

**Meeting of the Cabinet – 28<sup>th</sup> October 2009**

**Report of the Director of Children’s Services**

**Dudley MBC – Building Schools for the Future – Readiness to Deliver Supporting Statement**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To inform Cabinet about the progress that has been made on Building Schools for the future.

**Background**

2. The following summary outlines progress made by the Dudley Local Authority since March 2009. We can confirm that we will be submitting in December 2009 our ‘Readiness to Deliver’ statement as previously agreed. This submission is being drawn together following a series of planned consultations and development meetings that will involve Partnership for Schools, Office of the Schools Commissioner and Black Country Challenge officials.
3. Rapid progress has been made since our March submission. The Local Authority has given high priority to its strategy for 0 – 19 learning for the Borough ensuring that choice and diversity for all families is central to our vision. Vision 2025 - a strategic plan for learning, sets out our commitment to transforming the lives of all children and young people in Dudley by providing world class education and services. The strategy encompasses learning for everyone within the community, which includes young people, their teachers, mentors and their parents. The Building Schools for the Future strand of our vision planning has also advanced considerably. Key imperatives are raising achievement and reducing underperformance, personalised learning through a transforming 14 – 19 targeted offer, Special Educational Needs and specialist provision and access to ICT at any time and any where within the Borough.
4. Continuing Professional Development opportunities are developing significantly building on our beacon status for transforming the school work force. We are developing significant numbers of senior leaders through National College for School Leadership initiatives and Black Country Challenge developments. This will ensure strong leadership and management and the development of teaching and learning.
5. The *Vision 2025* will support the development of improved, inclusive and integrated services for all children, young people and their families. This will be promoted through the partnership of the Children’s Trust to enable a transformation of children's services

to raise self esteem, achievement and outcomes for all children. The Trust is also a key partner in helping to articulate and consult with all stakeholders. The aim of the vision will be to develop innovation and collaboration and will enable us to share best evidence based practice and makes the possibility of offering integrated and holistic services a reality.

6. Our targets are ambitious and transforming. They will not only lift performance above national norms but will tackle the types of underachievement and underperformance that are still found elsewhere. In Dudley we intend to lead practice in transforming learning. Our objective is to be an authority where young people gain outstanding outcomes. We intend to build on much of the leading edge work that is already taking place within the Borough. A report has been taken to Cabinet, has been fully discussed and approved by all parties. The Council as a whole through Corporate Board has also *endorsed the Vision 2025* and is actively supporting its development through a Cross Directorate Strategic Working Group.
7. Mark Wyatt the new Director of Children's Services joined the Local Authority in June 2009. A realignment of Children's Services has been approved by Council. A new Division within the Directorate of Children's Services has been created, 'Transforming Futures (Strategic Development)'. The key role for 'Transforming Futures' is to develop and manage Vision 2025 with the Primary Capital Programme, Building Schools for the Future initiative and the 14-19 Machinery of Government changes being central to this. The realignment of Children's Services will also heighten our ability to deliver early intervention and prevention work, thus working to narrow the gap.
8. There are a wide range of schools within the Borough; some top and high performing schools. The Council has continued to work successfully with secondary schools to drive up standards. Dudley Borough schools have posted their best set of results ever this year. The overall results from all schools within the Borough show an improvement of 61.1% – 65.5% GCSE 5A\* - C (+ 4.4%) and 46.9% – 49.6% for GCSE including English and Maths, (+2.7%). There is a twelve year record of continuous improvement and reduction in the number of schools below the floor to two, one of which, we are consulting on closing. However Headteachers are committed to work together to continue to eliminate under performance and underachievement with 14-19 reforms providing a key focus for these endeavours.
9. The secondary specialist schools programme has been further enhanced. A number of schools have attained a second specialist status and ICT mark. The work with schools has ensured that a strategic approach has been undertaken to maximise choice for young people Borough wide. To deliver our aims for world class Continuing Professional Development provision we are working with Higher Education providers and some schools have already incorporated training school status as their second specialism. This adds to the capacity of schools to collaborate in the sharing of good practice and for successful schools to support those schools facing challenges that restrict accelerated progress. This progress has also been enhanced by the growing strength of the two educational trusts that embrace secondary schools in Halesowen and Stourbridge. This will be enhanced by working with Further Education provision including our high performing 6<sup>th</sup> Form College.

