
Meeting: Executive
Date: 31 May 2011
Subject: Outcomes of the review of Transforming Teaching and Learning in Dunstable and Houghton Regis

Report of: Executive Member for Children's Services

Summary: This report sets out the outcome of the review of school organisation in Dunstable and Houghton Regis, as informed by the Council's Education Vision. It describes the options by which the aspirations of the vision could be achieved and recommends a preferred option that reflects the latest education policy for school improvement, the increasing independence of schools from the Local Authority and the Council's responsibility as the commissioners of support for underperforming schools.

Advising Officer: Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Sylvia Gibson, Assistant Director, Learning & Strategic Commissioning (Interim)

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: All in Dunstable and Houghton Regis

Function of: Executive

Key Decision Yes

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

Delivering the Council's Education Vision is of key importance in Central Bedfordshire's Strategic Plan (2009-11), particularly in educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people and managing growth effectively.

Financial:

Each option has been the subject of appraisal that has considered the minimum capital and revenue cost of implementation, alongside other criteria. Financial modelling has been undertaken at a high level, based on a range of assumptions, to provide a minimum cost.

As outcomes of the review four potential options were identified in an initial high level appraisal which can be found at the conclusion of Appendix A. This sets out the main findings of the review. Of these, option 2 was discounted early in the process as a result of its high cost and the feasibility of structural change due to new legislation referred to in the legal section. This report therefore recommends option 1 and comments on other options.

Option 1 has no significant capital cost that could not be met. This option describes a situation where schools are entering partnerships, paying any capital need from their own school's devolved formula capital. However, schools may require additional support in investigating the benefits of new models of partnership and leadership, and in this instance the Council would expect to request sufficient additional revenue support from the Schools Forum. Specific revenue savings for schools arising from different partnership and other management arrangements are difficult to quantify given the range of differing models that could be adopted by schools. However, any savings would remain ring fenced to the school budget and would be available for reallocation to schools.

In implementing this proposal, the Council's Executive will receive a report on any specific proposals that might arise in future where they would be the decision maker. These proposals might include changing age ranges, adjusting intakes, enlarging premises and discontinuing schools. In these instances each report will provide financial modelling based on the specific proposal. Schools that are affected financially in terms of pupil numbers by other schools changing age ranges could not be financially compensated. It is therefore possible, as with all of the other options, that future school financial viability may be an issue for governors of some schools to consider carefully as they are considering partnerships.

Option 4 requires a minimum capital investment of £30.7M over four years to expand lower schools into primary schools and to convert an existing middle school into a new secondary school. This option has the following expenditure profile.

2012/13 - £4.5M
2013/14 - £22.3M
2014/15 - £3.4M
2015/16 - £0.5M

In the absence of any strategic capital funding from the DfE, this capital demand would have to be met by the Council utilising reserves and through borrowing. In this option, as with other options, a number of school sites would become surplus and could be subject to disposal to raise capital from September 2014 to part fund this option. However, there are significant risks associated with reliance upon this income, as outlined below in the section on Risk Management, as well as risks from legislation that allows schools to seek to become Academies to avoid structural change.

Option 3 requires a minimum capital investment of £16.2M to expand lower schools into primary schools with the following expenditure profile.

2012/13 - £3.1M

2013/14 - £12.5M

2014/15 - £0.6M

In the absence of any strategic capital funding from the DfE this capital demand would have to be met by the Council utilising reserves and through borrowing and as in Option 4 is subject to risk as outlined in the Risk Management section of the report. The same legislative opportunities for schools to seek to become Academies to avoid structural change apply.

These indicative costs have been based on DfE cost multipliers for new provision required in each of options 3 and 4. They make no allowance for addressing existing condition or suitability issues in these schools, and they assume that the overall area of each school site, particularly in playing field provision, is free from planning constraints for the proposed growth in pupil numbers and new provision.

From a desktop study, six of the current lower school sites are known to have insufficient playing field provision if they were to be expanded as primary schools on their current sites as required by options 3 and 4.

