

<b>CABINET</b>	Paper No.  <b>7</b>
<b>Meeting date: 6 January 2009</b>	
<b>From: Corporate Director – Children’s Services</b>	

## **SCHOOL ORGANISATION : A STRATEGIC APPROACH – THE POTENTIAL ACADEMY FOR BARROW**

### **1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 *This paper relates to the future of secondary education provision in Barrow.*
- 1.2 *More specifically, the report informs Members of the nature and outcome of a public consultation exercise undertaken recently on whether the Academy planned for Barrow should, on a permanent basis, operate from one or from two campuses. It then goes on to provide some analysis and comment to help Members reach conclusions on that particular issue.*

### **2.0 STRATEGIC PLANNING AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 2.1 *The potential development which this report focuses on involves school organisation change.*
- 2.2 *The basic thrust of the strategic approach to school organisation adopted in 2005 is to safeguard and improve the education and other services to children and their families provided through the county’s schools. This is supportive of the Council Plan’s themes of ‘Improving Council Services’ and ‘Improving the Life Chances and Well-being of Young People’.*

### **3.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 *Cabinet is asked to agree to move forward on the basis that the potential Academy for Barrow be located permanently on both the Thorncliffe and Parkview sites, each campus having accommodation for 600 11-16 students when the building work to create its accommodation is completed.*

## **4.0 BACKGROUND**

### **Approach to the Report**

- 4.1 A range of detailed information is set out in the six appendices and the covering report which deals with the consultation exercise which was undertaken recently on whether the potential Academy for Barrow should be located on one or two sites (or campuses).
- 4.2 The approach adopted for this covering report was to avoid too much repetition of the content of the appendices and to pick out, comment on and analyse what were felt to be the most important data and issues. It is important, however, for Members to digest the content of the appendices as they contain a good deal of information, comment, views and arguments.

### **The General Context**

- 4.3 Following a comprehensive consultation process towards the end of 2007, Cabinet agreed a way forward for secondary education in Barrow at its meeting on 5 February 2008. At the heart of the changes planned was a potential Academy for the town to be located on a permanent basis on the site of Parkview School.
- 4.4 In the light of local concerns about the planned Academy, the Government began to indicate some months ago that it might be prepared to consider and fund the development of a single Academy with two campuses. In late August, Government confirmed its willingness to support and fund a two site Academy if that model was, as opposed to a single site one, what the people of Barrow preferred. On 1 September 2008 Cabinet decided that consultation should occur on whether the potential 1200 place Academy should eventually be located solely on the Parkview site or on the sites of both Parkview and Thorncliffe Schools (600 places on each).
- 4.5 Further details on the general context just described can be found in the consultation document provided as Appendix A.

### **The Consultation Process**

- 4.6 The consultation document was prepared in September and distributed on 1 October 2008.
- 4.7 The consultation exercise was based on that document, the main purpose of which was to provide information and comment on the locational options for the potential Academy and to explain why a fresh round of consultation was being carried out. Of course, the document also sought to update consultees about progress with the development of the Academy and the rest of the agreed plans for secondary education in the town. It was very clearly spelt out that the focus of the consultation was on issues related to forming a view on whether it would be best for the Academy to have one campus or two. A questionnaire was included in the consultation document to capture preferences regarding the two options and other related comments.

