

EDUCATION BUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS GROUP

BIRMINGHAM CONFERENCE 14 NOVEMBER 2002.

CONFERENCE NOTES

Chris Gilbert Birmingham Education Service - Introduction

In excess of 150 delegates welcomed, including a significant number attending for the first time. Birmingham also hosted the Rethinking Construction 'Movement for Innovation' Midlands Cluster Group.

Delegate packs included the Birmingham handbook, Rethinking Construction Toolbox, Respect for People, which was being launched together with Secure by Design information, which was being promoted by Birmingham Education Service and the West Midlands Police.

Birmingham website developments

The Birmingham Grid for Learning (BGfL) has been extensively used to assist schools and Diocesan bodies with Asset Management and premises data/issues/guidance. Conference was also being used to launch a website for the Education Building and Development Officers Group with access via the BGfL and controlled using identity and password. Further developments are planned.

Peter Farrell, Birmingham Education Service - Chair for the day.

Welcome was extended to representatives from DfES and also to representatives of several organisations with whom Birmingham is currently partnering. Reference was also made to a new handbook launched by Birmingham to advise schools regarding property matters, a copy of which was made available to all delegates.

Peter referred to the challenging and changing environment in which we work. However, Birmingham had recently acted as host to some international colleagues who work for UN and are responsible for providing school buildings for Palestinian refugees in Palestine and the Gaza Strip. They spent time seeing how we organise places and build schools - our task seems relatively straightforward compared to theirs!

Like all LEAs, Birmingham is trying to implement improvements to deliver better value based upon Egan. Some areas are working well – e.g. website development, specialist partnering, liaison with Rethinking Construction. Other areas are a development opportunity. But our experience of PFI in particular where we have rebuilt in schools and are about to rebuild a further 13 has demonstrated what can be achieved if we look forward and take the opportunities that are presenting themselves at the moment. We are always willing to grasp opportunities.

Delegates were later welcomed to Birmingham by Mike Yarnold on behalf of the CEO, Tony Howell, who had been called to an urgent meeting with the Leader of the Council.

Shirley Turner, Hampshire Education Service, EBDOG Chair - Review

Shirley also welcomed delegates.

Chairman's review and update since the May conference.

The Standing Group met in September and again on 13 November. The issues discussed have been many and various, but concentrated on areas that will be familiar to delegates. The Standing Group will, in future, use the EBDOG website to share with all delegates the responses made to issues at the time. Issues discussed included:

The Basic Need consultation document – individual LEAs were asked to respond to this paper. Standing Group when it met in September felt that it should also respond as a group. Particular concern expressed about: the removal of surplus places and apparent dilution of its funding. How would the targeting of need for new pupil places be achieved and what safety mechanisms would be put in place in order to adequately fund that need? Possible over-reliance on planning gain in Section 106 Agreements to meet the full cost of providing new not just additional pupil places and that Agreement may already be in place. The provision of basic need for 16 plus and SEN and whether these would be treated in the same way. In summary, however, from the DfES proposed options, the Standing Group supported a significantly modified Model 3 and suggested that the funding should address sufficiency needs – not just Basic Need – in order to address issues other than just pupil growth. A 70% - 80% base allocation based on pupil numbers was proposed with the remaining 30% - 20% of the allocation to be targeted at specific growth areas. Projections of demand should also be based on authority projections and perhaps checked in retrospect for accuracy.

Annual Capital Guideline for 2003-4 - some concerns were raised at the September meeting about the date for the projected demand for places which hasn't moved forward a year! (Ken Beeton subsequently explained that the current allocation round considered deficit of school places to September 2005 and granted allocations of 15% in 2005/6, which should enable schools to open for September 2005.)

Asset Management plans - Mixture of success and otherwise regarding appraisal. The Group had considerable concern that there were some LEAs 'who are still working to improve their progress'. If you need help, the Standing Group will give you support – please ask. (Subsequent note – a 'Can you help page' has been established on the EBDOG web site.)

BB 82 revised area guidelines – the draft of this is now on the DfES website and is scheduled for March publication.