Further detailed feasibility studies would be required on each school site involved in these options to provide confidence in the capital figures quoted above and the deliverability of the required growth. Likewise, for school sites that would become surplus under option 4 the feasibility studies would also determine the potential for redevelopment and therefore the sale value of each site. This further feasibility work would cost £100k revenue for option 3 and £80k revenue for option 4 in 2011/12 which is currently unbudgeted for.

Implementation would require significant support to deliver change management plans in schools to prepare for the transitional arrangements required to move from the current to the proposed system. The Council's revenue costs associated with options 3 and 4 could therefore be significant and would largely be required throughout the implementation period of 2011/12 to 2014/15.

As with previous options, it would not be possible to compensate schools financially for reductions in pupil numbers where changes to schools age ranges may affect pupil numbers in other schools as pupil funding is formula driven.

Legal:

The Council has a duty under section 13A of the Education Act 1996 to promote high standards, ensure fair access to educational opportunity and to promote the fulfilment by every child of his/her educational potential. The Council has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient high quality school places within its area and to promote diversity and increase parental choice. These duties are to be maintained under proposals set out in the Schools White Paper "The Importance of Teaching", published in November 2010, which also refers to the Local Authority's future role in school improvement, outlined within this report.

The Local Authority, subject to appeal to the schools adjudicator, can propose, and is the decision maker for, a range of changes in maintained school provision. This includes changing age ranges, adjusting intakes, enlarging premises and discontinuing schools. Governors of Community, Voluntary and Foundation schools can also propose a range of changes to their schools and are often, but not always, the decision makers for their own schools, particularly in deciding partnership arrangements and conversion to academy status.

Under the current arrangements, the Local Authority can support community schools to make alterations to upper and lower age limits through a process of consultation and by publishing statutory proposals, a process which can be as short as three months, with final decision making within a further two months. These alterations can be proposed and published independently of the Local Authority by the Governing Bodies of Foundation and Voluntary schools and implementation supersedes any arrangements published in the admissions booklet.

However, initial consideration of the proposals must be undertaken against the factors set out in a national document called "Decision Makers' Guidance", before they are published. These include the availability of any capital funding and the sufficiency of playing field and other provision for the planned enlarged school, the effect on standards and school improvement and the need for places. The Local Authority is the decision maker for these proposals and there are various rights of appeal.

The Academies Act 2010 brought considerable freedoms for school governing bodies to consult upon and apply for Academy status. As of April 2011, a broader set of circumstances was announced whereby any school can apply for Academy status. Previous requirements restricting this opportunity to outstanding schools or failing schools have been changed. Academies can also propose changes in their provision, including the extension of their age range. The Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) is the decision maker in this process, subject to appeal to the Schools Adjudicator, and the Local Authority is a consultee in the consultation process required by the Academy. The processes required for any specific proposal to make changes in school organisation are set in legislation and in guidance provided for decision makers. To date, the Council has not commented specifically on any proposals regarding changing of provision, except for noting the aspirations of the Governors. In future the Council will express a view in relation to the number of pupil places and the educational impact.

The guidance sets out a range of criteria that must be considered when evaluating any proposal. These criteria have been used as the basis for the appraisal of each option set out in this report to ensure consistency. If the Local Authority were minded to consult on either option 3 or 4 it would need to have undertaken this robust assessment and indicate, among other factors, its commitment to providing the capital and revenue investment required to implement either option before consultation commenced.

Risk Management:

The programme to transform learning has been subject to a risk management framework that has supported the work required to produce the Council's Education Vision and to undertake the first area review. Options arising specifically from this review have also been subject of risk assessment as outlined throughout this report.

The findings of the review, and an initial appraisal of the options arising from it, are attached at Appendix A. Appendices B and C have built on this early work through more detailed appraisal and also outline risks associated with each option. Of particular note is the policy context in which the review has been undertaken. This has changed significantly as a result of the Education Bill and the Academies Act 2010.

