
Meeting: Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 14 July 2009
Subject: Building Schools for the Future (BSF) and Transforming Teaching and Learning in Central Bedfordshire

Report of: Assistant Director, Learning and School Support

Summary: This report sets out the background to the BSF programme and outlines the early stages of the work of the Learning Transformation Board. It also outlines initial arrangements for gathering information and views from headteachers and chairs of governors about improving the way we organise school places; develop innovative curricula; manage transition and ensure that schools are at the centre of communities in Central Bedfordshire.

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Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: All

Function of: Council

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. Members are asked to consider the initial work on transforming teaching and learning and preparing the Strategy for Change in Central Bedfordshire and to give their views on the future direction of this work.**
- 2. Members are asked to make a response to Bedford Borough's Public Consultation, 'School Organisation Review'.**

Background to Building Schools for the Future (BSF)

1. The Government has promoted BSF as a Government funded 15 year programme of investment in secondary schools (including middle schools in Central Bedfordshire). This will involve building new schools and refurbishment and aims to transform learning, by:
 - enhancing school diversity and parental choice;
 - increasing the use of schools by the community;
 - seizing new technologies;
 - developing more creative approaches to learning;
 - producing places for learning that are exciting, flexible, healthy, safe, secure and environmentally sustainable.

2. Levels of deprivation and levels of underachievement are used by central government to prioritise the most recent wave of BSF funding. In Central Bedfordshire, the prioritised area would be Dunstable and Houghton Regis. This would be followed by Leighton Linlade, Sandy and Biggleswade, and then rural mid-Bedfordshire.
3. It is not yet clear when Central Bedfordshire will enter the programme, but there needs to be a 'readiness to deliver'. Also, there needs to be a planned approach to improving teaching and learning in the authority. There is scope for improvement in the outcomes of young people in some areas and some schools. Bidding for BSF funding provides a unique opportunity. The programme provides an important context for the new Council to develop its educational vision with its partners and to deliver its aspirations for children and communities. The programme acts as a catalyst for ensuring approaches to learning are innovative and modern. At its heart is personalised learning to ensure all pupils reach their potential.
4. This programme is not just about schools, it is about schools in their communities. All partners will need to consider carefully what learning for the wider community will mean, and how increased community use of schools for childcare, adult learning and family support can be facilitated. School facilities will be open to the whole community, taking into account local needs and priorities. Schools must be at the heart of the community.
5. Developing special needs provision, including proposals for special schools, could be brought forward as part of this programme. Similarly, there must be support for mainstream schools, ensuring they are more inclusive. Co-location with mainstream schools and special schools will be looked at, as will the local provision of special needs. The needs of all groups of pupils must be met, especially vulnerable groups.
6. The Council is required to set out a Strategy for Change document, against a national template (Appendix C). This sets out the educational vision, and the plans seek to reflect the wider Every Child Matters agenda. The final Strategy for Change document will be with members at the end of 2009, or early 2010. Discussions about the strategy have been taking place, without addressing the question of school reorganisation.
7. The Strategy for Change should illustrate how schools across the local area will provide more choice for parents and carers. The Strategy should be based around a firm commitment to raise standards, especially in the lowest attaining schools. It also needs to consider curriculum changes and how these can best be accommodated within school organisation so that schools can deliver vibrant and relevant curricula. These include 14-19 curriculum reform including the introduction of diplomas, the new Key Stage 3 curriculum, the Rose Report on a new primary curriculum and the recent introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
8. The Strategy needs to examine how the Local Authority can best work with Trusts in Central Bedfordshire, and the impact of the Trusts upon school effectiveness. Similarly, the impact of current and future federations should be analysed, and how these may work to improve school effectiveness.

9. The Shadow Executive considered a report by the Director of Children, Families and Learning on 17 March 2009 (Appendix B). The Shadow Executive resolved:
- **that in order to progress with the preparation for the Planning of Building Schools for the Future, Members agree the draft governance and management arrangements as detailed within the report, subject to amending the membership of the project preparation board to include the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources and to amend the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Communities to the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Development;**
 - **that early preparation work be done within existing budget provision and that a further report be brought to Members when the outcome of the BSF allocations is known and when actual costs of preparation will be easier to estimate; and**
 - **that the proposal to establish a Local Education Partnership at the appropriate time to deliver BSF in Central Bedfordshire be endorsed and in the meantime the Learning and Transformation Board undertake the preparatory work.**