Targeted Capital Fund - delegates were reminded of the bid deadline. A DfES consultation paper was shared with the Schools Capital Strategy Consultative Steering Group (SCSCG) and informally with EBDOG. Concern was expressed that there were still some other consultation documents to be issued that could have an impact. It was acknowledged that the proposals for TCF were consistent with Ministerial thinking hence the apparent shift in priorities. The Standing Group was, in part, able to influence the content and final shape of the paper inviting LEAs to bid. In addition, **PFI Consultation Guidance** was also shared with the SCSCG in October, and has been issued.

Section 77 Disposals – approvals process for getting these approvals seems to be becoming more streamlined.

DfES Cost Guidance – a task group that includes Standing Group representatives has been looking at the costs of building works and has produced an interim report. That was also shared with the SCSCG. In broad terms, a secondary school gross cost of somewhere between £1500 and £1600 per square metre seems likely.

Voluntary Aid School Projects – Most LEAs have very good relationships with Diocesan colleagues but some are struggling. If help is needed let a Standing Group Member know.

Valuation Office (VO) surveys –or net capacity assessments –concerns have been expressed by some LEAs i) difficulties getting data from VO, ii) information received is not totally clear, and iii) DfES deadlines for submitting capacity assessments need to be confirmed. DfES requested to confirm actions required and timetable.

Consultation on School Organisation proposals by the Learning and Skills Council – Consultation paper issued, delegates recommended to read it carefully and respond as potentially significant changes being proposed. Key is that LEAs will be required to implement proposals for which they have had no input into the decision-making!

Asbestos regulations are introduced with need to improve the management of asbestos.

Strategy Focus Task Groups. – increasing importance as LEAs including EBD OG Standing Group delegates together with other associations contribute to policy/strategy groups include:

The Schools Capital Strategy Consultative Group, led by Ken Beeton. Pre-consultation DfES documents and policy developments discussed. Opportunity to contribute welcomed, although work is sometimes very confidential.

AMP Network Focus Group - includes regional seminars open to all.

BB 82 area guidelines task group - Task almost completed. Valuable contribution made to the final shape of the document. DfES requested to establish similar group to look at BB 77, (Special Schools) which needs to be urgently.

VA Board –issues to be reported at the next conference.

Clearly demonstrates that our views/concerns matter – EBD OG conference is another way e.g. in May concerns raised re New Opportunities Fund bidding process. Ken Beeton subsequently arranged a meeting between your representatives and Stephen Dunmore, the Chief Executive of NOF. Although the formal NOF response letter was disappointing, we may have influenced future rounds. Thanks expressed to Ken.

RIBA – Schools Client Forum - Provides a framework in which the opinions and interests of those who commission buildings can be voiced, debated and then learned from by other clients and architects. Have also produced the ‘Guide to school governors, Developing school buildings’. But meetings poorly attended by LEAs. Conference pack includes a list of members and the dates of future meetings. More contributors requested.

2. Future of EBGOG

Need to review what we do, how we do it and how we can introduce improvement.

Profile: Profile changed, now respond to consultation documents and take an active role in those processes. Is this appropriate? Is there more that conference would like the Standing

Group to do? Are there any other developments that you would like to see? Delegates invited to share views with to any of the Standing Group members or website and stay in touch between conferences. Delegates confirmed that these conferences are valuable and should continue. Essential for LEAs to volunteer to host future conferences. Challenging task but support available and smaller LEAs can jointly host. Thanks recorded to Birmingham's Asset Management Team, in particular Chris Gilbert and Julie Cochrane for organising the conference.

Ken Beeton, DfES. Head of Schools Capital & Building – Policy Update

Reference was made to recent events at DfES including a number of key defining changes that have been responded to whilst normal allocation processes take place.

1 Significant changes

Excellent settlement for education. Five years ago just under £700m, in the Schools Capital Base Line (more or less a single programme) now substantially more at around £3.7b. Will increase further. Next announcement delayed as DfES establish how best to use this extra money and get approval from new schools minister, David Milliband. Also, Charles Clark new Secretary of State wants to review policies.

