

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Subject: Co-operative Trust Schools Model
Committee: Cabinet
Date: 12 July 2012
Cabinet Member: Councillor Williams
CMT Member: Carole Burgoyne Director for People
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Ref: MC.JEG/JS(CAB)02(25/06/12)
Key Decision: Yes
Part: One

Executive Summary:

The Co-operative College works with the Co-operative Group and schools. Their work has enabled them to develop a distinct co-operative trust model, which enables schools to embed co-operative values into the long term ethos of the school.

Co-operative trust schools combine long term institutional partnerships with a membership structure that enables parents, learners, staff and community organisations to be directly involved in the trust. Stakeholders drawn from these groups are elected to a Forum which holds the Trust to account, helps shape its policies and elects a proportion of trustees.

The stakeholding model puts the community at the heart of education provision, based on the belief that it is only through active engagement of communities that the aspirations and expectations of educational achievement can be transformed.

This ethos would help to support the council in achieving its Co operative principles.

Newcastle have been talking to their schools about Co-operative trusts and also about setting up a citywide Learning Trust as a model for sustaining collaboration and partnership working across the family of Newcastle schools. This would be a school-led organisation that can work with the local authority to inform the delivery of key services to and for schools. All schools in the city would be invited to join and it would operate within a co-operative value system and principles. The Newcastle Model would be the preferred model for the city council, this would then enable all existing collaborative trusts to have the potential to sit below a city wide trust, and

this model fits with the aspirations to move towards a co-operative council.

It must be remembered that it is Governors who decide on the status of their school – it will be important to work in partnership with the Plymouth Association of Governors as well as chairs of governors, headteachers, teachers, support staff, parents and students too.

The Plymouth Association of Primary Schools (PAPH) has been active in brokering support for schools to explore co-operative trust arrangements. So far the following schools have officially notified the LA that they are consulting on moving to co-operative trust status:

Pilgrim Primary School, Colledge Road Primary School, Drake Primary School, Morice Town Primary School.

In addition a cluster of 6 schools in the North East and Central locality have officially notified the LA that they are investigating a move to co-operative trust status with a view to consulting in the autumn term.

We have been advised by the Co-operative College to expect more interest from schools in the autumn term.

In addition we have the challenge from the Office of the Schools Commissioner and the DfE regarding those schools that require support. The Teaching School alongside the LA will support schools that require improvement or are vulnerable to not reaching national floor targets. Improving standards here will enable these schools to be more successful when inspected by Ofsted and potentially avoid sponsored academy status.

There is a risk that the application of a “market forces” approach to educational provision with a strong emphasis on competition and the increasing emphasis on structural change to improve schools, alongside a narrow focus on a small number of performance measures to judge success will exacerbate existing inequalities and fragment the educational community. It is important that the broader purpose of schools at the heart of their communities is not lost in the fervor around changes to status and governance.

It is therefore of the utmost importance that the LA secures local solutions that ensure assets remain community owned rather than owned by sponsors from outside the city.

Corporate Plan 2012 - 2015:

This programme aligns with and supports the following Corporate Priorities:

- **Deliver growth:** playing an important role in helping local communities to create jobs and training opportunities.
- **Raise aspiration:** raise the skills and expectations of Plymouth residents and ensure our young people achieve better qualifications and find high quality jobs.
- **Reduce inequalities:** reduce the large economic and health gaps between different areas of the city by tackling the causes.
- **Provide value for communities:** become more efficient and join up with partners and local residents to deliver services in new and better ways.

Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications: Including finance, human, IT and land

Schools who transfer from a local authority maintained school to become a Trust school need to change their category of school to Foundation.

All Trust schools operate within the same frameworks as other maintained schools: they teach the National Curriculum, follow the School Admissions Code and are inspected by Ofsted. Teaching staff will still be employed under the terms of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document. The local authority will fund the school on the same basis as all other local authority schools and will retain its intervention powers if there are problems at the school.

