

Bath & North East Somerset Council			
MEETING:	Cabinet		
MEETING DATE:	18 August 2010	AGENDA ITEM NUMBER	
TITLE:	A Review of Secondary Schools in Bath (reconsideration following call-in): Appendix 4 Further supporting information for Cabinet reconsideration of decision	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:	
		E	2097

This paper provides some supporting information for the Cabinet, in respect of the specific concerns raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel and during the debate at the Panel meeting following the call-in of the original decision.

This is set out under four headings reflecting the Panel's key concerns, plus information on travel, value added and school transfers.

1. The consultation had not been sufficiently clear about the proposals for Culverhay School

The original consultation document proposed the closure of three schools, with two new co-educational schools to be opened in their place – one north of the river and one to the south. This included the closure of Culverhay, but suggested that it would be replaced with a co-educational school (as it is the only one of the three affected schools that is south of the river). The consultation was also specific in suggesting that alternative proposals arising during the consultation would be considered. However, it is clearly regrettable that some people felt that it was not made sufficiently clear that there was a possibility of not having a school on the Culverhay site.

In line with DfE guidance where an option emerges from a consultation which did not form part of the original proposal a further consultation process should be undertaken and this is what Cabinet have agreed regarding the new proposal to close Culverhay but not have a school on the existing site.

The statutory consultation process is expected to be similar to the earlier consultation process;

- Publication of consultation document in September followed by a 5 week consultation period including public meetings at Culverhay and the Guildhall.
- A formal report in November setting out the responses to the consultation and the issues raised for consideration. This will enable a formal decision on whether to publish a legal notice for the closure of Culverhay.
- If it is decided to publish a notice, this could happen in December, with a further 6 week representation period for the public to comment although no public meetings are held.
- At the end of the representation period there would be a decision on whether to proceed with the closure of Culverhay school from September 2012

This further consultation should provide opportunity for consideration of the implications of the proposed closure and should inform the subsequent decision about whether to proceed with closure of Culverhay School, as well as informing how the closure programme would be managed.

2. The impact of changes in legislation was uncertain especially in relation to Academies and Oldfield School

The Academies Act 2010 gained Royal Assent on 27 July, after the last Cabinet meeting. Whilst a number of amendments to the original Bill were incorporated during its passage through Parliament, the essence remains as we originally understood it.

Oldfield School's application to become an Academy remains subject to consideration by the Department for Education, who are aware that the school is subject to a reorganisation process and that we have asked the school to confirm that its proposals include becoming co-educational.

We have asked the school to confirm this by Friday 17th September and said that if this is not forthcoming we would expect to commence a competition for a new co-educational school to replace it. We remain confident that in either event, this will enable us to have a co-educational school on the Oldfield site by September 2012.

We are still working through the full implications of the Act for the Local Authority's future role and functions, but the government's aim is to enable schools to 'provide a first-class education', to 'innovate and raise standards'. It is likely that over time, more local schools will become academies and the Local Authority's role in providing strategic oversight of the local school system will be diminished.

This suggests that the re-organisation of secondary schools in Bath, in order to remove surplus places and increase the availability of co-educational provision, which has been the subject of debate over a number of years, should be pursued with vigour and not delayed.

3. The Federation of St Gregory's Catholic School and St Mark's CofE School was at an early and uncertain stage

The chairs of governors of both schools and the Diocese of Bath & Wells have proposed a 'hard' federation (in which the two schools could have a single governing body). The Diocese of Clifton has indicated that they would support closer collaboration between the schools in the form of a 'soft' federation. This would mean retaining separately accountable governing bodies and two head teachers but with a formal agreement to work jointly and the ability to delegate powers to a joint committee.

Whilst it is felt that a hard federation would provide greater security that standards at St Mark's would be raised more rapidly, the enthusiasm of both schools to collaborate in this way can only be a positive development.

The rationale for proposing the retention of an 11-18 Anglican Faith School on the St Mark's site, set out in section 8.6 of the original Cabinet paper are not solely dependent on federation, but also take into account support for maintaining church school places and the school's location in respect of journeys to school.

4. The costs associated with the closure of Culverhay School and future options for the site needed greater clarification.