2 Funding issues for 2003-4.

a) All **BN and TCF** for 2003-04 allocated or about to be. PFI round likely to be transitional this year. Expressions of interest requested from LEAs to work with DfES to develop new types of arrangement in the future. Shape of the capital programme in 2004-5 and 2005-6 should be published by March. The analysis and some of the issues that are around shared but solution still to be agreed.

b) **Review settlement**, now £3.7b, £4.4b in 2004-05, £5b in 2005-6. Scope for transformation, full modernisation and renewal, no longer patch and mend approach. *Different issues, different choices and different opportunities.* Part of the justification for more money is impact that capital investment has on educational standards. This is increasingly the focus of Ministers less so stewardship. Research by Price Waterhouse Coopers for example, showed schools where no capital investment A level performance 1995-99 improved by 17% c/w 26% improvement in schools where relatively large capital investment. Strongest links of investment with pupil attainment were in suitability related measures e.g. Science blocks, and also physical environment e.g. good heating, good air quality, lighting and noise levels - Capital investment felt to be one of the two most powerful levers on teacher motivation. and good teaching usually takes place in schools that have good buildings. Wider benefits of schools capital investment particularly in areas of deprivation through community use. Potential for education benefit, community benefit, health benefit and of course economic benefit through qualified workforce, improved economic performance and regeneration.

c) **Patch and mend** - School buildings increasingly difficult to maintain, we need to avoid the practices in the past, e.g. of no planned maintenance, 86% of schools are more than 26 years old. The majority are beyond their original design lives. Past neglect is proving expensive to put right and the low investment 'patch and mend' approach has been endemic for decades.

3 Allocation of capital

Formulaic approach produces a relatively flat distribution of capital. Has been right thing to do while when all LEAs had major urgent repair backlogs. By the end of 2003-4 worst excesses of the repairs backlog should have been addressed and with increases in devolved capital it is anticipated that the repair position should not worsen at school level. Problem with a fairly flat distribution is that no LEA really has enough money to make a strategic difference and cannot break out of this incremental cycle.

The Challenge is investment for Reform. Whole range of initiatives needs to be taken into account to improve secondary school education and beyond the classroom. The drivers are best value and transformation. DfES want to transform all of the schools in this country through the opportunity of extra money available. Schools should be a pride of the community, need to take account of lifetime costs, balance between capital and revenue needs to be optimised, design quality is too variable and needs to be consistently good. Link suggested between PFI and poor design is not the case. Reform will help justify the case for sustained capital base lines of £5b level plus into the future.

4 Pace of delivery.

LEAs tend to deal with one off procurements. Slippage makes it more difficult to justify the case for more money if the existing money isn't being spent.

Difficulties: a) resource constraints include procurement burdens such as knowledge gaps. b) capacity - much work around selective bidding capacity issues.

5 Procurements – a) one off projects re-invent the wheel and are inefficient. Consider standardisation off-site engineering etc with flow of work to optimise supply chain management in terms of partnering, and looking for continuous improvement. b) PFI for VA schools as have not got the premises support that Community schools have. Different model possible through joint venture company with the Church of England and Partnerships UK (see Jim Lockie presentation) which could be replicated across the voluntary sector and modified for local authorities – real innovation is sought via pathfinder LEAs. DfES role to establish and define the link with improved educational standards and will make sure that there is a cohesive local strategy dealing with such things as 14-19, successful schools, closures, federations, SEN, specialisms, community cohesion and support LEAs in identifying strategic school accommodation plans and capital investment needs and development of new procurement models.

6 Basic need – current round with ministers proposing significantly higher investment in core standards. Emphasis towards successful schools and may withhold basic need allocations for those authorities with poor asset management plans. Consultation document strong support for a simpler model, fairly evenly balanced between options three and four will consult on 16 plus before start trying to match funding to it.

7 Targeted capital fund – Announcement date March 03. 20% local contribution requirement caused some confusion particularly in the VA sector 10% statutory contribution for VA schools remain plus say 10% from LCVAP. Local contribution is required as money will: a) go further, b) help lever money towards national priorities and c) helps ensure local priority not just bidding for extra money.

8 VA Schools Still to complete condition surveys of excepted buildings estimated backlog £100m. Insurance - DfES initial advice legal that the revenue responsibility for funding premiums is with local authorities. LCVAP –not fully spent for two last years, considering over-allocation and LEAs must allocate 75% of the LCVAP money by April or DfES will re-allocate it.

