

Select Committee on Children's Services – 17 September 2007

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Transforming Secondary Education

Purpose of Report

1. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) is preparing for the next group of local authorities to be included in the national Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme. This report provides an opportunity for Select Committee to contribute to Dudley's revised strategy to secure major capital investment in secondary education. It is extremely important that Dudley is able to demonstrate that the strategy will be effective in meeting local and national priorities and that it is widely supported by Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council and the diverse range of partners involved in improving outcomes for children, young people and families.

Background

2. In 2003 the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) announced Building Schools for the Future, the largest ever capital investment programme intended to transform the outcomes of secondary education for children and young people through the creation of "world-class" schools, fit for 21st Century learning. Local authorities were invited to submit expressions of interest in taking part in this 15 year national programme.
3. In December 2003 Dudley submitted an expression of interest which set out its vision for the future of secondary education within the Borough. The DfES announced the first group of four pathfinder authorities and 10 Wave 1 authorities in 2004. The DfES concentrated on local authorities with:
 - low standards of attainment at GCSE
 - high levels of deprivation
 - intervention following a very poor inspection report
 - a large number of secondary schools.

Dudley's prospects of inclusion in the early waves of BSF were not high.

4. In February 2005 Dudley received indicative information from the DfES that inclusion was likely to be in Wave 7 (2010/11), Wave 8 (2011/12) or Wave 9

(2012/13). Inclusion in the programme would be dependent on Dudley being able to demonstrate a clear and effective strategy for transforming education across the Borough and the capacity to deliver.

5. The DCSF have recognised that local authorities may wish to revise their strategies from those set out in the 2003 expressions of interest. Dudley continues to work with the DCSF to secure inclusion in the BSF programme at the earliest opportunity. It has been particularly important to respond to the experiences of local authorities already in the BSF programme and ensure Dudley's approach is appropriate. The revised strategy will follow the most recent DfES guidance to Local Authorities "Strategy for change". It is anticipated that guidance to Wave 7 authorities will include stronger emphasis on health outcomes. This is reflected in Dudley's draft Strategy for Change (See Appendix 2).

6. On 16 August, DCSF confirmed in a letter to Dudley the provisional timetable as:

- DCSF consultation on management of Wave 7 later this year
- guidance to Wave 7 authorities issued in 2008
- confirmation of inclusion (subject to ministerial decisions) by end of 2008.

7. In the same letter, the DCSF also stated;

"Lessons learned from earlier waves of BSF indicate that early preparation is key to effective delivery of projects and your work to date undertaking consultation with key partners and stakeholders and in the consideration of re-allocation of funding needed to resource the project at an early stage, will prove invaluable when we move onto the next phase of the programme".

This confirms that Dudley is taking the right steps in preparing for this major programme. The early information from Dudley will also help the DCSF in managing the overall programme and HM Treasury in terms of future financial arrangements.

8. Preparations to date include:

- Cabinet approval of corporate governance arrangements for Learning for the Future (now Investing in the Future -Transforming Secondary Education) June 2005. These arrangements have operated at a variety of levels. Confirmation of these arrangements and final establishment of the arrangements will be required when the project plan is considered by Cabinet, other partners/stakeholders and the DCSF
- dissemination of data and other information including establishment of web pages on www.dudley.gov.uk/education-and-learning/schools-and-colleges/learning-for-the-future/transforming-secondary-education

- initial discussions with secondary schools and other partners including Dudley PCT, West Midlands Fire Service and many others
 - timetable to submission of revised draft strategy to support detailed discussions with DCSF prior to inclusion in Wave 7
 - inclusion of Transforming Secondary Education as a major Council project
 - initial work on TSE Project Plan
9. It will not be possible to identify the total capital investment required until consultation and technical work on individual schools have been completed and agreed with the DCSF. On the basis of detailed knowledge of conditions and fitness for purpose of Dudley schools it is very likely that several schools will be replaced with new buildings and others will receive major extensions and/or refurbishment. On the basis of other authorities' experiences, it is very likely that the capital investment from the DCSF will be in excess of £200 million.
10. It is not possible to complete all of the projects simultaneously. The TSE strategy will require groups of schools to be completed in several phases. The inclusion of specific schools within each phase of Dudley's programme will be determined by the urgency of need and practical issues arising from project planning.
11. Comments are invited on the areas set out in paragraph 12 and Appendix 2. It should be emphasised that there will be sufficient time to consider further developments to the strategy through the course of 2008. Changes to schools also require consultation arrangements as set out in legislation and guidance. This strategy does not replace the consultation or any other planning requirements that may apply to individual projects within the overall strategy. In short, the development of this strategy is intended to ensure coherence between the secondary educational needs of the Borough, the policy and control requirements of DCSF and major influences including the Black Country Challenge, transport strategy and so on. Additional consultation arrangements will be made for proposals affecting individual schools.
12. **Areas for Comment**
- a. **Vision for Transforming Secondary Education**

