

## Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	<b>Cabinet</b>	
MEETING DATE:	<b>21 July 2010</b>	AGENDA ITEM NUMBER <b>12</b>
TITLE:	<b>A Review of Secondary Schools in Bath</b>	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE: <b>E 2097</b>
WARD:	All	
<b>AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM</b>		
<b>List of attachments to this report:</b> Appendix 1 – Summary of consultation responses		

### 1. THE ISSUE

- 1.1. In March 2008 Council approved a strategy for the future of secondary schools in Bath & North East Somerset. In May 2008 Cabinet agreed to consult on proposed changes to some Bath schools specifically the closure of Culverhay (boys), Oldfield (girls) and St Mark's C of E schools and a linked proposal to open one new co educational school in the north of the city and one new co-educational school in the south of the city.
- 1.2. A public consultation exercise on this proposal was undertaken between March and May 2010 and this report sets out the results of the consultation.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet agrees to:

- 2.1. Support the proposed federation of St Mark's C of E school on its current site with St Gregory's Catholic College, with joint Post 16 provision for both schools. Invite the two schools to proceed with this hard federation so that it is in place for 1 September 2011.
- 2.2. Support Oldfield school in seeking to become a **co-educational** academy and obtain written confirmation from the Head and the Governing Body by Friday 17 September 2010 that co-educational status has been included in the school's Application to Convert to an Academy sent to the Secretary of State, with the intention that it will become a co-educational academy by 1 September 2012.
- 2.3. If written confirmation that co-educational status has been included in the school's Application to convert to an Academy by 1 September 2012 is not received by Friday 17 September 2010 the LA to commence a competition to invite proposers to submit bids for a new 160 place co-educational 11-18 school on the existing Oldfield school site and to propose the closure of Oldfield school and the opening of a new co-educational school on 1 September 2012.
- 2.4. Consult on the proposal to close Culverhay school.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1. The impact of any decision will depend on the specific details of the decision and the resultant number of pupils attending Bath & North East Somerset schools.
- 3.2. Revenue funds are provided to the LA based on the number of pupils attending schools within the LA. The allocation known as the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is a ring-fenced grant that has to be spent on schools or services supporting schools under regulations laid down in the Education Act 2003.
- 3.3. The current DSG allocation per pupil (2010-11) is £4,203 per pupil. Funding allocations to schools average approximately £3,850 leaving £350 per pupil used on services supporting schools.
- 3.4. The principles of school funding are that if a school is closed then funding will follow the pupils to whichever school they attend. So if the pupil numbers attending Bath & North East Somerset schools were to remain the same the overall, DSG would remain the same whichever schools the pupils attend. However if pupil numbers were to fall then there would be a subsequent reduction in DSG.
- 3.5. As the purpose of the review is to remove surplus places and provide more co-educational places it is anticipated that there will not be an overall reduction in the number of pupils attending schools in Bath and North East Somerset. Parental choice may result in higher or lower number of pupils attending our schools as a result of any decision on school provision. As described earlier any reduction in pupil numbers would result in a proportionate reduction in resources being provided to the LA as part of the Dedicated Schools Grant.
- 3.6. All schools are funded through the Local Management of Schools (LMS) formula. If any school were to be closed approximately £150k of funding for fixed cost elements of the formula would be saved and could be re used to target at priorities by the Schools Forum. Some schools also receive additional resources in their formula funding for specific items like Curriculum protection which supports a school to provide a wide ranging curriculum when its pupil numbers are small. Small secondary schools receive approximately £200k under this factor, and again these resources would be released to support other priorities if a small school were to be closed. Culverhay and St Marks are small schools.
- 3.7. There would be ongoing capital maintenance costs of keeping three schools open, this would limit any possible improvements at schools as capital resources are restricted in coming years. If a school were to be closed this would reduce the ongoing maintenance costs of the schools estate as a whole. If Schools become academies their capital requirements are not met by the Local Authority.
- 3.8. The capital resource implications are linked to the site sale of any school to be closed. Any receipt from the sale of the site would under current council policy be ring-fenced for investment in the school estate. It is estimated that the Culverhay school site could release approximately £6m-£8m. However a conservative approach to any building projects out of this resource would be followed. As projects at any school converting to a co-educational establishment will be required prior to the release of capital from the sale of any other site, it will be necessary to plan the borrowing requirements into the use of any resource resulting from a site sale.

