

## APPENDIX 2

### Notes of a meeting held at Wyebridge Sports College, Stanberrow Road, Hereford at 2.15 pm on Thursday 13t March 2008

In Attendance:

Councillors: SJ Robertson (Chairman); ME Cooper; AM Toon and JD Woodward.

Mr J Sheppard, Head of Wyebridge Sports College/Principal (designate) Wyebridge Academy

Officers: S Menghini, (Director of Children's Services); G Salmon, (Head of Commissioning & Improvement) C Baird (Head of Performance Planning and Development); P James (Democratic Services Officer).

As reported to Children's Services Scrutiny Committee on 22nd January 2008, (see Minute no 45) a number of concerns had been raised regarding the Wyebridge Sports College Academy Project. This meeting had therefore been arranged to discuss and hopefully clarify a number of those concerns.

It was noted that no representative from the Sponsors had been invited. Mr Sheppard reported that he was a Co-Director of the Trust and would be able to contribute as such.

A number of questions or comments had been submitted prior to the meeting by Councillor Toon and the Chairman decided that the meeting would initially go through these and would conclude with a brief tour of the premises.

<b>Issue 1</b>
<i>Numbers do not stack up and how will it achieve its suggested numbers given the Councils U turn on cutting numbers at other schools.</i>
<b>Reference</b>
900 11-16 places 200 16-19 places
<b>Response</b>
The aim was to keep the majority of the 250/300 students per year who live in the area that in the past have gone to other schools. The Trust was committed to providing places to the students in the HR2 postal area and considered that it should be easy to fill places from within catchment. The 16+ places would include adult learners and would focus on up-skilling for local need e.g. opportunities arising from Rotherwas expansion; ESG and under the social justice agenda. As a result it could be possible to see 600/700 adult learners. The Academy would want the Learning Centre to continue and was exploring taking responsibility for this from the Council. The Academy would include a 6th Form. The post 16 learning should be seen to address social aspirations.
<b>Issue 2</b>
<i>How will the curriculum be different and add value to the already very good results that are already being provided.</i>

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

<b>Reference</b>
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<b>Response</b>
<p>Pre 2007 Academies had far more flexibility to set their own curriculum. They now have to meet national requirements for Science, English, Maths, ICT (to KS4) PE and RE. It was clarified that RE would be in accordance with the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Since Christmas 07 further work had been undertaken on the principles of the curriculum and the Group noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There would be three curriculum pathways (Gifted &amp; Talented / Specialist / Transitional).</li> <li>• Also mentioned were Customised Curriculum (14-19 – BTEC, GCSE, Diplomas); Enhanced Curriculum (vocational and post 16 – professional learning e.g. ECDL, and clear collaboration with South Wye Learning; Rotherwas and ESG) Developing a Year 8 Curriculum.</li> <li>• Progression would be by stage not age. Pupils would not be held back but clear emphasis would be given to skills sets and the level of understanding before moving up the curriculum.</li> <li>• The curriculum was about creating and assisting the aspirations for the young people.</li> </ul> <p>The School Improvement Team had seen and were supportive of the proposals. Due to the improved/wider provision the Academy expected to attract a greater number of SEN pupils</p>
<b>Issue 3</b>
<i>How will the design of the school be laid out. US and UK best practices arrangements are now showing that smaller units within schools (circa 300) show better learning provision.</i>
<b>Reference</b>
<p>See article "the children left behind" channel 4 dispatches programme.  <a href="http://www.channel4.com/news/articles/dispatches/the+children+left+behind/1537047">http://www.channel4.com/news/articles/dispatches/the+children+left+behind/1537047</a></p>
<b>Response</b>
<p>The Academy was anticipated to be based on units of people. 4 Vice-Principals would be responsible for sections of the curriculum and lead learning teams. Learning would be on a pastoral and aspirational basis. This was the Diocese's first Academy and therefore were still learning. However, compared to Hereford, other academy projects were experiencing difficult situations. Director acknowledged all County Councillors would benefit from receiving further information on this important project via a seminar/presentation.</p>
<b>Issue 4</b>
<i>When, Where and who have been consulted at all stages of the proposals.</i>
<b>Reference</b>

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#### 5.4 Sponsor and School Commitment

This section should set out:

The consultation with stakeholders undertaken in developing the project scope;

Which parties have been consulted; and

Senior commitment, both strategic in terms of commitment to the vision and the objectives of this project, and financial commitment given by the predecessor school(s) and the Local Authority, this should include operational costs for conventionally funded projects (e.g. ICT).