Option 4 proposes a number of school closures where sites would be surplus and represent potential income to part fund the required capital investment. However, it should be noted that the disposal of the sites is subject to a number of constraints and in the first instance requires Secretary of State approval under Schedule 35A (Academies), which could require the transfer of the former school site to the promoter of a Free School and S77 (disposal of Playing Fields). All of the potential surplus sites will present challenges to their redevelopment and disposal e.g. Listed buildings; conservation area status; open space requirements.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

Staff and Trades Unions will be fully consulted on any options proposed as a result of this review where the Local Authority is the decision maker. Where the Local Authority is not the decision maker, Governing Bodies will make their own arrangements for consultation. These arrangements will not be subject to quality control by the Council although the Council may offer comment as set out in the legal section of this report.

Subject to service buy back arrangements, schools will have the support of the Council's Human Resources team where any proposals for partnerships require changes in school staff structures or to terms and conditions of employment.

Both the Church of England and Roman Catholic Diocese have been informed of this review and are represented by their Education Officers on the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Church of England Diocese of St Albans neither encourages nor discourages school to convert to Academy status, leaving the decision to individual Governing Bodies but will support Schools who wish to go down this line, provided they meet certain basic requirements. The Roman Catholic Diocese has expressed a preference for Federations within the Roman Catholic school sector.

Equalities/Human Rights:

A summary of equalities issues for each option is attached in the final section of Appendix C and the latest draft of an Equalities Impact Assessment is attached at Appendix D. This will be developed further on a school by school basis to support any preferred option where the Local Authority is decision maker.

Options 3 and 4 would require the Local Authority to undertake a full and robust consultation exercise to ensure that all stakeholders are engaged in the process and have suitable opportunities to express support or to raise concerns about the proposals.

Community Safety:

Schools have an important role in working alongside a range of other agencies to ensure safety in their local communities. Schools working together in partnership are more likely than individual schools to have the capacity to engage in the wider work of the Community Safety Partnership.

Sustainability:

The findings within this report reflect the need to plan for significant growth in the Dunstable and Houghton Regis area, to reconfigure schools to reduce surplus places where they are unlikely to be affected by the planned growth, and to ensure that they are financially and educationally sustainable.

Summary of Overview and Scrutiny Comments:

- The Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee will consider this report as published in the Executive Agenda on 24 May 2011. The Committee commented on these proposals at its meeting on 1 March 2011 but asked to meet again just before the Executive meeting to make any final comments. These comments will be available separately at the meeting by way of a handout.

RECOMMENDATION:

that the Executive agrees to apply Option 1 to the development of the supply of school places in the Dunstable and Houghton Regis area. This will mean a continuation of the current pattern of provision but with schools actively encouraged to engage formally in hard federations, Academy chains and/or trusts with a 0 – 19 age focus to secure good transitions and improve educational outcomes.

Reason for Recommendation: To ensure that the Council's Education Vision is achieved, recognising the changes in national education policy and the need to ensure the deliverability of any chosen option.

Executive Summary

The Learning Transformation Programme is an important element in the strategy for raising educational outcomes and is a key mechanism for delivering the Council's Education Vision.

Following approval of the Education Vision by the Executive, a review of schools in Dunstable and Houghton Regis, the first of four geographical areas outlined in the document, started in April 2010 to determine how school organisation could best meet the aspirations contained in the Education Vision and raise standards in the area.

The review was undertaken during a period of considerable change in education policy, as set out in the Schools White Paper "The Importance of Teaching" published in November 2010. In addition, during the review the DfE indicated a 60% reduction in education capital spending over the next four years.

Following consultation with ward members, headteachers and governors, four options for the area were drawn up. These were then reduced to two options for detailed appraisal. Of these two options, the Executive is asked to agree Option 1.

