

**LONDON BOROUGH OF RICHMOND UPON THAMES**

**CABINET**

**DATE: 16 JANUARY 2006**

**REPORT OF: DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET  
MEMBER FOR SCHOOLS**

**DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET  
MEMBER FOR STRATEGY &  
FINANCE**

**LEAD  
OFFICER: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND  
LEISURE SERVICES**

**SUBJECT: BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE ONE-SCHOOL  
PATHFINDER**

**WARDS: HAMPTON WICK AND WHITTON**

**KEY DECISION?: YES**

**IF YES, IN FORWARD PLAN?: YES**

**Agenda Item No.**

**10**

**For general release**

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The report provides an update on action taken since last reported to Cabinet on 5 December 2005, with regard to the £23M capital grant from the DfES for the rebuilding of one secondary school under the Building Schools for the Future One-School Pathfinder initiative. In addition, the report recommends which of the two short-listed schools, Teddington or Whitton, is the best fit to meet the terms and conditions outlined by the DfES. These were clearly set out in the report to the Education and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 1 December 2005.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That the Cabinet approve the recommendation that Teddington School should be the site taken forward for the final negotiations with the DfES. This decision is subject to there being no adverse impact on abnormal costs and/or programme as a result of the further ground surveys that are being undertaken and that are referred to in the report.**

**3. DETAIL**

3.1 The Education and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 1 December 2005 to consider the Building Schools for the Future One-School Pathfinder report and the information provided within it, including details of the timescales, consultation process, criteria for consideration, and written submissions from each of the secondary schools under consideration. In addition, the Headteacher and Chairman of Governors for each school gave a presentation and answered questions posed by Members of the Committee.

3.2 The minutes of the Education and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee state:

3.2.1 “Richard Weeks, Headteacher and Jack Stephen, Chairman of Governors made a presentation on Teddington School’s application for pathfinder status and answered Members’ questions.

They reported that the curriculum offered was restricted by the condition of the school and the size and suitability of the classrooms. The school was oversubscribed and a new school would be able to accommodate an increased number of pupils and would offer post-16 provision for up to 350 students.

3.2.2 Sue Raynor, Headteacher and Bob Poland, Chairman of Governors made a presentation on Whitton School’s application for pathfinder status and answered Members’ questions.

They reported on the particular challenges that the school faced – significant indices of deprivation, relatively high numbers of children below average ability on entry and the very poor state of many of the school buildings. The school was undersubscribed, partly as a consequence of perceptions about its past reputation and the building of a new school would help to change attitudes. The new school would not have a sixth form but would deliver post 16 courses via a hub and spoke model with Richmond upon Thames College.

3.2.3 Some Members of the Committee expressed a preference for the application from Teddington School because of its cramped and crowded condition and because it would provide a sixth form. Others favoured Whitton because it was in an area of deprivation, was in urgent need of repair and was seeking to be an extended school and Children’s Centre. However, the majority of Members did not wish to express a preference and all agreed that both school buildings were not fit for purpose and would benefit from a rebuild.”

3.3 On 21 November 2005, a letter outlining details of the One-School Pathfinder initiative was sent to all headteachers, Chairmen of Governors, diocesan representatives and Capital Strategy Group members. In this letter the Cabinet Member for Schools invited views on the selection of the school.

3.4 The Capital Strategy Group was also asked to express any preference for the school to benefit from this funding when they met on the 6 December 2005. Preferences expressed were evenly spread between Teddington, Whitton and members who did not wish to specify a particular school, as both schools were worthy and would benefit enormously from the funding.

3.5 The Director of Education and Leisure Services sent a letter to all Cabinet Members inviting them to seek clarification on any of the criteria and conditions laid down by the DfES to inform the decision.

#### **4. SELECTION OF THE SCHOOL AGAINST THE DFES CRITERIA**

4.1 A detailed comparison of the evidence available for both schools was presented in the report to Overview and Scrutiny. The comparison demonstrated that a case could be

made to select either school for rebuild as outlined in the earlier analysis carried out for the Council's PFI bid in 2003. In this context both schools were invited to present their case to members of Overview and Scrutiny. The detailed submissions were published with the Overview and Scrutiny report.

- 4.2 The data analysis demonstrates that both schools have a good case for selection in respect of condition, suitability, workforce remodelling and the standards agenda. Some of the significant differences are set out below.

