



Insite

Partnerships for Schools
Quarterly
Winter 2007





Message from Tim Byles, Chief Executive

Welcome to the winter edition of Insite. Since our last edition, life has been extremely busy at PfS, starting in September with the new school term seeing the opening of our first brand new BSF school. Bristol is, of course, also the first BSF project to be delivered by a Local Education Partnership and as such we were delighted that the Prime Minister and Ed Balls, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, made time in their diaries to visit the school on the first day of term. Since the Bristol Brunel Academy opened its gates for the first time – on time and on budget – I have visited the school on a number of occasions and each time I am impressed by the impact the new school is having and the very real difference it is making to the students, to the staff and to the wider local community.

Previous years have seen us introduce a package of measures designed to improve the pre-procurement phase of BSF, and in particular new requirements that ensure local authorities are ready to hit the ground running from day one of BSF. These improvements have both improved the quality of local authorities' proposals for BSF and have reduced the timescales of this phase by up to six months.

Having made these improvements to the front end of the process, in October we announced our intention to explore whether similar refinements and improvements could be made to the procurement phase. Building on the successes of the existing model, the objective of the review is to improve timeliness, efficiency and flexibility in the overall delivery of BSF. As part of this exercise over 120 stakeholders shared with us, in some depth, their thoughts about three specific aspects of the current procurement process:

- the place of design in the process;
- the interface between ICT and construction procurement; and
- whether multi-area Local Education Partnerships could be created to encourage wider regeneration schemes beyond school building projects.

We expect to conclude the information gathering phase of this review at the turn of the year and will report back any changes we plan to make to the process in the spring.

October also saw the first Selected Bidders for two local authority projects appointed through our National Framework. Projects in Milton Keynes and Sunderland were the first projects to reach this stage since we launched our 'Design and Build' National Framework in January 2007 to streamline and accelerate delivery of the academies programme nationwide.

November marked my first year in post. Reflecting on BSF activity during this year, highlighted the significant progress that has been made; a year ago, just one scheme had reached financial close. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of PfS staff and colleagues across the BSF community, that figure has now reached 11, and I expect will increase further before the Christmas break. These deals amount to investment worth over £2.5 billion which will see education transformed in around 150 secondary schools. Authorities in Wave 5 have now formally joined the programme, with Wave 6 due to enter in the New Year.

As ever, we welcome your comments on this edition of Insite. As previously, we have opted not to print this publication as part of our commitment to reduce our paper usage, so please don't print it unless you really need to.

Tim Byles



Project update & news

BSF Waves 1-3

The biggest news for BSF is, of course, the opening of the first new school to be delivered through a Local Education Partnership. More about Bristol Brunel Academy can be seen on page 2.

The next BSF school to open will be The Michael Tippett School for children with special educational needs. The Lambeth school is due to open in brand-new buildings in February 2008: the picture above shows construction under way in August 2007.

Elsewhere, Liverpool and Waltham Forest have reached financial close since July, and Kent has become the first Wave 3 local authority to announce their selected bidder.

BSF Waves 4-6

Wave 4 local authorities (LAs) will almost all have submitted their Strategy for Change (SfC) part 2 documents by Christmas, and the newly-launched Wave 5 LAs are already starting to submit Project Initiation and SfC documents.

Pre-engagement meetings for Wave 6 LAs are being held in London and Leeds in December. An official launch and 'welcome to BSF' networking evening for Wave 5 and 6 LAs is to be held in London on January 15: invitations will be issued for this event shortly.

Academies

The delivery of Academies continues to quicken. With the DCSF seeking to establish 50 Academy Trusts per year, the delivery on new build and refurbished Academies must keep pace.

As a result we now have 139 Academies planned and being delivered through BSF areas and 134 through the National Framework route. The completion dates for all of these fall between 2009 and 2014.

The PfS team is currently engaged on 66 projects, with exactly half being delivered under BSF and the balance being secured through the National Framework.

We are now beginning to see some real evidence of delivery through the early procurements of Academies, with both Milton Keynes and Sunderland recently announcing their selected bidders.

Academy projects in Tameside, Southwark, Darlington, Mossbourne (Hackney), Nottinghamshire and Essex have been approved to go ahead, and Norfolk's project has been submitted for approval.

