

Executive**on 31 January 2006**

Title: **Crowland School: Arrangements for the temporary school, the permanent rebuild and the outcome of the investigation following the fire.**

Report of: **Interim Chief Executive & Director of the Children's Service**

Wards(s) affected: Seven Sisters

Item for: Discussion

1. Purpose

The report is in two parts.

Part one concerns the proposals for a temporary school near the school site and the preparations for the permanent rebuilding of the school.

Part two considers the actions that flow from the Internal Audit investigation into the overall management of the building works, including whether appropriate health and safety precautions were in place and properly followed.

2.

Introduction by Executive Member for Children and Young People

This serious incident at Crowland school last October was dealt with very effectively in the immediate aftermath by relocating the children to the PDC causing the children to miss only 3 school days. However, this arrangement was always seen to be very temporary. Part one of this report sets out a way forward for the period leading up to the rebuilding of the school having considered a wide range of possible options. Part two sets out very clearly some of the issues surrounding the fire itself and where recommendations have been made to the Children's Service these have been dealt with promptly.

Introduction by the Executive Member for Finance

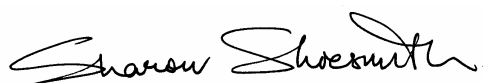
The recommendations set out broadly at 7.4 ask that a review of Council's Standing Orders is undertaken in order that firms that are relatively [or absolutely] unknown to the Council cannot find themselves in a position to provide work as sub-contractors, by-passing the rigorous and robust process we have in place as part of our revised and improved procurement process.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 The report seeks approval of the actions required to offer temporary accommodation and to re-instate the school following the remedial works. This includes the submission of a Planning Application for service provision in the interim period.
- 3.2 Members are asked to approve and adopt the actions and instructions of the Chief Executive in commissioning the Crowland School Fire Investigation Report and directions given to both the Children's Service and to officers generally in terms of its outcome.
- 3.3 Members are asked to agree that the scope of the re-instatement will be defined by what the loss adjuster agrees to fund and that there will be, consequently, no additional resource requirement.

Authorised by:

Interim Chief Executive



Director
The Children's Service

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4. Executive Summary

- 4.1 On 4th October 2005, an accident caused a fire to start on Crowland School which spread rapidly. All children and staff swiftly evacuated the building to safety. The service moved rapidly to create an alternative location to deliver education by the following Monday at the PDC. Since the October fire, the service has been transporting children twice a day to the PDC. This arrangement is not a sustainable long term option for children, parents or staff. It will take some 18 months to re-establish permanent education provision on Crowland school.
- 4.2 Alternative options have been reviewed to deliver education in this interim period.
- 4.3 The Children's Service has sought to find a solution that keeps the children together ideally within the Crowland community. A proposal is now being made to create a temporary school on the sports pitch within the Gladesmore Community School site, with an all weather sports pitch being provided in Markfield Park as a temporary replacement.

4.4 If planning consent is granted plans are to proceed with the works as soon as possible so that the temporary school is operational by April 2006 assuming the building works are not interrupted for any unforeseen reason.

4.5 Design work has progressed in developing a solution to re-instate the fire damaged teaching block at Crowland Primary School. This will be subject to a separate procurement action. The current forecast indicates a re-occupation of the teaching block by the school around August 2007 in readiness for the new school year.

4.6 Costs incurred, excluding betterment, will be recovered through the Insurance policy provided by AIG Insurance Company.

4.7 All areas affected by the works connected with the temporary provision will be re-instated, including all areas in Markfield Park affected by the construction of the all weather sports pitch immediately after building works to Crowland School are completed. .

5. Reasons for any change in policy or for new policy development (if applicable)

6. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

6.1 Internal Audit Report December 2005 – Crowland School Fire Report

6.2 The report is exempt as it contains information relating to a particular employee of the Council.

Part 1 Background

7.1 The main teaching block of Crowland school was seriously damaged by a fire that occurred on 4th October 2005. The fire occurred at roof level and led to extensive damage to first and ground floor areas. The building was unfortunately rendered unusable.

7.2 By Monday 10 October the Children's Service arranged for the use of the Professional Development Centre in Haringey for provision of temporary education to approximately 300 children. The principle of keeping the school together was established as a major driver. Limited adaptations to accommodation at the PDC were completed and a number of staff relocated. The Council is currently providing transport of the children from Crowland School to the PDC on a daily basis.

