

BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE

PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITY: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

CABINET

28TH SEPTEMBER, 2006

Wards Affected

- (1) Leominster North, Leominster South, Upton and Hampton Court.
- (2) Belmont, St Martins & Hinton and Hollington.

Purpose

To approve two major developments in Secondary School Provision within Herefordshire, namely:

- (i) To approve the choice of The Minster College as the school to be rebuilt under the Building Schools for the Future Pathfinder Project to be completed in the 2009 – 2010 academic year.
- (ii) To support the proposal that Wyebridge Sports College should become a “City Academy” with the Diocese of Hereford acting as principal sponsor.

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; It is significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in Herefordshire in an area comprising one or more wards.

It was not included in the Forward Plan however inclusion in the agenda gives the required notice in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) Regulations 2000.

Recommendations

THAT

- (a) The Minster College be selected under this initiative;**
- (b) consideration be given to the relocation of Westfield Special School to the College campus as part of the development; and**
- (c) approval be given for the application/expression of interest for Wyebridge Sports College to become a City Academy with the principal sponsor being the Diocese of Hereford.**

Reasons

For recommendation 1, the DfES require the selected school to be the one with the highest need in terms of the condition of existing buildings and the suitability of the areas for teaching and learning. The Minster College has the highest need.

For recommendation 2, the existing buildings and site at Westfield Special School are inadequate to serve the increasingly severe needs of its students, and the opportunity in terms of integration, site and funding for re-development on The Minster Campus should not be lost.

For recommendation 3, to sustain the considerable improvement in the standard of teaching and learning at Wyebridge, a significant investment is needed. The City Academy programme will provide this and on this occasion the DfES has invited the authority to make an application to join this programme. This will include a significant remodelling of the site and buildings.

Considerations

1. BSF Pathfinder Project

- The set of buildings which The Minster College occupy are of poor condition, inefficiently planned and uneconomical to run.
- Maintenance costs are very high for the floor area concerned. The schedule of required repairs during the next 5 years is as follows:

2006/07	477,676
2007/08	115,950
2008/09	11,525
2009/10	66,725
2010/11	69,470

Total	£741,346

The Minster College has been identified as one of the top Children & Young People's Directorate maintenance liabilities.

- The capacity of the new school is a critical issue both in mainstream and in the sixth form. At present the admission number is 140 with approx 120 students taking up places. The size of the sixth form is approximately 50 in each year.
 - This compares to the numbers of children living in the catchment area between 130 and 190 in various years.
 - DfES are working to see that provision does meet the aspirations of the 14-19 agenda, the use of ICT in future teaching and learning and the wider use of the school in the community.
 - The DfES also asks how SEN provision will be made, and in response to this and to resolve the shortcomings in accommodation at Westfield Special School, it is proposed to relocate the Special School onto The Minster Campus.
- ### 2. Academy Proposal:

3. Great strides have been made in improving the quality of teaching and learning with the best ever GCSE results being achieved in 2006. Although this is an essential element to shift public perception, it is critical in an era of parental preference and falling rolls to ensure that Wyebridge Sports College becomes the first choice school for the majority of students resident in the South Wye area. A major investment in the buildings is required. In the absence of local resources, and knowing that replacement under Building Schools for the Future will not happen for another decade, the City Academies programme provides the opportunity.
4. This programme has been amended to give local authorities a greater role in shaping the character of the school before the management, both of the project and of the school passes to a sponsor. This, together with the proposal that the sponsor is the Diocese of Hereford, allays many of the fears that the academy programme has raised elsewhere. The proposal assumes that the school will continue to serve its current area, and that there would be no fundamental change to the current admissions policy. There is no suggestion that any pupils are admitted on criteria relating to faith.
5. The timetable involves an expression of interest to be part of the programme to be submitted in October 2006 and a decision to be given in December 2006.
6. Feasibility work would take place between January 2007 and September 2007, which would culminate in a decision as to whether the school should become an academy in September 2008.

Alternative Options

- The offer of participating in both DfES schemes could be rejected. However this is felt to be inconceivable given the problems faced and the financial support potentially available.
- Other high schools could have been considered for the BSF programme but the evidence from the Education Asset Management Plan identifies. The Minster as the school with the greatest building problems.

Risk Management

Both are major projects with risk at various levels. At this stage the major risk lies in raising high expectations, but finding that, in the development of the projects within the constraints of the DfES, the aspirations cannot be met. In addition, the capacity of the Directorate and the Council to support these major projects operating in parallel will need to be assessed.

Consultees

- High Schools
- Hereford Diocesan Board of Education
- Cardiff Archdiocese
- LSC

Background Papers

None identified.