There are currently a total of 363 projects being considered by DCSF for new Academies which represents a substantial increase on the totals originally envisaged.



Wishes come true

Bristol Brunel Academy opens to students

"I wish that in the future I could make my parents proud", "I wish I could play for Bristol Rovers", "I wish people would stop misusing the planet". These are just some of the comments captured on the Wall of Wishes which welcomes visitors to the Bristol Brunel Academy – the first brand new school built under the Building Schools for the Future programme which opened its doors in September.

Delivered on time and on budget, the Bristol Brunel Academy exemplifies what will be achieved through the BSF programme: providing a 21st Century learning environment which will engage and inspire young people, helping them unlock their talent and realise their full potential.

The Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, officially opened the school on 6 September, and together with Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, Ed Balls, witnessed first-hand the enthusiastic response from students and teachers alike to their new surroundings.

Speaking at the school, the Prime Minister said the Bristol Brunel Academy was a clear sign that no child would ever be left behind, that every teenager matters, and that every young person should be helped to reach their full potential.

He added: "The level of investment in this new facility - which will be followed by every secondary school in Bristol being refurbished, and by programmes in every area of the country where we will invest more in education, in school buildings in the years to come – demonstrates our determination that we become world class in education: world-class schools, world-class teachers and world-class learning facilities."

Tim Byles, who also attended the opening event, said: "Every young person deserves the best possible start in life, including a school which helps unlock the talent that each of them has and encourages them to strive for excellence.

"I want every child in the country to feel motivated and develop a belief in themselves so that they fulfil their full potential. I want teachers to feel valued and inspired so that they too stretch themselves. And I want our schools to be positioned back in the centre of their communities, so that they become central hubs that help revitalise whole areas.

"Building Schools for the Future will help deliver just that. It will help us build better and brighter futures for all our young people, our teachers and our communities."



Members of the school and local community contributed to the design of the £24m school, which includes features aimed at reducing bullying and other anti-social behaviours, and a strong focus on sustainability to help reduce the carbon footprint of the school.

Formerly Speedwell Technology College, the new Academy offers 1,080 places for 11 to 16 year olds, and a 100-place sixth form. Under Principal Armando Di-Finizio, the academy is specialising in communications.

Students with a passion for drama, art or sports will also benefit from some of the best facilities in the country. The Leisure Box includes a fully-equipped gym with the latest equipment, an aerobics studio, main sports hall and Astroturf pitch and courts.

These dual-use leisure facilities are due to open in March 2008, once a separate public access has been created by demolishing the old school. Local clubs and sports groups have already expressed an interest in booking the indoor facilities, ensuring the academy will be the thriving heart of the local community.

Bristol Brunel Academy is also the first example of a school delivered by a Local Education Partnership (LEP), the new model of private public partnerships developed for BSF.

John Burgess, General Manager of the Bristol LEP, said the Academy not only marked the start of a new era for schools in Bristol, but the entire country. He added: "Students and the wider community will be now able to benefit from this vibrant new facility which is the impressive result of the close co-operation between the LEP, Skanska, the Academy and Bristol City Council."

Links:

www.bba.bristol.sch.uk

www.bristollep.co.uk



Bristol Brunel Academy: inside out

- Bristol City Council was the first local authority to create a Local Education Partnership to rebuild its secondary schools under BSF.
- Skanska began construction of the Academy in June 2006. Through BSF, the LEP and Skanska are also working with Bristol City Council to develop several other educational projects around Bristol, including five secondary schools, another Academy and several Children's Centres.
- Other partners involved in the delivery of the project include: Wilkinson Eyre, Buro Happold, and Northgate Information Solutions.

Features

- Flat screen televisions throughout the school display the energy and water use within the building, and visibility panels in the plant room walls and rainwater recycling facilities allow teachers to use the building as a learning resource.
- The school features a wide internal street allowing students to circulate easily and safely around the building. Glazed staff rooms overlook the street.
- Washroom areas open out onto the street to minimise the risk of bullying.
- Bristol Brunel Academy is a cashless school, with students using ID 'smart cards' charged with money to pay for meals. The same cards are also used to access the school and for class registration.

