

Cabinet – 22 April 2008

The Future of Sneyd Community – A Specialist Maths and Computing College – Options for Consultation

Portfolio: Councillor Zahid Ali, Children's Services

Service: Walsall Children's Services, Serco

Wards: Bloxwich West

Key decision: No

Forward plan: Yes

1. Summary of report

On 22 October 2008, Cabinet considered a report which outlined options for the future of Sneyd Community – A Specialist Maths and Computing College.

Following consideration of the issues raised in the report Cabinet resolved to refer the matter to the Children's and Young People's Scrutiny and Performance Panel for consideration of the options available for the future of education provision for the Sneyd pupils.

Following the Panel's deliberations and recommendations officers have further considered the options available, have had lengthy discussions with Government's department of children's, schools and families, Government office of the school commissioner and partnerships for schools. This report outlines the options for the school. Officers are continuing to explore financial and a range of other considerations in the light of the possible options. Details of these findings will be available in a supplementary report for the meeting of Cabinet on 22 April 2009.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet are recommended to note the contents of this report.

3. Background information

- 3.1 On 22 October 2008, Cabinet considered a report which outlined options for the future of Sneyd – A Specialist Maths and Computing College. Following consideration of the issues raised in the report, Cabinet resolved to refer the matter to an early meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel (CYPSP) for full consideration of all options available to the school and that the full implications of the community uses be considered in conjunction with any proposal coming forward in relation to the school.

3.2 The Children and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel held a special meeting at Sneyd on 20 November 2008 and reconvened on 18 December 2008. After considering the options and additional information, the Panel decided to establish a working group to consider the options in greater detail. The Working Group met on 6 January, 15 January and 3 February 2009 and reported back to the Panel on 5 March.

3.3 The Panel resolved to recommend that

a) Cabinet pursue a solution that ensures the continuation of education provision on the site of Sneyd Community School, supported by further investigation into viable solutions between Council Officers, representatives of Walsall Children's Services Serco, the Government's Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Government's Office of the Schools Commissioner (OSC)

b) This solution for the continuation of education provision on the site of Sneyd Community School must:

1. be financially viable
2. be devised with particular attention paid to its impact on all schools within the north west area of Walsall
3. meet the needs of the local community.

3.4 In the light of the above resolution, officers have consulted with the relevant key Government departments including the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Government's Office of the Schools Commissioner (OSC) and Partnerships for Schools (PfS). Officers were mindful of the priority expressed by the Children and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel (CYPSP) to secure the continuation of education on the Sneyd site. The possibility of an Engineering Academy is currently being explored in partnership with University of Wolverhampton and Walsall College.

3.5 Proposals

Officers have identified 6 options for consideration by Cabinet:

Option A – Closure of School

Option B – Federation with another school

Option C – National Challenge Trust

Option D – Sneyd to remain open as an enlarged 11-19 secondary school

Option E – Sneyd to become an 11-19 Academy

Option F – Sneyd to be replaced by a new 14-19 Engineering Academy or Specialist Skills Centre

3.6 View of the interim Headteacher of Sneyd Community – A Specialist Maths and Computing College

The interim Headteacher of Sneyd Community College was invited to make a short school response for inclusion in this report. The following has been submitted:

“The process of debate about the future of the school has been demanding for all concerned and we continue to be grateful for the enormous amount of time that has been invested in this issue. We do hope that a solution can be identified as speedily as possible.

The Working Group and the Scrutiny Committee have now established three criteria for future provision and we fully endorse these, recognising that any option that satisfies some or all of these criteria will be in the best interest of young people, both now and in the years to come. Our vision is that we create educational provision that strengthens collaboration, both within Walsall and beyond.

The tremendous opportunity afforded by BSF provides the Borough with the potential to create something that is ‘flexible, inspirational and innovative’ and if this can be made available to the local community here then that will be regarded as a fantastic outcome.

