

# **BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE**

## **REBUILDING THE MINSTER COLLEGE, LEOMINSTER**

### **PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITY: CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLES SERVICES**

**CABINET**

**6<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2007**

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### **Wards Affected**

Hampton Court, Leominster North, Leominster South, and Upton.

### **Purpose**

To confirm, prior to tenders being sought, the strategic elements of the project namely the size of school, the wider community facilities to be included and the provision for third party use.

### **Key Decision**

This is a Key Decision because it is likely to result in the Council incurring expenditure above agreed budgets for the service or function (shown as a line in the budget book) to which the decision relates but allowing for virements between budget heads and savings within budget heads of up to £500,000; and also because it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in Herefordshire in an area comprising one or more wards.

### **Recommendation(s)**

- (a) The Minster College be rebuilt as a 6 Form of Entry, 11-16 High School (Mainstream capacity 900) with a Sixth Form of 120 as a single school pathfinder under the Building Schools for the Future Initiative;**
- (b) On completion of the new facilities for the Minster College, the existing design/technology block be converted in part for use as a Youth Centre, subject to funding be approved as part of the Council's annual capital planning process;**
- (c) Facilities for use by the Marches Consortium and for industrial enterprise be provided, if the Consortium and Advantage West Midlands respectively provide the necessary funding, and if satisfactory lease arrangements can be agreed.**

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Further information on the subject of this report is available from  
George Salmon, Head of Commissioning & Improvement – Schools & Services (01432) 260802

## Reasons

1. The Minster serves the town of Leominster and a large rural area as shown on Appendix 1. A school with an annual entry of 180 will provide sufficient spaces for those children under the age of 11 living in this area, and those likely to be living in the area in any new housing in the future.
2. Youth facilities in Leominster are poor, and in property leased to 2013. The refurbishment of part of an existing building opposite the Sports Centre and Swimming Pool provides a longer-term solution in an appropriate location.
3. All schools in the country are expected to offer extended services, and in the new build opportunities to maintain and extend, adult education, and work training including teacher training on the campus should be exploited.

## Considerations

1. Cabinet approved the bid to DCSF that The Minster College be rebuilt under the Single School Pathfinder project. DCSF confirmed in June 2007 that £21,250,000 would be available for this project and the procurement through a design and build process met DCSF requirements. This funding was based on a 900 place 11-16 high school with additional 120 post-16 places. It also included £1,928,000 for special educational needs provision. The DCSF have confirmed that the sum for SEN provision will remain available pending a countrywide review of provision for children with special educational needs.
2. The number of students at the school in the past is set out in the table below:

<b>THE MINSTER COLLEGE</b>	
	<b>TOTAL ON ROLL EXCLUDING SIXTH FORM</b>
<b>January 2002</b>	617
<b>January 2003</b>	616
<b>January 2004</b>	633
<b>January 2005</b>	625
<b>January 2006</b>	645
<b>January 2007</b>	622

124 students have been allocated places to start at the school in September 2007.

3. The number of children under the age of 11 living in the catchment varies between 136 and 195 per year group.
4. There are 260 dwellings allocated in Leominster in the current UDP, and all indications suggest that market towns will be the focus of further housing allocation in the period 2011 to 2025. Therefore it is likely that the number of students living in Leominster town will grow.
5. The intake for September 2007 to The Minster is 124 from a cohort of those eligible and living in the catchment area of 199.  
75 students have sought places at:  
    Tenbury High School (9)  
    Bishops of Hereford Bluecoat High School (8)  
    Weobley High School (25)