Dudley's vision for Transforming Secondary Education is currently being developed in conjunction with its schools and other learning providers, governors, dioceses, unions, local employers, community groups, parents and young people. A range of other partners with significant interests in improving outcomes for children, young people and their families are also directly involved. These include Dudley PCT, West Midlands Fire Service, Police, private and voluntary sectors. This is a working draft of our emerging vision that is being developed with partners and focuses on meeting the needs of learners and improving outcomes for all. Our aspiration is that secondary education in Dudley will be transformed by:

- schools becoming self-managing, self-evaluating, self-determining and empowered to develop innovations, sharing responsibility for all of Dudley's secondary pupils;
- meeting the needs of all learners, within and beyond the school day;
- providing high quality, flexible and environmentally friendly learning environments that will reflect the importance the Council places on education, care learning, and sustainability;
- being located close to centres of population thus reducing the need for pupils to be transported, and promoting 'walking to school';
- working in partnership with other learning providers, other secondary schools, and primary schools to serve their local communities;
- accommodating a refocused and enriched curriculum, with complementary specialisms sharing expertise and resources;
- promoting participation and providing opportunities to mix vocational and academic learning for learners of all ages providing parents and pupils with enhanced life chances and opportunities;
- promoting community cohesion, citizenship, a sense of self-worth and self-discipline, and being responsive to the skills needs of the local and regional economy; and
- becoming, where appropriate, centres for the provision of other services for young people and their families including social care, and primary health care.

The delivery of this vision will close current achievement gaps, increase staying on rates and raise the profile of education and learning in the community. Schools, other learning providers and the Council are committed to raising standards at a rate in excess of national trends and expectations and those of our statistical neighbours.

b. Deprivation and Regeneration

Based on the 2007 statistics, Dudley's current Free School Meals (FSM) percentage is 17.2% for primary schools and 15.6% for secondary schools as compared with 15.9% and 13.1% nationally. Other indicators however, indicate that the Borough is significantly more deprived than FSM alone indicates. The Index of Multi Deprivation ranks Dudley as the 109th most deprived LA in England out of 354, scoring particularly low on income and employment. Transforming Secondary Education will be the support for further regeneration of communities with schools providing flagship buildings where services and resources are delivered or facilitated from the school site. Extended schools will encourage people of all ages to develop skills to improve their employment opportunities, contribute to community cohesion and enhance the local economy. Developments in this infrastructure will improve labour market opportunities

for all. Overall, Dudley will be a better place in which to live, learn, work and enjoy leisure time.

c. Diversity

Dudley has 22 mainstream secondary schools of which 14 are Community, 5 Foundation and 3 Voluntary Aided. There will be 21 mainstream secondary schools by 31 August 2008 due to the closure of Cradley High School. Of these 21 schools, three will have Sixth Forms. There are two secondary special schools and four other special schools where the age range includes Key Stage 3 and/or Key Stage 4 and three Pupil Referral Units, where the pupils are mainly of secondary age. We aim to maintain our rich diversity of mainstream school provision complemented by some secondary and all aged special schools. Amongst the major strengths of Dudley are the relationships established between the schools, the Council and other partners, based on regular programmed meetings.

TSE together with the strategies for extended schools, SEN and 14 – 19 will be used to encourage parents and pupils to have high aspirations and expectations of their schools including consistently excellent teaching and first rate buildings and facilities. In return they will be expected to work with their schools and commit to responsibilities about attendance, pupil behaviour, school work and positive contributions to their school community.

d. Curriculum

The Key Stage 3 and 14 – 19 curriculum will:

- be central to Dudley's vision for TSE and 11 to 19 education;
- identify, promote and meet the needs of learners;
- improve attainment and post – 16 retention
- ensure high quality teaching and learning and be reflective of the 14 – 19 and KS3 strategies;
- focus on curriculum design and content, course development and accreditation;
- provide an entitlement curriculum for all learners from a wide range of providers;
- create an interactive professional environment for teachers and support staff that facilitates collaborative working and promotes continuous professional development;
- engage wide stakeholder involvement to meet the needs of the local community and employers.