The costs associated with the closure of Culverhay School have not been fully worked through yet and will be further informed by issues identified during the proposed further consultation process. The main costs are associated with the potential redundancy costs of staff at Culverhay School. It is anticipated that some of the staff would transfer to other schools at various points during a managed transition process. However there are likely to be a number of staff who would not be able or willing to transfer to other schools and would on the closure of the school be entitled to redundancy payments. The Local Authority would endeavour to use its redeployment processes to limit the numbers affected by redundancy.

Calculations using current financial year data suggest the maximum cost of redundancy and early retirements would be in the order of £950,000 although we would expect to be able to mitigate this by at least 50% through the transfer and redeployment processes described above. The costs would be spread over more than one year.

There is clear support and rationale for reducing from 7 to 6 secondary schools in Bath and the costs of closing one school can be justified on the basis of the improvements that can be achieved for children and young people across the City. Initial estimates suggest that approximately £500,000 would be released from revenue budgets supporting Culverhay as a small school, along with the fixed cost elements of the formula funding. This subsidy would increase to approximately £680,000 in future years if Culverhay remained open with a similar intake to the intake in September 2009.

Future options for the site will need to take into consideration the existing agreements in place for occupation by Bath Spa University, Foot Steps Nursery and Aquaterra Leisure. We are keen to continue to foster the close links made with the Bath Spa University and will explore with them their future plans and aspirations for both their existing accommodation and possible expansion of facilities on the site. The Nursery will also need to be consulted although initial indications are that retaining this part of the site for this purpose would be a relatively straightforward option. Discussions will also need to be held with Aquaterra Leisure about their position regarding the future management of the community sports facilities currently used jointly with the school.

An initial evaluation of the site shows that the retention of some of the existing facilities and allowing for the fact that there may be planning restrictions on some parts of the site such as the playing fields, would not prevent the disposal of a significant part of the site generating a capital receipt for investment in other schools in the order of £6-8m.

The future of the site will not be determined through this particular decision-making process, but can be informed by the community's views during further consultation.

5. Travel

We have modelled a range of scenarios to test what the impact might be of closing one school.

This remains somewhat crude, as it is based on reallocating current year 7 entrants to probable alternative schools, based on the preferences already expressed and existing rules on schools capacity and travel distances – ie it cannot fully predict patterns of parental choice in the event of a different choice of schools. Further work on the travel impact will be required as part of more detailed closure and transition plans.

However, what it suggests is that the average and maximum distances in miles from home to school for existing B&NES pupils displaced by the closure of Culverhay would not be significantly increased.

	Average	Maximum	Other pupils displaced as a result (note 3)
Existing distances for 45 year 7 entrants	1.021	2.623	
Reallocated distances for 45 entrants displaced	1.165	2.84	5 displaced (2 increased distance, 2 reduced, 1 unchanged)
Increase (decrease)	0.144	0.217	

Notes:-

1. Distances used are straight lines, not travel distance
2. For St Marks closing, the increases would be greater
3. Denotes pupils allocated a place at Beechen Cliff or Ralph Allen but who would be displaced by pupils from Culverhay receiving priority through existing criteria.

In terms of overall impact on travel in the City, the increases for existing pupils identified above would be offset by reduced distances available to families who would be able to choose co-educational provision at Oldfield – eg particularly for boys, but also some girls living in the vicinity of Oldfield, and some families in the vicinity of Culverhay seeking a co-educational school; ultimately there should also be benefits for families close to St Marks who currently choose a more distant school on the basis of standards.

Home to school transport will be available in line with national criteria.

6. Value added measures

(a) Contextual Value Added

Culverhay performs well on the measure known as Contextual Value Added (CVA). No single measure of performance can tell the whole story about a school's effectiveness and CVA must not be viewed in isolation. Contextual Value Added scores including English and maths bonuses (CVAEM) measure the progress made by pupils from the end of Key Stage 2 (KS2) to the end of Key Stage (KS4) using their test and exam results. CVA takes into account the varying starting points of each pupil's KS2 test results, and also adjusts for factors which are outside a school's control (such as gender, mobility and levels of deprivation) that have been observed to impact on pupils results. When interpreting CVA scores it is important to understand that CVA is a relative measure. Each pupil is compared with pupils sharing the same prior attainment and characteristics in the national cohort. The distribution of school scores is then centred around 1000 each year.

