

Monthly Bulletin 24 on BSF Programme: August 2007

Main developments since the last monthly bulletin are as follows:

Progress towards “Financial Close”

Financial Close was reached on 31st August, with the signing of contracts covering building projects, PFI, ICT and the establishment of the Local Education Partnership with the Bouygues Partnership for Education and Community.

The scheme is the first BSF scheme in the country to incorporate all of the elements championed by the BSF programme: the local authority has entered into a joint venture with a local education partnership (LEP), it includes both a PFI project and design and build schools and fully integrated ICT.

Interest rates at close had fallen somewhat from their peak in July, with a positive impact on the overall costs of the PFI part of the scheme.

Building programme:

As reported in previous newsletters, building works are well underway and have continued broadly on schedule at both Bremer School and at Kelmscott. However, at the start of this term unfortunately two curriculum areas – Design and Technology and Modern Foreign Languages – were not available for use as planned at Kelmscott, being about a week late. This caused a loss of 3 days schooling for years 7 and 8 and 6 days for years 9, 10 and 11.

The contract to refurbish Kelmscott School has a value of about £11m. The scheme has been highly complex both to design and to implement for several reasons:

1. It involves maintaining the school in use with 900 pupils throughout the duration of works. This has meant a complex sequencing of decanting of areas followed by refurbishments and re-occupation. There are about 15 phases to the work. In some ways, Kelmscott is the most difficult scheme to manage out of all of the early BSFs – partly because elsewhere we are making great efforts to avoid on-site decanting.
2. The project is being undertaken under time pressure, so as to complete works by September 2008, with major re-occupation taking place over that summer. The programme is tight, which inevitably increases the chance of slippages.

The problems have offered an opportunity to learn lessons that will be of value later in the BSF programme, and also reinforced the message that in building projects of the scale currently being undertaken, there is always a risk that in some areas something will go wrong.

Development of proposals for wave 5 of BSF

The major public consultation round Wave 5 is still underway and has been advertised in WFM. Consultation closes in early September.

Meanwhile work is continuing on developing proposals for individual schools in discussion with relevant heads and Chairs of Governors.