7.3 Since the fire occurred, the Children's Service has secured the existing school site by erecting a solid hoarding around the perimeter. Certain high level structures were identified as possibly unstable and the Council has appointed a demolition contractor for the removal of unsafe structures and clearing fire debris.

7.4 This report addresses the temporary arrangements for Crowland School and the plans to rebuild the damaged block.

8. Temporary provision

8.1 The current arrangements at the PDC are short term only. The long-term use of the centre for the teaching of the Crowland School pupils is problematic:

- Play facilities are limited
- Classroom provision is cramped
- Continued bussing presents a range of difficulties for parents and staff
- The length of the school day (and education time) is reduced , and
- There are concerns about continuing to transport 300 children twice each day and whilst action has been taken to minimise risk there will always be a degree of risk in such arrangements.

8.2 In addition, since the PDC has been relocated to the TUC centre, access may be delayed with regard to the expansion of the Coleridge Primary School.

8.3 The Children's Service prepared a list of locations where alternative accommodation arrangements could be developed. Each location was assessed as to the ability to absorb numbers of Crowland School pupils with minimal impact upon existing performance. An option appraisal was prepared with each site being evaluated on a broad financial and practical basis.

8.4 Options considered by Members and a range of stakeholders included; reviewing capacity in neighbouring schools, arranging temporary accommodation in neighbouring schools, use of public amenities and sports halls, car parks and open spaces.

8.5 The favoured option was to return the pupils as a group to the vicinity of the original Crowland School community in line with the important principle of keeping the school together. As a result, the Children's Service investigated further sites both within the footprint of the School, and in areas within the public realm adjacent to the school.

9. Planning application and preliminary investigations.

9.1 The appointed design team developed plans for temporary school arrangements in Crowland Road community, with use of Markfield Park. Two Planning Applications were submitted for two options. The first option considered provided temporary classroom accommodation on the sports pitch at Gladesmore School, and re-providing the sports pitch within Markfield park, and the second option suggested providing a temporary classroom accommodation within a secure compound sited in Markfield Park.

9.2 The Children's Service amended the planning application for the football pitch following advice received from the Planning Department. The amended application omitted the lighting scheme, reduced fence height to 3m, and reduced the area of the pitch from the Sport England recommended size to dimensions more similar to the existing sports pitch at Gladesmore School.

- 9.3 The Planning Department issued notice to local residents of the two proposals in early December 2005; the Children's Service invited parents and pupils a consultation event on 14 December 2005. Following a briefing with the Council's Parks & Recreation Service the Children's Service was invited to present the two schemes at a Consultation Meeting on 5 January 2006.
- 9.4 Registering significant resistance to the proposal placing the temporary classrooms on Markfield Park the Children's Service formally withdrew that Planning Application on 5 January 2006 immediately prior to the arranged consultation event held on that date.
- 9.5 The Planning Application for the football pitch is to be considered at the Planning Committee meeting scheduled for 23 January 2006. The current state of the park is subject to localised water logging and flooding with poor land and silting of the Moselle brook. There are plans to provide a long term solution to this flooding by securing funds to install an extensive drainage system. The building of the temporary artificial pitch will need to be undertaken in such a way that its own drainage system complies with the drainage for the overall park. Without this compatibility the new pitch would be in danger of flooding as well as adversely affecting the larger park area. If planning permission is granted, the Children's Service will ensure the new pitch will comply with the drainage system of the park as a whole.
- 9.6 Investigations at the preferred sites have proceeded and are assessing their feasibility in construction terms. The construction of the foundations, and the mechanical and electrical services for the temporary facilities can be installed.
- 9.7 The classrooms, toilet blocks and stairs/ramp access have been secured through a preferred supplier, and are ready to be transported to the sports pitch site on receipt of Planning Approval. Discussions with preferred suppliers for the sports pitch and fencing have progressed, and following a decision the works will proceed quickly.
- 9.8 A date will be agreed with the Governors of Gladesmore School for the earliest release of their existing sports pitch allowing the works to commence.