The table below compares Culverhay's CVA with Beechen Cliff and St Mark's. The confidence intervals indicate that the value calculated for CVA is not a precise measure

and can only be said to fall within a particular range with 95% confidence. The national mean of 1000 is within the confidence interval for each of these schools and so it cannot be said with 95% confidence that they differ from the national mean.

KS 2 to KS 4 value added measure (CVAEM – includes Eng & Maths), 2009

School	CVA	Upper confidence interval	Lower confidence interval
Beechen Cliff	998.1	1008.7	987.6
Culverhay	1011.4	1027.1	995.7
St Mark's	988.8	1004.3	973.2

(b) Other measures of added value

It is recognised that pupils have different starting points and that the proportions of pupils at each starting point will vary from school to school. Measures of absolute attainment therefore need to be complemented by measures of the progress made by pupils - the value added - from one key stage to another. Unlike the contextual value added considered in (a) above, these are measures of the levels of progress made by pupils between Key Stages 2 and 4 with no consideration of contextual factors affecting either the school or the child.

Progress level analysis KS2 to KS4 (Beechen Cliff & Culverhay) for pupils with level 3 or below at KS2

- Of those with level 3 or below at KS2 (including no result): 24% made three levels progress in English at Culverhay (5 out of 21 pupils where levels of progress could be established) compared to 70% at Beechen Cliff (14 out of 20 pupils) (2009 results)
- Of those with level 3 or below at KS2 (including no result): 14% made three levels progress in Maths at Culverhay (3 out of 21 pupils where levels of progress could be established) compared to 46% at Beechen Cliff (6 out of 13 pupils) (2009 results).

Progress level analysis KS2 to KS4 – expected (3 levels) progress 2009, all Bath secondary pupils

School	% making the expected level of progress in English	% making the expected level of progress in Maths
Beechen Cliff	80%	75%
Culverhay	56%	49%
Hayesfield	78%	62%
Oldfield	88%	76%
Ralph Allen	80%	60%
St Gregory's	79%	77%
St Mark's	52%	81%

7. School Transfers

In proposing the closure of a school, it has been suggested that we create a risk, either of a negative impact for pupils being transferred between schools (or for pupils in the 'receiving schools'); or that children from a more deprived background would do less well in a school where they are in a smaller minority.

The DfE's predecessor, the Department for Children Schools and Families, published in March 2010 a document entitled 'Pockets of poverty', which provides a framework to help schools to avoid disadvantaging pupils from comparative poverty – broadly equated with pupils entitled to Free School Meals (FSM). The report identifies that (although it is not a general rule) schools where there is a larger proportion of children entitled to Free School Meals may enable those pupils to achieve more than a similar group in a school with fewer FSM pupils.

In fact, the report includes data that suggests that Culverhay, with 18.5% of FSM pupils, falls into a category of schools which nationally deliver lower achievement for both FSM pupils and non-FSM pupils than the average for schools with less than 9% of FSM pupils (such as Beechen Cliff, Oldfield and Ralph Allen).

However, the key purpose of the report is to highlight that it is not the make up of the pupil population that determines outcomes – but that awareness of the issue, monitoring progress and provision of appropriate help can enable all pupils to fulfil their potential. The document should provide a valuable tool to ensure schools can address these issues proactively.

The Local Authority is committed to managing these changes carefully and sensitively for both pupils and staff, minimising disruption and ensuring continuity of education and support for all children and young people. Change can be unsettling for all those involved and the Local Authority would work closely with teachers' professional associations, trade unions, staff representatives, headteachers and governors throughout this process. We have prepared a "Framework Agreement" which we expect to be implemented by the Governing Body of schools affected by any closure or expansion. This Framework Agreement gives added protection for those staff directly affected by the changes.

The Council has successfully managed this process in the past when closing schools. The process of closing would be gradual and all year groups would not stop attending the school at once. The first step would be to stop admitting year 7 pupils to Culverhay at the appropriate time with a managed closure for other year groups ensuring that disruption to older pupils preparing for exams is avoided.

Contact person	Mike Bowden 01225 395610
Sponsoring Cabinet Member	Councillor Chris Watt
Background papers	Consultation document – 'A Review of Secondary Schools in Bath'
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