The governing body of a Trust school will take on two new areas of responsibility:

- The governing body will be the employer of staff rather than the local authority; and
- The governing body will be responsible for setting admissions arrangements (in accordance with the law and the Admissions Code).

In addition, the governing body would continue to have day to day control of the school's land and capital assets. These will all transfer from the Local Authority to the Trust (which the Trust will hold on trust for the school). The LA may try to apply covenants on the land to secure continued community access but the DfE will not support such moves from LA's.

Should a number of schools move to Foundation status with a trust this will impact on the Local Authority as the assets currently held will be greatly reduced which could have a financial impact on the Council.

Dependent on the number of schools who may opt to take this course of action in the future this could impact on the School Organisation and HR teams in relation to the resources/capacity available to deal with such issues.

Other Implications: e.g. Child Poverty, Community Safety, Health and Safety, Risk Management and Equality, Diversity and Community Cohesion:

Schools are a key facility in their local communities and support wider cohesion in the area. An equality impact assessment has not been completed these are community facilities, which are open to all; therefore issues surrounding discrimination on the basis of age, faith, gender, race, or sexual orientation are not applicable. Schools are keen to develop a co-operative trust model that works with other stakeholders collaboratively, based on school to school support to assist with the work around narrowing the gap and child poverty.

Recommendations & Reasons for recommended action:

1. That Cabinet authorises a consultation with schools and Governors to identify views on moving towards a co-operative trust model that supports schools to move to Co-operative Trust status in line with the new administration’s aspirations as a Co-operative Council. Collaborative working with the Co-operative College, Governors, Head Teachers, parents and students will establish the best options worthy of further consideration.
2. That a further report is presented to Cabinet following the consultation indicating the views of schools and Governors, providing clear evidence relating to improvements in standards and highlighting risks and benefits and the financial implications for the council.

Alternative options considered and reasons for recommended action:

Schools currently are looking at moving to Academy status but for some Governing Bodies this would not be an option as they wish to retain their close links with the LA and not be independent from the Council.

Background papers:

Co-operative College website www.co-op.ac.uk

Local Government Association website www.local.gov.uk

Sign Off:

Fin	PeopleF EC1213 002	Leg	LT 15017	HR	N/A	Corp’ Prop	N/A	IT	N/A	Strat’ Proc	N/A
Originating SMT Member: Maggie Carter, Interim Assistant Director for Education, Education, Learning and Family Support											

1. Introduction

The move to a Co-operative Council is about putting people in control of their own communities and the services they receive, as well as council staff having a stronger stake in delivery. It is about working together cooperatively for the common good. The aim of the Co-operative Council is to create a strong sense of togetherness and ownership of council supported services, amenities and assets, so that they can be more effectively and efficiently used and support the delivery of the city's vision and growth agenda. It is a concept that will involve residents, service users, staff, partners and members with a strong focus on personal development and having a greater say over service delivery and how money is spent. The key components of the Co-operative Council are:

- Devolving power and encouraging greater community engagement
- Community ownership of assets and services
- Greater control for individuals of the services they receive
- Supporting social enterprises and a more mixed economy of provision
- Strengthening the community/voluntary sector
- Building up community funds
- Being part of a supportive Co-operative Council Network
- Giving staff a real stake in their work
- Championing open government

2. Changing landscape

The Importance of Teaching (white paper) sets the tone for reform. Key themes include:

- Greater autonomy and trust to front-line professionals – based on international evidence, a drive to create independent academies and free schools;
- Strengthening of the accountability framework – data including financial shared with parents Ofsted focused on weakest schools and academy status if schools fail;
- Striving for higher expectations for all pupils – more traditional qualifications, escalating minimum expectations, international comparisons;
- Proportional support – pupil and service family premium to narrow attainment gaps, educational endowment fund set up to encourage innovation;
- School to school collaboration seen as main vehicle – strong to weak, good schools leading the way and the creation of 500 'teaching schools' to develop school to school support, shared initial teacher training and some CPD for teachers etc;
- Pupil behaviour a priority for improvement – school powers increased;
- Importance of early intervention – universal entitlement for education for disadvantaged 2 year olds;
- School improvement support will no longer be thrust upon schools;
- Education as a business- sponsored academies to turn around failing schools, conversions for the rest, purchase services from the market, no new maintained schools to be opened.

