

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee **Rugby Area Committee**
Date of Committee **21st September 2006**
Report Title **Bishop Wulstan Catholic School**

Summary This report informs Members of progress to date on alternative proposals for Catholic provision in the town and proposes further reports to the Area Committee and to Cabinet in due course.

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 and 13.7.06

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- Details to be specified

Other Committees

Local Member(s) Cllr John Vereker – Caldecott
Cllr Ian Smith – Caldecott

Other Elected Members Spokespersons for information:
Cllr Richard Grant – “noted”
Cllr Jill Dill-Russell – “no comment”
Cllr John Whitehouse – “I support the report and recommendations”
Cllr Katherine King – “I note the report and reiterate my support for the work that is being undertaken by the LA, Diocese and DfES to secure 3-16 Catholic education in Rugby”

- Cabinet Member Cllr John Burton – “noted”
- Other Cabinet Members consulted Cllr Izzi Seccombe
- Chief Executive
- Legal Richard Freeth – comments incorporated in the report
- Finance
- Other Strategic Directors
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police
- Other Bodies/Individuals Father Marcus Stock, Director of Schools, Diocesan Schools Commission

FINAL DECISION **NO**

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee Future meeting of Rugby Area Committee
- To Council
- To Cabinet 12th October 2006
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee
- Further Consultation

Rugby Area Committee – 21st September 2006

Bishop Wulstan Catholic School

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

Recommendation:

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That a further report on Catholic provision in Rugby be presented to the Area Committee in due course.

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 August 2005 and at that time the parents/carers of only 25 pupils had expressed a first preference for Bishop Wulstan School for September 2006.
- 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. Progress on alternative proposals

- 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 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".
- 2.4 Officials from the DfES have recently met with officers of the Authority and the Diocesan Schools Commission to discuss these proposals. The DSC is now proposing to move forward by:
- establishing a federation of the Catholic primary schools in Rugby

- asking the Governors of Bishop Wulstan School to propose closure of the school and establishing a new secondary school which would then join the federation of Catholic schools thus providing for the age range 3-16; in DfES terms, this would represent a 'fresh start' for secondary provision within the federation
 - preparing a capital bid as part of the 'fresh start' proposals.
- 2.5 The DfES will make a decision on the application in November and wish to see these arrangements in place for September 2007. This does represent a very challenging timescale for the Archdiocese. The Authority are supporting the Archdiocese in the preparation of proposals.
- 2.6 Further reports will be brought to the Area Committee and to Cabinet as appropriate.

3. Admissions and Key Stage 4 results 2006

- 3.1 As at 8th September 2006, the number admitted to Bishop Wulstan School in Year 7 is 36. The total number on roll is 306.
- 3.2 In August 2006, the school achieved provisional results of 23.2% 5+ A*-C grades (12% in 2005). The provisional school figure for 5+ A*-C including English and maths, the new indicator used by the DfES, is 10.1% (8% in 2005).

4. Recommendation

That the report is noted and that further reports are brought to the Committee in due course.

MARION DAVIS
Strategic Director for Children,
Young People and Families

Saltisford Office Park
Ansell Way
Warwick

8th September 2006