10. Security and safety at fire damaged block

- 10.1 The Council has appointed demolition specialist Squibb & Davies to make the site safe, and to provide the Council with security of the damaged teaching block. The contractor will remove unsafe and high level structures, clear fire debris, and provide propping to the first floor that is currently supporting significant weight due to the debris of the collapsed roof structure and coverings.
- 10.2 The contractor is also removing water damaged internal partitions, flooring and suspended ceilings at ground floor level providing access for the installation of propping to the underside of the first floor slab. Furniture, fittings and equipment are being removed and returned to the School to be stored in a secure unit on the site.

- 10.3 The Council's Health & Safety manager has inspected the site and will carry out a further inspection following the removal of the high level structures in order to declare the site safe. Following this the scaffolding surrounding the building will be removed. Waste material is being removed from site at times designed to avoid periods when school pupils are in the vicinity.
- 10.4 Mechanical and electrical services surveys for the temporary school and sports field have been completed. Potential contractors have been identified that could be invited to carry out the re-instatement works and dialogue has been opened with statutory/utility companies over capacity and increasing supply to the required locations. The earliest provision of temporary classrooms once Planning Consent secured has been secured and the required agreements with SMIF (Gladesmore School) will be in place following agreement with the governing body.
- 10.5 On going work being undertaken by the Children's Service to ensure the earliest possible return for pupils and staff to Crowland School include:
- Investigation of the possibility of a phased opening of the temporary school.
 - The development of design solutions for re-instatement works
 - The investigation of opportunities for knock down and new build solution
 - Discussions with Planning Department re-instatement works solutions
 - The identification degree of betterment possible
 - Liaison with Parents and Governors of Crowland School; and Gladesmore School.

11. Permanent School reinstatement

- 11.1 The objective is to re-instate the fire damaged block as soon as possible. A design team has been appointed by the Council and it is developing a re-instatement scheme, identifying elements where betterment or upgrade may be appropriate for the Council to consider.
- 11.2 It is intended to re-instate the building consistent with current building regulations, and compliant with legislation. This affects thermal insulation levels to floors, walls and roofs, windows and external doors; access to all areas including works to doors and openings, ramped access, accessible toilet arrangements. The building will comply with Building Regulations Part M and Part L. The Council will have to negotiate to costs for each element of the proposed building with the Loss Adjustor. The cost of any works considered by the Loss Adjustor to be beyond an acceptable solution will have to be met by the Council as 'betterment'.
- 11.3 Survey work in and around the fire damaged block have proceeded, including investigation into the re-use of any salvaged equipment including heating and electrical systems. In all cases the recommendation to the Council is that little is worth incorporating in the new scheme.
- 11.4 The Corporate Procurement Group is developing a Major Works Framework Agreement and should be able to provide the Children's Service with names of approved contractors by end of January 2006. Discussions are progressing about the type and scope of future tender action amongst preferred contractors leading to the

selection of a suitable and capable company to carry out the works. The Loss Adjustor is expected to require a competitive process to determine value for money yet this may have already been undertaken by the Council's framework competition.

- 11.5 To achieve an early commencement of works at site it is proposed that the incumbent demolition contractor be instructed to strip-out the block of internal fixtures and fittings, internal doors, windows and external doors, mechanical and electrical services. Any openings in walls will have temporary supports installed for stability. The incoming re-instatement contractor will commence with new works only.
- 11.6 The current intention is to commence site works in mid April 2006. The construction work is programmed for 12 months however the tendering contractors will be invited to provide a shorter contract period that will benefit the Council's aim to re-open the school as soon as possible. Building works are expected to be complete in April 2007 following which a period of one month is provided to allow for the block to be fitted out and made ready for occupation at end of May 2007.

12. Cost

- 12.1 Costs are being covered and agreed throughout the building process with the Loss Adjustors. The Service will seek to develop a design solution, secure acceptable pricing from the market, and place contracts working within the Council Procedures and with the satisfaction of the Loss Adjustor including agreements required on betterment.
- 12.2 Agreement will also be required between the Council and the Loss Adjustor on all aspects of the temporary and permanent facilities, including costs to be incurred for providing a building that is in accordance with current regulation and legislation.
- 12.3 The existing capital programme for the Children's Service does not contain any additional capacity to support any betterment beyond the point of the agreement with the Loss Adjustor.