Background Information

1. In March 2009, governance and management arrangements were established following a recommendation to the Council's Shadow Executive, to guide early preparation work for the Council's potential entry into the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme. It was not certain that BSF funding would be available. However transforming teaching and learning, improving educational outcomes, reviewing the place of the school in the community and the standards of school buildings were recognised as important areas of focus for the Council whether or not it could eventually access substantial funding through the BSF scheme.
2. Following consultation with Head Teachers and Chairs of Governing Bodies in 2009, the Council's Education Vision was approved by the Executive on 9 March 2010. The Vision was formed around a set of core principles of educational transformation that continue to be relevant for all schools, including those that have subsequently become independent of the Local Authority as Academies.
3. As a result of the approval of the Education Vision, a review of schools in Dunstable and Houghton Regis, the first of four geographical areas outlined in the document, commenced in April 2010 to determine how school organisation could best meet the needs of the Vision. Head Teachers and Chairs of Governing Bodies worked with Council officers to undertake analysis of relevant data in the area to inform the review and eventual options arising from it. The findings of the review were reported to the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 1 March 2011. These findings are attached at Appendix A with the four high level options that were initially identified and described.

Education Policy Context

4. The review has been undertaken during a period of considerable change in education policy, defining a new role for the Local Authority and creating a new relationship between the Council and schools in Central Bedfordshire. Among a number of new policy areas, the Schools White Paper "The Importance of Teaching" was published in November 2010 and sets the direction for the Department for Education's (DfE) programme of school reform.
5. The Education Bill, going through the Parliamentary process at the time of writing, reaffirms and expands the Local Authority role as champion of choice with the duty to ensure that there are sufficient high quality school places in the area, to secure a wide range of education options for parents and families and to challenge schools which fail to improve. The requirement to ensure that parental preferences are reflected in strategic decisions on new provision is therefore reinforced.
6. Schools are self-managing and autonomous and therefore responsible for their own performance and improvement. The role of the local authority is to support and, where necessary, intervene should the provision and quality for children and young people be compromised.
7. Educational outcomes in Dunstable/Houghton Regis are below those of the other three areas of Central Bedfordshire (see Appendix A).

8. At Key Stage 2 in both English and Mathematics combined, 2010 outcomes for the Dunstable/Houghton Regis area for Level 4 and above were 5 per cent below the figure for Central Bedfordshire and 6 per cent below the national figure.
9. Progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 is below average across the three Upper Schools serving this area. The percentage of pupils achieving 5 A*-C GCSE passes including English and mathematics is significantly below the Central Bedfordshire average. All Saints Academy achieved 27%, Queensbury achieved 42% and Manshead achieved 46% compared with 54.2% for Central Bedfordshire as a whole.
10. The Government has introduced new floor standards. Schools falling below the floor standards, or which are on a downward trajectory or otherwise causing concern, must be included in a School Improvement Plan required by the DfE. At Key Stage 2, schools are below the floor standard if fewer than 60% of pupils achieve level 4 in English and mathematics combined. At Key Stage 4, schools are below the floor standard if fewer than 35% of pupils achieve five GCSE A*-C grades including English and mathematics. In Dunstable/Houghton Regis All Saints Academy and Kings Houghton Middle School fall below this floor standard.
11. The school improvement challenge for the schools in this area is to:
 - raise standards and improve the pupil learning journey 0-19
 - ensure that no school is less than satisfactory
 - ensure that there are significantly more outstanding middle and upper schools with the majority good or better.

In line with the proposals in the developing legislation, Central Bedfordshire's school improvement strategy is moving away from centralised support and increasingly moving towards commissioning support from the strongest partnerships of schools or from individual schools or other providers

The success of this strategy is dependent on the extent and quality of partnerships, as collaboration across schools and settings is an important way of increasing the capacity of schools. School-to-school support provides:

- Shared governance
 - Leadership development at all levels
 - Shared professional development opportunities
 - Shared strategies to manage exclusions and attendance
 - Inclusive practices
12. In order to facilitate schools entering Federations, the Council will provide a plan that will publish data similar to that set out in the appendices to this report. School governing bodies will make their decisions against this analysis. There has been little interest in Free schools in Central Bedfordshire. If additional pupil numbers are required this will be set against the published needs analysis and major decisions, where the Council is the decision maker i.e. where schools are not Academies, will be made through the usual arrangements of a report to the Executive.