Plymouth is a city with a strong culture of collaboration amongst its schools and in partnership we have enthusiastically set about developing a vision for an 'inclusive citywide learning campus'. We have supported the creation of a diverse pattern of school provision. Since 2008 (Investment for Children strategy) the LA has actively encouraged all schools to consider academy, Trust and federation status in order to add impetus to school improvement activity.

The LA takes its responsibility for commissioning schools seriously and will reconfigure the pattern of provision across the city to promote and support community-facing networks of schools, supported by trust, academy, diocese, voluntary and community partners. Such networks will be encouraged so as to improve transitions for pupils 0-19 years and to meet community and locality needs, whilst raising levels of attainment. (Extracts from Plymouth's 'Underperforming Schools Plan' 2011).

There is a risk that the application of a “market forces” approach to educational provision with a strong emphasis on competition and the increasing emphasis on structural change to improve schools, alongside a narrow focus on a small number of performance measures to judge success will exacerbate existing inequalities and fragment the educational community. It is important that the broader purpose of schools at the heart of their communities is not lost in the fervor around changes to status and governance.

Local Authority Officers meet with representatives of the Office of the School's Commissioner (OSC) every six weeks or so. Our discussions are robust and evidence based but the pressure to move to structural solutions (academisation) for schools below floor standard or in an Ofsted category is significant. Discussions to date with the OSC have centred on more local solutions with an emphasis not only on school improvement but on community involvement. We have been told that Ministers would like to see more outside involvement from the larger Academy Sponsors such as the Academy Enterprise Trust (AET), Collaborative Academy Trust (CAT) etc in Plymouth. The LA is trying to secure solutions that ensure assets remain community owned rather than owned by sponsors from outside the city.

Plymouth is working in partnership with the new (approved in May) Plymouth Teaching School Alliance (PTSA) which is centred on two of the city's outstanding schools namely Prince Rock Primary and High View Primary. Part of their work will be to support schools, alongside the LA, that require improvement or are vulnerable to not reaching national floor targets. Improving standards here will enable these schools to be more successful when inspected by Ofsted and potentially avoid sponsored academy status. The Plymouth Schools Forum has recently identified a level of funding to support work across all phases but with the immediate need identified at primary level. A business plan has been presented by the Teaching School to the Chair of the Schools Forum and this funding has now been approved for allocation. The LA is working closely with PTSA to ensure a joined up approach exists to coordinate shared resources to best effect.

It is important the LA ensures the continuation of a forum, with all schools represented, so as to agree citywide solutions to further improve standards and to preserve the collective responsibility for all the city's pupils.

Co-operative trust schools provides a model that offers an alternative way of providing parents, pupils and communities more voice in their schools, but with a stronger collective focus, driving forward stakeholder engagement and educational

improvements. This is based on a strong community ethos where parents, pupils and partners work collectively for the good of the school and the community. Unlike academies and the proposed free schools, trusts maintain the support and involvement of local authorities but offer collective autonomy and parental choice. As Sean Rogers, the Co-operative College's lead on trust schools says: "Trust schools are inclusive; they are about mutualisation, not privatisation".

The LA is exploring an alternative model of school organisation in order to raise standards and improve outcomes for children, young people and families in Plymouth. Elected members strongly believe that schooling in Plymouth should be based on the core principle of all schools in the city working together collaboratively in raising standards of education for all young people. This would be founded on strong partnerships between the LA and School Governing Bodies, which would include appropriate levels of challenge and support in raising attainment. The focus will be on Headteachers, School Governing Bodies and the LA working together for the benefit of the young people and being part of a family of schools. Once initial proposals on a new model have been developed, there will be full consultation with Headteachers and School Governing Bodies. Where schools have already converted to academies, it will be important for the LA to aim to maintain strong and effective partnership working.