Our preferred option is to close Sneyd and create an 11-19 Community Academy. This would enable learning to continue on site for the full age-range of local children and the additional funding associated with an Academy would accelerate the academic progress of all young people. Beyond the school, community provision would be enhanced and participation would increase, especially in sporting activities associated with healthy lifestyles. Adult provision could be extended to include day time classes in a range of subjects. New state of the art facilities created here could be made more widely available to other schools and colleges. Community cohesion would be strengthened.

If an 11-19 Community Academy was not possible because of falling numbers at Key Stage 3, for example, then the creation of a 14-19 Academy might be a strong alternative option. We know that this element of another proposal attracted interest from the Working Group. Surplus places at Key Stage 3 could be removed, at least in the first instance, in the hope that other places were available at other local schools (this is not the case at present). Current Key Stage 3 pupils at Sneyd could remain and then progress into this new provision (assuming a start date in 2010 or 2011). An Engineering specialism has already been suggested but the specialist provision, in an Academy, could also provide for additional specialisms to complement existing specialist subjects in other Walsall schools. This would be consistent with a Borough-wide strategy.

The Sneyd community is strongly committed to improving standards and there is plenty of evidence of this. We would want to continue to

do our part in transforming learning in the Borough. We would also want to be part of creating something that persuaded fewer families to choose education beyond our geographical boundary. This is the biggest challenge to us all."

4. Resource considerations

4.1 Financial:

- 4.1.1 There are significant financial implications associated with the options outlined in paragraph 3.5 and with the establishment of an Engineering Academy officers are continuing to explore these and a supplementary report will be provided to Cabinet on 22 April 2009.

4.2 Legal:

- 4.2.1 Any changes to the education provision at Sneyd school will have to be in line with statutory procedures. This includes statutory consultation. Comprehensive information regarding all options will be available to Cabinet in a supplementary report.

4.3 Staffing:

- 4.3.1 The staffing issues in relation to the options contained in this report will be available to Cabinet at its meeting on 22 April.

5. Citizen impact

- 5.1 None arising specifically from this report.

6. Community safety

- 6.1 There are no community safety issues arising from this report

7. Environmental impact

- 7.1 There are no environmental issues arising from this report.

8. Performance and risk management issues

8.1 Risk:

None arising specifically from this report

8.2 Performance management:

None arising specifically from this report

9. Equality implications

- 9.1 None arising specifically from this report

10. Consultation

- 10.1 Deliberations to date have included consultation with local elected members, Council officers, Sneyd Community – A Specialist Maths and Computing College, Frank F Harrison, Pool Hayes and Willenhall schools have been consulted in the preparation of this report. There has also been extensive consultation with the Government's Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Office of the Schools Commissioner (OSC) regarding the future of Sneyd.

Background papers

Cabinet report, 22 October 2008: Review of Secondary Schools: The Future of Sneyd – A Specialist Maths and Computing College.

Scrutiny report, 20 November 2008: Cabinet report dated 22 October 2008: Review of Secondary Schools: The Future of Sneyd – A Specialist Maths and Computing College

Scrutiny report, 18 December 2008: Options for the Future: Sneyd Community – a Specialist Maths and Computing College

Sneyd Working Group, 5 March 2009: Report to the Children's and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel

Scrutiny Report to Cabinet, 18 March 2009: Review of Secondary Schools: the Future of Sneyd Community School – A Specialist maths and Computing College

Author

Susan Lupton

Head of Planning and Development Services

☎ 01922 686231

✉ susan.lupton@walsallcs.serco.com



Signed:

Interim Executive Director:

Pauline Pilkington

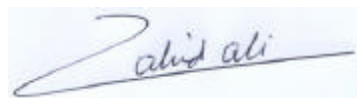
Date: 9 April 2009



Signed:

Managing Director, Walsall Children's
Services - Serco

Date:



Signed:

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Zahid Ali

Date: 9 April 2009