13. The Council still retains a strong role to intervene where it judges that performance in the community schools is not good enough. The education outcomes for Dunstable and Houghton Regis shows that in some schools this challenge will be required.

In addition, Central Bedfordshire Council will, where required, use the powers or levers of improvement afforded to a Local Authority (LA) i.e.

- A formal warning notice to the governing body
 - Appointment of additional governors
 - Suspension of the delegated budget
 - Proposal to the Secretary of State of the appointment of an Interim Executive Board (IEB) to replace the governing body
 - The requirement for schools(s) to collaborate with another school or FE college or to federate and/or convert to an academy.
14. An important aspect of the Government's reform programme is the introduction of University Technical Colleges (UTC) providing vocational and work based learning sponsored by Universities and Colleges with at least two specialisms. A proposal by Central Bedfordshire College to establish a UTC based on product design and manufacturing on the Kingsland Campus in Houghton Regis will bring considerable diversity to the 14–19 offer in the area for young people of all abilities. It will provide for 600 young people from Dunstable, Houghton Regis, Luton and the wider area.
15. The UTC is part of the 0-19 continuum of curriculum provision in the area and Upper schools will need to work closely with Central Bedfordshire College to ensure that the potential impact on pupil numbers is understood and that local 14-19 provision meets the requirements of young people across the local area.
16. The White Paper "The Importance of Teaching" and emergent legislation also reflect the Government's intention to expand the Academies and Free Schools programme by opening it up to all types of schools. Under the previous Government, Academies were established to replace schools in challenging circumstances with the support of sponsors. This mechanism for school improvement has continued and there is an expectation that schools that are seriously failing or which are unable to improve, are transformed through speedy conversion to Academy status.
17. In the review area, the Governing Body of Mill Vale Middle School, which has an Ofsted Notice to Improve, has indicated its intention to seek the sponsorship of Barnfield College as a new Academy. At the time of writing, the Secretary of State is considering whether to approve this conversion. Similar requests for schools in other Councils have been approved.
18. The Academies Act 2010 heralded the expansion in the Academies programme by providing schools that have achieved an Ofsted rating of outstanding, or good with outstanding features, with the opportunity to convert. Two schools in the review area have already converted to Academy status under the new regime. On 7 April 2010 the DfE announced the further expansion of the Academies programme by considering applications from any school that can make a compelling educational case for conversion.

19. As independent schools free from Local Authority control, Academies have a range of freedoms, including the ability to seek to extend their age range. In the review area, All Saints Academy is currently consulting to become an 11-18 secondary school from September 2012, reflecting its original ambition outlined in the Academy expression of interest submitted by the former school. The decision will be subject to the outcome of the consultation and the Council will have to consider its response given the impact that the proposal could have on the wider pattern of provision in the area.
20. All Saints Academy's proposal is also subject to the availability of capital funding required to provide the additional capacity. In parallel with the consultation exercise the Academy has submitted a request to the YPLA for £4.4M to fund the additional capacity. This funding is in addition to the £15M already secured for the construction of the new building for 13-18 provision. The YPLA is also the decision maker for the proposal and objections can be referred to the Schools Adjudicator.
21. The DfE has outlined a 60% reduction in education capital spending over the next four years and has stated its priority to address the condition of the current school estate and ensure that there are sufficient primary school places as a result of the increase in the national birth rate. In Central Bedfordshire this priority is brought into sharper focus with the need to manage the growth in pupil numbers expected as a result of housing development.
22. This change in emphasis also impacts on the historic focus on surplus places which still represent an inefficient use of resource but must be seen in light of the need to manage significant growth. To ensure the integration of new provision funded through S106, whether as infill development or as a result of a completely new growth area would need to be planned to follow the pattern of provision that is in existence at that time. The capital cost of new provision is calculated on a per pupil basis from the forecast yield of the new development and the final cost is therefore the same irrespective of the pattern of provision that is in existence. For infill development the choice of school to be expanded will include an assessment of locality, educational standards and leadership and management capacity to deliver an enlarged school. For standalone new provision, the Council may be required to seek new providers through a competition. This process is defined by regulation and all new schools are expected to be created as Academies.

