

CABINET 13TH FEBRUARY 2006

**REVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL PROVISION IN THE VALE OF BELVOIR AND
MELTON MOWBRAY.**

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES (DESIGNATE)

PART A

Purpose of Report

1. i) To inform the Cabinet of the progress made in the Review process to date.
- ii) To present the findings of consultation to date with schools and parents and to seek agreement to the proposed next steps in the Review process as set out in Part B to this report.

Recommendations

2. The Cabinet is recommended to:-
 - i) Note the progress made to date in the Review process.
 - ii) To agree the next steps in the Review process as set out in Part B of this report.

Reasons for the Recommendations

3. On 23rd November 2005 the Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Children's Services (Designate) detailing the results of an independent review of educational provision in the Vale of Belvoir. The Cabinet agreed a review process for the organisation of secondary and primary school places in both the Melton Mowbray area and the County as a whole.
4. This report is a first response to the Review process agreed by the Cabinet on 23rd November 2005.

Timetable for Decisions

5. The timetable for the Review process agreed by the Cabinet on the 23rd November 2006 identified a number of targets and timescales.
 - A review of secondary provision in Melton Mowbray be undertaken by the end of December 2005, with a view to public consultation taking place in the Spring 2006.
 - In the same time frame that a plan for primary education be prepared having regard to the proposed review of secondary education in Melton Mowbray.

- That a plan for secondary education across Leicestershire be developed by April 2006 with a view to further consultation taking place in the Summer of 2006.
- That such further plans for primary provision be prepared as necessary having regard to the proposed review of secondary provision across Leicestershire.
- In addition there is a requirement to respond to the DfES with further details of the County Council's strategy by the end of March 2006.

Policy framework and previous decisions

6. This report deals with proposals, which may substantially affect the way in which education is delivered in Leicestershire. This will involve a change to existing plans contained within the Council's Policy Framework and therefore, will require the approval of the full Council following consultation with the Education Scrutiny Committee.
7. The Cabinet agreed to the implementation of the Review process in response to a Cabinet Report of 23rd November 2005 and the decisions are set out under paragraph 5 of this report.

Resource Implications

8. An indicative capital allocation of £17.8M has been identified for the County Council, by the DfES, for the purpose of providing a One School Pathfinder project, which will transform secondary education in that school. There is potential scope for this funding to be dedicated to the Melton Mowbray/ Vale of Belvoir area.
9. The specific revenue and capital resource implications of any proposals for the reorganisation of school places await the identification of detailed proposals consequent upon the Review process. It is expected that there will be shortfall of capital resources to meet the potential outcomes of the Review process in the Vale of Belvoir and Melton Mowbray. A further report will need to be made once the DfES have clarified the size of the funding envelope and the outcomes of the initial consultation are known.
10. The Director of Resources has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

Circulation under Sensitive Issues

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PART B

Background

11. The Education pattern of provision within the Vale of Belvoir has been the subject of reviews and discussions for many years but parents remain discontented with the pattern of provision.
12. On 25th April 2005 the Cabinet agreed to the commissioning and funding of an independent review of educational provision in the Vale of Belvoir. This review concluded, inter alia, that if the County Council were to address the issue in the Vale of Belvoir, it would have an impact on provision in Melton. This in turn will have an effect on provision in the rest of the County.
13. On 23rd November 2005 the Cabinet agreed to a review process for the organisation of primary and secondary school places, which is outlined in paragraph 7 of this report. The review process relates to the Vale of Belvoir, Melton Mowbray and the rest of the County.
14. There is an expectation by central government that any reorganisation of school places should be predicated on transforming secondary education and raising standards of attainment and achievement.

Work undertaken to date

15. The progress made to date is as follows: -
 - An interim project management group has been established and has identified the key tasks that need to be achieved in order to deliver the completion of any building works in the Vale of Belvoir and Melton Mowbray by September 2009.
 - A review of secondary provision, in the form of working draft desk research, has identified some of the options that could be feasible for the Vale of Belvoir and Melton Mowbray in terms of the organisation of secondary school places. A similar exercise is underway for the rest of the County. A similar desk review has been undertaken on the implications for primary schools in the Vale of Belvoir should the decision be made to retain Year 6 children in primary schools.
 - On the 9th of January 2006, Headteachers, Governors, students and elected members representing the Vale of Belvoir and Melton Mowbray, met at the National College of School Leadership. As a consequence a list of principles was developed to inform the outcomes the Review Process. This is attached as Appendix 1.
 - To date Officers have met with the Headteachers and Chairs of Governors of John Ferneley High School, The Long Field High School and King Edward VII School to discuss the options that could inform the consultation process. A similar meeting has also taken place with the Headteacher and a governor of

Belvoir High School. A synopsis of those interviews is shown in Appendix 2 to this report.

- On 29th November 2005 a questionnaire was issued to all parents of children attending secondary schools in Melton Mowbray, their catchment area Primary Schools and Birchwood Special School. Of the 6080 questionnaires issued a total of 1100 were returned by the 23rd December 2005, representing a response by parents of 1715 children attending Melton Mowbray schools. A summary of the responses to the questions asked is attached as Appendix 3 to this report.
- Officers visited the DfES on the 23rd January 2006 in order to receive advice on the parameters informing the indicative offer of £17.8M to the County Council and to advocate the case for the targeting of this resource to the Melton Mowbray/Vale of Belvoir area. It was also pointed out to DfES that the indicative allocation of £17.8M was c£4.7M short of the funding required to rebuild, for example, a new 1500 place secondary school. In the course of discussion DfES indicated that it might be possible for the County Council to be considered as an exceptional case for additional capital funding for the One School Pathfinder project, in order to close the funding gap of c£4.7M.

16. The next steps are:-

- To complete outstanding interviews. To be held with the Headteacher and Chair of Governors of Birch Wood Area Special School, the Principal of Brooksby-Melton College, representative headteachers of primary schools in the Vale of Belvoir and Melton Mowbray, local County Councillors, the Chief Executive of Melton District Council, and the Learning Skills Council.
- To draft and issue a consultation document to enable a first round of consultation to take place in early May 2006. This will invite a response to principles for the organisation of school places. This should inform a second round of consultation on specific proposals in the summer of 2006.
- To respond to the DfES by the end of March 2006, with a detailed case for dedicating the indicative offer of £17.8M to the Melton Mowbray/ Vale of Belvoir area, and for considering the County Council's aspirations for this area to be an exceptional case worthy of additional capital funding for the One School Pathfinder School.
- Arrange public consultation meetings in the Vale of Belvoir and Melton Mowbray for the Summer Term 2006.
- To arrange a meeting with secondary head teacher representatives as the first stage in involving the rest of the County in discussion regarding organisational arrangements for schools.

Equal Opportunities Implications

17. The issues addressed in this report are aimed at improving the educational life chances of all Leicestershire pupils and students.

Background Papers

Report of the Director of Education to the meeting of the Cabinet on 26th April 2005.

Report of the Director of Children's Services (Designate) to the meeting of the Cabinet on 23rd November 2005.

Appendices

Appendix 1: 'Learners First' – Principles of school organisation in Melton Mowbray and the Vale of Belvoir.

Appendix 2: Synopsis of interviews held with the Headteachers and Chairs of Governors of The Long Field High School, John Ferneley High School, King Edward VII School, and the Headteacher and a governor of Belvoir High School.

Appendix 3: A table summarising parental responses to a questionnaire issued to all parents of children attending primary, secondary schools in the Melton Area and the Area Special School.