

DATE: 30 April 2008

**SHELFIELD SPORTS AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE – PROPOSED ACADEMY
CALL-IN OF CABINET’S DECISION**

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Councillor Z Ali, Children’s Services

Summary of report:

This report provide information in respect of matters raised in the call-in.

Background papers:

Cabinet Report: 16 April 2008: Sheffield Sports and Community College – Proposed Academy

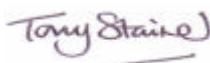
Cabinet Report 16 January 2008: Consideration of Academy Status Schools in Walsall.

Expression of Interest for Sheffield Community Sports College.

Reason for scrutiny:

Cabinet’s decision to approve consultation on the proposal to close Sheffield Sports and Community College on 31 December 2008, subject to the agreement of the Secretary of State to approve the opening of the school as an Academy from 1 January 2009 was called-in by five members. The Chair of Scrutiny decided to accept the call-in and arrange for the decision to be considered by the Children and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel.

Signed:



Executive Director: Tony Stainer, Managing Director
Education Walsall

Date: 28 April 2008

Resource and legal considerations:

These were detailed in the report considered by Cabinet.

It was originally planned to commence consultation on the proposed closure of Sheffield on 28 April 2008; consultation would have ended on 6 June 2008 and the outcome of consultation have been considered by Cabinet on 18 June 2008 which is understood to be the likely date of the first cabinet in the new municipal year.

Any delay to the commencement of consultation is likely to affect the timeline detailed in the cabinet report and included below.

28 April 2008	Consultation starts (6 weeks)
6 June 2008	Consultation ends
Mid/late June 2008	Walsall Council (Cabinet) considers response to consultation and decides whether to proceed with the proposal
5 September 2008	Statutory notice published, 6 weeks representation period follows
Early November 2008	Consideration of proposal by Walsall Cabinet and notification of decision to parents, staff and governors at the schools

This will be considered in the light of Scrutiny's decision. It is possible that the proposed closure / opening dates would need to be reconsidered.

Citizen impact:

The proposed date for the closure of Sheffield and the proposed opening date for the proposed academy may need to be delayed.

Environmental impact:

None arising from this report.

Performance management:

The performance of the proposed academy would be the responsibility of the DCSF.

Equality Implications:

None arising from this report.

Consultation:

The proposed consultation has been deferred pending consideration of Cabinet's decision by Scrutiny.

Contact Officer:

Susan Lupton – Strategic Leader: School Organisation, Admissions, Capital & Asset Management, Education Walsall,
 Tel. 01922 686231
Susan.lupton@we.serco.com

1. **MATTERS RAISED IN THE CALL-IN REQUEST**

1.1 Details of the consultation process

- 1.1.1 As outlined in the cabinet report, it was proposed to hold a six weeks consultation period from 28 April to 6 June 2008. In line with usual good practice, this consultation would include the publication of a consultation document and the holding of meetings with stakeholders including parents, staff and governors and there would also be consultation with pupils on roll at Sheffield.
- 1.1.2 The proposed consultation document would provide information regarding the proposed closure of Sheffield and also some information about the proposed academy. The sponsor plans to undertake consultation on the proposed academy at the same time and to publish a document to be distributed at the same time. Distributing these documents jointly will make information more readily accessible by parents, staff and other stakeholders.
- 1.1.3 The documents would be issued to stakeholders and would be made available to the public at Sheffield Sports and Community College, at local public libraries and on the Education Walsall website (with a link to the website to be set up for the proposed academy).
- 1.1.4 Meetings would be held with stakeholders including parents, staff and governors and there would also be consultation with pupils on roll at Sheffield. Again, to ensure the greatest access to information, it is proposed to hold joint consultation meetings. This is in line with national practice.

1.2 Effect on overall strategy for secondary education in Walsall

- 1.2.1 The DCSF has asked all local authorities to consider the diversity of provision of school type in their local areas and to support schools to become academies and trust schools. The Department is actively promoting this and has contacted all secondary schools to encourage them to consider such changes in status.
- 1.2.2 Secondary provision in Walsall is diverse and the range of school types includes: community, Church of England, Catholic and non-denominational aided schools, grammar schools and an academy. However, the DCSF is keen to see an increase in the number of academies and the emergence of trust schools (vertical and horizontal trusts).

1.3 Impact on neighbourhood schools

- 1.3.1 It is considered that any impact on neighbourhood schools is likely to be minimal. Sheffield currently admits 243 pupils and it is proposed that the admission number for the proposed academy should be 240.
- 1.3.2 Admission arrangements for September 2008 are not affected by the proposal that Sheffield becomes an academy and pupils who have been offered places will be admitted as usual. The 2009 admissions round will not be affected: arrangements were determined by Cabinet in March 2008 and information booklets and application forms will be issued to parents in July 2008. The

sponsor proposes to use the local authority admission arrangements for September 2010 admissions. It is possible that there could be changes in the longer term; however, the sponsor has stated that he is committed to the local community.

1.3.3 Sheffield is a popular school and is oversubscribed. It is expected that this would continue if it were to become an academy. The majority of pupils to be admitted in September 2008 attend schools in the Blakenall, Pelsall, and Rushall, areas of the borough, although pupils are admitted from a large number of primary schools.

1.4 Details of capital and site benefits

1.4.1 Capital

The DCSF will make a fixed sum available for the new academy and the Council will be required to either manage the capital project within that fixed sum or meet the additional costs from its own resources. A significant amount of new build accommodation was provided at Sheffield in 2003/4 and it is understood that any capital made available by the DCSF would enable the older accommodation to be replaced. In addition, a modest capital sum is made available to new academies to enable them to make some immediate improvements to the learning environment.

1.4.2 The arrangements for this may need to be reviewed if Walsall's bid for inclusion in Wave 6a of the building Schools for the Future programme is successful.

1.4.3 After achieving academy status, Sheffield would receive future capital monies directly from the DCSF.

1.4.4 Site and Property

The DCSF has advised that the following arrangements would need to be put in place:

- upon opening, the existing buildings and site would be leased to the academy;
- when work on the building commences, the site would become the Council's building site and an occupation licence would be put in place; this would last until the end of a 1-year snagging period;
- at the end of the snagging period, there would be a lease for 125 years.

1.4.5 The DCSF and sponsor have concerns that the overall site falls under the recommended area for a school of this size, particularly one with a sports specialism and have asked the Council to explore options to address this.

1.5 Lack of consultation with Scrutiny

1.5.1 The submission of the Expression of Interest for Sheffield to become an academy was supported by Cabinet when it considered the matter on 16 January 2008. The report considered by Cabinet on 16 April 2008 was the next step in this process and followed the usual practice.