13. Timetable for permanent rebuilding of Crowland

- 13.1 The Council aims to start construction works for the re-instatement of the block by April 2006. Currently the Council anticipates a 12 month construction period however if this can be improved upon through the tender process we will aim to secure an earlier opening.
- 13.2 Following a fitting out period the re-instated block should be ready for re-occupation by the school around May 2007. In June 2007 the Council will be able to re-instate the sports pitch and remove the all weather pitch from Markfield Park

14. Temporary School Provision

- 14.1 At the time when the two Planning Applications were submitted the Service had not been able to secure access/permissions from Crowland/Gladesmore Schools/SMIF

and others. By submitting two applications the Service embarked on a formal process that provided time to discuss schemes with stakeholders, and allow feedback from early consultation. Following receipt of feedback from the Planning Department regarding the size and nature of the all weather sports pitch in Markfield Park, an amended proposal was issued reducing the size of the pitch area, eliminating 4m high fencing, and the lighting scheme. Following receipt of further feedback through the consultation process, the Service has formally withdrawn the planning application that placed the temporary school in the Park.

15. Description of temporary school at Gladesmore and Markfield site

- 15.1 The planning application submitted is to place the temporary school on the sports pitch within Gladesmore School. This will involve importing 7/8 classroom units, access stairs, ramps and toilet blocks on to the sports pitch. The classrooms will be sited on prepared foundations, and be connected to temporary services for water, sewerage, phones, electric supply. Access for the works will be from the service road off Elm Park Avenue. Direct access will be formed across the service road to Crowland School for dining rooms and play area though some play area will be provided on the sports pitch site. The site will be secured using existing fencing.
- 15.2 The all weather sports pitch will be constructed in Markfield Park as close to Gladesmore School as possible without effecting the proposed drainage proposals for the park. The surface will be a polymer material that is durable. The pitch will be surrounded by a 3m high fence. The facility will be available to the public as the pitch will mainly be used by Gladesmore School during school times. Children's Service will work closely with Recreation Services to develop drainage solutions for the longer term benefit of Markfield Park and its users. There is no threat to the ODPM bid from the proposed works.
- 15.3 The Children's Service will maintain the artificial pitch; finance the cleaning and overall security. When the pitch is no longer required the Children's Service will undertake to return the land back to its current state by removing the artificial pitch and re-instating the grass.

16. Timescales for Temporary School

- 16.1 Provided an early planning approval can be secured it is expected that works will commence on the sports pitch by late January 2006. The Service will then provide classroom units and access/toilets by April 2006 completing the temporary school back on site.

17. Consultation

- 17.1 These proposals have been consulted up on with a wide range of stakeholders including parents, staff, local residents and Members.

PART 2: Outcome of the investigation following the fire

- 17.2 Immediately following the making safe of the school site, the Chief Executive commissioned an investigation into the contractual, health and safety and site operations and management of the building works at the school. This did not include an evaluation of the cause[s] of the fire and any recommendations that flow from that Report as this requires receipt of the Fire Investigation Branch Report which is still awaited. However, it appears that the fire was started by a domestic sub-contractor of the main contractor which had not been notified to the Council in accordance with Contract Standing Orders.
- 17.3 The investigation report is not attached or public available presently as it makes some recommendations which have resulted in disciplinary investigations being undertaken. Until these proceedings are complete the full report cannot be made available.
- 17.4 Irrespective of the incident itself the Investigation Report highlights both areas of non-compliance with Council Standing Orders and areas of learning which will improve the Council's performance in the future. Key recommendations are set out below together with the action being undertaken.

Recommendation	Action
1. All projects should be undertaken in full compliance with the council's contract procedures. This should also include the issuing and signing of a contract for all works, in accordance with agreed procedures.	The recommendation has been implemented with immediate effect. Any difficulties in processes required will be immediately reported to the Deputy Director for resolution.
2. The Council should conduct an immediate review of practice and contract procedures relating to the assessment of the suitability of sub-contractors to work on school premises while pupils are present.	The Children's Service operates within the Council's contract Standing Orders in this regard and will comply with the Council's review and recommendations.
3. The construction phase of a project should not start without receipt of all required documentation to ensure the safety of the site and of working methods, including health and safety plan and method statements, as well as insurance details.	The recommendation has been implemented with immediate effect.
4. The Council should revise its Property Guide to explicitly address building works taking place on school premises. This guidance should specifically state that the school's health and safety plan and evacuation procedures should be reviewed – and all staff – fully briefed prior to work starting.	The guidelines for schools issued by Property & Contracts have been revised to take account of this recommendation. A new set will be issued to schools this term. For schools already undergoing building works additional advice has been given in lieu of the revised guidance. Health and Safety remains the ultimate responsibility of the school head teacher and governing body.

