

**AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET**

**Name of Committee**

**The Cabinet**

**Date of Committee**

**23<sup>rd</sup> November 2006**

**Report Title**

**Catholic school provision in Rugby**

**Summary**

This report seeks a decision by Cabinet as to whether support should be given to the current proposals for Catholic school provision in Rugby.

**For further information please contact:**

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**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, 12.10.06 and 2.11.06
- Rugby Area Committee report 21.9.06

**CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:-**

Details to be specified

Other Committees

.....

Local Member(s)

All members of the Rugby Area Committee: Cllrs Tom Cavanagh, Gordon Collett, Richard Dodd, Bryan Levy, Jerry Roodhouse, John Wells, plus -

Cllr Heather Timms – *“The only comment I would make is that I would support the federated option in this report. Bishop Wulstan have made good progress in their results in only one year and this is a way forward to maintain Catholic education in Rugby.”*

Cllr Ian Smith – *“I wish to convey that I strongly oppose the closure of Bishop Wulstan School, I*

*believe it offers a vital service to the broader community of Rugby. It caters for many sectors which other schools in Rugby do not, for instance it provides a vital role in educating those residents whose first language is not English, such as the Polish residents, it has also taken on educating a special needs pupil, and it is also able to take on other children who may not be able to secure places at other schools in Rugby or those who may have to be moved from other schools.*

*I strongly believe that there is far more to education than just the tabled results of exams and that more consideration should be given to the 'quality' of the students and the people they become when they emerge from Bishop Wulstan. I think the school plays a part in developing them as well-rounded people and that the school has a positive effect on many of their students.*

*I feel that we should be looking forward and not covering old ground.*

*I would also like to convey my disappointment at the extremely short notice we were given in order to make our comments on this matter."*

*Cllr Katherine King – "I continue to fully support the hard work of the Diocese on this 'fresh start' bid, it is a great opportunity for Rugby and will secure Catholic education locally for generations to come."*

*Cllr John Vereker – "...In the time available my main thought is that with the benefit of local knowledge of what the school is trying its best to achieve, I support the federation proposal. Also, I am surprised at the rather unusual way the recommendations are set out. They appear to almost invite the uncertainty which is not helping the school in its efforts to promote itself..."*

*Cllr Phillip Morris-Jones – "My attitude continues to be opposed to any proposed closure and supportive of the proposals to create federated school provision for Roman Catholic pupils, also for those of other faiths seeking an education at a faith school.*

*The number of applications has shown a considerable increase but is still short of the PAN, therefore it is incumbent on the governors, parents and other supporters to strive for a continuing increase.*

*The prevailing influx of immigrants from Eastern Europe is likely to increase demand at a higher rate than the predicted growth from housing developments so this is a supportive factor.*

*The aspect of academic achievement must be regarded as a crucial determinant although some consideration should be given in the next few years for the language difficulties which incoming pupils from the EU will undoubtedly suffer."*

Other Elected Members

- Cllr John Whitehouse
- CYP&F O&S Spokespersons for information:
- Cllr Helen McCarthy
- Cllr Richard Grant – *“We need to be convinced that the proposals will lead to a ‘new’ school which is significantly different to the current school and one which has the capacity to deliver quality teaching and learning so that standards will be certain to rise. It is also vital that data about pupil numbers is robust and will deliver with certainty the critical mass of pupils.”*
- Cllr Jill Dill-Russell – no comments to make

Cabinet Member

- Cllr John Burton – *“the decision must reflect the best outcomes for the students”*

Other Cabinet Members consulted

- Cllr Izzi Seccombe – *“approve for Cabinet”*

Chief Executive

- .....

Legal

- Richard Freeth – no comments to make

Finance

- David Clarke, Strategic Director of Resources – no comments to make

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

- Further report (subject to Cabinet’s decision)

To an O & S Committee

- .....

To an Area Committee

- .....

Further Consultation

- .....

**The Cabinet – 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2006**

**Catholic school provision in Rugby**

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

**Recommendation:**

Either That the Cabinet support the proposals to establish a federation of Catholic schools in Rugby and the proposal to close Bishop Wulstan School and establish a new 'fresh start' Catholic secondary school, subject to the agreement of the governors and the submission of a 'fresh start' proposal to the DfES.

or That the Cabinet do not support federation and 'fresh start' proposals and that a further report be brought to the Cabinet as a matter of urgency on options for Catholic secondary provision in Rugby.