The case for Teddington outlines the significant opportunities to create a high achieving centre of excellence meeting the key aspirations of the national and local agenda. It is also significant that OFSTED report directly that the condition and suitability issues impact on the quality of teaching, learning and standards.

Teddington is an oversubscribed school with an ambition to develop a second specialism for Business and Enterprise and a sixth form. This will provide choice for parents and is in line with Council policy. The general teaching rooms and facilities at Teddington are used intensely with high levels of occupancy.

Teddington's vision for the community builds on current partnerships and good development of extended school activities as a School for the Future. Teddington is well placed to meet the aspirations to be a centre for sporting excellence in hockey.

The case for Whitton focuses more significantly on excellence at the heart of the community. The vision centres on the provision of community facilities on site with a rationalisation of the library and community centre. This extends to include a range of multi agency services located on site, building on their current good practice. The school is under-subscribed and presented evidence from parental surveys to demonstrate the potential impact of a new building on student recruitment. The OFSTED report commented on the unsatisfactory condition of the accommodation, the lack of study space and ICT specialist facilities. The occupancy rate is lower than Teddington in many areas due to the low pupil role in relation to the size of the building.

Whitton has a vision to be a thriving school in the centre of an area of relatively high deprivation for Richmond upon Thames. Whitton has no plans to meet the DfES criteria for expansion nor to develop a discrete sixth form provision. The school will bid for a second specialism in Business and Enterprise and has the Healthy School Award.

Whitton is well placed to develop further the range of extended activities as the hub of the Extended Schools' Cluster in Whitton and Heathfield.

#### 4.3 **Abnormal Costs**

##### 4.3.1 **Desk-top Studies**

Desk top based studies have been undertaken of the likely abnormal costs for development that would arise at both the Whitton and Teddington School sites and of the likelihood or not of development timescales fitting within the DfES requirements. The desk top work has been undertaken by a team of Property Services and Education officers and has been supplemented by a series of on-site soil surveys that have tested ground stability and contamination, with resulting advice from consultants and from the Council's Contaminated Land Officer.

It is stressed that the work undertaken has been relatively limited given the timescales dictated by the DfES. The work has drawn on the extensive construction and development experience of a range of officers as well as previous preliminary design work undertaken for each school, but this has necessarily been applied against a range of

assumptions that whilst considered reasonable at this stage, would ideally have been tested further had timescales allowed.

Town Planning assumptions, for example, have been made in liaison with the Council's strategic planning officers. These have concentrated on basic advice in terms of where in approximate terms buildings recreation and sporting facilities might or might not be placed, and what in very approximate terms might be allowed in terms of building density. The further design work that will come following a decision on which school to put forward to the DfES, will inevitably raise detailed planning issues and concerns that will need to be overcome, no matter which school is selected. The time potentially required to achieve a planning approval for either site represents a significant risk to the currently envisaged timescales.

The caveats against this desk top work are therefore such that it should be seen as an initial view only, one where we have attempted to apply assumptions to a similar level of detail against both schools, so that a fair comparison can be made between the two.

With these caveats, the principal issues and costs that have emerged from this desk top work are set out separately for each school.

#### **4.4 Principal Issues at Teddington Secondary School**

##### **4.4.1 Planning Assumptions**

The approved revisions to the Council's Unitary Development Plan are such that built development will very likely be allowed between the existing school building and the riverside boundary so long as it is sensitively designed and arranged. This would necessitate re-location of one or both of the current All Weather Pitches and this will require considerable care in terms of planning, particularly in relation to floodlighting whether the re-location is within or outside the school boundary.

Temporary and/or permanent use of the adjoining Broom Road Recreation Ground for re-located sports uses would be considered but there would be a range of planning hurdles to overcome, particularly in terms of ensuring compatibility with the principles of the planning status of the Recreation Ground, which is designated Public Open Space and Metropolitan Open Land.

##### **4.4.2 Phasing/Temporary Accommodation Issues**

The planning status and size of the land between the current building and the riverside are such that it might be possible to construct the whole of the new school whilst the school is in operation. This would keep to an absolute minimum any need for temporary classroom space and would negate the additional timescales and building costs that would come with phased development.

##### **4.4.3 All Weather Sports Pitches**

The existing All Weather Pitches are subject to a licence for their non exclusive use by Teddington Hockey Club until 2009. The terms of this licence will therefore need to be re-negotiated. It is hoped that this will be by agreement given the mutual benefits of a re-developed school and the community sports benefits that will bring. Officers have also assumed at this stage that one and more likely both of the All Weather Pitches will need to be retained throughout the construction period of the new school. We can only provide a range of potential costs in this respect at this stage.

