
Report to

Cabinet Member (Children, Learning and Young People)
Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee
Scrutiny Board 2

5 March 2008
5 March 2008
5 March 2008

Report of

Director Children, Learning and Young People

Title

Outcomes of the Consultation on the Establishment of an Academy in Swanswell

1 Purpose of the Report

This report provides feedback on the recent consultation to establish an Academy to replace the current Sidney Stringer School and sets out proposed the next steps.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Scrutiny Board is recommended consider this report and forward any comments to the Cabinet Member (Children, Learning and Young People) for consideration.

2.2 The Cabinet Member is recommended to:

- Note the proposal to establish a new Academy to be sponsored jointly by Coventry City Council; City College; Coventry University and Jaguar Cars to replace the current Sidney Stringer School and the responses to the recent consultation;
- Authorise officers to issue a Statutory Notice for the closure of the current Sidney Stringer School, subject to the approval by the Secretary of State of a funding agreement to establish a new Academy.
- Delegate authority to the Director Children, Learning and Young People to finalise the details of the Statutory Notice.

3 Information/Background

3.1 On 12 December 2006 Cabinet approved a report authorizing the submission of an expression of interest for an Academy in Swanswell to replace the current Sidney Stringer School to be sponsored jointly by Coventry City Council, City College, Coventry University and Jaguar Cars with the City Council and City College as joint lead sponsors.

3.2 Subject to the approval of the Expression of Interest by Ministers, Cabinet also authorised public consultation on the proposal. Consultation was initially proposed to take place in Spring 2007 but was delayed due to further discussions between the Department for

Children, Schools and Families and the sponsors. This was due to the possible implications for the proposal arising from Coventry's inclusion as a 'Wave 4 Authority' in the national Building Schools for the Future (BSF) Programme, which was announced on 22 December 2006.

- 3.3 The Expression of Interest was subsequently approved by the Secretary of State on the understanding that the Academy would be procured as part of the local authority's BSF arrangements. Further discussions which followed the fire at Sidney Stringer in October 2007, however, resulted in the agreement of the DCSF to rebuilding the Academy outside the main BSF Programme, through the National Framework Agreement for Academies. This will enable the Academy to be built at least 12 months earlier than through the BSF framework.
- 3.4 Consultation on the joint proposals to close the existing Sidney Stringer School and to open a new Academy began in mid January 2008 and closes on 29 February 2008. During the course of this consultation a schedule of meetings was arranged with various stakeholders including a public meeting for the local community; separate meetings with staff, governors and parents of Sidney Stringer School; a joint meeting for parents, staff and governors of partner primary schools; drop in sessions in the Hillfields area, a meeting with the Sidney Stringer School Council and meetings with trades unions and headteachers of the schools in the North West Federation.
- 3.5 The sponsors were represented at those meetings by Ruth Snow (Head of services for Schools Coventry City Council), Paul Taylor (Principal, City College) Madeleine Atkins (Vice Chancellor, Coventry University) and Les Ratcliffe (Community Liaison Manager, Jaguar Cars). In addition the lead sponsors also met with other key stakeholders.
- 3.6 A full schedule of all of the consultation meetings is shown as Appendix One to this report.
- 3.7 The sponsors have been supported in the development of the Academy proposal and the feasibility study by Place Consultancy appointed by the DCSF. They have prepared the formal consultation document and parents' newsletter in collaboration with the sponsors and supported the consultation meetings.
- 3.8 Copies of the newsletter were sent to the parents/carers of all pupils currently attending Sidney Stringer School together with those attending its main partner primary schools. Copies of the consultation booklet were made available to each governor and member of staff at Sidney Stringer together with other key stakeholders. Additional copies were made available at all of the meetings and were available to download from the City Council's website. In all over 5000 printed copies of the consultation document and newsletter were distributed. Documents were also available via an Academy specific website which could be accessed via links from the City Council website.