Sustainability

- The Academy is built to a BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) 'very good' standard.
- The school has achieved a recycled content of almost 25%. Concrete, blocks and bricks have a recycled content - around 20% of brick content is recycled, for example, with the steel used in construction having a recycled content of around 80%.
- The structure uses 'thermal mass', with the concrete and blockwork keeping buildings cool in the summer and warm in winter.
- Rainwater collected from the roof is stored in a 100,000 litre underground tank, which is then filtered and used to flush all of the toilets in the school - up to 20,000 flushes each week.
- Biomass boilers, using woodchip from sustainable forests, will provide most of the energy for heating and hot water.

PM shows support for BSF

Gordon Brown speaks about the importance of transforming schools

Gordon Brown has spoken about how the BSF programme is a 'catalyst for transformation' and will change the face of education for ever in a video message for Partnerships for Schools which is now available on the PFS website.

Shortly after making his first major speech on education, the Prime Minister was filmed in Number 10 Downing Street giving his views on how the unprecedented investment in education will ensure that this country's young people have access to world-class education fit for the 21st century.

He said: 'Over the last decade, investment in our school buildings and education facilities has seen a seven-fold increase. We are transforming our schools.

'But this isn't just about bricks and mortar. Building Schools for the Future is a catalyst for transformation. By rebuilding or renewing every single state secondary school in the country, it will provide world class learning environments to inspire and engage young minds and in which teachers can focus on their core role of enabling students to unlock their talents and reach for excellence.'

He also spoke about how by harnessing the best of the public and private sectors, PFS is able to deliver a new generation of schools which will help re-engage students and become focal points for the whole community.

Tim Byles, Chief Executive of PFS, said: 'When Gordon Brown opened the first brand new BSF school in Bristol in September, he spoke personally and powerfully about his school and how its ethos of hard work and ambition encouraged him to strive for more.

'The BSF programme is about inspiring all young people to unlock their talents and reach their full potential, and I am delighted that the Prime Minister has added his voice to help increase understanding of, and commitment to, this once in a generation programme.'

The full text of Gordon Brown's video message is below:

"Every child in this country has a talent and every child has potential to fulfil.

I want a Britain where there is no cap on ambition, no ceiling on hope, no limit to where your talents will take you.

And that is why I want a world-class education for every child in Britain.

Building Schools for the Future is our major programme of investment to ensure that every child can go to a school equipped with the very best facilities, in the very best buildings. It is about providing an environment in which every child can study, learn and achieve to the best of their abilities, with a rich and full curriculum.

Over the last decade, investment in our school buildings and education facilities has seen a seven-fold increase. We are transforming our schools.

But this isn't just about bricks and mortar. BSF is a catalyst for transformation. By rebuilding or renewing every single state secondary school in the country, it will provide world class learning environments to inspire and engage young minds and in which teachers can focus on their core role of enabling students to unlock their talents and reach for excellence.

By harnessing the best of the public and private sectors, Partnerships for Schools is delivering a new generation of schools that are centres of creativity, innovation and enjoyment.

The innovative use of technology provides new ways for students to engage – and in some cases, re-engage - with education, delivering personalised learning that can take place any time, any place, anywhere, instead of being confined to the four walls of a classroom.

And with our new schools all becoming 'extended schools', providing wider facilities and services to the local community – including lifelong learning, sports and arts, BSF also provides an opportunity to put our schools at the heart of the community.

I went to a school that had an ethos of hard work and ambition. And I want every young person in this country to have the same opportunities that I had; to believe that there is no limit to where their potential can take them and how far they can rise.

BSF is helping deliver just that. Strategic investments that will transform the face of learning forever are being made up and down the country. I wish everybody involved in Building Schools for the Future every success."



Lambeth

Leading London in BSF

The London Borough of Lambeth has one of the fastest developing BSF programmes in the country. In Waves 2 and 5 of BSF, over £220 million has been awarded to the borough, which aims to use the investment to help address its shortage of secondary school places. Lambeth is the first local authority in London to start constructing new buildings under the BSF programme.

Working in partnership with a selected group of architects and construction companies, Lambeth's delivery programme of six new builds and major refurbishment remains on track and on budget. Under Wave 2, using a design and build procurement route, three new buildings will be completed in 2008 with two others between 2009 and 2010.