Alan Jones, DfES. School Building & Design Unit – AMP Appraisal and Cost Guidance

AMPs have helped to transform the way that premises needs are assessed and prioritised and are an essential element of good capital planning and property management.

1 Appraisal - one of the principal levers of improving quality of AMP and help to ensure that capital is invested where it can make the biggest contribution to raising standards and provides DfES with confidence that LEAs systems are sound, and allows spending autonomy which wasn't previously available. AMP is not just a collection of data more strategic should join up funding streams to deliver larger projects. Must strengthen the contribution that capital investment makes towards raising standards and delivering the government priorities.

Appraisal has three main elements: 1) visits to LEA's to discuss the capital investment plans involving the Chief Executive and the Chief Education Officer. 2) appraisal of the AMP documentation (the key element and is completed) 3) ongoing appraisal of some LEA data and data collection systems. Visited 37 authorities over the summer to explore the link between capital investment strategies and the delivery of government policies. Including LEA's stewardship, raising standards and LEA's abilities to deliver their programmes. Also useful for LEAs to highlight some of the challenges facing them including basic need and surplus accommodation, regeneration to break the cycle of low skills, low aspirations etc., SEN and inclusion. Backlogs are still a major issue and authorities are having difficulty understanding the various funding streams needed to deliver campus wide, multi-agency projects.

Centre piece of the appraisal exercise focused on two key documents – the Statement of Priorities and the Local Policy Statement. Results notified to LEAs and will be fed into the allocation processes later in the year. Good progress 92% of authorities are now satisfactory compared with 81% last year even though DfES has raised the assessment standards and put a particularly strong focus on the strategic elements of authorities' plans. Will work with those authorities, which are not satisfactory, LEAs can also have a role to play in helping their neighbours and DfES will disseminate best practice. Some over-reliance on the DFES model statement of priorities; more work needed to be done on the target setting - smarter, more objective and clearer; more coherence needed across plans and various documents e.g. a clear link from the educational development plan, through to the Statement of Priorities through to the programme itself.

Future shape of appraisal – DfES has issued the next transmission guidance letter to authorities re condition premises and suitability data next year sought to streamline process, removed a number of data items, simplified Suitability assessment guidance which also aligns it more closely with DDA access audits. Over time, should be less reliance on the collection of AMP data and greater focus on the strategic aspects of LEA delivery and in particular embedding the rethinking construction agenda. Also expect all LEAs, even the very highest performing ones, to continue to maintain and improve their processes and data, but DfES will try and reduce the appraisal burden on authorities and much more light

touch. Key message is that whatever the future shape of the capital programme, Asset Management funding processes will form a key element.

2 Cost Guidance

Improvement in guidance data identified.

Current cost guidance unsatisfactory. Steering Group established and research undertaken. Analysed a sample of recently completed good quality secondary schools to try and identify what are reasonable levels of cost. Not yet published but increase likely. Factors contributing to increase in guidance cost include higher aspirations in terms of design quality, inclusion of sustainability issues, new building regulations and the increasing need for ICT infrastructure in schools. The cost guidelines will be used as the basis for benchmarking value for money and as a base mark for allocating capital across the various sectors.

Shaw Warnock, DfES – Investment

Capital funding to LEAs has increased rapidly and DfES has also greatly freed up and reduced the bureaucracy of allocation e.g. 1) where appraisal of AMP satisfactory, LEA rewarded with autonomy of investment and formulaic funding. 2) where AMP performance strong, are moving to light touch monitoring of AMP. 3) single capital pot mainly for basic need.