4. Academy in Swanswell: The Proposals for Consultation

- 4.1 In summary it is proposed to replace Sidney Stringer School with an Academy which will be situated in close proximity to City College in the Swanswell Learning Quarter. This will enable opportunities for sharing facilities and collaborative working. The proposal draws on the relevant expertise of each of the sponsors to build on the current success and strengths of Sidney Stringer School to deliver even better learning opportunities for young people in the area.
- 4.2 Sidney Stringer School is a high achieving and successful school which is greatly valued and respected within its community however its buildings are now beyond their economic life and

in need of replacement to provide its students with a learning environment that is fit for the 21st century. The situation with the buildings was made more acute due to the recent fire which has resulted in a significant loss of facilities at the schools.

- 4.3 It is proposed that the Academy to replace Sidney Stringer School will provide for students aged 11-19 and be of an equivalent size i.e. 7 forms of entry providing 1050 places (11-16) plus 300 places at Post 16 making a total of 1350. It is proposed that the Academy will open in the current school buildings in September 2010 and transfer to the new Academy building in 2011.
- 4.4 The sponsors have agreed the Academy will continue to admit students on the same basis as the current Sidney Stringer School, being a fully inclusive neighbourhood school which serves its local community and catering for students of all abilities, faiths and backgrounds. It will be a non-selective school, following the City Council's admissions policy and national best practice. All students attending Sidney Stringer at the point of 'closure' of the current school will have automatic right to transfer to the Academy.
- 4.5 The Academy will continue to participate as a full member of the Coventry community of secondary schools and participate fully in the North West Federation, as does the current Sidney Stringer School.
- 4.6 The Academy will continue to offer a broad and balanced curriculum and a diverse range of learning opportunities for its students. It is also proposed that the Academy will become a focus for learning not just for its students but also for their families and the wider community.
- 4.7 The sponsors are committed to ensuring that the Academy will be unique and reflect the values, priorities and aspirations of the community it serves, providing first class facilities that will enable an already successful school to develop and progress even further.
- 4.8 The sponsors had proposed Design and Technology as the specialism for the academy reflecting the strong expertise and support in these areas that will be available from the sponsors. It is clearly recognised in this proposal that the current specialisms of mathematics and computing will continue to be a significant part of the provision in the Academy. The sponsors therefore invited comment on the choice of specialism and are prepared to consider including mathematics as part of the named specialism of the new Academy if that is strongly desired.
- 4.9 The sponsors are also anxious to retain links with the proud history of Sidney Stringer School and its excellent relationship with the local community. A key factor in ensuring the continuation of that history and relationship will be the name of the new Academy. The sponsors have therefore asked as part of the consultation to hear all views before making a final decision.

5. Summary of Consultation Responses

- 5.1 Appendix two provides a summary of the responses to the consultation questionnaire received to date. A document containing written responses and the minutes of the consultation meetings will be put together and made available from Members Lounges or on request from the Director Children, Learning and Young People.
- 5.2 In overall terms 231 consultation responses have been received to date out of a total of 5000 consultation documents and newsletters sent out. 375 people have attended the various consultation events held so far.
- 5.3 Some of the people responding to the consultation object in principle to the establishment

of an Academy, as did a number of people attending the various meetings. Overall responses of parents/carers, school and college students and members of the community indicate that 54% were in favour of the proposal to establish an Academy. 28% were against, 16% unsure and 2% have made no comment. The degree of support varies according to the type of respondent.