3.9. The cost of essential work to convert Oldfield school to add co-educational facilities would be approx. £1-1.5m. Further work on improving facilities would also be considered as part of these alterations.

#### 4. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- *Improving life chances of disadvantaged teenagers and young people*
- *Improving school buildings*
- *Sustainable growth*
- *Addressing the causes and effects of Climate Change*

#### 5. THE REPORT

##### Background

- 5.1. In Jan 2007 the Children and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Panel completed a review of all our secondary schools. The Panel visited each school to see the facilities available to young people and staff in each school. They also held open public contributor sessions where the views of head teachers, governors, local councillors and the local community were heard.
- 5.2. The purpose of the review was *'to ensure that the current high standards in our secondary schools are maintained and improved; that all our resources are used effectively; that, wherever possible, good facilities are available to all users of school buildings; that the natural choice of parents and pupils will be their local school; that travel to schools by private car should be reduced where possible'*.
- 5.3. Following consideration of the findings of the Panel, full Council and Cabinet in 2008 agreed a strategy for secondary schools in Bath & North East Somerset and officers were authorised to consult on changes to secondary schools in Bath. Officers were also asked if possible to gain early access to Building Schools for the Future (BSF) funding to enable major capital investment to renew and remodel secondary schools in line with any proposed changes. In 2009 it became apparent that Bath & North East Somerset was unlikely to gain early access to BSF funding due to the economic downturn leading to uncertainty about the future of the programme. However, as capital investment would be possible from the sale of a surplus school site it was decided to proceed with consultation and publication of a notice and to use the proceeds from the sale of land following a school closure to invest in the remaining schools.
- 5.4. The public consultation was launched on 28 March and ran for two months. Approximately 13,000 copies of a consultation document setting out the issues and key challenges in Bath were distributed to parents at all Bath secondary, primary and special schools. Copies were also sent to all other schools in Bath and North East Somerset, ward members, local MPs, neighbouring local authorities and other stakeholders such as the Catholic and Anglican dioceses, parish councils and community groups and organisations using Culverhay, Oldfield and St Mark's C of E school sites. A copy of the consultation document can be found on the Council website [http://consultations.bathnes.gov.uk/consult.ti/bath\\_review/consultationHome](http://consultations.bathnes.gov.uk/consult.ti/bath_review/consultationHome). People were invited to respond using the detachable pro forma in the document, by email and letter or on line through the Council website.

- 5.5. Public consultation meetings were held at Culverhay, Oldfield and St Mark's C of E schools with an additional meeting at the Guildhall for those unable to attend one of the school meetings. Every attempt was made to ensure that the meetings could accommodate those wishing to attend, including the provision of overflow areas with both an audio and visual link so that people could see and hear the presentations by officers and the schools. Approximately 500 people in total attended the public meetings. A summary record of the public meetings has been provided to Cabinet.
- 5.6. Since the launch of the consultation in March there have been developments which may impact on the proposals that were consulted on and the options available to Members. The new Government is taking forward legislation that will enable a greater number of schools to become Academies outside local authority control, with those judged outstanding by Ofsted able to be fast tracked to achieve Academy status subject to agreement by the Secretary of State for Education. Two schools involved in this consultation Culverhay school and Oldfield school have indicated that they are seeking Academy status with Oldfield school as an outstanding school aiming to achieve Academy status as soon as legislation has been passed.
- 5.7. During the consultation period St Mark's C of E school announced that it is proposing to federate with St Gregory's Catholic College with a shared Post 16 provision. Federation can be proposed by two or more schools at any time and does not require statutory consultation or publication of a statutory notice prior to implementation.

### **Implications of proposed Government legislation – Academies Bill**

- 5.8. Schools judged outstanding by Ofsted can be fast tracked possibly enabling them to become Academies immediately after the new Academies Bill is in place in autumn 2010. Oldfield which is an outstanding school has announced that it will seek approval to become an Academy and remain a single sex girls school.
- 5.9. The Council supports the Academies agenda and has made it clear that it has no objection to schools becoming Academies. However, if Oldfield school became a single sex girls Academy this would prevent the Council delivering its plan for Bath and would reinforce a pattern of provision which the review and consultation process has identified does not currently meet the needs of parents and children across the city. Parents in the Weston and Newbridge area have expressed a strong desire for a co-educational school 'in this part Bath'. If the Secretary of State for Education were to approve a single sex academy this would deny the majority of local parents the type of school that they wish.
- 5.10. Recent guidance from the Department for Education on the application process for schools wishing to become Academies states that where *'schools wishing to convert that are already part of a local reorganisation the Secretary of State will want to review the merits of each case before making a decision'*. The Council and local MPs have already made representations to the Government office for the South West and the Secretary of State for Education, providing details of the Council's agreed strategy and consultation process and expressing concern about the potential impact of the proposal by Oldfield school to become a single sex academy.

