

ACADEMY TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT & RECOMMENDATIONS

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek the committee's endorsement of the Academy Task Group's final report and recommendations, and to consider how to continue monitoring the academy project.

Action Required of the Committee

2. The committee is asked to consider and endorse the Academy Task Group's final report and recommendations and to agree how to continue monitoring the progress of the academy project.

Background

3. The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee commissioned a task group in March 2007 to carry out an evaluation of the benefits and risks of the academy project, including matters such as its impact on all surrounding schools and 6th forms, its admissions' policies and how it will work with the local community and facilitate community use of its premises.
4. An interim report was put to the committee on the 25th July to update members on the progress made by the task group and to seek endorsement of a recommendation to the Cabinet Member for Education & Youth Development that she give urgent consideration to a number of matters. These matters related to the key risks to the council in developing the academy, the need for innovation in the building designs, the need to ensure that not just the sponsor but also the council and Castledown School are able to influence the academy's development, its design, staffing and organisation policies, and the impact of the academy on surrounding schools.
5. The task group has carried out 5 site visits, 9 interviews, issued a consultation exercise and applied careful analysis to the evidence it has gathered, before compiling its final report and recommendations.
6. The task group has benefited from the many and varied skills of its members, and in particular the chance to draw on the first hand experience of the committee's teacher representatives.

Final Report & Recommendations

7. The committee will note that the main findings from this scrutiny exercise are detailed in section four of the report (pages 11 – 25), with the corresponding recommendations listed in section 5 (pages 26 – 32).
8. The task group's main findings are structured under five headings:
 - (a) project management arrangements
 - (b) design & build of the academy

- (c) the academy's impact on surrounding schools and 6th forms
 - (d) an academy for local pupils and the local community
 - (e) future school building projects
9. These findings reflect the progress that has been made so far in developing the academy – the project still being very much in its formative phase.
10. The recommendations which have been agreed by the task group, based on the evidence gathered and the findings recorded therefore also relate to matters such as the need for:
- (a) project management arrangements to be robust, suitably funded, adequately supported by both council and other officers, and flexible enough to ensure that the new academy is developed for local pupils (some of whom may have special educational needs), for the local community, and to facilitate well supported and equipped school staff
 - (b) sufficient scope for innovation in the design and build of the academy (with this mainly being funded by central government, and subject to a central government procurement model), especially in terms of architectural design, state of the art facilities, and so that mistakes of past school building projects are not repeated
 - (c) sufficient government funding being released to build the academy to the right size and specification
 - (d) all education providers in the area, including those in Andover, to collaborate to ensure that the needs of the local learning community are met and its experience enhanced by the new academy
 - (e) Wellington College to establish good relations within the local community and to develop a positive profile, supported by the leadership team of Castledown School
 - (f) the admissions policies and boarding facility to be used as tools to ensure that the academy remains a school for local pupils
 - (g) the council to ensure that teams are fully equipped to respond to any further opportunities to develop secondary school building projects prior to the 2016 Building Schools for the Future programme.

Conclusion

11. Whilst the task group has been very tempted to continue working alongside / monitoring this project as it unfolds, it recognises that it was commissioned to carry out early evaluation of the plans for the new academy and to report with recommendations intended to influence the feasibility phase of the project.
12. The committee is therefore asked to consider and endorse the task group's final report, in order that it can be issued to all those listed as responsible for implementing its recommendations. The committee is also requested to discuss how it should continue to monitor the progress of the academy project.

Tony Deane
Academy Task Group – Chairman

Karen Linaker, Academy Task Group Support Officer, 01225 713056