- 5.4 As indicated in 5.2, to date 231 responses have been received in the form of the short questionnaire which accompanied the consultation document. 117 were hard copies of completed questionnaires and 114 were 'on line' responses. Data shown at appendix two shows that the majority of respondents (overall 54%) are in favour of Sidney Stringer School becoming an Academy. When analysis is considered by group/type of respondents there are wide variations in the proportions, with some groups showing less favour to the Academy option and some not in favour.
- 5.5 Respondents across all groups are mostly in agreement that the values expressed through the emerging education 'Ethos and Vision statement' for the new Academy are the right ones and all groups are mostly in agreement with the proposals for increased community involvement in the Academy. There is less certainty expressed over the proposed new specialism of design and technology and sponsors have agreed that this issue requires further detailed consideration as a result of the consultation responses and comments.
- 5.6 On the question of a name for the new Academy a large majority 82% wish to retain the name Sidney Stringer. The sponsors have acknowledged the wish from most respondents to keep the Sidney Stinger name and are keen to ensure that their decision on the name reflects local wishes, the fact that the school is a very successful school with a strong history of involvement in and support from the community. There was strong evidence throughout the consultation of the goodwill and support for the school from both current and previous students, parents and staff. This goodwill and support was well demonstrated in the response to the recent fire at the school.
- 5.7 As the consultation period does not end until 29 February an update on responses will be given at the various meetings on 5 March.

6. Process for moving to the next stage

- 6.1 The Secretary of State will be responsible for the opening of the new Academy by approving a funding agreement with the Academy Trust which will be set up by the sponsors in summer 2008.
- 6.2 Before the new Academy can open, the current Sidney Stringer School must close. As indicated earlier in the report the Academy will initially operate in the existing school buildings. The responsibility for closing the school lies with the City Council.
- 6.3 The next stage of this process is to consider the outcomes of the consultation and for the City Council to decide whether to publish the relevant statutory notices proposing the closure of Sidney Stringer School in accordance with section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. It is important to note that the closure of Sidney Stringer School will be contingent upon the Secretary of State agreeing to the opening of an Academy. If that agreement is not forthcoming the school will not close and will continue to operate as a community school maintained by the City Council as it currently does.
- 6.4 Following the publication of the statutory notice for closure there will be a period of 6 weeks during which there will be opportunity for community representations and objections. If there are any representations or objections received by the end of the 6-week period these will be

considered by the new Cabinet Advisory Panel set up to replace the School Organisation Committee. That Advisory Panel will then make a recommendation to Cabinet who will make the final decision on closure. As indicated in paragraph 5.3 above the closure notice will only take effect if the Secretary of State approves the opening of an Academy.

7. Proposal

It is proposed that the Cabinet Member support the proposal to open an academy in Hillfields to replace the existing Sidney Stringer School and authorise officers to publish the necessary notices under section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to facilitate the closure of Sidney Stringer School to enable the new Academy to open with effect from the start of the new School year in 2010 subject to the Secretary of State approving the necessary funding agreement.

8. Other specific implications

	Implications (See below)	No Implications
Best Value		√
Children and Young People	√	
Climate Change & Sustainable Development	√	
Comparable Benchmark Data		√
Corporate Parenting		√
Coventry Community Plan		√
Crime and Disorder		√
Equal Opportunities	√	
Finance	√	
Health and Safety		√
Human Resources	√	
Human Rights Act		√
Impact on Partner Organisations	√	
Information and Communications Technology		√
Legal Implications	√	
Neighbourhood Management	√	
Property Implications	√	
Race Equality Scheme		√
Risk Management		√
Trade Union Consultation	√	
Voluntary Sector – The Coventry Compact		√

8.1 Children and Young People

The proposed Academy will be of great potential benefit to the children and young people who will attend the school by significantly improving the quality of educational experience through providing a better learning environment in a new, state of the art school buildings and through the provision of more varied curriculum choices.

8.2 Climate Change and Sustainable Development

Coventry's schools currently account for 28% of the City's carbon footprint and the BSF programme, which includes funding for the Academy, aims to reduce that through replacing old school buildings with modern, energy efficient facilities.

Academy Framework bidding consortia will be asked to take account of the Council's proposed Climate Change Strategy, currently under consultation. The BSF national programme expects all new schools and academies to be built to meet CO2 emission reduction targets - 60% relative to those that are currently being constructed and that have been designed to 2002 Building Regulations.

Additional funding of £50 per square metre is available to this Academy project to support the delivery of the 60% target reduction.