- 4.8 In all, around 10,300 copies of the consultation document were distributed/made available in early October 2008. They were aimed at parents of nursery, primary, special and secondary school pupils, parents of pre-school children in the area, school staff and governors, local county and borough councillors, other partner organisations and the general public. During the consultation period, flyers were sent via the primary and secondary schools to be distributed to each parent / carer, indicating the dates, times and venues of the consultation meetings and providing details of where to obtain copies of the consultation document. These details were also featured in the 'I Love Barrow' supplement carried in the North West Evening Mail on 19 September 2008 and repeated at the end of numerous articles referring to the potential Academy in Barrow. The consultation document was also made available for downloading on the School Organisation website. Additionally, primary schools were invited to send two or three children (along with an adult) to an event held at Forum 28 in Barrow on Thursday 23 October 2008. A reminder letter was sent to all parents / carers on 5 November 2008 asking them, if they had not already done so, to complete the questionnaire.
- 4.9 As is usual in relation to possible school organisation change, the consultation exercise involved a wide range of meetings with stakeholders which took place during the period 15-23 October 2008. A series of meetings for student councils, staff and governors were held at each of the five secondary schools in Barrow. Additionally, there were four meetings held for parents and members of the wider community. There was also the meeting involving pupil representatives from the town's primary schools. In all the process involved 20 consultation meetings.
- 4.10 The meetings at the schools, involving students, staff and governors were very well attended. As far as the meetings for parents and members of the public were concerned, in total 179 people attended. Around 13% of those attended two or more of the meetings.
- 4.11 A number of different ways of responding to the consultation document were offered. These included the questionnaire in the consultation document, and an on-line questionnaire. Responses by letters and by emails were also invited. The consultation was undertaken during a seven week period which ended on 21 November 2008.

### **Feedback from the Consultation**

#### **General**

- 4.12 In line with the Authority's standard practice, details of the response to the consultation process is contained in appendices, which in this case are as follows:-
- Appendix B - Analysis of the response to the consultation via the questionnaire
  - Appendix C - Notes of the consultation meetings involving secondary school student councils, staff and governors and primary school pupil representatives

- Appendix D - Notes of the consultation meetings involving the parents and wider community
- Appendix E - Responses for organisations/groups, etc

- 4.13 Around 490 responses to the consultation document were received. This is a response rate of 4.7% which is broadly in line with recent similar exercises.
- 4.14 Of the respondents replying via the questionnaire 324 were parents / grandparents, 89 were school staff, 34 were school governors, 22 were students and 14 were other members of the general public.
- 4.15 Although the consultation document and the introductions to the various meetings stressed that the consultation was about whether the potential Academy should be based on one site or two, many contributions to the exercise included comments of an indirectly or non-related nature. However, the analysis of the questionnaire responses, the other written responses and the notes of the meetings contain the full spectrum of comments made.

### **Preferences on the Two Options**

#### Returned Questionnaires

- 4.16 In total there were 483 valid returns of the questionnaire. There were three boxes in the questionnaire to be ticked by respondents. These were to enable consultees to indicate whether they would prefer a one or two campus model for the Academy or whether they had no preference regarding the issue. The outcome is set out below.

<b>One Campus</b>	<b>Two Campuses</b>	<b>No Preference</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
24.8	68.1	2.3

- 4.17 The remaining 4.8% of those returning the questionnaire made no response to that question.
- 4.18 In a subsequent question respondents were invited to give reasons for their preferences and the main ones given are set out below. The number of respondents who indicated each reason appear in brackets.

#### **One Campus**

- Movement of pupils between two sites would mean the risk of road accidents, decreased teaching time, the creation of greater opportunities for truancy, etc (62)
- There would be greater economies of scale, including lower building maintenance costs (36)

- All services and support would be delivered to a higher standard on a single site (12)
- There would be a simpler management / staff structure (11)
- It would offer the opportunity to create something totally new (7)
- The children would feel that they belonged to a single school (7)
- Two sites would create difficulties in relation to exams, administration, communication, etc (6)
- Having two sites would make curriculum implementation problematic whilst one site would allow a better and wider curriculum offer (4)

#### Two Campuses

- One site would be too big (68)
- A single large campus would increase traffic congestion (57)
- Two sites offer greater choice with facilities being retained (43)
- Two sites would be better geographically being closer to students' homes (33)
- More attention would be given to pupils as individuals (23)
- Two sites offer a better deal re community use and access to sporting facilities (22)
- There could be a lower / upper school arrangement (17)
- Two sites would be better placed to cope with any future increases in population (15)
- Having one campus would mean a greater potential for bullying to increase (11)

#### Other Written Responses

- 4.19 As Members will see from Appendix E, the governing body of Thorncliffe School and the local MP support the two campus option whilst the governing body of Parkview School favours the potential Academy operating from a single campus.

