addressed where indicated below.

Financial	Legal	Human Rights Act	Planning	Sustainable Development	Diversity & Equality
✓	✓	N/A	✓	✓	N/A

Background Papers:
None