

Cabinet – 22 April 2009

Building Schools for the Future

Portfolio: Councillor A Andrew, Regeneration
Councillor Z Ali, Children's Services

Service: Children's Services/Regeneration

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: No

1. Summary of report

The council has been successful in securing agreement from Partnership for Schools to the inclusion of a sixth school within our Building Schools for the Future (BSF) wave 6a programme. Walsall's inclusion in Wave 6a, the submission of wave 7 and subsequent waves will bring huge benefits to children and young people in the borough. The opportunity to bring forward a sixth school will accelerate the inward investment into the borough. This once in a life time investment will create better learning environments that allow for the transformation of learning and the raising of attainment levels.

This report seeks authority for officers to notify Partnership for Schools (PfS) of the proposed sixth school to be included in Wave 6a of Walsall's Building Schools for the Future programme.

2. Recommendation

That Cabinet authorises officers to submit to Partnership for Schools, Frank F Harrison Engineering College as the proposed sixth school for inclusion within wave 6a and note that this is subject to approval from the Government Offices of the Schools Commissioner and Partnership for Schools.

3. Background

- 3.1 BSF is a long-term programme of investment and change in England that will help transform education for secondary age students by providing 21st century learning environments that engage and inspire young people, their teachers and the wider community. BSF was launched by the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) in February 2003 and Partnership for Schools is the non-departmental body set up to deliver BSF and the government's Academies programme. Walsall Council was selected for an accelerated start to BSF with 7 other local authorities joining the programme in Interim wave 6a in the summer of last year.

3.2 Inclusion in wave 6a allocates funding to Walsall to rebuild or refurbish up to five schools. Cabinet on 4 February authorised officers to submit to Partnership for Schools, the proposed five projects within Wave 6a as well as those schools proposed for wave 7 and subsequent follow on waves if government approval is achieved.

3.3 Schools Selection Process

The process for allocation of schools to a particular wave has proven to be a complex process with selection based on a pre determined set of criteria in order to minimise any subjectivity from the decision making process. The selection matrix ranks the schools in order of investment need and uses a scoring system against the following criteria (not listed in any particular order or priority):

- Condition of Building Fabric and building services
- Schools suitability
- Education standards in each school - Making National Challenge schools a priority
- Links to other facilities and organisations
- Links to Regeneration opportunities
- Sufficiency Needs
- Deprivation
- Wider regeneration opportunities.

When undertaking the assessment, the Council has separately applied an overarching affordability test to ensure that within each wave, the selection falls within the 50:35:15 funding cap. In selecting the first five schools in wave 6a Walsall Council has kept within this cap, thereby providing a best value solution for Council tax payers of Walsall.

Walsall currently has eight National Challenge schools with the three highest priority National Challenge schools in wave 6a – details below:

Wave 6a

SCHOOL	WAVE	NEW BUILD	MAJOR REFURB	MINOR REFURB	PROPOSED CONTRACT	NATIONAL CHALLENGE SCHOOL
Pool Hayes	6	100%	0%	0%	PFI – SAMPLE SCHOOL	YES
Joseph Leckie	6	65%	20%	15%	D & B – SAMPLE SCHOOL	YES
Alumwell	6	40%	50%	10%		YES
Shire Oak	6	25%	50%	25%		
Streetly	6	25%	45%	30%		

- 3.4 Following discussions with Partnership for Schools and the Office of the Schools Commissioner, the Council now has agreement in principle to include a further new build National Challenge School into wave 6a. Funding for this has been approved in principle at 100% and will sit outside the 50:35:15 funding cap for wave 6a.
- 3.5 The next highest priority National Challenge school as determined by the selection matrix is Frank F Harrison Engineering College. It is therefore recommended that this school be elevated from wave 7 into wave 6a.

