

## **CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**17 MARCH 2008**

### **CALL-IN: OUTCOME OF THE CONSULTATION ON ESTABLISHING A NEW ACADEMY SCHOOL IN STROOD**

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#### **Summary**

This report informs the Committee of the call-in request in relation to the decision to establish a co-educational academy in Strood.

#### **1. Budget and Policy Framework**

1.1 In accordance with chapter 4, part 5, paragraph 16.3 of the constitution with regard to decisions, the Cabinet decision 28-30/2008 has been called in to this Committee by six Members of the Labour Group, for the reason set out at paragraph 2.3.

#### **2. Cabinet decision**

2.1 On 19 February 2008 the Cabinet considered a report relating to this matter.

2.2 The Cabinet made the following decision:

##### **Decision**

##### **Number: Decision:**

28/2008 The Cabinet agreed to authorise the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, to publish formal proposals including statutory notices relating to the closure of Chapter and Temple Schools.

29/2008 The Cabinet agreed to delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Portfolio

Holder for Children's Services, to determine whether to approve the closure proposals at the end of the statutory consultation period, if no objections are received.

30/2008 The Cabinet agreed to delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, to pursue the necessary steps to establish a co-educational academy of eight forms of entry on the Chapter site admitting students aged 11 – 19 from 1 September 2009 (subject to no decisions being taken committing the Council to any course of action until and unless the Council has approved the closure proposal).

### **Reasons:**

The new academy will provide state of the art facilities for a progressive curriculum. Crucially, the involvement of the sponsors will ensure that the curriculum fully reflects the changing demands both of higher education and of business. These will combine to impact positively on ensuring that both boys and girls in Strood gain the knowledge, confidence and skills to develop as active and productive members of their communities and informed and responsible citizens.

2.3 These decisions were called in by six Members of the Labour Group. On the call in request the reason for call in was stated as being:

"To examine phasing, management structure and SOCK/Chapter proposals"

### **3. Director's Comments**

#### SOCK Proposals

3.1 The SOCK campaigners make two proposals. In the first option, a bid would be submitted for academy status in 2008. However, Chapter would maintain its existing leadership and management, staff and structures, becoming co-educational in 2009. Boys would be admitted starting with Year 7, so that the whole school would become co-educational over four years (Chapter has established a two-year key stage three, in common with a number of other Medway schools, so that pupils enter the sixth form, which is already co-educational, after four years rather than the usual five). The campaign would wish the construction of the new building to begin immediately. In stage two, once the new co-educational school was established and the building complete, the new principal would be appointed and the new staffing structure implemented. This is proposed for 2011. At the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny meeting on 30 January, officers made it clear that this timescale was, in their view, insufficiently urgent and there was considerable discussion about whether such an arrangement would be acceptable to the Department for Children, Schools and

Families (DCSF). Following a meeting at DCSF on 15 February, Lord Adonis issued a letter (at appendix 2) which was read out at the Cabinet meeting on 19 February, setting out arrangements for implementing the proposed changes which would be acceptable to him as well as to the local authority. These arrangements are outlined below in points 4.5 to 4.13 and involve the simultaneous closure of Chapter and Temple schools in August 2009 followed immediately afterwards by the opening of the academy.

- 3.2 The second proposal made by the SOCK campaigners suggests there would be no academy but the school would benefit from Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme in 2015. To summarise, the new co-educational school would open in 2009 following limited alterations to the building to allow the admission of boys. Substantial work to replace the building would await the implementation of the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme in 2015. This would delay the completion of building work to 2016 or 2017. In this case, the timescale is clearly insufficiently urgent, requiring pupils to be educated in inappropriate buildings for seven or eight years.
- 3.3 Most seriously, in both options as set out by SOCK, the effect on Temple would significantly disadvantage boys in Strood. Those students currently at Temple would not benefit from the new arrangements until they reached the sixth form. The youngest two cohorts would be dispersed to other schools at the end of their key stage three. In such a process it would be very difficult to ensure continuity of education for the boys concerned: equally seriously, the decanting of these groups of boys to other Medway schools would have an impact on the receiving schools themselves.
- 3.4 There would also be serious staffing implications in the SOCK proposals. The effect would be to offer a significant advantage to Chapter staff, who would remain in post (either until the new academy was formed, or for the foreseeable future, depending on the model adopted). In the academy case, the Chapter staff would then constitute the ring-fenced group from which the academy staff would be drawn. In the meantime, Temple staff would be employed in a school, which was declining in size year on year, requiring an annual round of redundancies in order to maintain a balanced budget. They would have no access to new posts in Chapter other than through the normal appointment process and, at the point when any academy was implemented, most Temple staff would already have left the school through natural wastage or redundancy. Managing this situation would present serious challenges to the staff and governors at Temple.

