

**WILTSHIRE COUNCIL**

**CABINET**  
**26 JANUARY 2010**

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**FIRE SPRINKLERS IN NEW SCHOOLS**

**Cabinet Member:** Cllr Lionel Grundy, Children's Services

**Executive Summary**

Following adoption of a motion by Council on 10 November 2009, a policy for the installation of fire sprinkler systems is proposed for consideration by Cabinet. The wider points for consideration have been covered in full in the earlier report to the Council, but additional explanatory notes are provided here to assist in the consideration of the policy.

**Proposal**

That Cabinet consider the proposed policy at **Appendix B** in conjunction with the Council Report at **Appendix A**, and confirm whether they wish to adopt the policy in its current format.

**Reason for Proposal**

To:

- (i) Meet Central Government expectations with respect to fire sprinklers in new schools.
- (ii) Reduce the potential impact on the Council's schools portfolio of a significant fire incident.

**PARVIS KHANSARI**

Service Director, Major Projects

**STEPHANIE DENOVA**

Service Director, Schools Branch

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#### **Purpose of Report**

1. To request a decision on the implementation of a policy for the installation of fire sprinklers in new school buildings, following consideration of a report by Council on 10 November 2009.

#### **Background**

2. Wiltshire Council, at its meeting on 10 November 2009, considered an amended Notice of Motion originally submitted by Councillor J Osborn and Councillor H Osborn, and resolved that the following notice of motion be adopted:

*"This Council commends the decision to install fire sprinklers in the new secondary school in Melksham. This has been warmly welcomed by the Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority and cited in evidence on fire safety to a House of Commons select committee.*

*In light of this it is most regrettable that a similar decision to install fire sprinklers was not made in respect of the new Wellington Academy.*

*This Council, in the interest of fire, person and property safety, wishes to see fire sprinklers installed in all new school buildings including extensions built by and for the Council.*

3. Council further noted that the issue would be brought to the attention of the Schools Forum, which is reported below.

#### **Main Considerations for the Council**

4. The Report considered by Council on 10 November is appended in full at **Appendix A**, and therefore this paper does not seek to repeat its contents. However, some further issues are raised here to assist with the consideration of the proposed policy by Cabinet.
5. A proposed policy is attached at **Appendix B**.
6. Paragraph 4 of the Policy includes a proposed threshold of 750m<sup>2</sup> for the new build area of an extension, below which sprinklers would not be required. The rationale for this is covered in paragraph 15 of the report to Council and is intended to avoid encumbering smaller projects with disproportionate infrastructure costs. For guidance, this floor area is set just below an area that

- equates to a seven classroom extension to a primary school, or a secondary school sports hall. This is considered to be a pragmatic application of the policy.
7. Paragraph 9 of the policy proposes that sprinklers be installed as a minimum to the newly constructed area of an extension to an existing school, but that provision be made for a future expansion of the system to the remainder of the school at a later point. The policy does not propose the retrospective installation of sprinklers to existing school buildings.
  8. The policy requires the Property Services Project Manager to carry out a Fire Sprinkler Project Assessment to document the decisions made with respect to the application of the policy. If this confirms compliance with the policy then it is proposed that this document be approved by the Head of School Buildings and Places (DCE) and the Corporate Building Manager (Property Services). However, it is proposed that approval for any derogation from the policy be obtained from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services.
  9. The responsibility for servicing and maintaining sprinkler systems will rest with the Governing Body of the School. The cost impact of this has been discussed with the Schools Forum, and the issue noted. The actual costs associated with the systems are being investigated further with actual quotes for service contracts now being received. However, the approaches of individual schools to elements of the required servicing regime will lead to some differences in costs from site to site. The policy requires the Project Manager to work with the school's management to ensure they understand their obligations and to help them mitigate their service costs.

**PARVIS KHANSARI**

Service Director, Major Projects

**STEPHANIE DENOVA**

Service Director, Schools Branch

Report Author

**Neil Ward**

Corporate Building Manager

Tel No: (01225) 713298

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**The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:**

None

**Appendices:**

Appendix A – Council Report, 10 November 2009 – Agenda Item 8: Fire Sprinklers in New Schools

Appendix B – Proposed Council Policy – Fire Sprinklers in New Schools