e. Workforce, Premises and ICT

TSE will be used to encourage secondary schools and other settings e.g. Children's Homes, to maximise new technologies and increase access to learning on an anytime, anywhere principle. ICT will be used to encourage imaginative, innovative, vocational and academic learning and impact upon standards of attainment, delivered by diverse learning and teaching styles. Technology will be used to link with higher and further education institutions and employers and to facilitate distance learning. The ICT skills in schools will be used to extend knowledge and expertise in the Community and to improve the employment prospects of adults. TSE will allow Dudley to build on the successful Dudley Grid for Learning project by integrating learning, information management and buildings management e.g. security, energy efficiency. Building specifications will exploit the potential of high level technology.

TSE will provide the opportunity to ensure that all schools have accommodation that will allow new and innovative ways of teaching and learning styles to flourish. This will maximise the opportunity for workforce reforms to develop and will include appropriate facilities and rooms for support staff, teachers and external agencies like Connexions and health professionals, to work with young people either on a one to one basis or small group arrangement. Appropriate preparation and staff rooms will feature. The needs of each learner will be met through high quality teaching and learning with well trained, well qualified and confident staff offering high quality teaching and learning to all learners. Children and Young People's Services will support schools to recruit, retain and develop staff where appropriate.

TSE will provide buildings in which a modern and inclusive curriculum will be delivered with sufficient flexibility to accommodate future developments and innovations. Schools will have recreational space for pupils, wide circulation spaces, room in teaching areas for more than one adult to work, up to date ICT infrastructure and flexibility to allow community use of the buildings. Premises will support the management of good behaviour, inspire learning and be flexible to encourage learning at times which suit users. These premises will be low maintenance and the buildings' energy management and water recycling systems will be used as a learning resource. As a community resource the buildings of these extended schools will provide outreach facilities for other mainstream services such as Connexions, Youth Centres, Social Services and Health and could provide full and shared facilities such as sports provision and public libraries. Schools will be used to deliver services that impact directly on health standards for learners and the whole community.

f. Children's and Young Peoples' Voice

Children and young people spend a great deal of their early development in schools. They have a great deal of experience in the things that make schools effective. We must engage them. Dudley has established very effective

mechanisms including the most modern technology for engaging the views of children and young people. These mechanisms will be used to seek the views of children and young people about the emerging strategy and what should be included. There will be many more opportunities to engage children and young people on the detail of individual school proposals as the project phased begin.

g. Place Planning

The annual birth rate in Dudley declined from 4,111 in 1991 to 3,548 in 2006 which represented a drop of 13.7% over the last 15 years. This is already affecting secondary intakes in Dudley. Appendix 1 includes the number of pupils in each age group from 2006/07 and how the demand for secondary school places will fall to 2014/15. Dudley's vision is that 11 – 16 secondary schools will be of approximately between 900 and 1200 pupils. The birth rate is predicted to stabilize at the lower level of around 3,500 until 2021 (Office of National Statistics). The size of each school will be planned to ensure that there are sufficient places to meet local need and that schools are sustainable financially.

Finance

13. On the basis of condition, sufficiency and suitability surveys and other knowledge about Dudley schools it is estimated that more than £200 million will be required to achieve the aspirations set out in this report. The capital will be provided by the DCSF subject to meeting a series of rigorous tests and approvals by the DCSF and H M Treasury. Please see paragraph 9.

The costs of building the capacity required to ensure that the strategy is implemented with robust project management arrangements will be substantial. Work is in progress to determine these costs more accurately using the experience of local authorities already in the national BSF programme. Further information will be reported to Select Committee and Cabinet with proposals to build capacity from April 2008.

The costs of the current work are met from existing budgets.

Law

14. As the project develops there will be significant implications covering school organisation, land, employment and finance. The Council's statutory powers relating to the building of schools and the provision of education are contained in the relevant Education Acts.

Equality Impact

15. The report takes into account the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy.

Recommendation

16. It is recommended that:

1. The Select Committee consider and endorse the emerging strategy for TSE, as set out in paragraph 12 and Appendix 2.
2. Advise the Cabinet Member on any issues that should be considered when developing the TSE Strategy for submission to the DCSF.
3. That further reports will be brought to Select Committee.



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List of Background Papers

15 June 2005
Cabinet Report Learning for the Future – Proposals for Governance Arrangements

13 December 2006
Cabinet Report Investing in the Future – Transforming Secondary Education

13 June 2007
Cabinet Report Investing in the Future - Transforming Secondary Education