#### **Other Points / Comments Made**

#### Returned Questionnaires

- 4.20 As already indicated, the consultation was solely on the question of whether the potential Academy for Barrow should be on a single campus or on two campuses. Nevertheless, the questionnaire did present the opportunity for related points and comments to be made. Set out below are the main

- The timescale for opening the Academy (ie in September 2009) is too short. The opening should be delayed until 2010 in order that all information is available and plans for the transition process are in place (151)
- We don't want an Academy (78)
- Insufficient information is available in general, eg on costs, uniform, transport, curriculum (35)

### Other Written Responses

- 4.21 The response from John Hutton (see Appendix E) indicates that he would prefer to see a rather different profile of places amongst the schools and Academy campuses (assuming a two-site Academy).
- 4.22 The letter from the NASUWT (also included in Appendix E) echoes the views of others on the degree of information available, the limited scope of the consultation and the timescale for establishing the Academy. The letter is also critical of the degree of the Unions' involvement in the consultation exercise.
- 4.23 There were a further three letters received from individuals making points which are covered in this covering report or in the analysis of responses (Appendix B).

### One Campus or Two?

- 4.24 The main issues relating to the one campus or two campuses options are set out in the section headed 'Choosing between the two options' which features on pages 8-10 of the consultation document.
- 4.25 Having had the opportunity to consider the various issues and the advantages / disadvantages of the options, the respondents to the consultation document delivered a clear message. This was that there was a preference for a two campus Academy rather than a single campus one of approaching 3:1. As far as the responses from parents / grandparents are concerned there were almost 5:1 in favour of a two campus model. All but one of the students who completed the questionnaire were in favour of having two campuses. The responses received from school staff and governors showed a small preference in favour of a one campus model.

### Responding to Other Comments / Points Made During the Consultation

- 4.26 Members may also wish for some information and comment on the main issues other than those directly related to the two options which came out during the consultation process.

## **The Timescale for the Establishment of the Academy**

- 4.27 Around a third of those who responded in writing to the consultation indicated that they felt that the opening of the potential Academy should be delayed a year to September 2010. The basis for this was that those respondents felt that there was lack of information as to how the Academy would operate and what its policies, curriculum and so forth would be. Their contention was that, if the opening date for the Academy was to remain 1 September 2009, the planning for its establishment would be too rushed and that would compromise educational effectiveness during its early stages
- 4.28 During the consultation it was pointed out that in taking the decision to consult on the one or two campus options, both the Government and the County Council did so on the basis that this did not compromise the ability to open the Academy in existing buildings on 1 September 2009 as originally intended. The case for a 2009 opening includes the following points.
- Having a short lead-in time would limit the period of uncertainty and be better for the education of the students attending the three predecessor schools.
  - The County Council is very keen to begin to improve education across the town as soon as possible.
  - The Government does not want to see action delayed, particularly in relation to The Alfred Barrow School. (A decision to delay the establishment of the Academy may result in the need for a further consultation process followed by statutory proposals to close Alfred Barrow School in August 2009 ahead of the other proposed changes.)
  - A delay to September 2010 would significantly increase the risk of teachers leaving and seeking jobs elsewhere. In a period of uncertainty recruitment is usually particularly difficult.
- 4.29 There is a Project Steering Group (PSG) which is undertaking the detailed planning for the Academy. This includes the lead sponsors and representation of the DCSF and the LA. The work of the Group is supported by a management company, Mouchel. The Group is extremely confident that, leaving aside any major unforeseen issues / problems, the Academy will be ready to open on 1 September 2009 and from that date to operate very successfully.
- 4.30 There is, of course, a job for the PSG to do in offering reassurance to parents regarding the ability to prepare for and achieve a successful opening of the Academy next September. Work on this has started and an ongoing dialogue with stakeholders is planned. Formal consultation on the Academy's policies, curriculum, staff organisation, uniform and so on is likely to occur early next year.
- 4.31 It seems appropriate that planning for the Academy continues to focus on an opening in September 2009.

