

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 9
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Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer(s) – Jonathan Lewis – Assistant Director (Resources, Commissioning and Performance)

Contact Details – 01733 863912 / Jonathan.Lewis@peterborough.gov.uk

OPENING OF A NEW SECONDARY SCHOOL – REEVES WAY PE1 5LQ

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the proposed approach to the opening of a new secondary school at Reeves Way PE1 5LQ on the site of the former Hereward Community College as a Free Schools.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Scrutiny committee is asked to note the process to be undertaken in order to reopen the school.

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT

- 3.1 The creation of a new secondary school at the Reeves Way site will contribute to the Council's achievement of at least three of its strategic priorities, namely; Creating Opportunities & Tackling Inequalities, Ensuring High Quality Opportunities for Learning and Ensuring Children are Safe and Delivering Substantial and Truly Sustainable Growth.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Local Authorities are under a **statutory duty** to ensure that there are sufficient school places in their area, promote high educational standards, ensure fair access to educational opportunity and promote the fulfilment of every child's educational potential. They **must** also ensure that there are sufficient schools in their area, promote diversity and increase parental choice.
- 4.2 Without increasing current capacity, year 7 pupils will exceed available places in 2015. Overall secondary forecasts show a total of 2568 11 year olds for that year. By 2015 there will be more children than available places. Most of Peterborough is divided into secondary school catchment areas. The exception is the central area where approximately 6.5 miles of the most densely populated part of the city has no designated catchment school. There are three schools in this area; The King's School and St John Fisher Catholic High School which are voluntary aided schools and select pupils on faith grounds; and Thomas Deacon Academy which uses a fair banding system, the nearest 33 pupils in each ability band then being offered places.
- 4.3 Peterborough City Council, in response to significant demographic changes to pupil numbers in the city and a subsequent growing shortage of secondary school places, is seeking to re-commission the Reeves Way site (formally Hereward Community College) as an 11–18 school. The increase in pupil numbers in the city is as a result of the continued migration of families from the European Union, birth rate increases and planned development and growth in the city as a whole.

- 4.4 As part of the Secondary School Review process completed in 2007, schools at Hereward, John Mansfield and Deacons were closed and replaced with Thomas Deacon Academy. Part of the reasons for the reorganisation was both poor standards at Hereward (although standards had improved in the final years of the school) and the surplus of school places across the city. Since 2007, the demand for places has increased significantly.
- 4.5 At the time of closure, the school was mothballed until being used by St John Fisher whilst rebuilding took place at its site. This was vacated in February 2009 and has remained unused since this time. It was proposed to redevelop the site but given the need for school places, the site was removed from the asset disposal list as part of the 2010/11 medium term financial plan. The main school building was built in the late 1960's and 4 further blocks have been developed since this time with the last being completed in the 1990's including a modern sports hall and gym extension. The most recently built accommodation is currently being used as a training and development centre for Children's Services. Overall the site is in reasonable condition although significant investment is required to create parity with other schools in the city. A full condition survey was undertaken in December. The school itself should be able to accommodate around 5 forms of entry i.e. 150 children in each year group with a sixth form of around 100 (a total of 850 children). The school has playing fields and a dated Astroturf pitch which is in need of replacement.
- 4.6 Given the demographic pressures and to allow for the school to grow over a period of time, it is proposed to re-open the site as a new school from September 2013.
- 4.7 Process for Reopening the School
- 4.8 In order to re-open the school and to pick up the issues around the former school (and its standards), a vision for the new school was developed. The vision for the new school is –
- Designated 11-18 school
 - Co-educational
 - Emphasis on community cohesion
 - Opens with a unique selling point
 - Has a specialism(s) linked to the unique selling point
 - Attracts learners from across the city
 - Is inclusive
 - Understands and responds to the needs of EAL learners (English as an additional language) and minority ethnic new arrivals
 - Has a strong community focus
 - Develops strong links with Peterborough Regional College and the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Centre
- 4.9 Since 2006, the Local Authority no longer is the provider of schools i.e. can no longer open community schools. It is now the commissioner of other providers to run schools. The process for establishing a new school is set out in The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA) and The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of School) (England) Regulations 2007. It requires local authorities who have identified a need for a new school, in specific circumstances, to invite proposals for the school and this process is generally referred to as a "competition". The process has just been undertaken in opening the new school in the Stanground South Development.
- 4.10 When identifying the requirement for a new school, the Local Authority needs to consider the outline specification for the school. Proposers are asked to respond to the outline specification (as outlined in 4.8) and the Local Authority then decides on the most appropriate proposer. This process takes around 8 months for start to completion and is hugely bureaucratic and expensive to administer.

