


Commissioner Decision Report	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Debbie Jones, Corporate Director (Children's Services)	Classification: Unrestricted
Agreement of the business case for the Tower Hamlets Education Partnership	

Originating Officer(s)	Christine McInnes
Wards affected	All Wards
Key Decision?	Yes
Community Plan Theme	A prosperous community

Executive Summary

This report provides a summary of development work establishing the Tower Hamlets Education (THE) Partnership and the proposed business plan, following the agreement of the Executive Mayor on 10th May 2016 of financial support of £300,000 per annum for three years, confirmed by the Commissioners on the 24th May 2016.

Longstanding collaboration between schools and the local authority has been a strength of education in Tower Hamlets. Schools have established the THE Partnership to promote and extend joint working so that the successful collaboration can be developed further for the good of children and young people.

The Business Plan for the first year of THE Partnership's life is focused on

- Delivering a sustainable and effective school improvement programme
- Effective engagement with members, associate members, partners and communities
- Establishing a financially sound and sustainable organisation.

Appendix A includes the full business plan and Appendix B the financial summary supporting the plan.

This report includes an update on how THE Partnership has met the requirements made by Commissioners on 24th of May and seeks a decision from the Commissioners to release the funding for year 1.

Recommendations:

The Commissioners are recommended to:

1. Note the completion of requirements by THE Partnership included in the Commissioners Decision Report of 24th May 2016
2. Note the THEP business plan and financial planning and agree the release of

- all funding for year 1.
3. Note the Council's proposed scrutiny and governance arrangements for the Tower Hamlets Education Partnership.

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 The decisions sought in this paper will enable THE Partnership to develop the capacity to become fully operational and work towards a sustainable business model in the medium term in order to play a key role in ensuring schools provide the best opportunities for children and young people to thrive and achieve.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

To do nothing, the risks of which are highlighted in the report to Commissioners of the 24th of May. Although publication of the White Paper Education Excellence Everywhere during the spring has to date not been followed up with a Bill, the government has made it clear the previous policy direction of travel will continue.

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

THE Partnership

- 3.1 Since the Commissioners decision in May 2016, there have been a range of developments that started the THEP journey from vision to implementation, with the Corporate Director (Children's Services) instructing Asset Management and Legal Services to make the necessary arrangements to enable the transfer of funds and use of facilities as a first step.
- 3.2 *Establishment of a company* - This work is being led by Rob Crothers, a member of both the Interim Board and Steering Group, partner at Clifford Chance LLP and an experienced school Governor. The Constitutional documents including articles of association and the byelaws of THE Partnership have been drafted and are in the process of being agreed by all parties. The process of drafting and consultation has been overseen and quality assured by Bates Wells & Braithwaite, specialists in educational law. Once the documents are finalised, THE Partnership will be registered with Companies House and the Charities Commission.
- 3.3 *Appointment to the Interim Board* – Release of the initial tranche of funding was dependent on the appointment of a finance director to the Interim Board. Stephen Purse, formerly Chief Financial Officer for Clifford Chance LLP (2005-16), and an experienced school Governor was appointed to the Board in July 2016 and has contributed to the development of the THEP business plan.
- 3.4 *Accommodation* - A THE Partnership office has now been established in the Tower Hamlets Professional Development Centre, Bethnal Green.

3.5 *Staffing* - Cath Smith, headteacher of Bow School was appointed and started her part-time one year secondment as Chief Executive of THEP on the 1st of September 2016. Ian Jones, headteacher of Marion Richardson Primary school, was appointed as Primary Adviser working one day a week from September 2016.

3.6 *Membership* – There has been great support for THEP with 80% of Tower Hamlets schools (82 of 103 schools) now full members of the Partnership, in comparison with less than 50% in May. Member schools include nursery, primary and secondary phase schools, special schools, academies and three of the four Teaching School Alliances in the borough. A diverse range of associate members have also joined including, Aldgate and All Hallows Foundation, Bow Arts, Queen Mary University, Spitalfields Small Business Association, Tower Hamlets Education Business Partnership, Tower Hamlets Together and Toynbee Hall.

3.7 The formal launch on the 20th September, 2016 attracted 111 delegates which included headteacher and governor representatives from 62 of the member schools, and colleagues from seven local partner organisations. The Council was represented by the Mayor, John Biggs, the lead member for Children’s Services Rachel Saunders, the Corporate Director (Children’s Services) Debbie Jones and the Chief Executive, Will Tuckley.

The THE Partnership model

3.8 Sound and reliable information gathering and analysis is at the heart of any effective school improvement system and a priority over the coming months will be to identify an appropriate system for THE Partnership to use which builds on the existing effective practice used by the Council’s school improvement service. Establishing an agreed data sharing protocol with and between schools, securing their agreement to the LA disclosing existing systems and intelligence will be critical to moving this priority forward.

3.9 The intention is to use the Council funding in part to develop

- A deeper understanding and mapping of the existing partnerships, support and challenge systems and relationships between schools in the borough
- Develop school improvement capacity within the schools system as a whole

so that as the Council provided service offer and school budgets reduce THE Partnership can access and broker support from a high performing, high capacity system.

3.10 On-going discussions are underway between THE Partnership and Council officers over how to manage an effective and smooth transition from an LA led school improvement system to a school led system. The important role of effective school improvement officers in London’s successful school improvement journey cannot be underestimated and careful thought needs to

be given about how this capacity will be managed as sufficient school capacity is developed. Much of school improvement work is invisible and headteachers will have to have confidence that transitioning to a new system will provide appropriate confidentiality, as well as challenge and support. The intention in the first instance is for LA officers to be used as one of a variety of providers to be brokered through THE Partnership.