5.11. The guidance also states that new academies must admit pupils wholly or mainly drawn from the area in which the academy is situated. The term 'area' is not defined.

### **Key challenges in Bath**

5.12. As set out in the consultation document, although standards in our schools in Bath are good overall the city of Bath area has some particularly complex issues:

5.13. Parents and carers in surveys in 1999 and 2004 identified that they want more co-educational places with approximately 60% of parents preferring co-educational (boys and girls educated together) schooling for their children. Currently only 40% of places are co-educational.

5.14. Four of the seven schools are single sex. Of the remaining three schools, two are Voluntary Aided Church schools. This leaves a choice of only one school, Ralph Allen school, for those parents/pupils who wish for a co-educational, non church school.

5.15. The seven schools have a total of 5,545 places available for pupils aged 11-16 but only approximately 4,800 pupils go to these schools and therefore there are around 750 unfilled places in Bath secondary schools, mainly in St Mark's C of E school and Culverhay school.

5.16. Approximately 4,000 of these 4,800 pupils live in Bath and the surrounding villages (including approximately 80 per year group pupils from a much wider area attending St Gregory's Catholic College as their nearest Catholic secondary school). Approximately 800 pupils travel into Bath every day to these schools; the largest number being girls attending Oldfield school from South Gloucestershire and Bristol.

5.17. Because schools are funded mainly on a per pupil basis, small pupil numbers can create financial problems for small schools and make it difficult to provide a sufficiently wide range of specialist teachers and subjects.

5.18. The total number of pupils, even with increased numbers of pupils expected to be generated from new housing developments, will only be enough for six secondary schools for the foreseeable future.

5.19. Every secondary school in Bath has some buildings which are in poor condition and need improvement. Maintaining the correct number of schools and places will mean that resources for repairs and maintenance can be used as efficiently as possible.

### **The plan for Bath is aimed at addressing the key challenges set out above and proposes**

5.20. A reduction in the total number of schools from seven to six to remove surplus places and reflect the current and future need in Bath.

5.21. A reduction in the number of single sex places and the provision of more co-educational places to meet parental demand.

5.22. Creating the right size schools which are educationally and financially secure.

5.23. The provision of sufficient Church school places to meet the level of demand.

5.24. Maintenance of one single sex girls school and one single sex boys school to provide choice for parents.

5.25. To have one new co-educational school located in the north of the city and one new co-educational school in the south.

### **Key issues arising from consultation**

5.26. In total 13,000 copies of the consultation document were issued with 619 replies received. Appendix 1 provides a summary of the responses to the consultation questions and the relationship of respondents to the schools.

5.27. The consultation document asked parents and other consultees the following questions:

1. Do you agree with the Council's overall plan/strategy for Bath (as set out above)?
2. Do you agree with the proposal to close Culverhay, Oldfield and St Mark's schools and to open one new 11-18 co-educational school with a planned admission number of 160 in the north of the City and a linked proposal to open one new 11-18 co-educational school with a planned admission number of 160 in the south of the City?

5.28. As can be seen from Appendix 1 a significant majority of respondents support both the overall plan for Bath (72%) and the closure of Culverhay, Oldfield and St Mark's C of E schools and the opening of two new schools (66%).

5.29. More responses were received from parents/carers of pupils at St Mark's Co of E school and Oldfield school than Culverhay school but the largest number (72%) were from parents/carers of primary school pupils who would enter secondary education in future years. Of these 76% are in favour of the proposal.

5.30. Those linked to St Mark's C of E school expressed strong support for the continuation of a church school on the St Mark's C of E school site reinforcing earlier parental surveys which confirmed a demand for church school places. Consultees felt that the school served its local community and it was essential that there was a school located in the North East of the city.

