

Report of	Meeting	Date
Councillor Alistair Bradley	Council	15 May 2012

PROPOSED CHORLEY CAREER AND SIXTH FORM ACADEMY

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To seek the Council's approval to write to the Department for Education regarding their recent consultation on the proposed Chorley Career and Sixth Form Academy.

RECOMMENDATION

- That the Council write to the Department for Education expressing the Council's concerns, as outlined in Section 7 in this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

- The Department for Education consulted Lancashire County Council as the Local Education Authority on the proposed Free School for Chorley. Although Chorley Council were not consulted, and the deadline has passed, it is recommended a response be sent as outlined in Section 7 of this report.

Confidential report Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No
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CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Strong Family Support	✓	Education and Jobs	✓
Being Healthy		Pride in Quality Homes and Clean Neighbourhoods	
Safe Respectful Communities		Quality Community Services and Spaces	
Vibrant Local Economy	✓	Thriving Town Centre, Local Attractions and Villages	
A Council that is a consistently Top Performing Organisation and Delivers Excellent Value for Money			

BACKGROUND

- As Members will be aware, a Free School, named the Chorley Career and Sixth Form Academy, is being proposed for Chorley.
- As part of this process of considering a Free School, Lancashire County Council, as the Local Education Authority for Chorley, have been consulted by the Department for Education. Chorley Council were not included in this consultation. The consultation deadline has passed.

PROPOSED RESPONSE

7. It is proposed that Chorley Council write to the Department for Education and make the following comments:
- (a) The detail of Chorley Career and Sixth Form Academy's plans are under developed, as outlined on their website, and do not allow for a full and proper consultation at this stage. The Council would recommend that the Plans be developed further and the consultation be undertaken again when respondents have more precise information to comment on.
 - (b) The Council would also request that Chorley Council and the local Chorley Children's Trust be formally consulted as part of a second consultation phase.
 - (c) If the proposal is approved and the school is successful, it will result in additional surplus places and reduced pupil numbers within the existing secondary schools as a result of increased competition. Although population forecasts indicate that future years will require an increase in school places, this is not the case at the present time, with demand only increasing in primary schools. There are enough places within the current secondary provision in the next 5 years. In the longer term, rising primary numbers transferring into secondary together with significant levels of housing development which has not yet come forward mean that there may be a need for additional places although the timing is not yet established.
 - (d) There are a number of secondary schools within Chorley and the surrounding area with significant levels of surplus places that the Lancashire County Council is currently required to report on an annual basis to DfE. In addition, some schools have low pupil numbers and future educational and financial viability is a concern, particularly as pupil numbers are not predicted to increase in the near future. If the proposal is approved. Schools will be competing for a decreasing number of young people and the costs to the young people and their lives is immense if a school fails through lack of numbers and/or is only able to offer a limited curriculum as it cannot afford to do anything else.
 - (e) In Chorley there are already two Academies with a further two schools due to convert to Academy status in September 2012 leaving only two local authority maintained schools. Therefore, there is plenty of diversity already in Chorley without the addition of a further secondary school. All the schools in the area perform above the floor target, some of them very significantly so. All of the schools are rated good or outstanding by Ofsted.
 - (f) There is evidence that pupils and their families have choice and their preferences are accommodated. The vast majority of applicants for Chorley secondary schools received an offer for their first preference school. This compared well to the Lancashire average as shown below

Area	1 st Prefs	2 nd Prefs	3 rd Prefs	No Pref
Chorley	95%	4%	1%	Nil
Lancashire	93%	5%	1%	1%

If the new provision opens in September 2012, the school will have no option other than to take pupils from schools that have already offered them a place. Whilst Academies are excepted from the first year of co-ordination such action would appear to be against the spirit of the Admissions Code and does not bode well for future relationships and collaboration between schools in the area.

- (g) Entry requirements into the Sixth Form of the Chorley Career and Sixth Form Academy for students following the academic route are a minimum of 5 A*-C grades and GCSE, including English and Maths. Grade requirements for individual subjects, in addition for the 5A*-C are no lower than B. The entry requirements are high and are at odds with the Academy's vision 'to reduce the % NEET' in Chorley significantly and increase the number of young people entering further and higher education. 71% of young people aged 16 – 19 in Chorley who are NEET do not have the qualifications to meet the Chorley Career and Sixth Form Academy academic entry requirements.
- (h) The Academy have listed 23 'A' levels in - Annex B Proposed Admission Requirements to Community Sixth Form/Year 12 2012/2013. 19 of the 23 'A' levels are offered by Runshaw College, of the other four 'A' levels three of the subjects are offered in a Btec qualification and Classical Civilisation is not offered. Runshaw College is a Sixth Form College whose main campus is 4.6 miles from the address on the Chorley Career and Sixth Form Academy website. They also have a site on Market Street in Chorley town centre. The following is taken from the Runshaw College website, 'The 2011 examination league tables published by the Department for Education in January 2012 show Runshaw to be the best performing college in the country. Runshaw College is very popular and attracts students from an area wider than Chorley and south Ribble. It should be noted that if there is excess demand for spaces priority is given to pupils from Chorley and South Ribble.
- (i) In addition to Runshaw College's Chorley town centre site, Rathbone are based on St Georges Street in Chorley town centre. Rathbone deliver Foundation Learning for 16-18 year olds and Apprenticeships for 16-24 year olds. Rathbone currently offer Apprenticeship programmes in Chorley and the surrounding area in: Motor Vehicles, Retail, Childcare and Business Administration. Runshaw also offer Apprenticeships and the following are available: Accounting, Beauty Therapy, Business Administration, Catering & Hospitality, Childcare, Customer Service, Engineering, Hairdressing, Health & Social Care, Housing, Information Technology, Management, Teaching Assistants and Team Leading.
- (j) In the light of the above comments, Chorley Council are of the opinion that the proposal would not have a positive impact on Chorley and its young people.

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

8. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Directors' comments are included:

Finance		Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal		Integrated Impact Assessment required?	
No significant implications in this area	✓	Policy and Communications	

COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER

9. This report presents no financial issues for the Council.

COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

10. This report presents no legal issues for the Council.

COUNCILLOR ALISTAIR BRADLEY LEADER, LABOUR GROUP

There are no background papers to this report.

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Councillor Alistair Bradley	5104	15 May 2012	