### Phasing

- 3.5 Following the discussion with DCSF, the Cabinet decision was that both Chapter and Temple schools would close on 31 August 2009 followed by the opening of the new academy on 1 September 2009 under the management of the new academy principal.

- 3.6 In September 2009 the new academy would admit a mix of both boys and girls to year 7 who would be based in Chapter School accommodation. This pattern would continue thereafter, with the erection of temporary accommodation to accommodate the increase to 8FE.
- 3.7 The accommodation at the Temple site would continue to be used for the education of students until the new academy building is complete in 2011. From this point, all the remaining students would be based in the new academy building on the site of the former Chapter School.
- 3.8 The new leadership and management of the academy would ensure a coherent vision and set of values operating within and across both sites.
- 3.9 When the new building is complete the Temple site would no longer be needed by the academy.

### Management Structure

- 3.10 The academy management structure would be determined by the new Governing Body; this would be established in the summer 2008 and would include two members nominated by the Local Authority as a co sponsor.
- 3.11 Following the statutory notice period, if a final decision is made in summer 2008 to close the two schools, the University College of the Creative Arts, as the lead sponsor, would take steps to establish the Governing Body of the new academy.
- 3.12 The new Governing Body would have the responsibility for developing a new management structure and appointing a personnel committee to appoint both the principal and vice principal during autumn 2008. The new principal and vice principal would take up appointment between January to April 2009 depending on release dates from their current employment. However, it is expected that the new principal would be involved in establishing the management structure together with other members of the Governing Body before April 2009.
- 3.13 As co sponsor, the authority would work closely with the lead sponsor and other members of the Governing Body to follow the path shown in the academy timeline as outlined below in points 4.14.
- 3.14 The following is the timeline that would be put in place if it is decided to continue with the Cabinet's decision made on 19 February:

2008

- 17 March - Overview & Scrutiny:

If the decision is to endorse the Cabinet decision, it can be implemented immediately; alternatively, Overview and Scrutiny may ask Cabinet to reconsider its decision

- 1 April - Cabinet to re confirm its decision (if required)
- 7 April – 18 May - Publication of Statutory Notice period
- 19 May – 18 July - Formal decision by either Director of Children's Services (if no objections are raised during the Statutory Notice period) or Council/Cabinet (if objections are raised during statutory notice period).
- Mid July – early September - Establish new Governing Body
- August - September - Governing Body Personnel Committee established
- September - Advertise for Principal
- October 2008 – January 2009 – Building Feasibility
- December 2008 – February 2009 – Statutory consultation with staff/unions

2009

- End February / early March - End of statutory staff/union consultation
- February - Agree design/building with partners
- End March/early April – Staff selection process
- March- April - Detailed building design
- Early April – Existing head teachers' notice given
- April – Principal takes up appointment
- End April - Appointments Appeals
- Mid May – Notice to all staff
- Beginning July TUPE transfer of staff
- May – October - Planning application process
- June – September - Building Tendering
- 31 August - Chapter & Temple schools formally close
- 1 September - New Academy opens
- October - Building approval
- November 2009 – August 2011 - Building construction

2011

- September 2011 – New building opens.

- 3.15 It would not, at this stage, be possible to adopt alternative proposals (such as those put forward by SOCK) without going again through the informal consultation process that has just been completed. This would lead to slippage in the timetable shown above, with the effect that the academy would not open until September 2010.
- 3.16 It is the duty of the Director of Children's Services to recommend the course of action that achieves the best possible outcomes for students now and in the future. The new academy will have the resources and facilities to offer broad, rich and sustainable learning pathways for the 21<sup>st</sup> century in an environment, which will be attractive to young people and their parents. Crucially, the involvement of the sponsors will

ensure that the curriculum fully reflects the changing demands both of higher education and of business. These will combine to impact positively and urgently on ensuring that both boys and girls in Strood gain the knowledge, confidence and skills to develop as active and productive members of their communities and informed and responsible citizens. It is therefore recommended that the Committee endorses the Cabinet decision made on 19 February 2008.

#### **4. Financial and legal implications**

- 4.1 These are set out in the attached Cabinet report.
- 4.2 However, if the Council opted for the SOCK campaigners' second proposal, both Temple and Chapter schools would need some new build to meet statutory requirements for an 8FE school. This would involve significant capital cost, which would need to be met by the Authority.

#### **5. Recommendations**

- 5.1 Members are asked to consider decision 28-30/2008 made by Cabinet on 19 February 2008 as outlined in paragraph 2.2 above.

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#### **Background papers**

- Report to Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee 30 January 2008
- Report to Cabinet – 19 February 2008 (Appendix 1)
- Letter from Lord Adonis to the Leader of the Council dated 19 February 2008 (Appendix 2)
- Letter from the Leader of the Council to Lord Adonis dated 19 February 2008 (Appendix 3)