

CABINET MEETING – 8 APRIL 2009

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I

Title of Report:

Education Improvement Partnership

Author(s):

Director of Children’s Services

Purpose of Report:

To seek the approval of Cabinet for Sunderland City Council to be a member of an Educational Improvement Partnership (EIP) with Sunderland schools, Academies and City of Sunderland College through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding.

Description of Decision:

To approve that Sunderland City Council becomes a formal member of the recently established EIP which aims to support the national government drive for local authorities, through Children’s Services to develop effective partnerships with school, academies and further education colleges.

Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework? Yes

If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework

Suggested reason(s) for Decision:

To support Children’s Services in strengthening and securing the current strong relationship with schools, academies and other providers so that cross sector awareness and ways of working that will benefit children and young people can be promoted and developed.

Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected:

An alternative option is for the local authority to acknowledge the joint working of schools through EIP without committing to the Memorandum of Understanding. This would prevent the local authority being a full participant member.

Is this a “Key Decision” as defined in the Constitution? Yes

Relevant Review Committee:
Children’s Services

Is it included in the Forward Plan?
Yes

DEVELOPMENT OF AN EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT PARTNERSHIP (EIP)

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To seek the approval of Cabinet for Sunderland City Council to be a member of an Education Improvement Partnership (EIP) with Sunderland Schools, Academies and City of Sunderland College, through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding.

2. Description of Decision

- 2.1 To approve that Sunderland City Council becomes a formal member of the recently established EIP which aims to support the national government drive for local authorities, through Children's Services, to develop effective partnerships with schools, academies and City of Sunderland College.

3. Introduction/Background

- 3.1 In 2000, the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) approved the Sunderland Partnership Plan for Excellence in Cities (EiC). This secondary school initiative ran from 2000-2009. In 2004, additional funding was made available for primary EiC programmes to ensure that more schools could be engaged in the thinking and philosophy of EiC which was to develop ways of working that would improve the educational attainment levels of children and young people in disadvantaged circumstances. Funding for the Behaviour Improvement Programme (BIP) in targeted schools was also introduced as part of the EiC initiative.
- 3.2 Through these initiatives, Sunderland has developed a strong culture of schools, academies and other agencies working together to improve outcomes for children and young people. Focused and good quality collaboration between schools, academies, City of Sunderland College and other educational providers including third sector organisations, has supported the local authority in improving service delivery and raising educational standards.
- 3.3 In 2005, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) published 'Education Improvement Partnerships – local collaboration for school improvement and better service delivery'. This document confirmed the effect and impact felt in Sunderland in highlighting the importance and value of effective partnerships and high quality collaboration. The document encouraged the expansion of effective collaboration, urging local authorities and partners to build upon the success of EiC and other related initiatives.
- 3.4 The impending closure of the EiC programme in 2008, and the expected cessation of funding for the initiatives was the opportunity for the EiC partnership to plan to

identify key priorities. These are outlined below.

- 3.5 The first priority was to ensure that ways of working that were proving successful and making a positive difference to children and young people could be continued and embedded. Through the securing of an Area Based Grant (ABG), allocation for 2008/09 and 2009/10, the Management Board have been able to continue and expand programmes across the City. In this transition phase there is now an imperative to ensure that this forms part of the wider Children's Services transformation plan so that it is sustainable in the longer term.
- 3.6 A second priority was to ensure that the trust and genuine spirit of partnership amongst schools and between schools, the local authority and partners, was not lost, but enhanced. This approach and genuine commitment to collaboration underlies the many successes that 'the family of schools' have recorded since 2000, in terms of attainment, 14-19 partnership working, post 16 arrangements, low exclusion rates and successful inclusion programmes. Statutory targets and the Local Area Agreement demand further improvements that will require the greater and more dedicated partnership approaches that the Education Improvement Partnership will be well placed to provide.
- 3.7 A Memorandum of Understanding was developed to set out the scope and purpose of EIP, as well as the responsibilities of members. Following full and lengthy consultation, the final version was agreed. The document is attached (Appendix 1).

4. Current Position

- 4.1 Between June 2008 and February 2009, all governing bodies of partner organisations (schools and academies/academies designate) considered and signed the Memorandum of Understanding.
- 4.2 A Management Board was constituted and this Board meets monthly. Currently, the Management Board has a local authority Chair. The Board oversees and scrutinises the allocation and impact of the ABG funding for EIP interventions.
- 4.3 EIP is now also a key constituent part of Sunderland Learning Partnership which is the thematic arm of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). Sitting alongside the 14-19 and Adult Boards this ensures that lifelong learning is fully represented and participating in the LSP.
- 4.4 The current key priorities for EIP are:
 - 14-19 Reforms;
 - Local Behaviour Partnerships;
 - Teaching and Learning Strategies;
 - Utilisation of City Learning Centres; and
 - Locality Planning and cross sector partnerships.

5. **Reasons for the Decision**

- 5.1 To support Children's Services in strengthening and securing the current strong relationship with schools, academies and other providers so that cross sector awareness and ways of working that will benefit children and young people can be promoted and developed.

6. **Alternative Options**

- 6.1 An alternative option is for the local authority to acknowledge the joint working of schools through EIP without committing to the Memorandum of Understanding. This would prevent the local authority being a full participant member.

7. **Relevant Considerations/Consultations**

- 7.1 The following consultation has taken place and the Memorandum of Understanding was amended to reflect this consultation.

- Excellence in Cities Management and Partnership groups 2007.
- Children's Services Leadership team Report 2007-2009.
- Secondary headteacher meetings and residential conferences.
- Primary headteacher meetings.
- School Governors through briefings and Governor Booklet.
- Academy 360.
- Sunderland Learning Partnership.

- 7.2 There are no financial implications arising from this proposal, as membership of EIP does not require any financial contribution. The potential for financial efficiencies could be facilitated by EIP in the future.

- 7.3 There are no employee implications.

- 7.4 The City Solicitor has been consulted through this process.

- 7.5 The extent to which these developments represent a risk are included in the risk assessment of the service area through the appropriate processes.

8. **Appendices**

- 8.1 Appendix 1: Memorandum of Understanding

9. **Background Papers**

- 9.1 Education Improvement Partnerships: local collaboration for school improvement and better service.