5.31. Travel difficulties arising from the potential for either Oldfield or St Mark's C of E schools to close was a concern as the schools are located at the extreme North West and North East of Bath respectively. Should one of these schools close parents were concerned that pupils living in these areas would be required to travel long distances in order to attend school, adding to the existing difficulty in moving around the city and compromising the Council's stated carbon reduction policy.

5.32. Supporters of Oldfield school questioned the proposal to close an outstanding school. (OFSTED judged 2003 "Very Effective" and 2007 "Outstanding").

- 5.33. Parents of primary aged children living in the Weston and Newbridge areas supported the provision of a new co-educational school on the Oldfield school site as currently there is no co-educational option in this area and particularly a lack of options for boys living in this area.

### **Admissions arrangements**

- 5.34. It is necessary to consider the admission arrangements that would accompany any proposals to change the number and location of schools in Bath. The current pattern of admissions where six of the seven schools have the same basic catchment - the Greater Bath Consortium (GBC) area (the seventh school, St Gregory's Catholic College has a wider catchment area) works very well. In addition the use of First Areas within the GBC for rural areas (Ralph Allen school - South East of Bath and St Mark's C of E school - North East of Bath) protects those children in outlying rural areas that might otherwise be disadvantaged due to distance. In the last two years over 90% of parents have received their first preference choice of a secondary school in the city. It would therefore be proposed to continue this pattern.
- 5.35. There are clear advantages of not having specific catchment areas within the city which parents may feel are unfair. Evidence in other parts of the country reveals they can lead to house purchases to obtain places in precise catchment areas.
- 5.36. If the decision is taken to close a school then the GBC area would apply to the remaining six schools with distance from the school being a key criterion after looked after children and siblings attending the school.
- 5.37. Should Oldfield school be closed and no co-educational school be provided on the Oldfield site then children from the upper Weston area in particular would have a long journey to school (Culverhay; St Mark's; Hayesfield and Beechen Cliff schools) and may have limited choices as children living closer to those schools would have priority places on distance grounds. If there were no co-educational school on the Oldfield site it is estimated that about 30 children each year might be disadvantaged and not achieve their first preference.
- 5.38. Should St Mark's C of E school be closed and no co-educational school be provided on the St Mark's C of E school site then children from the Larkhall area in particular would have a long journey to school and may have limited choices as children living closer to those schools would have priority places on distance grounds. If there were no school on the St Mark's site it is estimated that about 15 children each year might be disadvantaged and not achieve their first preference.
- 5.39. Should Culverhay school be closed then pupils from the Twerton and Southdown areas in particular would have a longer journey to school unless they chose a single sex girls school (Hayesfield) a single sex boys school (Beechen Cliff) or a Catholic school (St Gregory's). If there were no school on the Culverhay site and Oldfield school was a co-educational school it is estimated that less than 10 children each year might be disadvantaged and not achieve their first preference.

### **Key factors to consider**

- 5.40. When Members are considering the proposals set out in the recommendations they will need to consider whether they address the key challenges in Bath as set

out above, whether they reflect the views expressed through the consultation and the level of support for individual schools.

**a) The extent to which the proposals will contribute to improving educational standards.**

5.41. As part of the consultation exercise a proposal was received from the Chairs of Governors at St Mark's C of E school and St Gregory's Catholic College and the Directors of Education at the Diocese of Clifton and the Diocese of Bath and Wells for St Mark's C of E school and St Gregory's Catholic College to form a hard federation. This proposal would retain two distinct schools but create a single governing body from September 2011 with one headteacher. St Gregory's Catholic College is an Outstanding school (OFSTED 2008) and became a National Support School in 2009, recognised as having the ability to work with and raise standards in other schools. A hard federation between the two schools has every potential to significantly raise standards at St Mark's C of E school.

5.42. Oldfield school was judged by OFSTED to be outstanding in 2007. The leadership and management were judged to be "outstanding and the school's capacity to continue to improve was judged as "outstanding". Oldfield school is well placed to raise standards further were it to become a co-educational school. The Governing Body and the Headteacher have stated on a number of occasions that Oldfield school would be willing to become a co-educational school. Should Oldfield school become a co-educational school it has the potential to meet the needs of all the boys and girls from West and North West Bath area and become an outstanding co-educational school.