In September the borough formally entered Wave 5 which will be a major programme of substantial refurbishment and one rebuild using the LEP procurement route.

Lambeth welcomes the opportunities and benefits offered by BSF and has achieved a number of outstanding 'firsts' in the national BSF programme:

- The Michael Tippett School will be both the first school in London and the first Special Education Needs (SEN) school in the country to be built under the BSF programme .
- Stockwell Park High School, designed by Sheppard Robson, has been awarded the first rating of 'Excellence' by CABE.
- The Elmgreen School created with BSF funding, is the first Parent Promoted School* in the country. It opened on an interim site in September 2007 and will be in a permanent building in 2009.

Mike Pocock, programme director for Lambeth's BSF said "There have been many challenges in Lambeth's BSF programme, but we are delighted that so much has been achieved, that we are still running to the timetable for Wave 2 set two years ago. Soon the students and teachers will be benefitting from the excellent new facilities being created."

* A Parent Promoted School is one where plans for a new school are developed jointly between parents, local authority and partners. Parents work closely with the governing body on the development of the school.

Case study: Michael Tippett School

Tim Byles recently performed a topping-out ceremony at Michael Tippett School in West Norwood, laying sedum on the school's new green roof, a special design feature of the new building (see picture, left).

The SEN school currently operating on two sites based at opposite ends of the borough and catering for about 65 students with a range of learning difficulties.

The split-site environment brought a number of challenges over the years and one of the major benefits of BSF to the school and local community is that of bringing the school together in one building.

The schools will move from their current sites into the new building in early 2008

The £7.8 million building, designed by London Eye architects, Marks Barfield, is an exemplar of the latest thought in SEN building design.

Working closely with Lambeth, the school and parents, the architects created a building that has a dynamic environment and provides an increased range of opportunities for the students.

It features modern hydrotherapy facilities, a sensory room and environmental designs which incorporates an eco-friendly sedum roof.

There is a therapeutic colour strategy which is appropriate to the needs of the students and a link into the local park.

The new building also facilitates the extended school policy of opening the school to the wider community.

Sharing Best Practice

A critical aspect of our work is ensuring that we identify and share best practice with key stakeholders in the programme. As noted in the last edition of *Insite*, we have established dedicated 'lessons learned' pages on our website, covering all aspects of BSF. These pages provide high-level learning points and case studies designed to help both those already in the programme and those about to enter BSF.

Drawing on the experiences of our own Project Directors and wider stakeholders, the following section summarises recent additions to these web pages.

Preparation & planning

Literature: a growing body of literature and research illustrates the impact that new and refurbished schools can have on attainment, student engagement and aspirations and the degree to which student and teacher participation can impact on the effectiveness of school design.

This literature may prove useful to those developing plans and consultations for BSF, to explore ideas and gain insight into best practice from other school rebuilding projects.

Maintain a focus on the outcome: at any stage of BSF, it can be easy to focus too closely on the immediate future, especially when working with advisers and consultants. Remember that BSF is about creating new learning environments for the pupils, teachers and members of the public in your community.

Strategy for Change

When developing the Strategy for Change:

- ensure that the local authority's strategic vision aligns with the individual schools' visions
- consider all the possible options for the school estate, from campus schools to Academies. Changing plans later can potentially cause delays to the scheme.
- keep in mind that a scheme needs to be attractive to the market in order to get the best bids.

Use previous PFI experience intelligently: local authorities should make good use of previous PFI experience. Arrange a de-brief and feedback session with the PFI teams to make sure lessons learned are addressed within BSF plans from the very beginning. Don't let previous bad experiences blight BSF – identify problems, develop solutions and move ahead with the new project.

Resourcing

Be an 'informed client': Local authorities should use any in-house experience of complex procurement projects (especially PFI) or school re-building programmes. However, be sure to highlight the differences in the BSF approach, and recognise that there needs to be a change in approach from previous projects, however successful.

Dedicated resourcing at a school level: different models of appointed / seconded / distributed resourcing of BSF-related responsibilities have emerged. Whichever model, the equivalent of a full-time member of staff must be resourced for. BSF is not an 'add-on' to a day job – it is best resourced separately. Commitment varies but, at some stages, is significant. Where possible, appoint a BSF Manager at each school.