Government wants further freedoms and flexibilities for local authorities, particularly for those who perform well but DfES may withdraw this freedom for poorly performing authorities. Aspirations were set out in an Office of Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) white paper and are now moving to being implemented. Target to reduce all plan requirements for the very best performing authorities to only two. However, DfES will expect that the processes behind AMPs will continue particularly on consultations and on prioritisation. DfES will continue to require the submission of Condition and Suitability data to inform the allocation of formulaic funding according to need. DfES will continue to explore how additional freedoms and flexibilities may be offered to LEAs. While additional freedoms and flexibilities are welcome on both sides, they can bring problems. LEAs need to respond to issues that are very high on the government's agenda. E.g. science laboratories following the Robert's report on the provision of science graduates. If DfES are to avoid need to hypothecate investment in school laboratories because small hypothecated funding streams are not the way to address long term core needs of school buildings. DfES will provide guidance on funding programmes, but if this is ignored Ministers will be under further sharp pressures and may want direction in the way that DfES allocate funding.

Beech Williamson, DfES-School Building & Design Unit – Net Capacity & Area Guide lines

1. Net Capacity

LEAs should be set capacities by determining sensible planned admission number. Further detail shared in pm workshop sessions. General points include: DfES don't require Head Teachers signature on forms as LEA legally set the school capacity school. Data submission date moved from end of November to the 20th December. Following checks will return to LEAs during January a spreadsheet including anomalies. LEAs can then use information for admissions procedures for September 2004. DfES surplus places team will then use the

information to check for surplus places and should forward a pre-populated form to LEAs. They will also be used for School Organisation Plans, statutory proposals, and basic need.

2. Area Guidelines

School for the Future issues blur the boundaries e.g. between what is teaching area and what is not. Highlights the issue that DfES are trying to address and protect the non-net area for circulation etc and include decent sized corridors, circulation routes accessing every classroom etc. Approximately 25% of the overall gross area is appropriate for circulation. General view that overall gross area is 10% above BB 82 in secondary and 15% above for primary schools. This is not that all classrooms should be larger but that for inclusive schools they need small group multi-purpose discrete rooms say one, to every 4 class bases. Circulation in classrooms for pupils with SEN and disabilities is all part of the extra space. SEN is not supplementary, everybody with SEN and disabilities should be accommodated in the school, and the overall gross area should allow for all to be accommodated as well as out of hours community use and better ICT etc. Supplementary areas may also be required and need to identify this. Some schools may have a hearing impaired unit, or a pupil referral unit, or extra community facilities for community use during the day. They are over and above what DfES would expect every school to have and LEAs should not take area away from the rest of building in order to provide it, there should be more space which should probably be funded possibly from elsewhere which is why DfES are identifying it as supplementary (note that not saying all SEN accommodation is not supplementary). New area guidelines should now mean:

- a) specifying a standard for what the school should have as a minimum rather than a constraint.
- b) allowing flexibility within an overall area recommended for each of the different types of space. (e.g. staff accommodation has an overall recommended area within which is flexibility as to how organised.)
- c) allows schools, with design brief, to determine what they want within the net area limits, not within the gross area. If the net area increases then the non-net area increases. Also, for example, it allows the PFI provider to propose other options and gets away from the issue of whether a Mall is in the gross area or not and may help to identify in brief who funds what.
- d) funding may be a constraint and also gives the designer scope for innovation and design excellence by protecting some of the circulation which areas often have major impact on excellence.

Anticipate will revise the website draft version before Christmas, possible issue March.

Also, BB 77 will be linked to this and external architects are in a position to do some research and DfES will produce a model brief for special schools with in-put from a steering group.

Jim Lockie, DfES - PFI and Joint Venture

1. General Points

Number of PFI projects proposed included additional space and therefore more money because they are going to be inclusive schools. DfES emphasised (and Beech made it very clear) that the increase in spaces in draft BB82 takes that into account. Also, LEAs should allow contractors as much flexibility and freedom as possible to put forward their ideas. So specifying each and every classroom size is not a sensible way to encourage innovation. Revised toolkit should be available on DfES website from November 15th. It may be further amended around Christmas time. For those projects that get through the bidding round, DfES will do the revised calculation before making announcements.

2. PFI/Joint Venture

Since 1997 there have been nearly 50 signed PFI projects covering over 550 schools. Mainly bundled schemes with average size about a dozen schools, but there are still single school projects. Another 50 projects in procurement or planning. Funding will increase from £850 million base line for 2003-4 to £1.2b in 2005-6. Final announcements about future arrangements likely in March. It is within the flexibility of the DfES, subject to Treasury agreement, to vary the proportion of PFI within the capital spending. Important issue about VA sector getting their fair share if PFI is going to be a significant part of overall funding. There is still enormous criticism about the length and cost of the procurement process but there has been some improvement.