10. A series of meetings this summer with Headteachers has refined our vision. A strategic Building Schools for the Future plan for the Borough is being developed. It will include education provision for every secondary and secondary age special school young person through the formation of township plans and related borough wide provision. These plans will enable delivery of *Vision 2025* to be developed in partnership with our schools, colleges, work based providers and other agencies. This builds upon the Council's development of a Joint Core Strategy. Working with all of the Black Country Councils, the Joint Core Strategy aims to set out how the Black Country should look in 2026 and establishes clear directions for change in order to achieve this transformation. The Joint Core Strategy is a spatial plan that addresses economic, transportation, social infrastructure and environmental needs.
11. Township planning involving every Headteacher in detailed discussions about collaborative working and shared targets to improve outcomes is taking place. This radical planning for additional and new joint collaborative approaches will tackle underachievement where tracking shows youngsters to be at risk of not achieving. We have revisited the data for the township and, set ambitious collaborative targets for all children. Individual learning pathways are being plotted against pupils' current attainment. From this ambitious collaboration to raise standards, the Headteachers with Local Authority officers are refining the accommodation requirements which will be needed to deliver the curriculum offer. This offer includes curriculum delivered in schools and a commissioning plan that will ensure children who are currently not engaged in learning or whose needs are not currently met are provided for. Radical planning includes imaginative links with Further Education and Higher Education and proposed capital planning that can enhance our Building Schools for the Future submission to ensure world class provision 11 – 19 and beyond.
12. The Local Authority is working with College Principals to link 16 – 19 plans and Local Authority/College plans together to provide viable educational pathways within the Borough and beyond. The Local Authority is also developing partnerships with higher education providers to promote stepping stones to degree level qualifications. There are opportunities to link Building Schools for the Future to both Further Education Capital plans and Higher Education Funding. The Local Authority is developing a Integrated Youth Support Team to drive education improvement coherently; this will include Learning and Skills Council duties, Information, Advice and Guidance duties, children not in education, employment and training requirements and Connexions.
13. Since March 2009 work has continued to implement an Extended Schools Strategy which links Children's Centres, primary, special and secondary schools together in local communities in order to improve all outcomes for young people and families and to help promote social cohesion. All phase 1 & 2 Children's Centres are open and delivering services to their communities and phase 3 will be operational by February 2010. This means every community in Dudley will have access to a Children's Centre and the services provided therein by spring 2010. We are also recognised as being an innovative authority that has pioneered valuable activity in areas like young people's participation in decision making, play, and therapeutic approaches to working with looked after children and healthy towns.
14. The Local Authority has continued its work on developing learning villages, which encompass learning for 3–16 year old pupils (19 year olds for pupils with Special

Education Needs) in order to promote inclusive practice and personalised learning. A new state of the art school has been designed for the replacement of the current Old Park Special School and will be rebuilt on the Thorns Secondary and Thorns Primary School site in Stourbridge Township. All three schools are already working together sharing expertise and knowledge to raise educational outcomes for all students. The start of construction is planned to commence spring 2010. The next stage in the implementation of the Local Authority's Special Educational Needs strategy will be incorporated into the *Vision 2025* as an integral part of our Building's School for the Future submission.

15. The Local Authority's successful Private Finance Initiative pathfinder ICT managed service, Dudley Grid for Learning, continues to gain national and international recognition and has been used as an exemplar and point of reference by many other authorities as they plan for Building Schools for the Future. The original ten year Private Finance Initiative contract with RM plc. has been extended for a further two years to enable effective integration with Dudley's Building Schools for the Future programme. A major 'Refresh' of infrastructure, hardware and software in 110 schools has just been completed on time and on budget. All schools have access to on line learning spaces, e-portfolios and a virtual learning platform. Work is now advanced to embed this technology in teaching and learning and deployment of several thousand low cost net book devices is helping to make personalised learning a reality across the Authority. We are now eager to move forward with our vision for 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning with the continuing support of a flexible ICT managed service.
16. Early and positive discussions have been held with Partnerships for Schools and Becta to explore the potential for an 'ICT first' procurement as the DGfL contract extension will come to an end before a Local Education Partnership can be established.

### **Planning to reach the standard**

17. The LA is actively working upon the following in order to be ready to meet the standards and enter in to Building Schools for the Future programme fully prepared:
  - a. Township planning is at an advanced stage and will deliver learning pathways which will meet the needs of all pupils ensuring appropriate commissioning for all vulnerable groups. Colleagues from Partnership for Schools and Office of the Schools Commissioner and Black Country Challenge officials will be invited to these meetings from the beginning of October onwards.
  - b. Dudley has updated the evidence provided in November 2008 with regard to issues such as pupil place planning and school organisation in order to translate the vision into a realistic robust plan for the future. A further development has been the inclusion of 16 – 19 information in order to achieve a coherent 11–19 strategy.
  - c. The Local Authority is meeting with local partnerships (formerly 4Ps) at the end of September in order to undertake a skills audit of staff to ensure an

appropriate team to manage the BSF programme. It has been agreed to commission support where skills gaps have been identified.

d. The Council has committed a capital receipt when it becomes available to support the funding of the set up costs. The secondary Headteachers have also indicated their willingness to financially support the project.

### **Finance**

18. The initial development of the vision will be delivered within existing Directorate resources. The technical element of our BSF submission will be supported by consultancy and the costs will be funded from the income generated from the disposal of surplus school buildings.
19. The actions outlined in this paper will support the development of a radical learning plan which will be funded via current budget, grant support where available and Building Schools for the Future funding.

### **Law**

20. The provision of learning by the Council for children adults and families falls within a range of Council functions including the Education and Children Acts and Local Government Acts.

### **Equality Impact**

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

Children and young people will be fully consulted during the development of Vision 2025 – A strategic plan for learning.

### **Recommendations**

22. It is recommended that:

Cabinet members note progress made to date on developing our Building Schools for the Future submission.

Cabinet members endorse the work to be undertaken next.



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List of Background Papers