Consultation

Ideas for consultation: keep up communication and buy-in with road shows, open evenings and training sessions for governors, parents, pupils and the community. One BSF team regularly attended school fetes, parents' evenings and other public functions, to keep the community up to date with their progress on BSF.

Pupil consultation: provide funding to students to enable their involvement, and integrate pupil consultation into school timetable / curriculum to ensure that it is done. Arrange focus groups between architects and students – this is good practice for architects and helps students to look at and in think about their environment in a different way.

School staff consultation: Visits to other schools will help school staff visualise what could happen with BSF funding. Provide INSET days to enable planning and discussion around BSF.

Community consultation: seek views from parents and the community, through open evenings or a notice in local press: this will ensure ownership and pride in the facilities.



Design evaluation: involve stakeholders in the evaluation of designs and bidders: for example, allow bidders to present direct to schools. (Maintaining bidder confidentiality around this time needs to be handled carefully.)

Involve educationalists and headteachers in the design process from the start: they are the practitioners and experts on what needs to be done, what will work – and what won't. This will be especially valuable if the design team have not worked on schools extensively before.

Consultation with schools and consultation by schools are different.

Communication

Joined-up communication: Set up a Communications email group ASAP at selected bidder stage – this will help with the initial press release and with future events, announcements and eventual school openings. The press officers from the local authority, selected bidder (including ICT partners and any other co-investors) and PFS should be primary contact, with link to the relevant BSF teams and project directors.

Effective relationships between schools and local authorities are critical: Keep schools, headteachers up to date with approvals, status, progress, submissions, etc. They shouldn't have to read about an approved OBC, etc in the press. Celebrate milestones with communication about the next steps.

Communication with governors: if governors only meet twice a term, the local authority and school need a communications plan about how governors are kept involved: nominate a BSF representative (who may also attend meetings, consultations, etc) to feed back to the whole governing body more regularly.

Procurement

The appointment of an effective LEP manager is key. The right LEP manager can become a local champion, can advise schools, organise subcontracts, pull everything together, manage KPIs, and hold contractors to account on behalf of schools.

Key factors – ICT

ICT is not just for transforming education: staff workload and administration can be reduced with intelligent IT systems.



Delivery in Action

Floods in Hull

Summer 2007 will be remembered as one of the wettest on record, with Wellington boots, rather than sunglasses, the accessory of the season. For students, parents and teachers in Hull, two floods in less than a month brought uncertainty about whether the city's schools would be in a fit state to open their gates at the start of the new term.

In total, 92 of the 99 schools in Hull City Council's catchment area were affected in some way by flooding, with nine schools remaining closed for the final weeks of the summer term. Sydney Smith School – one of the worst affected – was a scene of "total devastation" according to its head teacher, Kevin Beaton. Every ground floor room in the secondary school was under water to a depth of up to four feet, with 104 classrooms affected as well as the sports hall.

On his visit to the city in July former Secretary of State for Education, Alan Johnson, expressed doubts that Sydney Smith would be ready to accept pupils in September. But thanks to the joint efforts of Hull City Council and Partnerships for Schools, the secondary school re-opened as planned, along with all but two of the city's schools.

PfS was tasked to put in place a Recovery Plan and provide overall management for the provision of temporary accommodation for all the schools where remedial works would not be complete for the start of term. This involved regular liaison with the local authority, the Government Office, and the Department for Children, Schools and Families, and the appointment of a project management company to deliver what was required on the ground.

Through its Project Management Framework, PfS commissioned Turner and Townsend to work locally with the local authority and nationally with Wernicks Hire (temporary accommodation supplier) to ensure that the accommodation was ordered, delivered and fully functional for the start of term.

As a result, the 3,000 children displaced from their schools by the floods were back in education by the start of the September term, some in their usual buildings, others in 4,500 square metres of temporary classroom accommodation at 10 sites across the area.



Anthony Walker, PfS Strategic Director, said: "In this most unusual situation we moved quickly to assess how best to provide suitable space and facilities and then implemented a plan of action to ensure that there was as little disruption as possible to the students' education. Quite clearly, there was a pressing need to ensure that Hull's students would be going back to good quality accommodation at the start of the new term, and our commitment to delivering this saw the public and private sectors pulling together to achieve this goal."

