

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee

The Cabinet

Date of Committee

2nd November 2006

Report Title

Catholic provision in Rugby

Summary

This report includes a draft response to the Catholic authority's consultation on Catholic provision in Rugby.

For further information please contact:

Mark Gore
Head of Service (Education Partnerships and School Development)
Tel: 01926 742588
markgore@warwickshire.gov.uk

Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? [please identify relevant plan/budget provision]

No

Background papers

- School Organisation Framework document 2005/10
- Cabinet reports 12.1.06, 9.3.06, 13.7.06 and 12.10.06
- Rugby Area Committee report 21.9.06

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:-

Details to be specified

Other Committees

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Local Member(s)

- Cllr John Vereker – Caldecott
Cllr Ian Smith – Caldecott
Cllr Richard Dodd – Eastlands & Hillmorton
Cllr Jerry Roodhouse – Eastlands & Hillmorton
Cllr Bryan Levy – Lawford & New Bilton
Cllr Gordon Collett – Dunchurch

Other Elected Members

- Cllr John Whitehouse
Cllr Katherine King – *“I wholeheartedly support the hard work that is being undertaken; this is an*

excellent opportunity to secure 3-16 Catholic education in Rugby for generations to come”

CYP&F O&S Spokespersons for information:

Cllr Helen McCarthy

Cllr Richard Grant – *“supports the proposed response by the Children, Young People & Families Directorate”*

Cllr Jill Dill-Russell – *“noted the report”*

- Cabinet Member Cllr John Burton
- Other Cabinet Members consulted Cllr Izzi Seccombe
- 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 23rd November 2006
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee Rugby Area Committee
- Further Consultation

The Cabinet – 2nd November 2006

Catholic provision in Rugby

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

Recommendations:

- (1) That the Cabinet comment on and agree the draft response to the Diocesan School Commission's consultation document at Appendix A.
- (2) That the Area Committee consider this matter further and the Cabinet receive a further report on the outcome of the consultation process at its meeting on 23rd November

1. Background

- 1.1 At their meeting on 12th October the Cabinet received a report on the future of Catholic provision in Rugby which included a draft consultation document prepared by the Diocesan Schools Commission (DSC) of the Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham, the governors of Bishop Wulstan School and of four Catholic primary schools. A final version of the consultation document has been sent to all elected Members.
- 1.2 The proposals contained in the consultation document were, in brief:
 - the creation of a federation of the four Catholic primary schools in Rugby including Our Lady's at Princethorpe
 - the closure of Bishop Wulstan School and the opening of a new 'fresh start' secondary school with effect from 1st September 2007 which would join the federation to create a federation of schools for children and young people aged from 3 to 16.

2. The response of the Local Authority

- 2.1 Key to the success of the proposed new arrangements is the viability of the secondary school and the level of support for it and the new federation from the local community and, in particular, from the local Catholic community. One of

the purposes of the consultation is to gauge that support. It is suggested therefore that the Cabinet consider the outcome of the consultation at their meeting on 23rd November and at this stage submit an interim response to the consultation document setting out the Authority's position.

2.2 A draft response to the consultation is given at **Appendix A**.

3. Suggested recommendations

It is suggested:

- That the Cabinet comment on and agree the draft response to the DSC's consultation document at Appendix A.
- That the Area Committee consider this matter further and the Cabinet receive a further report on the outcome of the consultation process at its meeting on 23rd November.

MARION DAVIS
Strategic Director for Children,
Young People and Families

Saltisford Office Park
Ansell Way
Warwick

18th October 2006

My ref: EPSD/MG/ADG

Children, Young People and Families

Father Marcus Stock,
Director of Schools,
Diocesan Schools Commission,
61 Coventry Road,
Coleshill,
BIRMINGHAM. B46 3EA

Mark Gore
Education Partnerships and School
Development Service
Saltisford Office Park
Ansell Way
Warwick
CV34 4UL

Tel: 01926 742588
Fax: 01926 742084
e-mail: markgore@warwickshire.gov.uk
www.warwickshire.gov.uk

November 2006

Dear Father Marcus,

Proposals for Catholic Provision in Rugby

I am writing on behalf of the County Council in response to the Consultation Document published on 9th October on Catholic provision in Rugby.

1. The Council wish to place on record its appreciation of the hard work and determination of the officers of the Diocesan Schools Commission and the Governors of the Catholic schools in bringing forward these proposals.
2. Key to the success of the proposed arrangements is the support of the Catholic community. The Council welcomes the consultation as a means of gauging the support of the local community and in particular the local Catholic community for these proposals.
3. The Council is supportive in principle of greater collaboration between schools, and the proposed federation could provide significant benefits including:
 - unified governance for Catholic schools in Rugby
 - greater curricular continuity and progression
 - a larger staff group sharing expertise and experience and able to offer a wider range of opportunities to children in the federated schools
 - professional opportunities for staff
 - possible economies of scale.
4. The 'fresh start' proposed for the secondary school could also have significant benefits:
 - a new school in new or refurbished accommodation
 - new leadership and staffing
 - new arrangements for governance
 - the opportunity to develop secure strategies to promote good attendance and behaviour, high quality teaching and learning, recruitment of staff and staff development, recruitment of pupils and strong links with the community, and above all to promote higher standards of achievement and attainment.

5. The Council is also committed to the use of school facilities by the local community and would seek reassurance that the Governors of the new school would ensure community access to facilities in the Sports Hall.
6. The Council is supportive of the efforts of the Catholic authorities in seeking alternative ways forward to preserve Catholic secondary provision in Rugby. The Council recognises that a Catholic school contributes to the diversity of provision and has attracted pupils both Catholic and of other faiths and from the families of migrant workers now living in Rugby.

However, it is recognised that levels of subscription to the school remain low. Moreover, while there has been improvement in the percentage of pupils achieving five A*-C in 2006, at 23.2% this remains below the DfES floor target and the Council remain of the view that the levels of attainment at Bishop Wulstan School are unacceptable. Any alternative proposals have to be judged against the criterion of whether the new arrangements would make a very significant positive impact on outcomes for children and young people in Rugby, and in particular levels of attainment.

7. We need, therefore, to be assured so far as possible that the new school proposed within the 3-16 federation can deliver the improvement in standards necessary. Part of that judgement will depend on the new school's ability to attract the support of the Catholic community to ensure higher levels of subscription and therefore the capacity to secure and sustain improvement. The consultation process set out in the DSC's document and the information the DSC are seeking through a parental survey will be very important in helping to make that judgement about viability and capacity.
8. We look forward, therefore, to receiving the outcome of the consultation exercise to assist the Council in making the judgement about the school's future viability and the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Gore
Head of Service (Education Partnerships and School Development)