

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2007/2008 REPORT NO. 187

MEETING TITLE AND DATE:

**Cabinet
17 January 2008**

REPORT OF:

Director of Education,
Children's Services &
Leisure

Agenda – Part 1	Item: 7
Subject: Investment in Albany School	
Wards: Enfield Highway	
Cabinet Member consulted: Cllr Glynis Vince	

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Governing Body of Albany School has identified the need for substantial capital investment at the school in order to address building deficiencies and to promote pupil achievement. The government's academy programme appears to offer the best opportunity to respond to this need in a substantial and timely manner. Following extensive informal consultation, the governing body has expressed its support for the submission of an Expression of Interest for an Academy to replace Albany School by the Council and Oasis Community Learning Trust. In order to explore the potential options for and benefits of relocation it is proposed that two versions of the Expression of Interest are submitted. Any proposals for relocation will be the subject of a separate report.
- 1.2 In the event that Albany School is replaced by an Academy the most likely date for that to occur is September 2009: the completion of major capital works is unlikely before September 2011.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

To agree that an Expression of Interest, including a variant to explore the potential options for and benefits of relocation, for an Academy to replace Albany School be submitted by the Council jointly with Oasis Community Learning Trust to the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Albany School is a foundation school situated in Enfield Highway ward. The school admits up to 270 pupils to year 7 each year. There are currently 1368 pupils attending the school including 179 in the sixth form. It has a specialist status in Business and Enterprise.
- 3.2 The governing body of Albany School has identified the need for substantial capital investment at the school in order to address building deficiencies and to promote pupil achievement. The Council's asset management arrangements identify a substantial number of accommodation deficiencies at the school but in the context of the needs of other schools and the extensive nature of the works required at Albany School, it is most unlikely that substantial investment will be resourced at Albany School ahead of the roll out of the Building Schools for Future (BSF) programme. A government announcement has not yet been made to confirm when Enfield's secondary schools will benefit from investment through BSF.
- 3.3 The government has prioritised the establishment of a programme of academies: this programme appears to offer the best opportunity for accessing substantial investment. It could be feasible for construction work to commence in 2009 with completion in 2011.
- 3.4 The following text describing academies has been published by the DCSF.

'Academies are publicly funded independent schools that provide a first class free education to local pupils of all abilities. They bring a distinctive approach to school leadership drawing on the skills of sponsors and other supporters. They give Principals and staff new opportunities to develop educational strategies to raise standards and contribute to diversity in areas of disadvantage.

They are all ability schools established by sponsors from business, faith or voluntary groups working in highly innovative partnerships with central Government and local education partners. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) meet the capital and running cost for the Academy in full.

The Academies programme aims to challenge the culture of educational under attainment and to deliver real improvements in standards. Most Academies are located in areas of disadvantage. They either replace one or more existing schools facing challenging circumstances or are established where there is a need for additional school places. The Department expects Local Authorities (Las) to consider the scope for the establishment of Academies as part of their strategic plans to increase diversity in secondary provision and improve educational opportunities.

Each Academy will provide an excellent environment for teaching and learning that is comparable with the best available in the maintained sector. On July 10, 2007 the Secretary of State announced that future Academies will be required to follow the National Curriculum programmes of Study in English, Maths and ICT.

As well as providing the best opportunities for their pupils, Academies have a key part to play in the regeneration of communities. A new Academy will be a significant focus for learning for its pupils, their families and other local people. Academies will help break the cycle of underachievement in areas of social and economic deprivation whether in inner cities, suburban or rural areas.

Each Academy will offer local solutions for local needs. Each will be different, drawing on the expertise of its sponsors to help develop its own distinctive ethos and mission. Whether they involve new buildings, refurbishment, or both, Academies will be innovative in design and built to high environmental standards.'

- 3.5 Oasis Community learning (OCL) is the umbrella governing body for Oasis Academies. Its roots are based in Oasis UK, a charity founded in 1985 by Steve Chalke, whose Christian faith inspired him to create ways to develop people and build communities.

The Mission of OCL is to create and sustain a network of excellent learning communities where everyone can realise their full potential.

The vision of Oasis Academies is to create both outstanding schools and community hubs. The aim is to provide access for both the students and the community to facilities such as adult learning programmes, fitness suites, sports courts and out-of-hours youth activities. Oasis believes this can be achieved through high-quality facilities, outstanding staff, clear leadership, a positive, affirming environment and a partnership between students, parents, each Academy and the local community.

Oasis Community Learning opened its first three Academies in September 2007 at Innova Park in Enfield and at Immingham and Grimsby in North East Lincolnshire. Five more have been confirmed for September 2008: Oasis Academy Mayfield and Oasis Academy Lord's Hill in Southampton East and West, as well as Academies in Bristol, Salford and Coulsdon.

Oasis Community Learning is currently in discussions to sponsor a ninth Academy in Oldham.