<p>5. The Children’s Service should also issue reminders on this guidance, including a clear checklist, to headteachers and governing bodies prior to work commencing. This guidance should also ensure that parents/carers are appropriately briefed.</p>	<p>This recommendation is included in the one above. Again for schools already undergoing building works such reminders have been given and will be standard practice in future.</p> <p>In addition risk assessment training is offered regularly to every school.</p>
<p>6. The Children’s Service should immediately review all current works on school sites to ensure that health and safety plans and evacuation plans and evacuation procedures have been reviewed and all staff are appropriately briefed.</p>	<p>Immediately following the fire the Health and Safety Officer within Property and Contracts contacted all schools where work was underway and requested headteachers to confirm that they and their premises manager have reviewed their health and safety plans and that staff and parents have been informed. In addition the Head of Property and Contracts visited a number of schools where hot works were taking place and postponed these works whilst safety checks were made. These records are available if required.</p>

- 17.5 Recommendation 2 requires that the Council should conduct an immediate review of practice and contract procedures relating to the assessment of the suitability of sub-contractors to work on school premises while pupils are present. The Chief Executive has extended this to general learning and action point for all Council contracts so as to review Contract Standing Orders to determine whether or not the Council should maintain a list of approved 3rd party sub-contractors or to require main contractors to warrant to the Council that their domestic sub-contractors comply with all the standards the main contractor is required to demonstrate compliance with to gain acceptance to our list.
- 17.6 It is clearly unacceptable at, having gone through quite a rigorous appraisal process to gain acceptance onto the Council’s select list, the majority of the works are then undertaken by people over whom the Council has neither any knowledge nor any warranting explicitly in place. This corporate review will be led the Director of Finance’s Central Procurement Team and will be reporting to Members in due course.

18 Summary and Conclusions

- 18.1 For the temporary school - the Service is awaiting formal completion of the consultation process as part of the Planning Application placing the school on the sports pitch at Gladesmore School. The application is made for a 3 year, temporary arrangement but it is not envisaged to take that long. The Council will re-instate the sports pitch at the end of the period. The alternative application – placing the school in Markfield Park has been withdrawn. The Council’s preferred supplier is ready to commence works providing temporary services, foundations and assembly of

classrooms. Surveys for temporary services have been completed and solutions are being progressed.

- 18.2 For the sports pitch in the park – survey work has been completed and contractors approached to provide an all weather pitch with 3m high fence. The facility will be available for public use. Gladesmore School will arrange for use during school times. A maintenance regime will be applied to make sure pitch is available for use, and safe.
- 18.3 For the demolition works - a specialist demolition contractor has been engaged to make the structure safe, removing high level masonry, and debris arising from fire. The contractor is also clearing internal partitions and finishing where unsafe or likely to be a future hazard. This contract should be completed in early February 2006.
- 18.4 For the re-instatement works - the Service has identified potential contractors who may wish to tender for the re-instatement contract. Schemes are being designed for re-instatement, betterment and new build options. The scheme and cost estimates will be developed by end of January for each option.

19. **Financial Implications**

There may be financial implications as the scope of the reinstatement will be defined by what the loss adjuster will agree to fund. This means there will not be a requirement for additional resources.

20. **Comments of the Director of Finance**

The report makes clear that there is no additional financial provision to be applied to either the temporary arrangements or the permanent solution. All costs will therefore need to be agreed with the loss adjuster and project scope adjusted as necessary

21. **Comments of the Head of Legal Services**

The Head of Legal Services has been consulted on the content of this report and has no specific comments to make.

22. **Equalities**

- 22.1 It is the firm commitment of the Children's Service that every child has a right to good quality education. Following the fire of 4th October 2005, the service moved assiduously to ensure that a temporary school was created at the Professional Development Centre. The children lost only three school days. It is important that the children are able to return to their own community for the period leading up to the re-instatement of the Crowland School.
- 22.2 In an attempt to recreate Education provision closer to Children's Homes, the Children's Service will continue to pursue these options in this report.