**b) The extent to which the proposals maintain Choice and Diversity and meet parental demand for co-educational and church places**

5.43. As stated in section 5.13 major surveys conducted in 1999 and 2004 together with this consultation all reveal the demand for more co-educational school places in the City of Bath. The proposal to retain a co-educational Anglican Secondary School on the St Mark's C of E school site through a hard federation with St Gregory's Catholic College and provide a non-denominational co-educational school on the Oldfield school site would both increase co-educational places and maintain the balance of church school places.

5.44. Together with the four schools to be retained, Hayesfield school and Beechen Cliff school (single sex girls and boys schools), Ralph Allen school (co-educational) and St Gregory's Catholic College (co-educational), this would provide an excellent range of schools providing parents with a genuine choice of schools of different types.

**c) Degree of support from parents and wider stakeholder for the proposals.**

5.45. As set out there was considerable support for the overall plan for Bath although consultees understandably differ in their views as to how this can be best achieved.

5.46. The proposals reflect the consultation responses by recommending the retention of church places through the continuation of St Mark's C of E school for which



strong support was expressed. The proposed federation with St Gregory's Catholic College provides the potential to build on this high level of support.

5.47. The high level of demand from parents of primary aged children supporting a co-educational school in North West Bath site would be met by either Oldfield school becoming a co-educational school or co-educational academy or the provision of a new co-educational school on the Oldfield school site via a competition.

**d) Whether the proposals will lead to a more effective and efficient use of resources**

5.48. A reduction in the number of schools would lead to a more efficient use of resources through savings in both revenue and capital funding. As set out in Section 3 the closure of a school would provide £150k approximately of fixed cost revenue savings. The closure of Culverhay school would provide an additional £200k saving through the small school support element proving a total of £350k which could be used to benefit other schools with priorities to be agreed with the Schools Forum.

5.49. The Government has recently announced it is halting the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme which removes prospects of building new schools in Bath & North East Somerset. Future levels of other capital funding from government are also almost certain to be significantly less than previous years. Children's Services in line with all Council departments will also face revenue budget reductions impacting on the capacity to borrow to fund capital. In these circumstances the already considerable backlog of schools planned maintenance e.g. roofs, windows, and boilers is likely to increase with only highest priority essential work being done. This will mean that necessary but less essential maintenance will not be possible with consequent deterioration in those areas of the buildings with a risk that some parts of buildings become unfit for purpose. Retaining more schools than are necessary will in time increase the overall level of essential maintenance required at a time when funding is reducing. A reduction in the number of schools through the closure of Culverhay school would reduce the level of maintenance required and provide a capital receipt of £6-8m a proportion of which could fund the essential works required to provide more co-educational facilities and the balance may fund additional improvements.

**e) Extent to which the proposals enable young people to access a local school and reduce travel across the city**

5.50. The proposals for the six schools to be provided through this consultation would provide a pattern of schools that is able to best meet the needs of the majority of pupils in the City of Bath (see also sections 5.34 to 5.39 covering Admissions issues).

5.51. Currently Hayesfield school (girls) and Beechen Cliff school (boys) have a City-wide catchment and enable the majority of pupils 1<sup>st</sup> preference in Bath to gain places at these schools. This would continue as at present. Similarly, St Gregory's Catholic College would continue as at present meeting the needs of catholic pupils from a wide area, including the City of Bath. These three schools would cater for approximately 400 pupils drawn from across the whole city.

5.52. The remaining three schools (Ralph Allen school and two co-educational schools on the St Mark's C of E and Oldfield school sites) would serve specific areas of

the City. The most isolated areas of the City and its surroundings (the rural area towards Freshford and Batheaston and the urban areas of Larkhall and Upper Weston) are best served by schools in these three localities. This would reduce the distance travelled to school and the number of pupils taking journeys across the city, especially if these schools were high performing and popular and greater numbers of pupils living in each of these areas chose to attend their local school rather than travel to a school that is further away. The Twerton and Southdown area would continue to be served by Oldfield school and Hayesfield school (all girls living in this area currently attend schools outside the area) and boys would be able to attend Oldfield school (co-educational), Beechen Cliff school, Ralph Allen school, or St Gregory's Catholic College or St Mark's C of E school if a church school was preferred. It is anticipated that as more pupils choose their local school rather than travel greater distances to other schools as at present, places will become free in Beechen Cliff school and Ralph Allen school that could be occupied by pupils from the Twerton and Southdown area.