Wigmore High School (7)  
Other Schools including Private (26)  
**Total 75**

6. The experience of Whitecross High School moving into new buildings showed that applications for admissions can increase significantly when new accommodation is provided (i.e. for Whitecross the number of first preferences rose from 184 in 2004 to 240 in 2007).
7. It is impossible to predict with accuracy the impact of new buildings on parental preference but, with new accommodation, parents may prefer to apply for places at The Minster College rather than other schools. It is a central principle of the school organisation plans that schools should serve their area. Given this principle, and our best assessment of future demand, planning for 180 students per year is a sensible long-term strategy.
8. The Headteacher has been a key member of the project group since the autumn of 2006, and all design and curriculum planning work has been based on a school of 900. The Headteacher has serious concerns if there were to be any change to this for the following reasons:
  - The school would not be able to serve its community.
  - School organisation and curriculum on offer would be far more effective and able to meet the personalised curriculum if the school operates with 6 Forms of Entry.
  - A change of direction now would cause delay. The curriculum and consequential accommodation requirements would have to be reconsidered.
9. If a school of 750 rather than 900 was to be built, the DCSF grant would reduce to £17,800,000, with £2,260,000 returning to Central Government.
10. DCSF expect all schools in the country to offer extended services to their students, families and community, based on the assumption that high Schools will be in a better position to offer more comprehensive services. The Minster College is well-placed to do this, having a joint-use Sports Hall, Children's Centre and Teacher Training facilities on site currently. The project group have identified the opportunities to:
  - design the school hall as a multipurpose performance space that could be available to the community outside school hours.
  - locate a Youth Centre in part of the design/technology space, which will be vacated by the school when new accommodation is built.
  - discontinue the occupation of temporary classrooms by the Marches Consortium, and consider permanent provision in the remaining areas of the current design/technology space for that activity.
  - relocate a training facility currently in temporary accommodation on an industrial estate to the school to form an integral part of the 14-19 provision.

The campus could be 'badged' as a learning village if that was felt to be beneficial.

11. The Design/Technology Block has an area of 663 m<sup>2</sup>. The Youth Service are seeking an area of 239m<sup>2</sup>. To provide this in the new build a budget of £494,000 is required. To provide the area by converting an existing build a budget of £140,000 is sufficient.

The remaining space in the block would be considered for use by the Marches Consortium or an equivalent organisation. The Marches Consortium have been asked what their needs are and what capital contribution they could make. Discussions on a lease would follow, to ensure that, as a minimum, costs of their occupation are covered.

## **Financial Implications**

1. The DCSF has provided funding for accommodation that, it calculates, is needed for a 900 place 11-16 High School with 120 post-16 places. This figure is based on the assumption that building works will start in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2008 (i.e. September to December). It includes design, building, ICT and furniture costs. This figure now stands at £20,059,098 (DCSF have recently allocated an additional amount to the original figure given to allow a start in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter than that in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2008).
2. This is a grant that is payable to the Council over a 4 year period as the project progresses. The Property Services Manager has confirmed that it is sufficient if:
  - i. the area of new buildings is kept within DCSF standards for new high schools,
  - ii. a contract is let before the end on 2008, and there is no unexpected inflation in the construction industry, and
  - iii. no exceptional “abnormals” are encountered, particularly in the ground works.
3. This funding will not cover youth provision or provision for third parties.
4. The level of funding is sufficient to allow a high specification to minimise energy consumption, to create a sustainable building of at least the same quality but probably higher than the Whitecross High School. The latter has achieved the Building Research Establishment’s high rating in terms of energy efficiency and management.
5. The estimated cost of youth provision is £495,000 for new build or £140,000 through refurbishment. This would have to be subject to a bid through the Capital Programme. A Section 106 contribution of £250,000 has been agreed from the Barons Cross development for community facilities, but there is a restriction on how it is to be used in that the landowner has to give consent to the spending proposals. In the absence of that permission, other funding would have to be found. Monies are sought in all instances from housing developers but there are constraints on what can be demanded. The Youth Centre is currently housed in leased accommodation until 2013 at annual rent of £10,000. The recommended solution would not be available until 2011/12, as conversion work would follow vacation by the school. Both the service user and landlord are encountering difficulties in this lease and an early surrender before the full term would suit both parties.

## **Risk Management**

The two main risks in the project are:

1. keeping cost within DCSF allocation. This is best achieved by making progress with the tender procedure to take a contract in the summer of 2008
2. proceeding with a school, which is able to meet the needs of its community but does not, either in Leominster or elsewhere create surplus space which is expensive to run. This issue is best addressed through the school review, in light of whatever decision is made today.

## **Alternative Options**

A school of a smaller size could be built, but if the school becomes the success that is our objective, this would not meet the needs of the community policy.

Use on the site could be restricted to the school, but this would be contrary to central and local party and be a missed opportunity

## **Consultees**

Richard North, Principal of Minster College

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Minster Map

Appendix 2 – Minster Sketch Plan of Proposed Site

## **Background Papers**

None identified