

CITY OF WESTMINSTER
COMMITTEE OF THE CABINET MEETING
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

At a meeting of the **Committee of the Cabinet** held on **Tuesday 23 May 2006** at 6pm at City Hall, Victoria Street, SW1.

Present: Councillors Sarah Richardson (Chairman), Sir Simon Milton and Colin Barrow.

Also present: Councillors Michael Brahams, Alan Bradley, Tim Mitchell and Philippa Roe.

1. INTRODUCTION BY THE CHAIRMAN

1.1 The Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 No interests were declared by Members or Officers.

3. SUBMISSION OF BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE (see report of the Interim Director of Building Schools for the Future – agenda item 4)

3.1 The Interim Director of Building Schools for the Future introduced a report outlining the next stage of the business case for the Westminster Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme. In particular, information on (a) consultation outcomes, including union responses; (b) government funding allocation arrangements; (c) the investigation into decant options for Pimlico School; (d) developments relating to the Local Education Partnership; (e) proposals in relation to the two special schools; and (f) other Council services that might be delivered on the Pimlico School site; and (g) plans for a market consultation day, was provided.

3.2 The Committee noted the above and raised the following issues:

- Were Schools and their governing bodies truly 'on board' in terms of (a) tackling barriers to school improvement and (b) ongoing revenue costs and enhanced maintenance costs?
- Why had the number of extra school places been reduced from initial projections?
- How had the three sample schools for procurement been chosen?
- Why had some schools initially been resistant to the ICT programme at the SBC stage?
- Were schools aware of the need to establish a 'sinking fund' to pay for future maintenance costs?

- How had the approach to educating children with special educational needs changed?

3.3 In response to these queries the it was noted that:

- Schools and their governing bodies were aware of the challenges involved in raising school standards and there was no evidence to suggest that difficult issues would not be tackled. In addition, each school Governing Body had confirmed their support for the programme and had agreed to a resolution relating to the revenue affordability of the scheme. The Council had also provided tailored financial training for the Headteacher, Chair of Governors and Bursar of each school, covering the financial aspects of the scheme, including the need to establish a 'sinking fund' to pay for future maintenance costs. The need for a medium term financial plan was well understood and schools were planning to have this in place in advance of the capital investment. A recently established BSF Chairs of Governors Forum on delivering school improvement had been very successful and the Director for Schools and the Director for BSF had agreed to make this group meeting a termly event.
- London Challenge had initially suggested that Westminster might not require any additional school places over and above those to be provided through the new Academies, as the borough was a net importer of pupils and it was anticipated that the number of out-of-borough pupils would reduce once the planned academies in neighbouring boroughs had opened. However, they had been challenged by the Council and additional places equating to two forms of entry had been agreed after an extensive demographic analysis.
- The three sample schools for procurement had been chosen for a mixture of educational and technical reasons. Pimlico had been selected because the building need was massive and it was affecting school performance. It was noted that the eight other schools all supported Pimlico School's selection. St Marylebone's Girls' School had been chosen in line with the policy of expanding successful schools and in support of the Education Guarantee. Westminster City Boys' School had been selected because it was felt that the governing body had fully accepted the challenge of adding value and were supportive of innovative ways of achieving this aim.
- The current ICT systems used by schools had been developed in isolation and were not necessarily fit for purpose or scalable. However, many schools were initially wedded to their current systems and were concerned that the proposed, managed ICT system would not provide the quick response to maintenance issues that they were accustomed to receiving from their in-house teams. Nonetheless, a high specification, scalable system was required and schools had now been reassured by the success of the BSF ICT Sub-Group which had worked on this area and had recently agreed an ICT output specification for the OBC. The ICT Sub-Group had arranged visits to schools using managed systems, that the new system would require less maintenance and that response times would continue to

be rapid. In addition, the criteria for evaluating tenders would ensure a robust and resilient system would be selected using a process that involved all schools.

- Mainstreaming children with special educational needs (SEN) was now an important focus of SEN provision and there were concerns that this would draw money away from specialist schools and high need provision. Additional Early Years funding was encouraging the early identification of need however, thus reducing the number of pupils developing high need at later stages of their school career and requiring specialist and intensive provision.

3.4 Councillor Bradley addressed the Committee in relation to Pimlico School and reported that many local residents felt that a truly satisfactory re-build would require a decant. Assurance that the Council had not ruled out the possibility of a decant, publication of an edited version of the confidential appendix and assurance that the orientation of the replacement building had not yet been decided were therefore sought.

3.5 The Leader of the Council stated that the search for a suitable decant site had been thorough and had involved officers and Members at the highest level. It was regrettable that a suitable site had not been found. It was agreed that the Chief Executive would write to Councillor Bradley providing the information requested. Councillor Bradley was also assured that the Council had not ruled out the possibility of a decant, although the likelihood of this happening was slim, and that the orientation of the replacement building would be subject to the usual planning process and would need to be agreed by the Planning Committee.

4. EXEMPT REPORT UNDER THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

4.1 **RESOLVED:** That under Section 100 (A) (4) and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business because they involve the likely disclosure of information on the grounds shown below:

Agenda Item No.	Grounds	Para of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act
7	Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)	3

5. **Pimlico School Decant Options for the Building Schools for the Future schemes** (see report of the Interim Director Building Schools for the Future – agenda item 7)

5.1 The Committee discussed the issues set out in the appendix and asked questions of the officers present.

5.2 Resolved: That

1. the BSF Outline Business Case be approved for submission to Partnerships for Schools and the DfES, noting that a further, Final Business Case would be required after the procurement exercise;
2. the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, be authorised to make any necessary changes to the Outline Business Case suggested by Partnerships for Schools and the DfES; and
3. the proposal that other Council services on BSF sites be incorporated into the procurement process, within BSF procurement timescales and as part of the procurement documentation, be supported, noting that this proposal would be considered by full Cabinet in due course.

Reasons for Decisions:

The Outline Business Case shows that the plans for capital investment are currently affordable within the allocation of DfES funds. The business case needs to be submitted to Partnerships for Schools and the DfES by the 27th May for their consideration and approval so that the project can move to the procurement stage.

6. END OF MEETING

- 6.1 The meeting ended at 7.26pm.

Chairman

Date