- 5.53. If a co-educational school were to be provided on the Culverhay school site this would provide easy access for children in the South West of the City but would result in long journeys to school and restricted choice for either the Weston area or Larkhall area (depending on whether a school was provided on the Oldfield school site or St Mark's C of E school site).

## **6. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 6.1. The report author and Lead Cabinet member have fully reviewed the risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.
- 6.2. Oldfield school have stated that they would like to become a co-educational school. Funding (initially £2 million) is available to make modifications to the buildings to accept boys (approximately 50 in Y7 in the first year of becoming a co-educational with additional numbers of 11 year olds in each subsequent year). However there is a risk that Oldfield school will request substantial building modifications costing in the region of £10m and therefore will not proceed to becoming a co-educational school or academy. In this case the only course of action would be closure and a competition to run a new co-educational school.

## **7. EQUALITIES**

- 7.1. An equalities impact assessment has been carried out and reviewed by the Lead Cabinet Member
- 7.2. The proposals will continue to provide single sex places at centrally located schools providing equality of access and meeting parental demand. An increase in the number of co-educational places and the retention of church places will ensure choice and diversity.

## **8. RATIONALE**

- 8.1. There are 5,545 places available for pupils aged 11-16 in the seven secondary schools in Bath. However, only approximately 4,000 pupils living in Bath and the surrounding villages (including approximately 400 pupils from a much wider area attending St Gregory's Catholic College as their nearest Catholic secondary school) attend these schools. Despite an additional 800 pupils attending Bath

secondary schools from outside Bath and North East Somerset, there remain around 750 unfilled school places in these seven schools. The majority of these unfilled places are in Culverhay school and St Mark's C of E school with a smaller but significant number at Oldfield school.

8.2. Therefore, in order to ensure the effective use of resources, provide schools with sufficient pupils to maintain a broad and balanced curriculum with a range of options and to raise standards only six secondary schools are required.

8.3. The consultation responses have revealed strong support for the strategy to reduce the number of schools from seven to six.

8.4. In order to maintain choice and diversity and to meet parental preferences it is important to maintain both single sex and co-educational provision and church and non-church school places. Therefore it was proposed to retain one single sex boys school (Beechen Cliff) one single sex girls school (Hayesfield) a co-educational school (Ralph Allen) and a Catholic secondary school (St Gregory's Catholic College). This strategy was also well supported by the consultation responses (71%).

8.5. In order to maintain the balance of church school places and also to provide more co-educational places a further two schools need to be provided. Due to the difficulty and cost of obtaining land for a secondary school in an urban area such as Bath existing school sites need to be used.

8.6. It is proposed that these two schools should be:

1. An 11-18 Anglican Faith School on the St Mark's C of E school site. The key factors in reaching this conclusion are:

- The Diocese of Bath and Wells already owns this land and there is already an 11-18 school on this site;
- The hard federation proposed by St Mark's C of E school and St Gregory's Catholic College and supported by the Dioceses of Bath and Wells and Clifton has every potential to significantly raise standards at St Mark's C of E school and increase the number of pupils on roll;
- There is strong support from the local community for a secondary school on the site;
- The long and difficult journey for a significant number of pupils if there were no school in North East Bath (particularly from the Larkhall and Lambridge areas). The journeys to school and traffic across the city would be reduced if local children were to attend the school on this site.

2. An 11-18 co-educational school on the Oldfield school site. The key factors in reaching this conclusion are:

- The current school with a 192 Planned Admission Number is able to provide sufficient co-educational places on the site;
- Modifications to the buildings can be undertaken within a budget of approximately £1.5m to enable both boys and girls to attend the school;

- Oldfield school is already on “Outstanding” school (OFSTED 2007) and the Governing Body have expressed a desire for the school to become a co-educational school;
- There is very strong demand from local parents for a co-educational school on the site, particularly from parents of primary age pupils;
- A co-educational school on this site would reduce the journeys to school and traffic across the city if local children were to attend the school.

8.7. These decisions would however mean that a consultation on the proposal to close Culverhay school with no new school on the Culverhay site would need to be carried out. If the decision was made to close the school with no new school on the site, careful consideration would need to be given to the impact of this on pupils and staff at the school and on the local community. If Culverhay school was to close, the pupils from the area could be accommodated in the six remaining schools throughout the City.