**1. Background**

- 1.1 At their meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> January, the Cabinet agreed consultation on a proposal to close Bishop Wulstan School in Rugby with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> 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. Following the consultation the Cabinet withdrew the proposal to close to allow the Archdiocese to explore alternative proposals which would secure Catholic secondary provision in the town of Rugby.
- 1.2 On 17<sup>th</sup> October the Diocesan Schools Commission (DSC), with the governors of the Catholic schools in Rugby, published a consultation on alternative proposals to establish a federation of Catholic schools in Rugby and to close Bishop Wulstan School and establish a new 'fresh start' three-form-entry secondary school. A copy of the consultation document has been sent to all Members. A summary of the proposals is given below.

## **2. The proposals in detail**

### **2.1 The primary school federation**

2.1.1 The current proposal is that the four primary schools would come together in a federation with a single governing body but each school retaining its head-teacher. Such a federation would enhance the collaborative working between the four schools. This proposal is linked to the proposal to establish the 'fresh start' secondary school and its joining the federation. Decisions about the leadership of the federation would be taken in due course as the federation is established. The benefits of the federation for the primary schools are set out in the consultation paper but include:

- 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.

2.1.2 Both the DfES and the Local Authority would support more collaborative working between primary schools recognising the benefits of such arrangements outlined above. The federation has been supported by the headteachers and governors of all four primary schools (as well as the Governors of Bishop Wulstan School) who have already formed a joint committee.

### **2.2 The 'fresh start' proposal for secondary provision**

2.2.1 As part of the 'fresh start' proposal, the governing body of Bishop Wulstan School would propose the closure of Bishop Wulstan School with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> August 2007 and the opening of a new school under the Government's 'fresh start' arrangements. The new school would have access to a capital fund to provide new and/or refurbished accommodation.

2.2.2 The benefits of this proposal are:

- a new school in new/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.

2.2.3 A key part of the proposal is that the new school would be part of the enhanced 3-16 federation.

2.2.4 The document prepared by the DSC states that the 'fresh start' proposal "would allow a line to be drawn under the past, and a new establishment with a new identity created".

## **2.3 Site issues**

2.3.1 It is planned that the federation will operate on more than one site to provide for the Catholic community across Rugby. Our Lady's Primary School in Princethorpe will be unaffected.

2.3.2 In relation to the other schools, the DSC are consulting on two options:

(1) to locate the new secondary school and St. Marie's Junior School on the site currently occupied by St. Marie's Infant and Bishop Wulstan Schools, with English Martyrs School remaining on its existing site.

(2) to locate the new secondary school in new buildings on the site of English Martyrs Primary School which would also have new building.

2.3.3 The location of the schools cannot be finalised until the level of capital funding and the planning requirements are known.

## **2.4 School place planning issues**

2.4.1 Given at **Appendix A** is an analysis of forecast pupil numbers in Rugby which was included in the report to Cabinet on 12<sup>th</sup> October. This report concludes that the proposals for primary Catholic provision appear reasonable given the rising demand for primary school places in Rugby as significant new housing developments are completed, with others planned.

2.4.2 In relation to secondary provision, the report concludes that the proposals again appear reasonable in the light of forecast pupil numbers in the secondary sector, but that the school may need to attract significant numbers of non-Catholics to be viable. The report also says that it is difficult to assess the number of children from migrant worker families from the European Union, many of whom may seek Catholic education.

2.4.3 It is important to note also that the schools are seeking to recruit from Daventry where there is currently no Catholic provision.

## **2.5 Revenue and capital funding**

2.5.1 The DfES have said that capital funding could be available for a 'fresh start' proposal. The size of the resources available is unclear. In order to secure such funding and a contribution towards the revenue cost of implementing the 'fresh start' proposal the Archdiocese will need to submit a bid in very early January 2007.

2.5.2 In terms of ongoing revenue funding for the 'fresh start' school resources will be allocated from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) in line with the Authority's formula for Bishop Wulstan School. Members will recognise that the cost per pupil in small schools is greater than in larger schools (because of the very substantial base allocation made to all schools in addition to the per pupil elements).

### **3. Timetable**

3.1 The timetable for consultation on these proposals is very tight.

3.2 The consultation closes on 19<sup>th</sup> November. A report on the outcome of consultation including the outcome of the parental survey will be presented as soon as possible after 19<sup>th</sup> November for consideration by the Cabinet. The governors of Bishop Wulstan School will meet on 23<sup>rd</sup> November to decide whether to go forward with the proposals and make a bid to the DfES for a 'fresh start' secondary school.