Stakeholder voices

Views aired and shared in 'intelligent debate' on BSF

Around 120 stakeholders from across the BSF community have taken part in a series of workshops and meetings as part of a targeted review of the procurement process that aims to introduce even greater efficiencies to the Building Schools for the Future programme.

The review, which is being conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers, is focusing on ways to improve the timeliness, efficiency, flexibility, and ultimately, the delivery of the BSF programme.

Three specific aspects of the procurement process have been put under scrutiny during the discussions, in written submissions, and in one-to-one meetings: the place of design in the procurement process; the interface between ICT and construction procurement; and whether multi-area Local Education Partnerships could be created to encourage wider regeneration schemes beyond school building projects.

Tim Byles, Chief Executive of PfS, said: "It is widely accepted that the delivery of the BSF programme has picked up pace considerably over the past year. A package of measures designed to ensure that local authorities are ready to hit the ground running as soon as they enter the programme is already making a real difference to the timetable for delivery.

"This targeted Procurement Review enables us to reflect on what we have learned to date and, importantly, to listen to the views, experience and expertise of others in the wider BSF community.

"It has been a dynamic and intelligent debate so far, and we are grateful for the time and enthusiasm shown for this review from across the stakeholder groups. We look forward to sharing the outcomes with participants at a conference in the new year as we work together to make the very most of this opportunity to transform education in secondary schools across England."

In brief: workshop issues

Among the ground covered in the three separate workshops, held in October, were:

Design

- how best to use design as part of the BSF procurement process
- whether local authorities and schools need to engage more with designers to get truly innovative buildings which transform education
- the amount of time needed for the design phase
- the most appropriate number of sample schemes and how these are working in practice

The LEP

- the need for better understanding of the LEP model and how it operates
- the flexibility of scope for the LEP to deliver wider services beyond education
- the possibility of multi-area LEPs, with one adjacent authority partnering another, or a group of authorities creating a regional LEP

ICT

- whether integrated procurement model is beneficial and key to achieving any significant levels of transformation
- the need for better understanding, particularly by schools, about what an ICT managed service would mean for them
- earlier engagement with schools so that the ICT solution can help bring about educational transformation



Event previews



BETT is the world's leading educational ICT event, dedicated to showcasing the best in UK and international educational technology products, resources and best practice.

Free to attend, BETT attracts 700 educational suppliers and nearly 30,000 visitors. It brings together the global teaching and learning community for innovation and inspiration. For anyone involved in ICT and BSF, it is a 'must-do' event.

BETT 2008 takes place on 9 - 12 January 2008, at Olympia in London.

Partnerships for Schools exhibited at BETT for the first time in 2007, sponsoring the central feature 'Tomorrow's Learners Today'.

In 2008, PFS will be on stand J56, as part of the 'Policy in Practice' zone, with other government bodies such as Becta, Ofsted, TDA, QCA and SSAT. A dedicated seminar area for Policy in Practice has been created for 2008. PFS and several BSF local authorities will be presenting case studies and answering questions on the programme.

PFS is also featuring in the main seminar programme at BETT: Tim Byles is delivering a keynote speech on Friday 11 January; Steve Moss will speak on ICT in BSF on Saturday 12 January and take part in a panel discussion afterwards; and other PFS presenters will speak on science and change management in BSF.

More information about PFS' presence at BETT is available on the PFS website.

Links: www.bettshow.com

BSEC08

Building Schools Exhibition & Conference (BSEC) takes place on 12-13 February 2008. The event, supported by PFS, will be held at Manchester Central (formerly G-Mex), having outgrown its previous home at Harrogate.

The combined exhibition and conference successfully brings together the entire BSF community: local authorities and private sectors meet for two days of networking and informative debate.

Once again, PFS will have a stand at the show, ready to welcome visitors. Tim Byles will deliver a keynote address on the first morning of the conference, and we are also contributing toward several of the workshop streams, including design and ICT.

Other confirmed speakers include the Rt Hon Ed Balls MP, Barry Sheerman MP and designer Wayne Hemingway.