3.6 Wave 7

Walsall has also submitted an Expression of Interest for wave 7 outlining proposals for three further funding waves. Wave 7 includes a further 4 National Challenge Schools with the last National Challenge School – Blue Coat included in wave 8. Blue Coat school is a large new build PFI scheme and has been placed in wave 8 as it is ranked last in the analysis of complete new build National Challenge schools. Willenhall which is also a large new build PFI scheme school is included in wave 7. To place both Willenhall and Blue Coat schools in wave 7 would make the wave unaffordable. However as an additional school has now been included in wave 6a this will enable one of the wave 7 schools (proposed in this report to be Frank F Harrison Engineering College) to be elevated to wave 6a which in turn will allow Blue Coat to be included in wave 7.

Subsequent to the Expression of Interest for wave 7 the Council has successfully been ranked priority number 4 out of 85 Councils follow on Councils. The depth of Government funding for wave 7 will be announced by Government on the 22 April. Should this be favourable it will enable the Council to address all of its National Challenge schools in its first two BSF waves.

4. Resource considerations

4.1 Financial:

The cabinet report of 4 February 2009 outlines the key financial information related to the BSF project as a whole. This school will increase the funding envelope available. There is potential risk in that building an extra school will potentially increase any affordability gap. Work is ongoing within the project to ensure the project is affordable and to develop solutions to close any gap.

The council will receive 100% funding for a new enlarged secondary school. Current estimates make this an additional c£20m investment into the borough.

4.2 Legal:

All normal processes associated with undertaking major changes to school organisation will apply.

4.3 Staffing:

Changes to school structures are discussed with unions of staff employed in schools and where changes could impact directly on staff, consultation and support is provided.

5. Citizen impact

5.1 BSF schools are designed for shared community use wherever appropriate and therefore every BSF school will be an extended school offering additional or dual use facilities such as sport halls, libraries, repositioning schools at the heart of communities.

5.2 Proposals for changes to schools are made to improve and maintain the quality of education and opportunities available to Walsall pupils.

6. Community safety

There are no safety implications as a result of this report.

7. Environmental impact

There is a new emphasis on sustainability within the BSF programme with the desire to work towards zero carbon schools. The buildings will be designed to minimise their impact on climate change by reducing carbon emissions and thereby contributing to the council's carbon reduction commitment. British Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) rating of excellent is a requirement by PfS for all new school buildings.

8. Performance and risk management issues

8.1 Risk:

In the event that Frank F Harrison is not approved an alternative solution would need to be found to deliver the education provision. The risk is that the two other local schools, Pool Hayes and Willenhall are already large schools and would not be able to cope with additional pupil numbers if following consultation, a decision is taken to transform the current education provision at Sneyd School.

8.2 Performance management:

Inclusion within the BSF programme requires the council and the schools within wave 6a to sign up to a number of headline Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) around diversity, choice, access and education outcomes. These KPIs are part of the consultation process between the council, PfS and schools and will be set out in the Strategy for Change.

9. Equality implications

Inclusion in the BSF programme will support the work of schools and the Council to address access, deprivation and standards issues. All proposals for change will be designed to enhance equality of opportunity for Walsall's children and young people. An equality impact assessment will be carried out on formal entry to the programme.

10. Consultation

- 10.1 A consultation plan is in place to support the proposed strategy for secondary education provision across the borough. This plan uses existing consultation channels to consult with parents and the wider community including Local Neighbourhood Partnerships (LNPs) and the First Stop Shop Express community bus. Events are being supported by a multi-use flyer, web information, an online questionnaire and DVD.
- 10.2 A series of local consultation events will be held at schools around the borough starting with the recommended wave 6a schools commencing in May. The events will give parents, teachers, governors, professionals and local residents the opportunity to get involved in transforming learning at their local school.

Background papers

Cabinet 19 March 2008 - BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE – WAVE 6a
Cabinet 16 July 2008 – Structure of Secondary Schools
Cabinet 4 February 2009 – Building Schools for the Future

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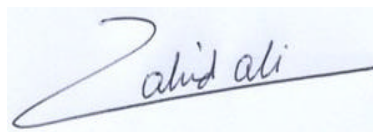


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Interim Executive Director
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9 April 2009



Tim Johnson
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9 April 2009



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