They are based on the cost of re-provision in the order of £0.5m per pitch. The range starts at a probable best case scenario of the new school being built on just one of the

current pitches, with its replacement being in a permanent new position. This continues through to the worst case scenario of both pitches needing to be replaced on a temporary and then permanent basis. The range is therefore £0.5m to £2m.

#### **4.4.4 Ground Stability and Contamination**

The school and its grounds are upon the site of a former Victorian sewage works. The historic plans indicate that the current school buildings are built over former filter beds with the All Weather Pitches being predominantly over what was the sewage works buildings and over what was a shallow pit. Prior to the school's construction, the sewage works site will have been levelled off using soil and materials imported from elsewhere.

Typical concerns for such sites are the stability of the made up ground and whether there is any contamination within the imported soil and materials. Sample soil surveys have been undertaken to examine these issues. All indicate levels of strength and stability that would not require specialist foundation design and/or ground stabilisation techniques to allow construction of a building of the scale that is envisaged. The depth of made up ground identified is shallower than the typical depth of the foundations required for a building of this size and scale constructed using typical construction techniques and hence the foundations would go below the depth of the made up ground.

One of the six soil surveys showed high levels of contamination and is of concern. This problem drill was at a boundary of the site. Whilst it is likely that the contamination is isolated to a limited part of the site, we have considered it prudent to order further drill surveys radiating away from the problem area in order to come to a more definitive view of its extent and of the costs of any necessary remedial works.

The close down of the construction industry over the Christmas period has meant these extra drills have only been possible to arrange for the week commencing 9 January. The time needed for chemical analysis thereafter puts in doubt whether the full results will be available for the Cabinet meeting. A radar based scan of the ground beneath the All Weather Pitches is also being undertaken, particularly to detect whether there are any remaining foundations from former buildings that might impede, to detrimental cost, the construction of new foundations. Hence the recommendations of this report have provisos in respect of the results that are awaited from these further surveys.

#### **4.4.5 Timescales**

There is a possibility that the timescales required by the DfES can be met at this site particularly given the potential for the new school to be built in a single phase.

This is however, as it would be at any site, subject to there being very smooth progress on planning matters, design and procurement, as well as specifically at this site to reasonably quick resolution of the issues relating to re-provision of All Weather Pitches.

It is also subject to there being no impact on timescales as a result of any need for de-contamination that emerges from the additional surveys referred to above.

#### **4.4.6 Approximate Range of Abnormal Costs for Teddington as at 5 January 2005**

- All Weather Pitch Replacement - £0.5m - £2m.
- De-contamination costs and/or foundation costs that may arise from further survey work being undertaken.

#### **4.5 Principal Issues at Whitton Secondary School**

#### **4.5.1 Planning Issues**

There is no possibility of construction of the new school on the school's playing fields at the south side of the A316 since this is Metropolitan Open Land. However, subject to detail, it is likely that the Metropolitan Open Land can be used for temporary classrooms as necessary through the construction period and for temporary and/or additional new hard play areas.

There is a possibility in planning terms of new school buildings being constructed on the adjacent Council site at the corner of Hospital Bridge Road and Percy Road. Subject to detailed design considerations and to the current community facilities being appropriately re-provided, either within the new buildings or at another site.

#### **4.5.2 Phasing Issues/Temporary Accommodation Needs**

The inability to build the new school on existing playing fields leads to very significant phasing issues. The main school site is small and already substantially built over leaving very little room for new construction without need for demolition of large sections of the current school. Our assumption at this stage is that if the boundary of the main site cannot be extended, then the new school would have to be built in three phases.

This would mean significant additional costs in terms of the basic building costs because of loss of economies of scale and restricted working areas, as well as the need for significant numbers of temporary classrooms and for the provision of temporary play areas to the South Side of the A316.

A three phase construction would also add significantly to timescales and could take the build period beyond the DfES timescale requirements by potentially as much as a year. This in turn adds further to costs since it adds to contractors "preliminaries" i.e. their basic costs of being on site through a construction period.

