

20 July 2010

Building Schools for the Future

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Councillor R. Andrew – Children's Services

Purpose

To update Members on the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme from an education transformation perspective.

SfC2 and OBC

The Building Schools for the Future (BSF) draft Strategy for Change – Part 2 (SfC2) was approved by Cabinet on 28 May 2010 with authority to submit the final SfC2 to Partnerships for Schools (PfS) on the 2nd June 2010. This was duly done and a response from PfS was expected during the summer of 2010. Since the submission of our SfC2 there however has been an interim review of the future of the BSF programme nationally, culminating in an announcement in the House of Commons by the Secretary of State for Education (Michael Gove) on 5th July, to stop any BSF programme that had not reached financial close. As a result of the above announcement we have stopped all work on developing our OBC and are considering our options in regards to our schools and capital investment in the future.

Programme issues

Building Schools for the Future (BSF) in Walsall was one of the strands of Transforming Learning in Walsall programme along with the Primary Capital Programme and the Academies programme and was part of the largest national capital investment programme in schools since the Victorians. However the programme was seen as wasteful and too bureaucratic. In light of the public finances the new Coalition Government felt it would be irresponsible to carry on regardless with an inflexible and needlessly complex programme. This has led to the new Education Secretary Michael Gove setting out on the 5th July a complete overhaul of capital investment in England's schools. This announcement has brought to an end the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme and set out the basis for a new national review of capital expenditure in schools.

Only those BSF programmes that had reached financial close have been allowed to proceed as originally planned. 14 of those projects that had reached preferred bidder will be looked at individually in recognition of the

amount of work that has been put into them by all parties. In addition Academy and UTC projects that have not reached financial close will be reviewed on a case by case basis. As Walsall has only reached the point of submission of its SfC2, all BSF work with its schools has been stopped immediately and the Academies at Darlaston and Sheffield along with the University Technical College (UTC) are being reviewed by the Department for Education (DfE)

The schools affected by this decision in regards to the shelving of the BSF programme are:

- Alumwell Business and Enterprise College
- Frank F Harrison Engineering College
- Joseph Leckie Community Technology College
- Pool Hayes Arts and Community School
- Shire Oak Science College
- The Streetly School – A Specialist Sports College

Given this position we have had no choice but to bring our programme to a halt awaiting the outcomes from the national review announced by Michael Gove later in 2010.

Future Developments

It is clear from the statement from Michael Gove that there is an intention to continue to deliver capital investment in England's secondary schools and he has set up a review panel to consider future spending on schools in the following areas:

- How best to meet parental demand
- Make design and procurement more cost effective and efficient
- Overhaul how capital is allocated and targeted

In addition capital investment to support schools that have an urgent need driven requirement is still available through the existing channels and will not be affected by the shelving of the BSF programme. The review will guide future spending decisions over the next Spending Review period (2011-12 to 2014-15).

The review panel will include Kevin Grace, director of property services at Tesco, Barry Quirk, the chief executive of Lewisham, John Hood, the former vice- chancellor of the University of Oxford, Sir John Egan former Chief Executive of Jaguar and BAA and will be led by Sebastian James, Group Operations Director DSG international plc.

This panel will be making an interim report during September which will be fed into the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) on 20th October 2010 with a final report within this calendar year.

Financial

As part of the process of closing our BSF programme down we are drawing up a final closing statement setting out income and expenditure across the programme to date. This will enable us to agree with the contributors to the finances of the programme any payments. This cannot be finally completed till we have all the costs in from the programmes consultants and will be made available for inspection on completion.

Conclusion

We have to conclude that any new programme that removes the waste and bureaucracy that have slowed down the BSF programme in the past must in the long run be positive for investment in Walsall's schools providing it can be targeted to those schools in greatest need as defined by the funding criteria.

We are reviewing our plans with regards to improving school buildings and await a further announcement from the Department for Education on the Government's proposals to improve the fabric of school buildings.

We are also in the process of winding up our BSF programme in preparation for any new direction from the DfE or PfS later in 2010 or early 2011. We will ensure that the work done so far where possible will inform future plans and programmes.

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