

pupils. It would be in their interests also to find a way forward."

CLlr Richard Grant – *"agree for consideration by Cabinet"*

CLlr Jill Dill-Russell – *"noted the report"*

- Cabinet Member CLlr John Burton – *"need to review urgently"*
- Other Cabinet Members consulted CLlr Izzi Seccombe – *"approved for Cabinet"*
- Chief Executive
- Legal Richard Freeth – *"fine"*
- Finance David Clarke, Strategic Director of Resources – *"fine"*
- Other Strategic Directors
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police
- Other Bodies/Individuals

FINAL DECISION **NO**

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee
- To Council
- To Cabinet 12th October 2006
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee Rugby Area Committee, 21st September 2006
- Further Consultation

The Cabinet – 13th July 2006

Bishop Wulstan Catholic School

Report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families

Recommendations:

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That a further report on Catholic provision in Rugby be presented to the Area Committee and the Cabinet by the end of October 2006.

1. Background

- 1.1 At their meeting on 12th January, the Cabinet agreed consultation on a proposal to close Bishop Wulstan School in Rugby with effect from 31st August 2006. The proposal rose out of concerns about standards in the school and about the capacity of the school to improve those standards in the light of very low levels of subscription for Year 7 in September 2006. The school achieved only 12% 5+ A*-C grades at GCSE in September 2005 and at that time the parents/carers of only 25 pupils had expressed a first preference for Bishop Wulstan School.
- 1.2 During consultation the Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham brought forward an alternative proposal:
 - to establish a new school for pupils aged 3-16 to replace the existing Catholic primary schools (St. Marie's Infant, St. Marie's Junior and English Martyrs Primary) and Bishop Wulstan School
 - the school would be two forms of entry in the primary phase and three forms of entry in the secondary phase giving a school of around 900 pupils, possibly operating on two or three sites
 - the school would be established as a Roman Catholic academy for which the sponsor would be the Archdiocese of Birmingham who would make the capital contribution required to establish such an 'academy'. The remainder of the capital cost would be provided by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).

- 1.3 In the light of this alternative proposal the Cabinet resolved:
- (1) That the proposal to close Bishop Wulstan Catholic School be withdrawn.
 - (2) That the alternative proposals from the four Catholic schools of Rugby and the Archdiocese of Birmingham as detailed in Section 5 of the Director's report be pursued with a serious and rapid evaluation of the 3-16 options and that the LEA give active support to the evaluation of these options.
 - (3) That the Cabinet place on record their appreciation for the hard work and commitment of the headteacher, Brendan Higgins, Father Marcus Stock, the staff, parents, students and governors of the school, and Councillors Katherine King and John Vereker during this difficult time.

2. Decision of the DfES

- 2.1 The Archdiocese of Birmingham have recently been informed that the DfES has turned down the application to establish an Academy. The official response recognises the support for such a proposal but concluded that the proposal did not meet the criteria for an academy which are principally designed to serve areas of very severe social deprivation.
- 2.2 The Academy proposal had three important features to note at this stage:
- (i) it would involve the closure of the four existing schools, including Bishop Wulstan School, in order to establish the new school. It represents therefore a 'fresh start' for Catholic provision, primary and secondary, in Rugby
 - (ii) the Academy route would have led to the provision by the DfES of very significant capital funding to provide entirely new buildings for the Academy
 - (iii) the proposal would have preserved Catholic provision in Rugby which is clearly the concern of the Archdiocese but also of the County Council.
- 2.3 Officials from the DfES have written seeking a meeting with the Authority to ascertain the action the Authority is proposing to take.
- 2.4 In the letter from the Archdiocese to the Authority in response to consultation which introduced the proposal for an Academy, it is suggested that if the academy proposal is rejected "alternative proposals will need to be explored. These should include the possibility of federation of Catholic schools in Rugby or the federation of Bishop Wulstan with another Catholic school in Warwickshire". The Archdiocese is now pursuing the alternative proposal to establish a federation including the Catholic schools in Rugby which would come together with a single governing body and headteacher, the three primary

schools and Bishop Wulstan School to provide for the age range of 3-16. The secondary provision it is proposed would include the closure of Bishop Wulstan School and the opening of a new secondary school as part of the federation. In DfES terms this would represent a 'fresh start' for secondary provision within the federation. The Archdiocese have prepared a bid for capital funding to a fund established by the DfES to support the establishment of federation of schools. The outcome of the bid will be known by the end of July.

3. Proposed way forward

Cabinet are asked at this stage to note the report. It is proposed to bring a further report on Catholic provision in Rugby to the Area Committee and Cabinet in the Autumn when the outcome of the bid for capital funding in support of the federation will be known. The GCSE results for Bishop Wulstan School for 2006 will also be known by this time, and by October there will be an indication of likely admission numbers in Year 7 for 2007.

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3rd July 2006