A single or two phase construction of the new school building would be possible if the land at the corner of Hospital Bridge Road and Percy Road were able to be used for part of the building. This land is currently used as a library and as a community centre under the terms of a lease from the Council. If this site were used it would bring down additional building costs and temporary accommodation costs. This would be considerable for a single phase construction, less so for a two phase construction. At this stage we consider it would more likely allow a two- phase construction given the proximity of existing school buildings to the boundary with western side the current school site.

However, there are considerable caveats around the use of the Hospital Bridge Road/Percy Road site. There are doubts as to whether the use of the site could be planned for expeditiously enough to fit within the DfES timescales given the re-provision and lease issues. Even if these concerns were overcome, there are significant additional costs for the construction of the new school using that land that would offset, to a large extent, the savings made on building costs and temporary accommodation. Principally these are the opportunity cost to the Council of use of what is a valuable development site in its own right, plus the need for demolition of the school caretaker's house.

#### **4.5.3 Ground Stability/Contamination**

We have undertaken soil survey drills at several points on the current school site and on the Hospital Bridge Road/Percy Road site on parts. All show reasonable stability of the ground and no concerns around contamination.

Historical data does however show that parts of the Western boundary of the school site and the whole of the Hospital Bridge Road/Percy Road site as once being a gravel pit.

The Pit would have been levelled off and backfilled using soil and materials imported from elsewhere many decades ago. Typical concerns for such sites are the stability of the made up ground and whether there is any contamination within the imported soil and materials. Sample soil surveys have been undertaken to examine these issues. All indicate levels of strength and stability that would not require specialist foundation design and/or ground stabilisation techniques to allow construction of a building of the scale that is envisaged. The depth of made up ground identified is shallower than the typical depth of the foundations required for a building of this size and scale constructed using typical construction techniques and hence the foundations would go below the depth of the made up ground.

Although the two soil survey drills already undertaken over this particular area showed no adverse readings, the Contaminated Land Officer has advised that it would be prudent to undertake a radar scan of accessible land in order to try to trace accurately the line of the former gravel pit excavation. He has also advised that we drill and sample at least two additional boreholes within the established extent of the Victorian gravel pit. This is particularly pertinent given that the community centre at the Hospital Bridge Road/Percy Road site has suffered from adverse settlement in the past. This scan is being arranged for the week commencing 9 January.

#### 4.5.4 Timescales

Without use of adjacent land a scheme at this site would almost certainly fall beyond the timescales required by the DfES, and by anything up to an additional year, primarily because of the phasing issues described above.

If the Hospital Bridge Road/Percy Road site were able to be used quickly and if a single phase construction of the new school building was then possible, then the DfES requirements can be met. The more likely scenario of a two phase construction with the use of the Hospital Bridge Road/Percy Road site could push the construction timescales beyond the DfES requirements by anything up to six months. Both scenarios are subject to there being very smooth progress on planning matters, design and procurement, in line with the Teddington project.

#### 4.5.5 Approximate Range of Abnormal Costs for Whitton as at 5 January 2005

##### (1) Within Current School Boundary

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Basic Building Cost Additions for phasing | £2.2m        |
| Temporary Accommodation Needs for phasing | £1m          |
| Additions to preliminaries                | <u>£1.2m</u> |
| <u>Total</u>                              | <u>£4.4m</u> |

##### (2) Use of Hospital Bridge Road/Percy Road site – single-phase new school

|  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| Re-provision of library and community centre plus latent development value of the extra land | £2.5 – 3m          |
| Loss of caretakers house   | £0.3m              |
| Temporary Accommodation needs for close proximity of old and new schools                     | <u>£0.3m</u>       |
| <u>Total</u>   | <u>£3.1 – 3.6m</u> |

##### (3) Use of Hospital Bridge Road/Percy Road site – two-phase new school

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Re-provision of library and community centre plus latent development value of the extra land | £2.5 – 3m |
|--|-----------|

|   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| Loss of caretaker's house                 | £0.3m               |
| Basic Building Cost Additions for phasing | £1m                 |
| Temporary Accommodation Needs for phasing | £0.5m               |
| Additions to preliminaries                | <u>£0.5m</u>        |
| <u>Total</u>                              | <u>£4.8m – 5.3m</u> |
| Aggregated Range                          | <u>£3.1- £5.3m</u>  |

Subject, especially in terms of (2) and (3), to any additional costs that might arise as a result of the further ground survey

#### 4.6 **Consultants**

This desktop work will be reviewed by Currie and Brown, our recently appointed consultants for the next phase of the feasibility work, and is also therefore subject to any additional and significant issues they consider pertinent to raise given their specific experience of the “Building Schools for the Future” framework. It is hoped that this review work will be undertaken in the week commencing 9 January and that Cabinet can therefore be advised accordingly.