3.3 The DfES have made clear that for the bid for 'fresh start' to be successful it must have the support of the Local Authority.

3.4 If the bid does go forward the DfES have undertaken to give a decision by 12<sup>th</sup> January. If approved, the governors and Archdiocese will publish statutory notices with a view to referring these proposals to the School Organisation Committee in the late Spring.

### **4. The response of the Local Authority**

4.1.1 The Authority has been supportive of the Catholic authorities in seeking alternative ways to preserve Catholic secondary provision in Rugby as part of the diversity of provision available in the town. The Rugby Area Committee have been strongly supportive of the proposals which the Catholic authorities have brought forward for that reason.

4.1.2 So far as the federation of primary schools is concerned the Authority would be supportive of any arrangements which promote collaboration and joint working.

4.1.3 So far as secondary provision is concerned the Authority, and indeed the DfES, will need to be satisfied on the answers to two key separate but inter-related questions:

- Is the school viable?
- Does the school have, as a result, the capacity to secure improvements in outcomes for children and young people and in particular higher levels of attainment and achievement?

## **4.2 Viability**

- 4.2.1 As already noted the Planned Admission Number for Bishop Wulstan School is currently 83. In Autumn 2005 only 25 parents had expressed a first preference for admission to Bishop Wulstan School in September 2006. Clearly if that level of subscription were to have continued the school would not have had the capacity to sustain improvement in levels of school attainment required. This was one of the key factors which prompted the decision by the Authority to propose the closure of the school.
- 4.2.2 In terms of the current proposals, the DfES were clear in discussions with the Authority and the DSC that they would need to be assured of the viability of the new school. It is for this reason the DSC included in the consultation document a questionnaire for prospective parents to help gauge the support for the new school and the commitment of parents to seeking a place at the new school. A report on the outcome of this survey will be circulated to elected Members prior to the Cabinet.
- 4.2.3 At the time of writing the report, 41 parents had expressed a first preference for Bishop Wulstan School. Some of these children may be allocated a place at one of the grammar schools. This figure does not, however, include children from Northamptonshire who have applied for Bishop Wulstan School.
- 4.2.4 Further information and updated figures will be presented to the Cabinet as the first preferences for secondary school are analysed.

## **4.3 Levels of attainment and achievement**

- 4.3.1 The issue of viability is, of course, related to the issue of the capacity of the new school to improve standards. Members will recall that the original proposal to close Bishop Wulstan School in January 2005 was prompted by concern about levels of attainment and the school's capacity to respond to those concerns.
- 4.3.2 In August 2006, the percentage of children gaining five or more A\*-C at GCSE rose from 12% to 25%. The percentage of children gaining five A\*-C including both English and maths rose from 9.6% in 2005 to 10% in 2006. The percentage of children gaining five A\*-G at GCSE rose from 77% in 2005 to 84%.
- 4.3.3 This represents significant improvement. However the results in Key Stage 4 fell below the school's own target, and the DfES's threshold. They fell well below the expected levels of attainment. In addition other key indicators were lower this year than in 2005, including attainment at KS3.
- 4.3.4 These figures have to be viewed with some caution. At this stage figures for 2006 are provisional. Bishop Wulstan is a small school and fluctuations in the school population can affect the statistics. However there is general agreement that the standards in the school currently are unacceptable and must improve. Members will recognise that the concern about standards is shared not only by



the school community, the Catholic authorities and the Local Authority but by officials at the DfES and, it is reported, by Ministers. The DfES, like the Authority, will need to be confident that any new arrangements can deliver the improvement in standards necessary. In essence the Authority and the DfES will need to be clear about what will be different in the new school and federation which will impact on standards of attainment and achievement and improve the overall outcomes for this group of children and young people.

## **5. Response of local Members**

The cover sheet includes a number of comments from local elected Members which the Cabinet will wish to consider. Unfortunately the Rugby Area Committee does not meet until after the meeting of the Cabinet. An informal briefing is to be held for elected Members from Rugby when the outcome of the consultation and the survey of parents will be known. Further comments from local Members will be reported to the Cabinet.

## **6. Recommendation**

A report will be presented to the Cabinet on the outcome of consultation and the parental survey by the DSC. The Cabinet are asked to consider on the basis of that report whether the Authority should support the proposals for federation and 'fresh start' in principle, subject to the decision of the governors and for the submission of a 'fresh start' proposal to the DfES.