Copies of resolutions for the governing bodies accepting their inclusion into the process, based on the template included at Appendix 6 should be appended to the OBC for all School schemes (PFS National Framework - Template Document - Outline Business Case v3.0)

#### Response

Navigant Consulting, working on behalf of the Academy Trust, were undertaking the consultation work. Noted that in early stage only local Councillors written to rather than all Councillors (County) being informed. It was noted that despite reasonable advertising public meetings had been poorly attended. Improved consultation was evident since September. Consultation meetings were an ongoing process e.g. under the statutory notice period. Noted that public may not be interested until there was something more tangible or there was specific detail on how the Academy would look/work. Noted that a significant number of residents in the area were on Housing Benefit and meet at the learning centre. These visits may then lead them to undertaking learning courses. £80,000 had been allocated by the Trust to establishing Extended Service Teams, headed by a Deputy Principal. This would enhance the commitment and inform people in the area. A higher profile was being given to the County's involvement in post 16 learning.

#### Issue 5

*Why is the business plan not available at present?*

#### Reference

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#### Response

A report would be available in the Cabinet agenda for Cabinet meeting on 27th March (publication due on Monday 17th March) and the Business Plan would be part of that report. The Business Plan followed the format set by Partnership for Schools and therefore may seem disjointed.

#### Issue 6

*Representatives of the sponsors appear to be very clear on the content of the curriculum since Oct 07. Why has this not been made available to the Scrutiny Committee?*

#### Reference

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#### Response

Curriculum mentioned earlier.

#### Issue 7

*Only 3 parents attended the last open consultation at the Kindle Centre and many councillors were not aware of the event. Would you deem this suitable consultation and what efforts have you/Navigant consultants made to include more parents.*

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<b>Reference</b>
10 <sup>th</sup> Dec 07 12 noon – 6 pm (hardly working family friendly ) <a href="http://www.theherefordacademy.co.uk/pages/news.aspx">http://www.theherefordacademy.co.uk/pages/news.aspx</a>
<b>Response</b>
Consultation mentioned earlier.
<b>Issue 8</b>
<i>What will be being consulted on given that the statutory notices are to be issued?? Also given that even the cabinet are unaware of what is being consulted on??</i>
<b>Reference</b>
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<b>Response</b>
There would be a single statutory notice to close the current school and that would be contingent on an Academy being opened. The Secretary of State would then make the decision to open an Academy. Statutory Notice would be published in the press and elsewhere on 27 March. There was a 6 week minimum to the statutory notice period. Consultation events will be held. Report to Cabinet in June to determine the notice.
<b>Issue 9</b>
<i>How much input have the pupils had in the design of the buildings</i>
<b>Reference</b>
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<b>Response</b>
As no design work had been undertaken then no involvement so far. However, pupils had started to be asked about key elements “what is important to us” and requirements and will have input to the design brief. Pupils will also be involved in the tender selection. Teaching staff will also be involved. Group noted the meeting room had note boards with themes and ideas posted. The current favoured idea seemed to be separate toilets.
<b>Issue 10/11</b>
<i>Are Oracle involved in the IT provision in the School?</i>
<b>Reference</b>
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<b>Response</b>
No. Procurement will be in accordance with the National Framework.
<b>Issue 12</b>
<i>Given the cash for honours row recently and departure/involvement of Sir Cyril Taylor as the chair of SSAT is it not appropriate for the sponsor to identify the donor</i>
<b>Reference</b>
“We pay the Piper- They call the Tune” <a href="http://www.antiacademies.org.uk/index.php?option=com_remository&amp;Itemid=41&amp;func=startdown&amp;id=71">http://www.antiacademies.org.uk/index.php?option=com_remository&amp;Itemid=41&amp;func=startdown&amp;id=71</a>
<b>Response</b>
Mr Sheppard stated that he did not know who the donor was. The DCSF had checked the donor and had given assurances that the donation was from a reputable source e.g. not connected with tobacco or drinks. He was unaware of any ulterior motive in having the Academy operate in a particular way. The Group briefly discussed the issue of donations from notable persons/organisations.