8.8. Currently a large number of boys from the Culverhay school area attend Beechen Cliff and Ralph Allen schools. They would continue to be able to do so with boys also able to attend Oldfield school if it were to be a co-educational school.

8.9. Currently all girls from the Culverhay school area gain places at Oldfield, Hayesfield and Ralph Allen schools. They would continue to be able to do so.

8.10. Catholic children (boys and girls) from the Culverhay school area gain places at St Gregory’s Catholic College and they would continue to do be able to do so.

## **9. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

9.1. Other options were considered and evaluated against following key criteria;

- How they would contribute to improving educational standards
- The extent to which they maintain choice and diversity but meet parental demand church and co-educational places
- Whether they reflected the views in the consultation including the level of support for individual schools.
- Whether it will lead to a more efficient use of resources
- Whether proposals would enable young people to access a local school and reduce travel across the city.

### **Option 1**

**Close Oldfield school and close St Mark's C of E school. LA run a competition to open a new 160 place co-educational school on the Oldfield school site (The Diocese may seek an exemption from running a competition and consult on the proposal to open a new C of E school on the Oldfield school site or on the St Mark's C of E school site or propose a C of E school on the current St Mark's C of E school site in the competition).**

**With a linked proposal to close Culverhay school and LA run a competition to open a new 160 co-educational school on the Culverhay school site.**

This was the proposal set out in the consultation paper. This option could provide more co-educational places at Oldfield school or St Mark's C of E school and if a school were on the Oldfield school site meet parental demand for co-educational places in North West Bath and provide more co-educational places in South West Bath on the Culverhay school site. However closure of Oldfield or St Mark's C of E schools would provide only one school serving North Bath which is a major concern of parents due to travel difficulties as these schools are at the extreme North West and North East of city respectively. It could also mean the loss of church places which consultation has confirmed are still required and valued by parents if the Diocese was not successful in obtaining an Exemption or was not the winner of the competition. Finally, the closure of one of these schools could be detrimental to educational standards as Oldfield school is an outstanding school and St Mark's C of E school through the proposed federation with St Gregory's Catholic College has an opportunity to raise standards. Preserving a school on the Culverhay school site which although co-educational may not be as attractive to parents as other options available.

**Option 2**

**St Mark's C of E school remains open on its current site federated with St Gregory's Catholic College.**

**LA run a competition to open a new 160 place co-educational school on the Culverhay school site and then a notice to close Culverhay school.**

**Linked proposal to close Oldfield school.**

This option has, through the proposed federation of St Marks' C of E school and St Gregory's Catholic College, the potential to raise standards and would meet the demand for church places. It would provide a good choice for parents in South West Bath through a co-educational school on the Culverhay school site. However it would mean the closure of Oldfield school as an outstanding school and would remove the potential for Oldfield school to become a co-educational school or academy. Also it would not provide co-educational places in North West Bath contrary to the wishes of parents, and could lead to pupils from the area not getting any of their first choice alternative schools through distance criteria in the admissions process.

## **10. CONSULTATION**

10.1. *Ward Councillor; Cabinet members; Parish Councils; Trades Unions; Overview & Scrutiny Panel; Staff; Other B&NES Services; Service Users; Local Residents; Community Interest Groups; Youth Council; Stakeholders/Partners; Other Public Sector Bodies; Section 151 Finance Officer; Chief Executive; Monitoring Officer*

10.2. Extensive and wide reaching consultation on the school re-organisation proposals for Bath were undertaken between March and May 2010. This included a consultation document circulated to a range of statutory consultees to include pupils, parents and carers of existing pupils and of local primary age pupils, school staff - both teaching and non-teaching, ward councillors, local MPs, Catholic and Anglican dioceses, trade unions and neighbouring authorities. Local

public consultation meetings were held at each school with an additional meeting for those unable to attend the school meetings.

## 11. ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

11.1. *Social Inclusion; Sustainability; Human Resources; Property; Young People; Corporate; Impact on Staff; Other Legal Considerations*

## 12. ADVICE SOUGHT

12.1. The Council's Monitoring Officer (Council Solicitor) and Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

<b>Contact person</b>	Chris Kavanagh 01225 395149
<b>Sponsoring Cabinet Member</b>	Councillor Chris Watt
<b>Background papers</b>	Consultation document – 'A Review of Secondary Schools in Bath'
<b>Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format</b>	