

Education Leeds

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF EDUCATION LEEDS

EXECUTIVE BOARD: 16 July 2008

SUBJECT: South Leeds Expression of Interest

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to seek approval to progress an expression of interest into a detailed feasibility and consultation process that will allow a full examination of the issues surrounding the establishment of an academy to serve the Beeston & Holbeck and City & Hunslet wards of inner South Leeds.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** At its meeting on 17 October 2007, the Executive Board authorised Education Leeds to begin discussions with the Department of Children's Schools and Families (DCSF) to explore the potential of working with a sponsor to develop an academy to replace South Leeds High School and serve the Beeston & Holbeck and City & Hunslet wards of inner South Leeds. The DCSF have identified the Schools Partnership Trust as a prospective lead sponsor with support from both Universities in Leeds. An expression of interest has now formally been received to establish an academy with this lead sponsor.
- 2.2** Increasingly the role of the Local Authority is changing from 'provider' of services and schools to the 'commissioner' of provision to serve local communities. Academies are independent schools whose success critically depends on the absolute responsibility given to their sponsors, their governing bodies and their principals. However, academies are now jointly commissioned by the DCSF and the Local Authority on a partnership basis. They are established through an agreement between the DCSF, the Local Authority and the sponsor. In Leeds this agreement, or protocol, will take the form of a Memorandum of Understanding which is now being developed with the DCSF. This will be considered for approval by the Executive Board at its meeting in October. The local authority agreement or protocol will be presented to prospective sponsors of academies in Leeds for their approval and adoption in advance of the City Council being required to make any binding decisions on a proposal to establish an academy.

2.3 South Leeds High School has been identified as a school that may have difficulty reaching floor targets by 2011. It is therefore considered by the DCSF as part of the National Challenge. This requires the local authority to consider structural options to assist the acceleration on progress.

2.4 Education Leeds has formally assessed the expression of interest. Education Leeds has assessed that there is sufficient merit in the proposal to undertake further detailed consideration through a comprehensive feasibility and consultation process. This report outlines the basis for this judgement.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Members are asked to:

- i) approve moving to a detailed feasibility and formal consultation process that will allow a full examination of the issues surrounding the establishment of an academy to Beeston & Holbeck and City & Hunslet wards of inner South Leeds;
- ii) note that a further report will be presented in Autumn 2008 that will explain the outcome of this feasibility and formal consultation process and enable Members to come to a final decision on the value of establishing an academy to replace South Leeds High School.

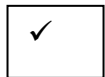
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Electoral Wards Affected:

Beeston and Holbeck
City and Hunslet



Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality & Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call-in

Not Eligible for Call-in
(Details contained in the Report)

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3. **MAIN ISSUES**

- 3.1 When considering this expression of interest Education Leeds considered four issues. Firstly, the potential of academy status to provide additional support or benefit to enhance young people's outcomes that isn't available through the established school improvement partnership arrangements that operate through the Leeds School Improvement Policy. That is "does the proposal bring potential benefits to young people?" The second issue was the extent to which potential sponsors recognise and value the contribution an academy will make as part of the educational community in Leeds. That is "how will the proposed academy contribute as part of the educational community of Leeds?" Thirdly, Education Leeds considered the extent to which the expression of interest committed the Council irreversibly to a particular decision or course of action. That is "if an alternative proposal emerges as the best solution for inner South Leeds could it still be developed?" Finally, the nature of this proposed academy, involving an existing PFI school, requires additional consideration of the resourcing implications for the City Council. Thus we also must consider the question, "Are there medium term funding issues which might undermine this proposal?" These four issues are each addressed in turn below.

Does the proposal bring potential benefits to young people?

- 3.2 South Leeds High School was established in September 2004 following the closure of Matthew Murray High School, and Merlyn Rees High School. It moved into new premises adjacent to the South Leeds Stadium September 2006. Immediately prior to South Leeds High School being established, one of its predecessor schools had been identified as requiring special measures to improve and the other predecessor school was improving after previously being identified as needing special measures. The new school benefited from support from Education Leeds. However accumulated in-year deficits from the predecessor schools contributed to limited improvement. South Leeds High school was subsequently identified to requiring special measures in June 2007. At that point it was linked to Garforth Community College to support the necessary improvements. South Leeds High School has

secured satisfactory progress through two HMI monitoring inspections. There has been limited evidence of the impact of the school improvement partnership work involving Garforth Community College within South Leeds until relatively recently. However, there are now healthy signs that this is enabling greater impact alongside the continued focused contribution of the headteacher of South Leeds High School.

- 3.3 The vision statement outlined in the expression of interest highlights how the Schools Partnership Trust intends to build upon recent success and sustain improvement in the medium term. In addition to this, South Leeds High School has been successful in its attempt to address its exceptional large accumulative deficit. That is, it is now operating with a healthy in-year surplus.