The Learning Transformation Board

10. A Learning Transformation Board has been established to oversee the Building Schools for the Future Programme and to gather the information necessary to help elected members make informed decisions. The Board is made up of elected members, chairs of headteachers' groups and officers.
11. Ten workstreams have been identified in preparation for developing the Strategy for Change and to demonstrate a readiness for BSF. The workstreams are:
- Transforming Teaching and Learning;
 - Governance and Management;
 - Finance and Legal;
 - Property, Regeneration and Sustainability;
 - Information and Analysis for Decision Making;
 - Partnerships, Sport and Culture;
 - Communications;
 - Information and Learning Technology;
 - Every Child Matters and Extended Schools; and,
 - Special Educational Needs and Inclusion.
12. An important aspect of the work on transforming teaching and learning is to gather views and information about a range of areas for future development. This includes the way school places are organised; how innovative curricula can be developed; how transition is effectively managed and how schools can improve the quality of life for all of the people in our communities.

13. Initial meetings have been arranged for headteachers and chairs of governors to discuss principles which should be taken into account in making decisions and to start to explore the wide range of options and issues in relation to possible future arrangements for schools in Central Bedfordshire.
14. Information and evidence which would inform the drawing up of principles to underpin the decision making process could include:
 - school effectiveness as judged by Ofsted inspection outcomes;
 - school standards and achievement;
 - the number of surplus places in schools and communities;
 - population growth and future house building, and,
 - the distance of travel for young people to school.
15. In addition principles to be considered could include;
 - the need to provide excellent learning in up-to-date buildings;
 - the importance of improving recruitment, including the provision of high quality leadership and management;
 - the need for flexibility to meet communities' needs;
 - the need to provide value for money;
 - the need to provide choice for parents and carers;
 - the importance of developing sustainable communities with schools being the hubs for extended services; and,
 - the need to develop strong partnerships and to provide continuity of learning for pupils between schools.
16. A more complete list of evidence and information to support the decision making process, and principles which should be applied to such decisions, will be developed after meetings with headteachers and chairs of governors have been held.

Central Bedfordshire's Response to Bedford Borough's Public Consultation, 'School Organisation Review'

17. Bedford Borough has entered into a public consultation with regards to their proposed school organisation review (Appendix D). Central Bedfordshire, through the Learning Transformation Board, is developing initial views on the proposed review and Overview and Scrutiny will be verbally updated on these at the meeting so members are able to make their response.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

Achieving BSF funding and transforming teaching and learning would support the Central Bedfordshire Strategic Plan (2009-11) particularly in educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people.

Financial:

Authorities that have already participated in the programme have had to set aside considerable resources. At a meeting of the County Council Executive in January 2007 £1.8 million was set aside to fund the implementation plan for Bedfordshire. This allocation has been disaggregated to Bedford Borough Council, as this was needed for their on-going base budget provision for projects already agreed. There may be a need for a future report on budget provision should intensive work be needed in 2009/10 on BSF preparation. In the meantime current preparatory work is being funded from existing resources.

Legal:

A project of this nature has significant and wide-ranging legal implications for the Council associated with Governance and the establishment of a Local Education Partnership. Once the project is up and running there could be complex contractual arrangements involving £200 - £300 millions worth of building projects. Partnership for Schools has produced standard contractual documentation, which the Council will be expected to adopt if it proceeds with the BSF option.

Risk Management:

Initial risks have been identified and mitigation developed. If Central Bedfordshire was successful in achieving BSF funding then mitigation of risk would be a key part of the project.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

In the event of specific work stream impacting on staff, appropriate consultations will be undertaken with trade unions and professional associations

Equalities/Human Rights: None**Community Safety:**

Improvements in the quality of school buildings and the opportunities for extended services will enhance the opportunities for wider community development and improved community safety.

Sustainability:

To develop new school buildings which are well designed and maintained during their lifetime and provide optimum efficiency and effectiveness in relation to their use by schools and the wider community.

Appendices:

Appendix A – School Organisation in Central Bedfordshire (June 2009)

Appendix B – Report to the Shadow Executive ‘Building Schools for the Future’ (March 2009)

Appendix C – Partnership for Schools, Building Schools for the Future – Strategy for Change

Appendix D – Bedford Borough’s Public Consultation, ‘School Organisation Review