Options for Change

23. Four options were originally drawn up. These were:

Option 1: A continuation of the current pattern of provision but with schools supported to engage formally in hard federations, Academy chains and/or trusts to secure transitions and improve outcomes.

Option 2: A two tier model of 5-11 primary schools and 11-19 secondary schools closing all Middle schools.

Option 3: A two tier model of 5-11 Primary and 11-19 Secondary schools, closing all middle schools. Each new secondary school would operate across 3 sites i.e. existing upper and two former middle school sites.

Option 4: A two tier 5-11 Primary and 11-19 model, closing all Middle schools, converting Upper schools to Secondary but limiting each new Secondary in size to the pupil capacity of the former Upper school.

24. On the 1 March 2011, the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered these options and agreed to recommend options 1 and 4 for further detailed work. The Committee will further consider the detail set out in this report to the Executive at its meeting on 24 May 2011 and will provide further comment for the Executive's consideration by way of a handout at the Executive meeting.
25. The results of this further appraisal of the options are attached at Appendix A. Appendix B includes a management summary of options appraisal scoring against the potential to deliver each of the educational outcomes of the review, the corporate capacity to deliver and the Council's ability to finance each option. Appendix C provides commentary for each option against the themes set out in the Decision Makers Guidance. An Equalities Impact Assessment is also attached at Appendix D.
26. Option 1 is most closely aligned with the Education Vision and developing national education policy by promoting and supporting schools to support each other through partnership arrangements or through conversion to Academy status. The Local Authority can assist these arrangements by utilising the school organisation powers that it has where maintained schools are voluntarily seeking organisational change or where it is required to act where schools are causing significant concern. In these circumstances the statutory process that controls such proposals will be required, and will be subject of separate recommendations as necessary on a case by case basis to the Council's Executive.
27. Partnership working is in evidence across the schools in Dunstable/Houghton Regis, although some of this work is at the earliest stages. As well as seeking to improve their standards, schools are also looking to work closely within their recognised pyramids, within their faith base and also with schools that cater for the same age range. Through working in partnership, schools can more effectively chart the pupil journey and ensure effective progress for their pupils.
28. Options 2, 3 and 4 are variants of a proposal to reorganise maintained schools into a two tier model of primary (5-11) and secondary (11-19) schools. These options carry significant capital requirements compared with Option 1 (see Appendix A). Furthermore, a Schools Adjudicator determination in November 2010 of a proposal to reorganise schools in the Purbeck area of Dorset summarised the historic national debate on the relative merit of three and two tier systems and pointed to the lack of conclusive evidence of a link with school performance. The Adjudicator's report stressed that educational achievement is affected by a wide range of factors, of which the quality of teaching and school leadership is probably the most important. Structural and school organisation factors are relatively less important.

29. The views of headteachers and chairs of governing bodies for schools in the review area are mixed. The consultation and initial consideration of options for the area has shown that many are in favour of a two tier system that reflects the structure of the current national curriculum and minimises transition points. However, there is also a strongly held view in support of the current system and a belief in its alignment with the social emotional development of a child's needs. Despite this difference in educational philosophy there appears now to be acknowledgement of the need to work more effectively in partnerships to share the pupil journey 0-19 and the Education vision of the Council has been embedded in school improvement work since it was agreed in 2010.

