

SCHOOL ORGANISATION ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES of a meeting of the School Organisation Advisory Board held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 7 May 2008.

PRESENT: Mrs V J Dagger (Chairman), Mr C J Capon, Mr L Christie (Substitute for Mrs C Angell), Mr A D Crowther, Mr M J Northey and Mr A R Poole

IN ATTENDANCE: Dr I Craig (Director Strategy Policy & Performance) and Mr M Doole (Area Education Officer Thanet & Dover)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Declaration of Interests by Members in items on the Agenda for this meeting
(Item. 2)

No interests raised

2. Minutes - (a) 19 March 2008 and (b) 2 April 2008
(Item.)

(a) Subject to the comments made by Mr Crowther the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2008 were agreed as a true record.

(b) That the Minutes of the meeting held on 2 April 2008 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

3. Proposed Change of Age Range for Green Park Community Primary School, Dover
(Item. 4)

(1) The Director – Operations circulated an appendix detailing the final analysis of the written responses which had been received in respect of the consultation. This showed that out of 600 consultation documents which had been distributed, 9 responses had been received, all of which expressed support for the proposal.

(2) Mr Doole said that the school's Adjudicator had approved the proposal to close Melbourne Community Primary School and the Powell School with effect from

31 August 2007 to establish a newly amalgamated school from 1 September 2007. At that time, the Adjudicator made a modification to the proposal which required that the new school should operate initially on split site locations. That was done in order to allow for appropriate improvements and adaptations to be made to the Powell site. The original proposal was that both schools should be consolidated onto the Powell site and the school would have an age range of 4-11. The proposal therefore encompassed the closure of the existing Unit at the Melbourne site.

(3) It was agreed by all parties that consolidation into a single site should be deferred until September 2008. However, a further modification to the original published proposal was made determining that the age range of the new school should be 3-11 allowing the Nursery Unit to continue until the Melbourne site was closed. When Green Park Community Primary School consolidate in September 2008 onto the Powell site it would become difficult and impractical for the school to continue to manage the maintained Nursery. Initial discussions have, therefore, taken place with UMBRELLA, the current children's centre provider about the possibility in principle of relocating to the maintained Nursery Unit accommodation. The relocation of the pre-school provision to the Melbourne site would ensure that the excellent facilities afforded by the maintained Unit would continue to be available to the local community. The accommodation would also provide an improved environment for the pre-school children attending UMBRELLA which is currently located in St Nicholas Church hall.

(4) Mr Newman said that in the circumstances he believed this to be a good proposal. The current Nursery Unit was under used and with the safeguards and guarantees that had been given about future provision, he supported the proposal

although on-going monitoring would be important. Mr Newman also said that it was important that local Members were kept informed and advised as proposals are being progressed and in conclusion said that given the local circumstances it was better to have a going concern which would attract parents to use this Nursery.

(5) Mr Cowan said that local Members were given insufficient notice about the commencement of the consultation process. He said the Melbourne site was a fantastic facility and he questioned what would happen to the remainder of the site and would it be used for community purposes. Mr Cowan also said that he had concerns about the future of the existing staff.

(6) In response to the local Member's comments Mr Doole said that officers always tried to keep local Members informed and he was sorry that if in the early stages of this proposals, that had not happened. On the question of staffing Mr Doole confirmed that no body would be made compulsory redundant and staff would be consolidated. Also as yet no decisions had been taken about the future of the Melbourne site. Mr Doole also confirmed that the County Council would be working with UMBRELLA through its Early Years staff and the Nursery would also be subject to OFSTED inspections. As to the maintenance of the building there should not be significant ongoing costs to the County Council.

(7) In answer to Members' questions Mr Doole confirmed that no child would be displaced as a result of these changes and Dr Craig said that whilst there were many instances where maintained nursery units shared a site with a primary school, there was no automatic right to go from that nursery unit into that primary school. Mr Doole also said that it was only intended that the UMBRELLA Group would use the Melbourne site and that ongoing provision for those with physical

disability would be provided at the Whitfield School which already has most of the major facilities to meet these special needs. However, the Powell site would be made more accessible for the disabled.

(8) Following further discussion, Members of the Advisory Board agreed to the proposal to change the age range of Green Park Community Primary School and closure of the maintained Nursery Unit on the former Melbourne site with effect from 19 October 2008 and that a public notice be issued in respect of the change of age range of Green Park Community Primary School.

4. Schools Applying for Foundation/Trust Status
(Item. 5)

(1) Dr Craig presented a report which informed Members of the Advisory Board on the current situation regarding Foundation/Trust proposals.

(2) Following discussions, the content of the report was noted.