Accountability

- 3.11 The Council is providing financial support for THE Partnership to establish itself as a financially viable organisation over three years. As discussed at the Commissioners meeting in May, processes need to be established to ensure appropriate accountability and scrutiny of the use of this funding.
- 3.12 It is proposed that THE Partnership Board present 6-monthly reports of activity and impact to a sub-group of the Children's Partnership, Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny. Audited accounts should be presented annually. The contents of the reports will change over time, from monitoring the establishment of THE Partnership through judgements about evidence of achievement of the business plan to judgements about school improvement outcomes.
- 3.13 The intended outcomes for the work of the Partnership which are included in the business plan demonstrate the high ambitions of the organisation and provide a framework for making judgements about effectiveness over time. To date, the Council retains statutory responsibilities for school improvement and, though the government's intention in the White Paper Education Excellence Everywhere was to remove these duties, the subsequent Education Bill has still not been published. Whilst a longer timeframe is welcome, without the legislative imperative, agreement will need to be reached about when THE Partnership will formally take responsibility for school improvement and be judged against the published outcomes. The earliest this could be is summer 2018 and that would be contingent on THE Partnership taking full responsibility for school improvement by September 2017.
- 3.14 This is a decision for the THE Partnership Board and the nature of the reporting will change to align with the transfer of leadership for school improvement.

Confirmation of addressing points from May's meeting

- 3.15 Summary of points raised and the response
- Appointment of a finance director to the Interim Board – achieved
 - THE Partnership would need to be subscribed to by the majority of the schools in the borough – achieved

- The number of schools and pupils THE Partnership will provide for and an assessment of the minimum number the LA think to be viable – THE Partnership will become responsible for the provision of school improvement services for all member schools. For schools which are not members, the role of THE Partnership is TBC and will be informed by new legislation on school improvement. The LA assess a membership of 50% of the borough's schools and pupils would make a sustainable organisation and this has been exceeded.
- Detail the number and percentage of schools and pupils represented by those schools which have joined -As of 13th October, 84 schools have formally joined THE Partnership, representing 84% of Tower Hamlets schools. This accounts for 37,728 pupils, or 86% of the pupil population.
- How the in-kind support would be valued and how and appropriate fee would be charged – the fee charged for accommodation and IT support is in-line with Council pricing policy. The officer in-kind support is being provided at no cost currently, as supporting THE Partnership is considered as an aspect of the fulfilment of statutory school improvement duties.

Review the approach that THE Partnership intends to implement, including annual interviews of those with responsibility within and outside of the Council/Partnership; and OSC consider holding a public hearing taking evidence from the Chair, Chief Executive and Finance Director: a small scale external review will be commissioned annually and reports made in parallel with THE Partnership Board reports as described above.

Conclusion

3.16 Having considered the contents of this report, the THE Partnership Business Case (Appendix A) and Financial Information (Appendix B) the commissioners are requested to

1. Note the completion of requirements by THE Partnership included in the Commissioners Decision Report of 24th May 2016
2. Note the THEP business plan and financial planning and agree the release of all funding for year 1.
3. Note the Council's proposed scrutiny and governance arrangements for the Tower Hamlets Education Partnership.

4. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 4.1 The Council has approved seed funding of up to £300k per year for three years in addition to in-kind support for the THEP.
- 4.2 The draft business plan identifies how the funding will be used to support the objectives of both the Council and the THEP. Formal monitoring and reporting

arrangements are being established to ensure the funding is used as intended and in line with the business plan.

5. LEGAL COMMENTS

- 5.1. At its meeting on 24th May 2016, the Commissioners approved an annual grant of £300,000 to Tower Hamlets Education Partnership (THEP). This was with a proviso that for the first year £150,000 be initially released and that the Commissioners then required a further report regarding THEP's three-year business plan and the arrangements for years two and three prior to the release of the second £150,000 grant funding for the first year. This report is reporting back on THEP's three-year business plan and the arrangements for years two and three so as to release the second £150,000 grant funding for the first year.

6. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 The aims of THE Partnership to support collaboration and a system which benefits all children in the borough is entirely consistent with One Tower Hamlets aims.

7. BEST VALUE (BV) IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The use of the grant will be on the basis that it demonstrates best value.

8. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

- 8.1 None identified.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Incorporated in main report.

10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 None identified.

11. SAFEGUARDING IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The Council will retain responsibility for safeguarding children and will have a duty to ensure that schools understand and discharge their safeguarding duties. Discharging this duty in a more fragmented system presents additional risks.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- The Tower Hamlets Education Partnership, Commissioners Decision Making Meeting, 24th May 2016

<http://democracy-internal.towerhamlets.gov.uk/documents/g7009/Public%20reports%20pack%2024th-May-2016%2018.30%20Commissioners%20Decision%20Making%20Meeting.pdf?T=10>

- Tower Hamlets Education Partnership, Cabinet Report 10th May 2016

<http://modgov.towerhamlets.gov.uk/documents/g6208/Public%20reports%20pack%2010th-May-2016%2017.30%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10>

Appendices

- Appendix A - Tower Hamlets Education Partnership (THE Partnership) DRAFT BUSINESS PLAN October 2016
- Appendix B – Financial information

Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012

None

Officer contact details for documents:

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