Enfield has developed a good working relationship with OCL: effective collaboration is developing well in relation to the newly opened Academy and a fully inclusive approach is already evident. A joint

youth work programme is in place and delivering effectively in the north east of the Borough.

The Oasis 'faithworks charter' is attached as appendix 1.

- 3.6 An extensive programme of meetings have taken place including:
- A Governing Body meeting attended by local authority officers discussed the academy programme on 18th October 2007 and noted that further work was planned in order to advise Members of the Council whether or not to submit an Expression of Interest to the Department of Children, Schools and Families
 - An initial staff meeting attended by local authority officers discussed the academy programme on 19th October followed by subsequent meetings. Unions representing the staff working at the school have also been informed of the work in hand.
 - Staff, student council and governing body meetings took place with Steve Chalke, founder of Oasis Community Learning, on 19th November 2007 to discuss the possibility of OCL becoming the sponsor.
 - All parents of pupils at Albany School have been informed by letter about the work in hand and that there will be formal consultation in the event that an Expression of Interest is submitted and the DCSF decides to progress the scheme to the feasibility stage.
 - The Governing Body meeting on 6 December agreed to support the submission of an Expression of Interest by the Council and Oasis Community Learning Trust for the School to be replaced by an Academy in order to secure substantial investment, ideally involving a new build for staff and pupils.
- 3.7 During the discussions it has become clear that there may be advantages in relocating the school in order to establish it at the heart of a local community. This could be of potential benefit to both the local community and to the new school. It would avoid the potential difficulty of delivering the school curriculum whilst a substantial building programme was on-site. It would be essential for students and staff that any new site was within easy travelling distance of the current site. Further work is needed to establish the potential options for and benefits of relocation. Any proposals for relocation would be the subject of a subsequent report.
- 3.8 It is envisaged that the Expression of Interest will set out a proposal for the school to admit up to 240 pupils annually and to provide a sixth form. This proposal is consistent with initial preparatory work in advance of Building Schools for the Future. In addition to the current specialism a second specialism is envisaged and although this has not been finalised it is likely that it would play a key role in the delivery of 14 – 19 diplomas in due course. The admissions policy would continue to mirror that of local community schools. Dependent on the site (see 3.7 above), there may be potential for and benefit from developing the

new school as an all-through school, incorporating a new primary school admitting up to 60 pupils annually: this would contribute to the strategy for increasing the number of primary school places that will be presented shortly for Member consideration.

- 3.9 If a decision is made to submit an Expression of Interest for an Academy to replace Albany School, Ministers at the DCSF would then decide whether to progress the scheme into feasibility. During the feasibility stage there would be formal consultation with a range of parties including parents and detailed work to determine the nature of the new school including the proposed capital investment. A decision would then be made whether or not to progress to the closure of Albany School and the simultaneous opening of an academy by way of a funding agreement: in the event that Albany School is replaced by an Academy the expected date for that to occur is September 2009. The completion of major capital works is unlikely before September 2011.
- 3.10 As a foundation school the Governing Body is the employer of staff who work at the school. In the event that the school closes and is replaced by an Academy on the same site, at the point of closure the ownership of the site would revert to the Council and the Council would then be in a position to grant a long lease at peppercorn rent to the proposed sponsor. Similarly as a foundation school the governing body is the employer of most staff who work at the school and, in the event that the school closes and is replaced by an Academy on the same site, OCL would be the new employer. The governing body and staff have been advised about the application of TUPE legislation in these circumstances.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The local authority, supported by London Challenge, is working closely with the school through the School Improvement Service. This approach to promote pupil achievement would not enable the substantial capital investment that the governing body considers essential ahead of the unconfirmed BSF timetable.
- 4.2 The role of the Office of the Schools Commissioner (OSC) is to work with local authorities to identify potential academies or the need for a new academy. The OSC then works with the local authority to find the sponsor that best suits the needs of the local community. The OSC delivers the first part of the academy process, which includes the brokering phase where the local authority and sponsor for the project are decided. If an organisation is interested in sponsoring an academy they can contact the OSC.
- 4.3 Through this process the OCL has been identified as the appropriate sponsor. The OCL have already demonstrated a commitment to inclusion and collaboration at Oasis Academy: Enfield. Developments

in N.E. Lincolnshire indicate that there may be benefit in having two OCL academies in fairly close proximity. OCL is enthusiastic to increase its involvement in the Borough through a second academy.

- 4.4 The alternative to this is to seek expression of interests from other sponsors and it should be noted that it would be feasible to seek to work with a sponsor other than OCL. Indeed the local authority has been approached by other potential sponsors in the past (over 18 months ago). However, the Council through working with the DCSF and OSC has already identified OCL as the appropriate sponsor. There has been no further contact from other sponsors for over 18 months, and at the time of contact 18 months ago the potential sponsors did not demonstrate the vision, commitment and enthusiasm required. In addition, such sponsors are able to contact OCS direct to be considered as a sponsor.
- 4.5 It is important to note that this is the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) Academy scheme. The DCSF will meet the capital and running cost for the Academy in full. Therefore, the Council is complying with the DCSF requirements in identifying the appropriate sponsor with the OSC.

5. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendation is intended to address the need for substantial capital investment at Albany School in order to address building deficiencies and to promote pupil achievement.

6. COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND CORPORATE RESOURCES AND OTHER DEPARTMENTS

6.1 Financial Implications

The expression of interest itself, does not give rise to any financial implications. If the replacement of the school by an academy is completed in due course, approximately £55k pa of Dedicated Schools Grant will be deducted from the Council's allocation in respect of responsibilities that transfer from the Council to the academy, in addition to the transfer of the school's budget share. The Council will retain responsibility for the funding, assessment and administration for statemented pupils with exceptional needs who attend the academy.

6.2 Legal Implications

The Local Education Authority must maintain any school as categorised under the Education Act 1996. Under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 any alterations or proposals to a school, which the LEA maintains, must be published beforehand and in consultation with such persons as appear to

be appropriate and have regards to any guidance by the Secretary of State.

Academies are publicly funded independent schools. Academies, work in different ways to traditional Local Authority (LA) schools.

The Sponsor and the LA will need to work together to prepare a formal Expression of Interest (EoI) for Ministerial consideration at the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF). The EoI will clearly need to demonstrate the need for a new Academy in the area proposed and details about the proposed Academy e.g. the age range and pupil numbers.

The governing body of an Academy is accountable to the Secretary of State through the requirements of a Funding Agreement.

If members agree the recommendation detailed legal advice/procurement will need to be obtained to address the completion of major works, relationship with OCL and the replacement of Albany School by the Council.

6.3 Property Implications

Work is currently underway to identify and evaluate possible alternative sites for the school: any proposals for relocation including the property implications will be the subject of a separate report.

7. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The development of Albany School is intended to promote pupil achievement including improvements in key stage 3, GCSE and post-16 attainment levels for all pupils and improvements to 'narrow the gap' for students from low attaining groups.

8. COMMUNITY IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of the proposed development is to promote pupil achievement for all pupils and to 'narrow the gap' in attainment levels for students from low attaining groups. The proposed sponsor is committed to a fully inclusive approach which would be reflected in school policies including the admissions policy and staff recruitment policies. OCL is also committed to provide a hub for the community providing access to a wide range of services. If the proposal progresses to the feasibility stage, consultation will seek to involve the whole community.

9. PUTTING ENFIELD FIRST

Aim 2: High Quality Education and Lifelong Learning.

Background Papers

None.

APPENDIX 1

The Faithworks Charter

Motivated by our Christian faith we commit ourselves to serve others by aspiring to the following standards in all our community work.

We will provide an inclusive service to our community by:

1. Serving and respecting all people regardless of their gender, marital status, race, ethnic origin, religion, age, sexual orientation or physical and mental capability.
2. Acknowledging the freedom of people of all faiths or none both to hold and to express their beliefs and convictions respectfully and freely, within the limits of the UK law.
3. Never imposing our Christian faith or belief on others.
4. Developing partnerships with other churches, voluntary groups, statutory agencies and local government wherever appropriate in order to create an effective, integrated service for our clients avoiding unnecessary duplication of resources.
5. Providing and publicising regular consultation and reporting forums to client groups and the wider community regarding the effective development and delivery of our work and our responsiveness to their actual needs.

We will value all individuals in a way that is consistent with our distinctive Christian ethos by:

1. Creating an environment where clients, volunteers and employees are encouraged and enabled to realise their potential.
2. Assisting our clients, volunteers and employees to take responsibility for their own learning and development, both through formal and informal training opportunities and ongoing assessment.
3. Developing an organisational culture in which excellence and innovation are encouraged and rewarded and individuals learn from any mistakes made.
4. Promoting the value of a balanced, holistic lifestyle as part of each individual's overall personal development.
5. Abiding by the requirements of employment law in the UK and implementing best employment practices and procedures designed to maintain our distinctive ethos and values.

We will develop a professional approach to management, practice and funding by:

1. Implementing a management structure which fosters and encourages participation by staff at all levels in order to facilitate the fulfilment of the project's goals and visions.
2. Setting and reviewing measurable and timed outcomes annually, and regularly to evaluate and monitor our management structure and output, recognising the need for ongoing organisational flexibility, development and good stewardship of resources.
3. Doing all we can to ensure that we are not over-dependent on any one source of funding.
4. Implementing best practice procedures in terms of Health and Safety and Child Protection in order to protect our staff, volunteers and clients.
5. Handling our funding in a transparent and accountable way and to give relevant people from outside our organisation/project reasonable access to our accounts.

'Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.'
W.B. Yeats