All BSF and Academy schemes are required to achieve, as a minimum, the category of BREEAM "Very Good" for schools, as set out under the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM). However, credits awarded under the BREEAM scheme are achievable by implementing initiatives other than those that are directly energy related and Officers are concerned that BREEAM compliance alone may be insufficient to meet the CO2 reduction targets proposed in the Council's own Climate Change Strategy.

8.3 Equal Opportunities

The academy will continue to operate as a fully inclusive school taking pupils of all abilities, faiths and social background in accordance with the City Council's SEN and Inclusion policies.

8.4 Financial Implications

If established the Academy would be an independent school funded directly by DCSF. The running costs of academies are funded at the same level as other local schools with similar characteristics. In revenue terms we anticipate that this would be broadly neutral to the City Council. The DCSF use a recoupment model based on our local funding formula to reduce the Dedicated Schools Grant by the amount that would be allocated to the Academy.

The feasibility and implementation costs of approved Academy schemes are funded by government grant. The government also fund the majority of the capital required for new or refurbished buildings. Sponsors are required to contribute £2m in total towards this. The City Council, as part of the consortium which sponsors the Academy, will contribute through a Deed of Gift to the Endorsement Trust a total sum of £1m. The sponsors collectively have to make a contribution of half a million pounds at the point of Funding Agreement, and the remaining £1.5m over a period of five years.

The building and running of the Academy would be the responsibility of the Academy

Trust. There would therefore be some transfer of risk and long-term cost from the City Council to the Academy Trust.

8.5 Human Resources

Consultation meetings have taken place with staff at Sidney Stringer School. A specific meeting with relevant trades unions will take place on 27 February 2008 and an update of this will be provided along with the outstanding consultation responses at the various meetings on 5 March. The TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings and Protection of Employment) Regulations would apply to the establishment of an Academy. All staff employed at Sidney Stringer School at the point of transfer would move across to the new Academy.

8.6 Legal Implications

The Academy will be independent of the City Council and operated by a Trust set up by the sponsors. In order for the Academy to open the City Council must go through statutory process to formally close Sidney Stringer School.

8.8 Neighbourhood Management

Throughout the consultation period the local Neighbourhood Management Team and the Swanswell Initiative Team have played an active and supportive role. They have acted as advocates and facilitators of the consultative process and have hosted events and activities specifically to elicit responses from key Academy stakeholders. The further involvement of these teams through the implementation phase of the project (should this go ahead) will ease the successful establishment of the Academy.

8.9 Impact on Partner Organisations

The sponsors will be keen to ensure that any new Academy will work as part of the overall partnership with schools in Coventry and within the federations of secondary schools in the City. The sponsors themselves will continue to support and work in collaboration with all schools in the City as they currently do.

8.10 Property Implications

For the Academy proposal to proceed, the Local Authority needs to transfer the control of land to the Academy Trust. The transfer would be created by means of a long lease at a peppercorn rent. The recommendations in this report would imply that the City Council agrees to this approach, subject to the drawing up of a detailed lease agreement, which will need to be the subject of a subsequent specific Cabinet report.

Any lease would restrict use of these sites to school and related uses. It would preclude land being sold on to a third party.

At present however no clear site boundary has been established for the new Academy. The report to Cabinet on 12th December 2006 indicated the broad approximate location of the new school on the Learning Quarter Site adjacent to the proposed new City College buildings. Phase 1 of City College is already complete and Phase 2 is expected to be completed in October 2008. The report further stressed that some or all of the existing Sidney Stringer site will still be required for the Academy, most likely for sports provision.

The Expression of Interest (EOI) approved for the Academy clearly states that the entirety of the existing site (some 6.5 acres) and the additional site adjacent to the College (some 2.5 acres), a

total of 9 acres, will be transferred to the Academy Trust as a clear and unencumbered site on a 125 year lease. The EOI also indicates that enhanced sports facilities may be created for Academy and Community use within the 9 acres, but that the Academy would have first call on this use and the local authority would be expected to pay a facilities management charge. If suitable agreement could not be reached between the Academy Trust and the local authority about the sports facilities, the local authority has given an undertaking to transfer all 9 acres as a clear and unencumbered site. Any deviation from these details within the EOI would represent a material change to the proposals and DCSF/Ministerial approval is likely to be required.