We are aware of a number of cases across the country where either schools or LA's are challenging the Secretary of State's powers to transfer a maintained school to a sponsored academy. In particular Downhills Primary School in North London following a recent Ofsted were declared inadequate, as a result the Secretary of State has removed the governing body, the Head teacher has resigned and in May the teachers went on strike for the day. Parents views were sought by the school and Governors a large number of parents voted against moving to academy status. Despite this the Secretary of State has decided that the school will open in September as a Harris Academy. It is likely that a judicial review will be requested to challenge the Secretary of State's decision.

In Derby City Council the Labour Party regained control and at its first meeting reversed the authority's policy on academy schools which will mean that the Council will no longer offer support to maintained schools wishing to convert to academies. The council will now explore alternative models of school organisation and improvement, such as cooperatives, focusing on collaborative working between the LA and schools in Derby. The council as part of its report believes that this will enable schools and the LA to continue to invest in a collaborative and partnership based approach to improving the outcomes of all students and to encourage strong and effective partnerships between the family of schools in Derby. They are particularly keen to ensure that the LA can strategically plan and manage education provision which would be based on a consultative approach with schools.

In Plymouth we have to date treated all schools as part of the 'family' irrespective of their category of school, as the vast majority of schools teach Plymouth children. Providing services to schools enables the City Council to achieve a significant level of income which would otherwise be lost to the council. In 2011/12 the income from buy back of services was £2,591,786 of which £375,922 relates to academies and £2,215,864 relates to maintained schools. We do however in the future need to ensure that services are value for money, covering service costs and more

importantly evaluate the potential cost to the Council if we are only providing a service for a small number of schools. It may be that not providing the service will in the long term achieve more savings for the Council. In April 2013 the new Single Funding Formula for schools will be implemented which will see further delegation of funding to schools, as part of the consultation schools will be asked to identify those services they would still wish to purchase through the City Council. This could potentially impact further on the both services offered as part of the buy back and more significantly the level of income received from schools.

2. Academies

Plymouth currently has 13 academies (11 Secondary, 1 Junior School and 1 Primary School) with a further Primary School moving from 1 July 2012. An option would be to try and accelerate the academy agenda across the city, but we are already aware that a number of schools and Governors have investigated academy status and made the decision not to transfer. Schools at primary level particularly are not convinced of the benefits and fear the removal of the LA in becoming an independent school.

The LA is aware that the RC Diocese are close to agreeing a model whereby all RC schools in Dorset, Cornwall and Devon will move to Academy status, but we do not have a date for transfer at this time.

Schools built under the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) are also subject to the same pressures to become independent academies. This brings a host of extra issues not least the potential for the financial risk to remain with the City Council following a transfer to academy status, whether it be sponsored or not. A group of officers are investigating the issues and risk relating to our PFI schools moving to academy status and will report back as part of the next Cabinet report. Currently we have Wood View campus comprising Secondary, Special, Primary and Nursery school provision and other co-located services and Riverside Primary School located in the NW of the city.

3. Co-operative Trusts

The Co-operative College has worked with the Co-operative Group and schools. Their work has enabled them to develop a distinct co-operative trust model, which enables schools to embed co-operative values into the long term ethos of the school.

Co-operative trust schools combine long term institutional partnerships with a membership structure that enables parents, learners, staff and community organisations to be directly involved in the trust. Stakeholders drawn from these groups are elected to a Forum which holds the Trust to account, helps shape its policies and elects a proportion of trustees.

The stakeholding model puts the community at the heart of education provision, based on the belief that it is only through active engagement of communities that the aspirations and expectations of educational achievement can be transformed. Thus enabling the community to address wider inequalities e.g. poverty and worklessness which can impact on a child attainment at school.