The 'local authority village' offers a valuable opportunity for bidders to meet BSF local authority teams and discuss their plans.

Links: www.buildingschools.co.uk/bsec

ICT in BSF

partnerships for schools
building schools for the future

18th March 2008
Royal College of Surgeons, London

PFS are hosting a focused and highly practical conference, in partnership with Education Guardian and intended to follow on from our inaugural event of 2006.

The conference will concentrate on the practical lessons of ICT strategy and procurement learnt by projects in the early waves of BSF.

Delegates will be able to hear directly from those people involved in early BSF projects and to benefit from the lessons they have learned.

More information will be on the PFS website early in 2008.



In conversation with...

Barbara Spicer,
Chief Executive of
Salford City Council

What difference will BSF and the Academies programme make in Salford?

We have a relatively mixed economy in our secondary schools and BSF gives us the ability to rebuild, refurbish, and provide another academy to complete our 16-school secondary estate. We're also very pleased that the ICT platform will be provided across the whole estate.

BSF is allowing us to send a very powerful signal about the importance of education and the value we place on providing excellent education for all of the children and young people of the city. For example, the new Academy will be built on the Gateway site into Salford Quays.

What do you see as the key opportunities and challenges of BSF?

Every home a decent home, every school a good school, every job a fulfilling job. Investment in education on this scale gives Salford the ability to plan and deliver transformation across the city's boundaries alongside the other key components of change. The next 20 years can, and should, be planned to accommodate and drive those positive changes, and in BSF we hope to find a LEP partner who wants to stand side-by-side with the City Council throughout those times. We believe that it's not only the physical opportunities that should be maximised, but also the cultural opportunities the programme presents.

However, BSF is not an easy programme to deliver if you really want to use it to drive change. It means proposing actions in the short term that may well be unpopular. I am very lucky to have political Leaders that are willing to take incredibly difficult decisions to achieve the right outcomes, willing to resource major programmes that will deliver them and willing to lead from the front.

How does BSF fit in with the wider regeneration agenda in Salford?

Salford was one of the places that drove the Industrial Revolution and was, without doubt, a city of some significance. Then came industrial decline - ergo city decline - and a well-documented 'slide' into a place known largely for its deprivation factors. However, the city is now on the cusp of major resurgence; in the last year we have drawn on a wide range of physical developments, which are in excess of £2 billion, supported by more than 2,000 major planning applications. The most publicised is the decision by the BBC to make its bold move from London to Salford Quays.

But if we are to make any of this regeneration work for the city and to ensure that we simply don't polarise our communities in the process then we have to make sure we properly connect people to the opportunities that will exist. That means having a strong delivery chain of activity, which will ensure that local people are equipped with the skills, experience and confidence to take up those opportunities. Education is key; and BSF is an inherent part of delivering that agenda.

What advice would you offer to local authority chief executives who are about to enter the BSF programme?

If you say you are going to be the programme sponsor, which I believe that you should, then you have to take it very seriously. For me personally there were things I had to learn such as pupil place planning which would help my understanding, but the crucial part was working with political leaders to embed BSF into our overall plans for transformation. Salford manages its BSF programme alongside other major programmes that will have a positive impact right across the city; delivery of our housing stock options, the arrival of the BBC and our Connecting People programme. It's my role to ensure the programmes all hang together coherently.

BSF is an incredibly resource intensive programme in the short-term (although not if viewed in terms of the long-term gain), so you need to be realistic about early investment, support your teams throughout what will undoubtedly be some bumpy moments and personally take responsibility at an officer level for some of the more difficult decisions that may be proposed.

What are you most proud of in your career to date?

I have been lucky to have contributed to a wide range of things which make me proud. Development of housing co-ops, seeing people who have worked for me grow, and most recently the decision of the BBC to move to Salford all spring to mind, but I couldn't single out any one particular event.

Describe Salford - as you see it - in five words.
Ambitious, proud, welcoming, dynamic... and tiring!

Finally, a 'non-BSF' question. Which three people - dead, alive or fictional - would you like to have dinner with?

Josephine Baker and Stephen Fry for entertainment value and a glimpse into what must be fascinating life stories, and my father so I could knowingly have one last drink with him.