## **Opposition to the Academy**

- 4.32 It was clear from the consultation meetings for parents and the public and from the comments on the returned questionnaires that there remain those who are opposed to the establishment of an Academy in Barrow.
- 4.33 It is also apparent from the response to the consultation that there is also support for and acceptance of the Authority's plans for changes to secondary education in Barrow, including the development of an Academy.

## **The Number of Places**

- 4.34 In his letter responding to the consultation the Local MP suggested that the Academy should have 1400 places, rather than the 1200 currently planned. The effect of this would be to reduce the planned number of places at Walney School from 900 to 800 and at St Bernard's from 1000 to 900.
- 4.35 Prior to the Cabinet deciding to undertake further consultation, Government representatives, the Lead Member for Children's Well-being and senior local County Councillors at a meeting in August took the view that any consultative process should focus solely on the issue of one or two campuses with the rest of the way forward agreed in February 2008 remaining intact. Cabinet endorsed this view at its meeting on 1 September when deciding to hold further consultations. The options in the consultative paper were therefore based on a 1200 place Academy.

## **Lack of Information and Limited Scope of Consultation**

- 4.36 In addition to the specific comments made in the questionnaires on this issue, the Authority received 118 identical letters from individuals expressing the view that the scope of the consultation was too limited and that there was a lack of information available. A copy of the letter is included in Appendix E. Completed questionnaires were also received from 65% of the individuals who submitted the letter. The sentiments expressed in that letter were also voiced at the consultation meetings for parents and the public.
- 4.37 Regarding the scope of the consultation, this was determined by Cabinet at its meeting on 1 September 2008. The decision was to consult solely on the issue of whether the Academy planned for Barrow should be located on a permanent basis on either one or two campuses. As indicated in the consultation document, in all respects other than whether the Academy is based on one or two sites, the way forward for secondary education in Barrow agreed by Cabinet in February 2008 stands.
- 4.38 On the subject of lack of information, the criticism relates almost without exception to data on the Academy which will not become available until later in the planning process. The information referred to was on, for example, the planned Academy's staffing arrangements, admissions policy, catchment area, curriculum and uniform. All of that is a matter for the Management Company and the Academy's sponsors and work to make progress in those respects is well underway. As promised during the consultation meetings, a list of issues raised and suggestions made by parents and members of the public was passed on to Mouchel in early November to aid the planning

process for the Academy. The list is provided as Appendix F. As was pointed out during the Authority's recent consultative process, consultation led by Mouchel on these kind of subjects will occur in the New Year.

### **Scrutiny Consideration**

- 4.39 The Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Panel considered a paper on the outcome of the consultation exercise on 16 December 2008. Their views are presented in a separate report by the Chair of the Panel.

## **5.0 OPTIONS**

- 5.1 Members can either opt for a two campus approach for the planned Academy in line with the outcome of the consultation or for a single campus model.

## **6.0 RESOURCE AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The subject matter for Cabinet to consider is whether the potential Academy for Barrow is to be located on just the Parkview site or on both the Parkview and Thorncliffe sites.
- 6.2 There are no resource or value for money implications for the County Council which will arise from such a decision. The additional capital expenditure and any extra revenue costs relating to a two site model would be met by the Government.

## **7.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Although not strictly resulting from a Cabinet decision on the site options, it is necessary in order for the potential Academy to come into being for the three predecessor schools, Alfred Barrow, Parkview and Thorncliffe to close.
- 7.2 The intention is to publish the required statutory proposals to close the three predecessor schools on 30 January 2009. Following their publication, there will be a six week period for objections and other comments to be made. It is envisaged that Cabinet will consider whether to approve those statutory proposals at its meeting on 7 April 2009. DCSF statutory guidance to Local Authorities contains the presumption that proposals to close schools to make way for the establishment of Academies will be approved. The intention is that the existing schools will officially close on 31 August 2009 prior to the Academy formally coming into being the following day.
- 7.3 It is also necessary, in line with the 5 February 2008 Cabinet resolution, to publish a proposal which will have the effect of enlarging Walney School to provide 900 places; an increase of 25%. It is the intention that this proposal will be published in February 2009. Proposed changes to Regulations in January 2009 will mean that, because of the limited scale of the planned enlargement of St Bernard's School, statutory proposals are not necessary.