The main difference between Co-operative Trust Schools and Trust schools with a foundation is that the community retains the land and capital assets. These will all transfer from the Local Authority to the Trust (which the Trust will hold on trust for the school).

The trust schools model has already proved popular across the country. Since the first, Reddish Vale Technology College, opened in Stockport in 2008 over 100 schools have converted to a co-operative trust model. The Co-operative College, which works with and advises schools, expects 200 to have gained trust status by the end of this year including a number of clusters and federations. This model of school collaboration is popular in Cornwall, Devon, Leeds, Sandwell, Staffordshire, Leicester, Derby and Newham.

A meeting is being organised with the Cabinet Member Cllr Nicky Williams and officers with Sean Rogers to discuss how the Co – operative College can work with the Council in achieving their aspirations.

Trust schools can also benefit from the expertise of partners, either other schools or universities, to help drive up standards. In Plymouth a Co-operative Trust already exists based at Lipson Community College with Mount Street Primary as another member.

The Plymouth Association of Primary Schools (PAPH) has been active in brokering support for schools to explore co-operative trust arrangements. So far the following schools as a cluster have officially notified the LA that they are consulting on moving to co-operative trust status with effect from 1 September:

Pilgrim Primary School, College Road Primary School, Drake Primary School, Morice Town Primary School.

In addition a cluster of 6 schools in the North East and Central locality have officially notified the LA that they are investigating a move to co-operative trust status with a view to consulting in the autumn term.

A primary school in the SW locality are also investigating co-operative trust status and will join with the Morice Town cluster if Governors make the decision to go ahead with the Trust following the outcome of consultation.

Importantly the OSC and DfE have confirmed that schools that move to co-operative trust status do not have immunity from further structural solutions. They can still be converted to a sponsored academy by the Secretary of State through an academy order.

At a recent meeting with the OSC they indicated that the Co – Operative College would not be approved as a sponsor for under performing schools an option that we would have been keen to secure.

3. The Newcastle model

'The Council is talking to schools about Co-operative trusts and also about setting up a citywide Learning Trust as a model for sustaining collaboration and partnership working across the family of Newcastle schools. This would be a school-led organisation that can work with the local authority to inform the delivery of key services to and for schools. All schools in the city would be invited to join and it would operate within a co-operative value system and principles. In establishing a Learning Trust, it is hoped that all schools, regardless of governance arrangements, can commit to a single set of underpinning values. Taking a co-operative approach to education and schools forms part of our overall commitment to being a 'Co-operative Council'.

This is the preferred model for the city council and that all existing collaborative trusts would have the potential to sit below a city wide trust, this model fits with the aspirations to move towards a co- operative council.

4. Issues to consider:

Plymouth already has a very diverse school estate consisting of selective, faith, academy, trust, community, foundation and a University Technical College as well as potentially 2 free schools. Support for the Co-operative Trust model is strong because of its ethical principles, strong community engagement and collaboration. If the Council's policy was to support this type of school organisation it would be a popular initiative with a number of schools and an increase in take up would result. Plymouth would remain very diverse but still subject to external pressure to 'academise' schools. The process to create an academy once it has become a Trust school will delay the transformation and make it more expensive in legal fees etc but the Secretary of State retains the authority to achieve this.

It must be remembered that it is Governors who decide on the status of their school – it will be important to work in partnership with the Plymouth Association of Governors as well as chairs of governors, headteachers, teachers, support staff, parents and students too.

There are a number of other collaborative trusts within Plymouth already. All the secondary schools have formed the Plymouth Learning Trust. This organisation runs the Tamar Valley Consortium (an ex-LA service) that provides training/vocational places/courses in the private and voluntary sector. PAPH has created a Community Interest Company that provides marketing and advertising services, a property compliance and buildings advice service with plans to open a supply teaching agency in September.

The Plymouth context is quite unique.