- 3.4 In conclusion, whilst the South Leeds High School is demonstrating satisfactory capacity to improve, it faces many substantial outstanding challenges. The sponsorship from the Schools Partnership Trust will begin to add significant capacity to progress into the medium term and secure the strength and expertise needed to secure the vision described in the expression of interest. Action needs to be taken to change the perception of the school in its community. Developing an academy has the potential to address all these issues positively to the benefit of young people and provide sustainable capacity into the medium term.

How will the proposed academy contribute as part of the educational community of Leeds?

- 3.5 The Schools Partnership Trust is the first charitable trust to establish foundation schools in the country. It draws together the educational community that operate in Garforth in East Leeds into a coherent single governance framework. As part of the existing educational community of Leeds, the Schools Partnership Trust is committed to social responsibility and operating in partnership with the Local Authority. Representatives of the Schools Partnership Trust are clear that they will recognise all relevant Trade Unions in Leeds as they already do within the Trust. The Schools Partnership Trust has been made aware that Leeds is moving to establish a Memorandum of Understanding that will determine how Leeds will work with any academy sponsor to improve outcomes for young people in the city. They have indicated that they are strongly supportive of this Memorandum
- 3.6 The Schools Partnership Trust has made a clear explicit commitment to apply the admission arrangements that already operate across Leeds in addition to abiding by the Admissions Code of Practice. Within the expression of interest the Schools Partnership Trust have made a very strong commitment to inclusive practice and avoiding exclusions.
- 3.7 The Schools Partnership Trust understands that an academy is unlikely to be successful unless it operates as an active member of the wider education and children's services community. This is a strong indication of the proposed academy's willingness to plan the development of curriculum provision in partnership with other schools and other providers.

If an alternative proposal emerges as the best solution for inner South Leeds, could it still be developed?

- 3.8 It is only at the end of the feasibility and consultation process that the City Council will be required to make binding decisions on the future of South Leeds High School and the establishment of an academy to serve the Beeston & Holbeck and City &

Hunslet wards of inner South Leeds. At this stage the only question to be addressed is whether there be value in further detailed work, including formal consultation, being undertaken to enable the Council to determine if an academy will better serve young people than the present provision made through South Leeds High School. If as a result of detailed feasibility considerations and the outcome of consultations, alternative viable strategies emerge then the Council will be free to withdraw from considering an academy and progress the alternative instead. A further report will be available in the Autumn of 2008 that will enable the Council to make its final decision on this matter

Are there medium term funding issues which might undermine this proposal?

- 3.9 Should this academy proposal be eventually approved by the City Council there will be two major funding issues to consider. Firstly, any accumulated deficit in the predecessor school will have to be written off by the Local Authority. This one off financial pressure had already been considered by Schools Forum and built into their resourcing plans.
- 3.10 The second issue is whether there are PFI issues which might impact on the Local Authority's medium term resource planning. As a result of reassurances provided by the DCSF the view of Education Leeds at this stage is that the Local Authority is unlikely to be worse off if it subsequently determines to support the establishment of an academy to replace South Leeds High School. However, it will be vital to secure explicit assurances on this point during the feasibility phase. Any subsequent report to the City Council on this proposal will address this point.

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNCIL POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

- 4.1 Ward councillors and South Leeds School Governors have been informed of the development of the expression of interest. Indeed some governors and staff have participated in developing the expression of interest. Both the relevant neighbouring authority, Wakefield, and the LSC have been consulted and have agreed that they are willing to support this proposal in principle at this stage. In any further report the outcomes of formal community consultation on the future of South Leeds High School and consultation with wider stakeholders including recognised trades unions will be analysed and addressed.
- 4.2 The issues addressed in this report will impact on the 'Narrowing the Gap' and 'Going up a League' agendas. Academies in Leeds have the potential to contribute to the ambitious targets to meet key priorities within the Children and Young People's Plan and the work on the Local Area Agreement.
- 4.3 The development of new models of provision, such as academies, will have significant implications for Council policy and governance which will be addressed in any proposals that are developed for further consideration by Executive Board.

5. LEGAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The funding of secondary and post-16 provision in Leeds is a significant part of the Children's Services overall budget and part of the Learning and Skills Council budget. The establishment of an academy in Leeds has the potential to have major financial implications for Leeds City Council as it increasingly takes total responsibility for all 14 – 19 provision here in Leeds. These financial implications and the potential deficit and PFI issues outlined above will have to be explicitly

addressed in any subsequent report to the Executive Board on this matter.

6. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 Members are asked to:

- iii) approve moving to a detailed feasibility and formal consultation process that will allow a full examination of the issues surrounding the establishment of an academy to Beeston & Holbeck and City & Hunslet wards of inner South Leeds;
- iv) note that a further report will be presented in Autumn 2008 that will explain the outcome of this feasibility and formal consultation process and enable Members to come to a final decision on the value of establishing an academy to replace South Leeds High School.