7.4 Members may be aware of media reports concerning legal challenges to the Government's Academies programme. One such challenge has been made in relation to a proposed Academy in the London Borough of Camden. This case was heard in the High Court in November 2008 with judgement expected to be announced in the near future. This challenge, if successful, is understood to have potential implications for the Government's Academies policy on a national basis as it alleges that European Union procurement rules should have been applied by the Secretary of State to the selection of Academy sponsors. This is a claim which the Government disputes on the basis that Academy sponsors are not operating in a market for profit. A similar legal challenge was issued against the Secretary of State in relation to the selection of sponsors for the proposed Barrow Academy on 11 December 2008. The Barrow case is likely to be delayed pending the decision in the Camden case and it is anticipated that the progress of any legal challenge in relation to Barrow will depend on the outcome of the Camden case. Developments in relation to the Camden case are being closely monitored. It is appropriate to continue to take the steps necessary to facilitate the establishment of the potential Academy unless and until the High Court judgement changes the position.

## **8.0 CONCLUSION**

8.1 There is a current County Council decision to seek to establish the potential Academy on a single site; ie Parkview. It would have been inconsistent with the decision to consult again on both that possibility and a two site approach had the Council not conducted the consultation process with an open mind regarding the two options. The consultation document made it clear that the response to the consultation would be listened to and would significantly influence the decision on whether to proceed with a one or two campus model. As far as the Government is concerned, it would be prepared to support and fund the establishment of either a one or two campus Academy depending on which is preferred locally. In these circumstances it is assumed that Cabinet will wish to take a decision on the options which is in line with the majority view contained in the feedback received from the local people who responded to the consultation.

**Moira Swann**  
**Corporate Director – Children's Services**

*18 December 2008*

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## **APPENDICES**

- Appendix A -** ***'Planning 11-16 Education for Barrow : The Potential Academy – one site or two?'***
- Appendix B -** ***Analysis of the response to the consultation via the questionnaire***
- Appendix C -** ***Notes of the consultation meetings involving secondary school student councils, staff and governors and primary school pupil representatives***

- Appendix D - Notes of the consultation meetings involving the parents and wider community**
- Appendix E - Responses from organisations / groups, etc**
- Appendix F - The consultation meetings – points to emerge for consideration by Mouchel / the lead sponsors**

Electoral Division(s): All Barrow Local Committee Members

Executive Decision  Yes

Key Decision  Yes

If a Key Decision, is the proposal published in the current Forward Plan?  Yes

Is the decision exempt from call-in on grounds of urgency?  No

If exempt from call-in, has the agreement of the Chair of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee been sought or obtained?  N/A

Has this matter been considered by Overview and Scrutiny?  
If so, give details below.  Yes

Has an environmental or sustainability impact assessment been undertaken?  No

Has an equality impact assessment been undertaken?  No

**PREVIOUS RELEVANT COUNCIL OR EXECUTIVE DECISIONS**

- Cabinet, 7 September 2005*
- Cabinet, 28 February 2006*
- Cabinet, 28 November 2006*
- Cabinet, 05 February 2008*
- Cabinet, 01 September 2008*

**CONSIDERATION BY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

The outcome of the consultation was considered by the Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Panel (see paragraph 4.39)

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Enhancing Lives Through Learning – A Vision for Schools in Cumbria (2006)

**RESPONSIBLE CABINET MEMBER**

*Anne Burns, Cabinet Member for Children’s Social Care and Lead Member for Children’s Services*

**REPORT AUTHOR**

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