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13<sup>th</sup> November 2006

## School place analysis

Members will know of the difficulty in forecasting pupil numbers particularly in an area like Rugby with very significant developments (Cawston and Coton) already agreed and underway and other developments planned (the Cattle Market and Alstom factory sites). It has also been difficult to estimate the number of children of primary or secondary age which results from new development. The figure for Cawston, for example, is much greater than the commonly used national average figure (6.5 in January 2006 compared with 2.5 pupils per year group per hundred houses).

The tables below show the forecast numbers of primary-aged children assuming a lower figure (2.5) from new housing, and using a higher figure (4.5); and similar figures for secondary-aged pupils:

**Table 1**  
**Primary place demand in Rugby 2006/11, including additional demand from housing developments at a rate of 2.5 per NCY per 100 dwellings\***

	Forecast 2006	Forecast 2007	Forecast 2008	Forecast 2009	Forecast 2010
Reception	903	1,003	1,021	1,003	1,035
Year 1	1,034	917	1,016	1,035	1,017
Year 2	1,034	1,048	930	1,030	1,049
Year 3	1,031	1,036	1,053	957	1,032
Year 4	1,011	1,045	1,049	1,067	971
Year 5	1,078	1,025	1,058	1,063	1,081
Year 6	1,044	1,092	1,038	1,072	1,077
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,135</b>	<b>7,166</b>	<b>7,165</b>	<b>7,227</b>	<b>7,262</b>

**Table 2**  
**Primary place demand in Rugby 2006/11, including additional demand from housing developments at a rate of 4.5 per NCY per 100 dwellings\***

	Forecast 2006	Forecast 2007	Forecast 2008	Forecast 2009	Forecast 2010
Reception	914	1,025	1,054	1,047	1,090
Year 1	1,045	939	1,049	1,079	1,072
Year 2	1,045	1,070	963	1,074	1,104
Year 3	1,042	1,058	1,086	1,001	1,087
Year 4	1,022	1,067	1,082	1,111	1,026
Year 5	1,089	1,047	1,091	1,107	1,136
Year 6	1,055	1,114	1,071	1,116	1,132
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,212</b>	<b>7,320</b>	<b>7,396</b>	<b>7,535</b>	<b>7,647</b>

\* This is based on a total number of dwellings in all developments of 25 dwellings and more planned for the Rugby area 2006/11, as advised by Rugby Borough Council, April 2006.

The proposals for federated Catholic primary schools are based on retaining current admission limits to those schools. Given the rising demand for primary-school places this appears reasonable.

**Table 3**

**Year 7 to 11 secondary place demand in Rugby 2006/11, including additional demand from housing developments at a rate of 2.5 per NCY per 100 dwellings\***

	Forecast 2006	Forecast 2007	Forecast 2008	Forecast 2009	Forecast 2010
Year 7	1,112	1,109	1,140	1,110	1,134
Year 8	1,119	1,126	1,122	1,154	1,124
Year 9	1,098	1,133	1,139	1,136	1,168
Year 10	1,161	1,112	1,146	1,153	1,150
Year 11	1,099	1,175	1,125	1,160	1,167
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,589</b>	<b>5,655</b>	<b>5,672</b>	<b>5,713</b>	<b>5,743</b>

**Table 4**

**Year 7 to 11 secondary place demand in Rugby 2006/11, including additional demand from housing developments at a rate of 4.5 per NCY per 100 dwellings\***

	Forecast 2006	Forecast 2007	Forecast 2008	Forecast 2009	Forecast 2010
Year 7	1,123	1,131	1,173	1,154	1,189
Year 8	1,130	1,148	1,155	1,198	1,179
Year 9	1,109	1,155	1,172	1,180	1,223
Year 10	1,172	1,134	1,179	1,197	1,205
Year 11	1,110	1,197	1,158	1,204	1,222
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,644</b>	<b>5,765</b>	<b>5,837</b>	<b>5,933</b>	<b>6,018</b>

\* *This is based on a total number of dwellings in all developments of 25 dwellings and more planned for the Rugby area 2006/11, as advised by Rugby Borough Council, April 2006.*

The proposal for secondary education assumes a Bishop Wulstan School with a capacity (90 pupils per year) only slightly above its current number of 83 pupils per year. Given the increase in forecast secondary-school pupil numbers up to 2010 this may be a reasonable approach but the new school will need to attract significant numbers of non-Catholic pupils if it is both to attract enough pupils to secure viability and to contribute effectively to the pool of secondary-school places available in the town. It is difficult to assess at this stage the numbers of children from migrant workers from the new states of the European Union, many of whom will want Catholic education.