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<b>Issue 13</b>
<i>How has the public taxpayers money been used during the feasibility stage (c£250k) and is this value for money (see Q4) Also another £500k was allocated from the LA funds</i>
<b>Reference</b>
The average amount of funding per academy released by my Department during the feasibility phase is £252,959. This figure is based on the funding released to the 27 open academies and to 30 other academies yet to open but which have entered feasibility and to which payments have been made. (Jim Knight MP) Pasted from < <a href="http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmhansrd/vo060511/text/60511w0014.htm">http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmhansrd/vo060511/text/60511w0014.htm</a> >
<b>Response</b>
The £250k had been granted from Partnership for Schools (PFS) to the Council to take the scheme forward and this had supported topographical/ground survey works. Navigant Consulting were involved in the first phase involving the feasibility. A report would be made to Cabinet on the next stage which envisaged Navigant being appointed to ensure adequate resources were available to deliver the project. The Council could start claiming fees against the capital sum once the contract was let. Responding to questions on 'options' the Director reported that Cabinet had been consulted about the retention, or not, of one of the buildings on site. Cabinet had also commented on the 'entrance to the site' option (fait accompli !). The proposal to build on the playing fields had met with PFS approval and a further allocation of funding had been made. Portacabin accommodation was therefore not anticipated. Cllr Toon undertook to provide Mr Salmon with a break down of her estimated potential £1.5m additional costs. Group informed that no additional costs were currently known. The Council would bear the risk for any costs over the tender figure, therefore good project management was in place and any anticipated over spend would require a trimming of the contract.
<b>Issue 14</b>
<i>What arrangements have been made for the Redhill Community Centre? What arrangements have been made about clawback from AWM and Sir Clive Richards</i>
<b>Reference</b>
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<b>Response</b>
Group informed that a reply from AWM was awaited regarding potential clawback of the £60,000. Residents Association had expressed inability to use a relocated 'info zone' building due to alleged reduced size and capability to accommodate kitchen facilities. Cost of moving info zone building to different site was £80,000 compared to new build costs of £250,000. While sympathetic, the Director expressed concern about using Children's Services capital funding for Resident Association purposes. Group noted that under Extended Schools, schools needed to look at how they provided 'added use', not just at night but throughout the day. Noted that the new Academy would have good restaurant and that residents may want to eat there. Cllr Toon to speak to Wendy Jones, Chair Residents Association to clarify issues of concern.
<b>Issue 15</b>
<i>What will happen to the South Wye Learning Centre with its 100 users per week?</i>
<b>Reference</b>
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<b>Response</b>
See response for issue 14

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<b>Issue 16</b>
<i>Will you (the Wyebriidge Academy) have links with the Steiner Academy?</i>
<b>Reference</b>
<a href="http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/6290115.stm">http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/6290115.stm</a>
<b>Response</b>
No formal links were anticipated other than through any national body for Academies.

<b>Issue 17</b>
<i>Given that the Academy is a Faith Academy are the sponsors prepared to insert in its contract document that it will always keep the same admission arrangements in line with other community schools in Herefordshire and only select on its specialist status and not on faith?</i>
<b>Reference</b>
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<b>Response</b>
<p>While C of E sponsored, it was not a Faith Academy. It would serve the community. Admission arrangements were governed by the Funding Agreement.</p> <p>Comment made that this needed to be made clear as the Web site home page for the Academy started with the Bishop saying "God wants the best for each of us....."</p> <p>Responding to a comment that the Trust could change its admission arrangements it was stated that during the first 2 years the Trust could refuse admission if it could be deemed detrimental. It was commented that every school in the county should take its fair share of the full range of pupils.</p> <p>The Academy was not about creating another Bishop of Hereford Bluecoat High School. It will be run by a small number of Governors in accordance with its Articles of Governance and will include representatives from staff and students. In addition there will be three Advisory Councils (students, family and curriculum).</p> <p>The Funding Agreement contained details of the admission process and was controlled by the Secretary of State and the DCSF were checking that the admission appeal process was compliant with national requirements.</p> <p>Concern was expressed that being Church of England sponsored, and therefore obliged to abide by ecclesiastic rules which promoted faith, the church and not community would be at its heart.</p>
<b>Issue 18</b>
<i>Are the sponsors prepared to allow a representative of parents and pupils to be part of the contract with the Secretary of State and ensure that their rights are preserved to challenge the school in the case of a dispute?</i>
<b>Reference</b>
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<b>Response</b>
See response to 17

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and thanked Mr Sheppard for hosting the meeting.

The meeting ended at 3.41 pm. Councillors concluded with a tour of the buildings given by Mr Sheppard.

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