Conclusion

30. The Dunstable and Houghton Regis area is the most vulnerable in educational terms of the four review areas in Central Bedfordshire. This vulnerability also restricts the local capacity to manage change without support.
31. The Council's ability to be strategic in terms of system wide school reorganisation has largely been overtaken by the policy move to Academies that are now seen as the vehicle for school improvement. The number of Central Bedfordshire schools that have converted or are applying to do so is significant and is forecast to increase with the broadening of the qualifying criteria.
32. The financial deliverability of options 2, 3 and 4 is in significant doubt, requiring capital and revenue investment by the Council at a time of shrinking resources and low reserves. However, even if the finances were deliverable, the policy framework set out in the report shows how the outcomes would be difficult to achieve whilst individual school governing bodies can elect for Academy status and so opt out of the impact of collective decisions made on their behalf.
33. The review of the National Curriculum and the ongoing reform of vocational education with accelerated development of 14-19 University Technical Colleges and Technical Academies provide an opportunity for schools and partnerships of schools to work together more closely on models to deliver an improved 0-19 offer, whether it be through academies, trusts or federations.
34. Whilst Option 1 is a continuation of the current pattern of provision, it provides support for schools to engage formally in hard federations, academy chains and/or trusts to secure transitions from one phase of education to the next and to improve outcomes. This option might still include the closure of schools on the grounds of small school size or because they are otherwise causing concern based on data, other local intelligence or Ofsted judgement.

35. School Governors may identify financial pressures and, as set out in the financial section of the report, it should be noted that whilst Option 1 may require less strategic intervention from the Local Authority, all options will require strategic and informed support by way of good data being provided to Governors on school places planning issues. Financial pressures in schools with vacant school places in the short term could mean that partnerships between schools become perceived by some Governors as a necessity not a choice as they consider their budget structures. This is aligned with the Government consultation on National Funding Formula and schools becoming free from Local Authority control.
36. The Local Authority will need to provide consistent school improvement data across the review area to ensure that Governors can make informed choices about partnerships to improve learning outcomes across the 0 – 19 age range.
37. The Local Authority will need to work with Governors to model the educational, financial and places planning consequences of proposed partnerships, including advising Governors of less popular schools on how to undertake risk assessments on proposed mergers in to Hard Federations either across same age range schools or in vertical age range partnerships.
38. The impact of recommending a particular option on the next review in the Leighton Buzzard and Linslade area should be considered. If structural options to move to a primary/secondary age provision are not recommended as an outcome of this review, i.e. if the Executive chooses Option 1, then the Leighton Buzzard and Linslade review will be framed to focus much more on places planning within a partnerships/Academies structure and will not consider structural changes to age ranges. The resolution of the Executive arising from this report will be the starting point for discussion in that area.
39. For the above reasons it is recommended that the Executive resolves to apply Option 1 to the development of the supply of school places in the Dunstable and Houghton Regis review area.

Appendices:

- Appendix A – Report - Findings of the Dunstable and Houghton Regis Review
- Appendix B – Management summary of options appraisal scoring
- Appendix C – Detailed options appraisal
- Appendix D – Equalities Impact Assessment

Background Papers: (open to public inspection)

- 1) Building Schools for the Future (BSF) - Shadow Executive 17th March 2009
- 2) Building Schools for the Future (BSF) and Transforming Teaching and Learning in Central Bedfordshire - Overview & Scrutiny 14th July 2009
- 3) Next steps on Transforming Teaching and Learning in Central Bedfordshire – Children’s Services Overview & Scrutiny 11th August 2009
- 4) Learning Transformation Programme – Executive 15th September 2009
- 5) Learning Transformation – Central Bedfordshire’s Education Vision Executive 9th March 2010
- 6) Outcomes of the review of Transforming Teaching and Learning in Dunstable and Houghton Regis - Children’s Services Overview & Scrutiny 1st March 2011

7) “The Importance of Teaching” schools White Paper - Department for Education (DfE)

Location of papers:

All reports are available on the Council’s website or the DfE website.