Contractors' costs very high on the agenda. Profits may be reduced because of bidding costs they incur. More and more pressure on government to do something about it and has been suggested that contractors will walk out of the market unless something happens.

Good quality design is also high on the agenda, and DfES expect the Audit Commission to produce a report just before Christmas, which will be quite negative of some very early PFI schools.

Problem of capacity. PFI procurement requires good quality procurers and project managers, which are a scarce resource. Private sector also has shortages of those people who manage the tendering. Looking to see how DfES can deal with some of those problems. Want to develop a new approach initially for VA schools using standardisation as a means of developing efficiency. Have looked at various mechanisms and national framework for this to happen in e.g. the NHS LIFT programme. For education propose to develop a joint venture with Partnerships UK, a private company, 49% owned by the Treasury, the National Society (the Church of England's education body) and DfES. Role is to procure local, private sector partners to provide new schools, refurbishment and perhaps strategic management locally for a group of schools. This joint venture would provide the support that at the moment is missing for the VA sector as Diocese very often have little resources. Joint Venture also reduces the cost and the length of procurement quite considerably. Partnership Board covering a local area which will be defined and anticipate two or three Dioceses together with other stake holders such as LEAs. The partner procured by the national Joint Venture would sign a partnership agreement with the local partnership board, and they would agree a first wave of projects, just as in a current PFI contract. Partner would then have a period of exclusivity and first refusal for other schools identified within that area. Pricing structure is agreed at the start. The national Joint Venture company is providing standard documents – contract, output specification, payment mechanism, standard partnership agreement, which reduces considerably the need for local negotiations re commercial and legal issues. They will also provide support for this first wave and monitoring and possibly offer longer-term services to be purchased by schools in the Diocese.

Joint Venture is a company and cannot operate at a loss, business plan predicts it will actually make a profit to be shared between the shareholders – the Church of England, DfES and Partnerships UK – and, by very significant financial saving for schools and bidders because of the standardisation involved, it will be very attractive. Time scales will also be speeded up through the standardisation of the process. Tranches of local schemes will go out to tender at the same time and each local scheme will be on the basis of waves of schools, i.e. a local scheme with say twenty schools that need some work over a period of time and in the first wave perhaps five of the schools. But there will be no guarantees beyond the first wave for the partner. The DfES has agreed to guarantee funding to the joint venture company for

the first three years with the private sector partner taking the rest on risk. DfES may provide some services to remainder of the VA sector and are likely to set up a similar company for Catholic Education Service.

Pathfinder LEAs

Policy still developing. If LEA is interested in putting themselves forward as a pathfinder and will fit in with local priorities but LEA must ensure no 'internal problems' as need to test processes without delays.

Other procurement issues affecting PFI

a) the standards schools contract still on the website as a draft, final contract should be on the website by February. Any urgent needs should be raised now. 4P's have been commissioned to produce a procurement pack on PFI that will be available to everyone for free electronically and hard copy and will include standard documents.

b) design - have commissioned CABE for all of the PFI projects this year to provide five days advice and support through the lifetime of the project. LEAs can pay if they want more. Design, must be given adequate priority throughout the whole of the process.

c) Joint Venture timetable already issued and the pathfinders DfES are looking for are in the round for project signing in 2004-5.

Questions

1. John Procter Hertfordshire County Council;

Insurance of Voluntary Aided schools - DfES legal advice is that it might be the responsibility of LEAs to insure aided school buildings and their contents. Our insurers are refusing to move in that direction on the argument that they will not insure any buildings that the county council neither owns nor controls. Please can you solve that one for us?

DfES response

Currently all sorts of confusion about who pays for what and what is paid for. Sometimes VA schools insure for 10%, sometimes insure for 100%. Other people are insuring as well. It is also an issue in terms of the adequacy of the premiums that they pay. DfES are trying to standardise and agree with some main insurers how it might work. This is work in progress, and we hope to conclude by the end of this financial year.

