



NORFOLK SCHOOLS PFI NEWSLETTER

Issue 17 – October 2002

CONFERENCE 15th OCTOBER 2002

This conference gave a good opportunity to judge the different approaches of the two Bidders. Unfortunately the excellent attendance of over 200 from schools did expose the venue's shortcomings and our apologies for the problems this caused.

Those attending should be aware that some workshop leaders presented their experiences as generic to PFI rather than specific to their project. We have learned a lot from other projects and will not necessarily do things in the same way.

To address this issue the conference report will include our existing proposals for dealing with the issues raised as well as reporting what the Bidders said.

BIDDERS' VISITS

During September the Bidders visited jointly all schools. Individual follow-ups have already started to discuss particular proposals. Time scales are very tight in getting round to all the schools and your co-operation in arranging visits has been greatly appreciated.

Both the visits and the preparation required for these are making additional time demands on schools. This is regrettable, but essential, to get the right solutions for each school.

Some small schools have asked if supply cover can be provided to allow them to spend more time on PFI. The PFI Project Board of County Councillors and officers recognises this as an issue and has asked for proposals to be brought to their next meeting in November.

EVALUATING THE BIDS

Schools will be an important part of the evaluation. Each school will allocate 50% of the evaluation marks for the proposals affecting their school. Schools will receive bids by 24 February 2003 and should finish marking these by the end of March.

A letter will shortly be sent to schools with more guidance on evaluation, e.g.

- ❖ What information should be evaluated
- ❖ Possible process for allocating marks
- ❖ Detailed timescales
- ❖ Information the LEA will provide, e.g. cost to school, future of formula capital

LEA officers are available to come to schools to discuss the evaluation process in more detail with staff and governors.

FUTURE OF PFI PROJECTS

You may be aware that the recent Labour Party Conference included much discussion of PFI - including a call for an independent review.

The Government has responded that they will not commission such a review and are actually looking at ways of extending PFI. As part of this the DfES are considering proposals for offering PFI projects to all secondary schools.

Even if the Government changes its mind about the future of PFI this should not affect our current scheme as we already have a commitment from the DfES to provide £92m of funding. In fact it is unlikely that a change in mind would affect projects in the next bidding round due by 3 January 2003 – this will include our bid for a project in the Central Area.

FURTHER INFORMATION AVAILABLE

[Esinet](http://www.esinet.norfolk.gov.uk/pfi)

Information is on the public website at www.esinet.norfolk.gov.uk/pfi. The Frequently Asked Questions document gives sources for further information. A draft letter aimed at parents and a summary of PFI aimed at governors have recently been added to the website.

If you would like any further information about PFI please contact:

Matthew Rathbone (tel: 01603 222469; e-mail: matthew.rathbone.edu@norfolk.gov.uk)

NORFOLK SCHOOLS PFI CONSULTATIVE GROUP

Given below are extracts from the notes of the last meeting on 1 October 2002

Progress of project

- Clarified that bidders could propose land acquisitions to expand existing sites or move to an alternative site locally. The LEA would undertake any agreed acquisitions itself.
- Bidders require information on any building projects at schools expected to take place before the PFI contract is signed. This is needed both to incorporate in their design proposals and to take account of the cost of maintaining the new / changed accommodation for 25 years.
- The ITN return date has been delayed to 24 February 2003 to enhance the quality of bids.

Cost to schools of PFI

- Revised data on historic spend by schools on PFI services is currently being prepared. Schools will get this later this term along with a possible formula using pupil numbers to distribute the total PFI costs between schools. Whatever the final system for distributing costs there will be no connection with the amount of PFI work done on each school.

Development of Bidders' proposals for each school

- Bidders will be coming back to schools individually in the fairly near future to talk about design proposals (they may also visit separately to talk about facilities management).

Evaluation of Bidders' proposals

- Bidders will be expected to present their proposals to each school in advance of the formal submission date of 24 Feb. School specific information provided will include design and construction proposals and some elements of service delivery. Schools will have at least 6 weeks after receiving this information to evaluate the bids and return marks to County Hall.
- The LEA will write to schools to provide more detail about the evaluation process. Officers will be available to visit schools to explain the process further.

Informing parents about PFI

- A draft letter that could be sent to parents was thought to be helpful and this will be made available to schools shortly.

Visits to existing PFI schools

- Ralph has contacted both Bidders to talk about arrangements. Expected that a party of 6-8 people will go on visits.
- Schools may arrange visits to PFI schools not run by one of the Bidders. There is a potential problem in going to one Bidder's schools only that this may be deemed unfair in the context of the competitive process. This would not be a problem once we have a preferred bidder.

Potential impact of recent changes to DfES guidance

- The current redraft of BB82 on school space requirements suggests areas 15% up in primary and 10% up in secondary. This compares with the 10% built into the DfES £92m funding. Agreed we should ask DfES for extra funding to compensate for their revised requirements.

Next meeting is 6.00 p.m. on Monday 4/11/02 at County Hall.

People that are not members of the group may still attend the meeting. Anyone interested should contact Ralph Masterson on 01603 223411.