### 5. **CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 Extensive consultation has been undertaken. Please refer to Agenda item 11, Building Schools for the Future One-School Pathfinder, Cabinet 5 December 2005. In addition, this topic was an agenda item at the meeting of the Education Capital Strategy Group when it met on 6 December 2006 as referred to in paragraph 3.4 of this document.

### 6. **RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET FOR THE SELECTION OF ONE SCHOOL**

The data analysis and evidence presented by the schools supports a case for either Whitton or Teddington School as the BSF Pathfinder. Teddington has a more acute problem with significant suitability issues and intense use of the building. Teddington proposes to expand provision to include a sixth form subject to the new competition rules for sixth forms in schools.

Teddington is in a position to develop a vision for extended community use on the current site.

Whitton is set in the heart of a more deprived community with an ambition to develop the facilities to include a library and community use. This paper sets out the barriers to achieving this vision within the timeframe. Whitton School has ambitions to raise standards in a school of the twenty first century. However, the school is not in a position to respond to the criteria for possible expansion either through an additional form of entry or sixth form provision.

These arguments for raising standards and meeting the agenda for Every Child Matters are finely balanced. The paper clearly outlines the impact of the feasibility study and potential abnormal costs in relation to both sites. On the evidence provided in section 4 of this paper it is clear that the proposal to rebuild Teddington School could possibly be met within the timescale with a range of abnormal costs of between £0.5m and £2m.

The proposal for Whitton could not be delivered within the timescale. The cramped nature of the site indicates significant disruption to the school and estimated abnormal costs of between £3.1m and £5.3m.

Members are therefore recommended to select Teddington as the BSF Pathfinder School. This is subject to discussion with the DfES on the abnormal costs.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 As reported to Cabinet on 5 December 2005, the offer of capital grant is subject to the scheme proposed by the Council being able to meet a number of terms and conditions set out by the DfES. These include guidelines on spend for different elements of the scheme and a very challenging timescale.
- 7.2 The Council is now entering a period of discussion and negotiation with the DfES on these issues. The expectation being that such discussions will be finalised, including the agreement of a detailed scheme by the end of March 2006. Only if such an agreement can be reached, will the Council receive the £23m grant allocated to it.
- 7.3 In view of the tight timescales and the need to carry out a large number of feasibility and design related functions to move the project forward, Cabinet agreed that the two Deputy Leaders of the Council be authorised to commit up to a maximum of £200k from the Council's remaining contingency budget. To date the expenditure has largely consisted of site investigations and the engagement of Currie and Brown as advisors to help the Council develop the scheme and ensure it fulfils the requirements of the DfES. In total approximately £50,000 has been spent or committed to date.
- 7.4 As part of developing the detailed scheme the Council will be preparing a full financial analysis and this will be reported to Cabinet when finalised.

## **8. POLICY IMPLICATIONS/CONSIDERATIONS**

- 8.1 The Building Schools for the Future One-School Pathfinder is an opportunity to provide a modern and up to date secondary school which will support the aims of the Council's 10 year vision for excellence. If final DfES agreement to proceed is received, this capital grant will also support the work of the Council in meeting the needs of the local community in providing sufficient high quality school places and post-16 education in secondary schools. It will also contribute significantly to the achievement of a wide range of targets for the new integrated Education and Children's Service, set out in Every Child Matters.

## **7. RISK ASSESSMENT**

A full risk analysis will be carried out as part of the project development. At this stage the key risk to the Council is in developing a scheme that meets the requirements of the DfES and secures the longer term funding required. This will inevitably mean investing in the development of the scheme without the guarantee of recovering this investment at this stage. As this represents a unique opportunity to obtain major Government investment in the refurbishment of a secondary school, it is considered that the opportunity outweighs the initial risks identified.

## **8. EQUALITY IMPACT/CONSIDERATIONS**

The Building School for the Future One-School Pathfinder is an opportunity to provide a modern and up to date secondary school which will support the raising of standards and high quality education. This strategy is consistent with the Council's policies on Equality and pursuance of high standards in secondary schools.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal implications arising directly from any of the matters referred to in this report.

## **10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Education and Culture Overview and Scrutiny report 1 December 2005.  
Cabinet report 5 December 2005.

## **11. CONTACTS**

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