Appraisal - 37 authorities have been visited during the Autumn. Has this programme come to an end? Will it continue? What are the time scales? Will they have any effect on the grades that have been issued through the appraisal system?

Response by DfES

Development of capital policy, and also appraisal process on hold because of the Milliband review. Intend to then develop support for authorities. Some initial discussions about the product of AMPs but need clarity on the Milliband review before progress.

2) Mike Lee, West Sussex City Council

Devolved and delegated budgets - Larger Secondary Schools will have a third of a million pounds devolved over three years and we would expect them to, for example, be looking at the improvement of their science labs, but how does this relate to delivering government strategies if LEA is not funding what would be a relatively small project?

Response by DfES.

Is an issue that needs to be addressed.

3) Sally Letief, Westminster diocese

VA schools and PFI VA sector still have to find 10% contribution to the PFI scheme. This is a disincentive.

Response by DfES

Part of the arrangement with the Voluntary Aided sector is that their schools pay the 10% **statutory** contribution in return for which they get different arrangements as far as admissions, the composition of the governing body, who employs the staff and so on. With conventional procurement it might be paid in a lump sum rather than on an ongoing basis. It can work similarly on PFI, or it could be on a longer time frame and rather than the £1,000,000 fee that was recently paid for a single school procurement in terms of fees just to access the deal, it's unlikely that a primary school would have to pay more than say a £100,000 fee of which it would only pay 10% to access the PFI deal. That would be substantially better than the current arrangements.

4) Paul Holmes, Buckinghamshire City Council

Is it an oversight or deliberate to exclude offsite caretakers' houses from the 100% excepted building grant funding that was offered to VA schools? A number of these off site caretaker's houses now need extensive refurbishment.

Response by DfES

It was deliberate not an oversight. There was a great deal of discussion with the VA sector and with local authority representatives and some uncertainty as to whether they were excepted buildings anyway concluded pragmatically that exclusion was the easiest way. Ken promised to write to Paul with the detail.

5) Tony Blackman, Kent County Council

Communications - useful information today re websites etc but there are LEAs not here today who need to be notified. Also, if not paper communication, DfES have email addresses. Is it possible to make sure that every time something added to the web, DfES notify people because most LEAs do not have spare staff to check at the web everyday.

Response by DfES

Very good point and we will try to make it a policy now that with all the AMP letters which go out of SBDU that there is an accompanying email notification. We perhaps need to spread this a bit more widely within the division and elsewhere in DfES.

Where LEA have staff changes, then advise DfES to revise list especially e-mails.

6). Sarah Bourne

CABE's involvement in PFI with design assessment and support. Is there any restriction on those architects not being involved in any of the bidding consultants?

Response by DfES

Has been raised with CABE as it is a concern. What we have at the moment is an agreement – the enabler must let CABE and ourselves know immediately if there is any likelihood of them being involved. If they are the enabler we would not expect them to be involved. Not quite resolved but it would be quite unacceptable in DfES opinion for one to translate straight across.

Ali Mafi, Rethinking Construction, Midlands Region Co-ordinator - Implementation Innovation

Rethinking Construction original report put together by Egan and now includes Accelerating Change. Promoted by ODPM, as too many projects were over-budget and over time. Focus on how the industry could improve its performance in terms of efficiency and quality. Although many have not heard about Rethinking Construction, many are familiar with Egan but many seem not to be able to see beyond partnering. The report is about a set of recommendations to help the industry to improve its performance but not just through partnering and collaborative working. Many good recommendations and proposals for how they can be delivered were contained in the report. Change and innovation should be led by the clients and these clients should get together and apply the recommendations and the innovations and prove the business case. Ali shared much of the content of Rethinking Construction and urged delegates to read the documents, participate in the processes such as Demonstration Project status, engage with regional Cluster Groups and access the Rethinking Construction website. In conclusion, the key issues identified were Client Leadership, Respect for People, Lean Construction, Collaborative Working, Sustainability, Off-site manufacturing and KPI's.

The business meeting part of the conference concluded and thanks were expressed to Birmingham City Council for hosting and organising the conference, to speakers for their contributions and delegates for attending.