5. KEY ISSUES

5.1 Free Schools

5.2 With the introduction of the coalition government, there has been a drive to establish schools free from local authority control. This has traditionally been through establishing academies for failing schools, but a new route has now been developed - Free Schools.

5.3 Free Schools are state funded schools which can be set up by a wide range of proposers – including charities, universities, businesses, educational groups, academy sponsors, teachers and groups of parents – in response to parental demand, to improve choice and drive up standards for all young people, regardless of their background. Free Schools will provide an inclusive education to young people of all abilities, from all backgrounds, and will be clearly accountable for the outcomes they deliver.

5.4 Free Schools have the same legal requirements as academies and enjoy the same flexibilities to help them deliver an excellent education and drive up standards in our schools across the country, particularly in disadvantaged areas. These freedoms include:

- the ability to set their own pay and conditions for staff
- greater control of their budget
- freedom from following the National Curriculum
- freedom to change the length of terms and school days
- freedom from Local Authority control.

Like academies, they will be funded on a comparable basis to other state-funded schools and will not be profit making.

5.5 The Secretary of State will consider each proposal on its merits, and take into account all matters relevant to that proposal. Generally, he would expect that all proposals will comply with all aspects of the rigorous suitability and vetting tests throughout the application process, including due diligence and CRB checks and will reject any proposers who advocate violence, intolerance, hatred or whose ideology runs counter to the UK's democratic values.

5.6 In order to set up the school via this route, the Local Authority has been working with the Department for Education on looking at potential sponsors / proposers who would run the school, bringing with them successful models of education delivery. A shortlist of 5 organisations has been identified and it is proposed to hold an informal process to assess each organisation against the vision for the school outlined in 4.8. It is proposed the appointment process is completed in February 2011. The panel making the recommendation of final provider will consist of –

- Cllr John Holdich – Lead Member
- Allison Sunley – Head of 8-19 Services
- Mel Collins – AD Learning and Skills / Gary Perkins – Head of Schools
- Jonathan Lewis – AD Resources, Commissioning and Performance
- Brian Howard – Project Manager
- Department for Education Representatives
- Ward Members
- A secondary head teacher

The final decision will be made by Cllr Holdich as part of his existing delegations.

5.7 The benefits of following the Free School approach are –

- The council is able to generate a shortlist of potential candidates with support the Department for Education suited to the needs of the school and its catchment.
- Simplified and shortened process which will allow further time to develop the school site once the preferred education proposer is appointed.
- There is capital funding available nationally to support the opening of Free Schools. This could be used to modernise the school site.

5.8 Once appointed, the Local Authority would seek to work in partnership with the new provider to set up a Free School via a 3 stage process –

1. **Proposal** – this form outlines the aims and objectives of the new school, the main people and organisations involved in the project, evidence of parental demand (e.g. a petition) and possible premises that have been considered.
2. **Full business case and plan** – Proposers will prepare a fully detailed business case and plan for the new school. This will need to include
 - a detailed statement of educational aims and curriculum
 - final details of the key people and organisations that will be involved in the running of the school
 - full evidence that there is demand for the school and that it will be financially viable over a minimum five-year period
 - evidence that the school will meet all required standards (including the Independent School Standards and the Admissions Code) and a commitment to conduct national tests where appropriate
 - details of proposed premises and a full business case for the public value of all start-up costs
 - financial projections for operating the school on an ongoing basis.
3. **Pre-opening** - Proposers will sign a funding agreement contract with the Department to trigger the release of potential start-up funding. The school will need to set up new financial systems and contractual arrangements, completing registrations and ensuring that all Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks are carried out as necessary. The Department will support the school to ensure all legal documents are completed relating to governance, land transfer and company registration.

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 A capital sum was identified in the 2010/11 capital process to support the redevelopment of the school site. A full condition survey of the site has been undertaken and the detailed results are due at the end of January 2011. The budget will be finalised at this stage.

Legal support will be required to formalise the establishment of the Free School and to secure the use of the site for the Free School proposer.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 Local ward members (ie Cllrs Goldspink, Todd and Collins) have been invited onto the working group to develop the proposal. Cllr Holdich (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University) is also part of the working group.

8. NEXT STEPS

8.1 The results of the competitive process to appoint a provider will be shared at the next suitable opportunity at this panel.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

9.1 None

10. APPENDICES

10.1 None