The Academy Project Steering Group are therefore currently investigating three options as part of a wider feasibility study, to establish the preferred location for the new Academy across the two available sites. The preferred model will be driven by the education vision for the new Academy which is currently being jointly developed by the sponsors. Each option is likely to have different financial and property implications and a further report will be brought to Cabinet in May recommending the site for transfer and the associated financial and property implications.

8.11 Trades Union Consultation

A specific meeting will be held on 27 February 2008 to allow Trade Unions to comment on the consultation document and to meet with the sponsors for the Academy. Further consultation on the detailed arrangements for the transfer of staff to the Academy will take place in due course if the proposals are implemented.

9. Timescale

Timetable for an Academy in Swanswell

Task	Date
Consultation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff, governors and parents of Sidney Stringer (3 separate meetings) • Community meeting • Partner Primary Schools –staff governors and parents • Trades Unions 	<p>Tuesday 29 January 2008</p> <p>Thursday 31 January 2008 Tuesday 5 February 2008</p> <p>Wednesday 27 February 2008</p>
Report on outcomes of consultation and seek authority to Publish Statutory Notices	Cabinet Member (CLYP) – 5 March Scrutiny Board 2 – 5 March Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee – 5 March
Publish Statutory Notices to close Sidney Stringer	6 March 2008
End of Statutory Consultation period (6 weeks from date of publication of notices)	End of April 2008.
Cabinet Advisory Panel to consider any statutory objections and make recommendations to Cabinet and further consideration by Scrutiny Board 2	End of April/Early May 2008
Cabinet to make decision	Mid/Late May 2008
Sign Funding Agreement	Mid June 2008
Academy Opens	September 2010
Academy moves to new buildings	September 2011

	Yes	No
Key Decision		√
Scrutiny Consideration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutiny Board 2 – 5 March 2008 • Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee – 5 March 2008 	√	
Council Consideration		√

List of background papers

Proper officer: Director Children, Learning and Young People

Author: Ruth Snow; Head of Services for Schools; Children, Learning and Young People Directorate Telephone (024) 7683 3621

(Any enquiries should be directed to the above)

Other contributors:

- Colin Green – Director CLYP – extension 1500
- Gillian Carter - Solicitor - extension 3116
- Ros Lilley - Solicitor - extension 3011
- Rachael Sugars – Finance – extension 2961
- Neelesh Sutaria – HR Manager – extension 1559
- Michelle Salmon – Committee Officer – extension 3065
- Alison Townsend – Committee Officer – extension 3080
- Ashley Simpson – BSF Project Manager – extension 1508
- Paul Taylor – Principal City College
- Madeleine Atkins – Vice Chancellor Coventry University
- Les Ratcliffe – Community Manager Jaguar Cars
- Nigel Clews – City Development Directorate – extension 2620
- Belinda Lowe – Place Consultants

Papers open to Public Inspection

Description of paper

Location

Appendix 1

Timetable of consultation events on the development of an Academy in Swanswell:

Consultation Meeting	Date
Sidney Stringer Staff	29 th January 2008
Sidney Stringer Governors	29 th January 2008
Sidney Stringer parents and students	29 th January 2008
Local Community	31 st January 2008
Staff, Governors and parents of partner primary schools	5 th February 2008
Sidney Stringer School Council	6 th February 2008
Swanswell Initiative Consultation Event – Primary Schools	7 th February 2008
Swanswell Initiative Consultation Event - Yardley Street Youth Centre	13 th February 2008
Drop in – Neighbourhood Management Centre	14 th February 2008 9.30am – 12pm
Drop in – City College	21 st February 2008 9.30am – 12pm
Sponsors meeting with Trades Unions	27 February 2008