

By: Rosalind Turner, Managing Director, Children, Families and Education

To: School Organisation Advisory Board – 17 March 2010

Subject: PROPOSAL TO RE-DESIGNATE FOXWOOD SCHOOL AS A SCHOOL FOR PROFOUND AND SEVERE LEARNING NEEDS AND HIGHVIEW SCHOOL AS A SCHOOL FOR COMPLEX LEARNING NEEDS; RELOCATE BOTH SCHOOLS ON TO AN ALTERNATIVE SITE; REMOVE THE BOARDING PROVISION AT FOXWOOD SCHOOL AND CHANGE THE AGE-RANGE OF HIGHVIEW SCHOOL TO INCLUDE POST-16.

Classification: Unrestricted

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Summary: (1) This report sets out the results of the public consultation on the above proposals.

(2) It seeks the views of the School Organisation Advisory Board on the issuing of a Public Notice.

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**This paper should be read in conjunction with the report to School Organisation Advisory Board of 4 November 2009.**

## **Introduction**

1. (1) The School Organisation Advisory Board, at its meeting on 4 November 2009, supported a recommendation to consult on the proposal to redesignate and relocate Foxwood and Highview Schools and to remove the boarding provision at Foxwood School.

(2) This report sets out the results of the public consultation exercise that took place between 7 December 2009 and 5 March 2010.

## **The Proposal**

2. (1) The original proposal was to redesignate Foxwood School as a school for profound and severe learning needs and Highview School as a school for complex learning needs (with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2010); change the age range of Highview School to include post 16 provision (from September 2011); relocate both schools onto the site of Brockhill Park Performing Arts College and remove the boarding provision at Foxwood School (with effect from June 2010).

(2) Following publication of the consultation document, further discussions became necessary with the Governing Body of Brockhill Park Performing Arts College regarding the precise siting of the schools. It was originally proposed to locate the special schools close to the college itself, but an alternative location on site, to the south, is now

proposed. Additionally, the Local Authority felt it appropriate to consult on an alternative site location for the two special schools. The second site proposed is land fronting Park Farm Road - part of the former Channel School site. The site adjoins the Folkestone Academy which is an all ability school for boys and girls aged 4-18 years. An Addendum to the Public Consultation Document was issued as a result of this.

(4) It has been necessary to move the position of Foxwood and Highview Schools in the sequence of school rebuilds within Wave 5 of BSF. We now anticipate the schools being completed by January 2015. This will alter the proposed relocation date.

## **The Consultation**

3. (1) A public consultation document was widely distributed. Hard copies were provided for all parents / carers, students, staff and governors of Foxwood School, Highview School, Brockhill Park Performing Arts College, St Augustine's Catholic Primary School and Folkestone All-Age Academy. Hard copies or links to the electronic copy on the County's website were distributed to all schools in the area, Local Members, Cabinet Members, SOAB Members, the local Member of Parliament, Shepway District Council, the Diocesan Boards, local libraries, Saltwood Parish Council, Folkestone Town Council, Saltwood Village Society, key colleagues in the Children, Families and Education Directorate and others.

(2) Approximately 4,200 copies of the public consultation document were circulated, which included a form for written responses. A copy is attached as Appendix 1.

(3) Approximately 4,200 copies of an Addendum to the consultation document were circulated, which included a form for written responses. A copy is attached as Appendix 2.

## **Responses to the Public Consultation**

### *Written Responses*

4. (1) 121 responses have been received, of which 57 are in favour, 50 are opposed and 14 are undecided.

(2) A summary of written responses is attached as Appendix 3.

### *Public Meeting Responses*

(3) A summary of the points, questions and comments made at the public consultation meeting is attached as Appendix 4.

## **Views of Local Members**

5. (1) Mr Christopher Capon, Member for Hythe is happy with the proposal to re-designate both schools, change the age range of Highview School and end the boarding provision at Foxwood School. With regard to the relocation he has no objection to the principle of either site being used for the new building. He is, however, very much

concerned with regard to traffic using the access to the Sandling Road, and feels that the use of access via St John's Road is totally unacceptable.

(2) Miss Susan Carey, Member for Elham Valley has concerns about traffic through the village at present and is as anxious as other local people that this problem is not worsened if the two special schools locate to a site on Brockhill Park."

(3) Mr Richard Pascoe, Member for Folkestone North East

### **Views of Local Member of Parliament**

6. No comments have been received.

### **Views of Shepway District Council**

7. No comments have been received.

### **Views of the Parish Council**

8. (1) Saltwood Parish Council has indicated that they have no views at this stage but will comment on the Planning Application if and when received.

(2) Folkestone Town Council has no strong feelings either way regarding the two site options.

### **Views of the Learning and Skills Council**

9. The LSC sees benefit in the proposal such as the potential for the opportunities to widen the curriculum offer and to promote inclusion.

### **Views of the Governing Body**

10. The Governing Body supports the re-designation of the schools, as this better describes the needs of pupils currently being admitted. The Governing Body also supports the removal of residential provision at Foxwood School, which has been without staff or pupils since December 2009. The addition of post 16 provision to Highview School is also a very positive step forward and is fully supported. The Governors recognise that the buildings of both schools are inadequate and welcome the opportunity to have fantastic new buildings to support their pupils' education. The Governors recognise that neither of the current school sites are suitable for the rebuilt schools, and therefore a new site is needed. Inevitably a new site would have advantages and disadvantages for pupils and neighbouring communities, but with good planning and positive working relationships these can all be overcome. The schools desperately need a new building and facilities. It would be the best thing in the world for the children.

### **Views of the Pupils**

11. These are awaited.

## **Views of the Partnership Board**

12. The joint Shepway Partnership Boards support the proposals to re-designate both schools, remove the boarding provision at Foxwood School and change the age range of Highview School to incorporate pupils aged 16-19 years. The Boards also support the proposal to relocate the schools to a single site.

## **Views of Highways**

13. Highways are not in a position to give a formal view until a Transport Assessment at Saltwood has been conducted and that is currently being undertaken. The original Transport Assessment was based on the previous site proposal.

## **Views of the Area Children's Services Officer**

14. The responses to the consultation need careful interpretation. A number of those indicating the proposals are not support are in fact not opposed to the re-designation aspects or even to the need for the schools to relocate somewhere, but are generally registering objection to a particular site option, usually to the Brockhill Park site. This assertion is supported by the written responses and the statements made at the public meeting. It would suggest that the majority of those responding are comfortable with the proposals, provided the right site for relocation is identified.

I recognise the genuine concerns of the residents of Saltwood village about existing traffic problems, and the worries that this situation would become untenable were the schools to relocate to Brockhill Park. I also appreciate that traffic outside of most schools causes inconvenience to local residents and this will be true of any site identified for the relocation of these two schools. While every effort will be made to militate against any negative impact, it is not possible with any development to state that we can address the issues to the extent that there will be no negative effects. A traffic impact assessment will be required as part of any planning application and this will inform any remedial action that could and should be taken.

Suggestions have been made regarding constructing alternative road access to the Brockhill Park site, and these are being followed up. However, the cost and environmental impact of such a proposal may render these unviable.

It is welcomed that the hard work undertaken by the Authority and the two schools to develop an innovative solution to meeting the needs of the District's pupils appears to have support.

In line with the commitment given throughout the special school review, parents have been assured that their children can continue in Foxwood and Highview Schools until they would naturally leave, or the parent and Authority agree that a different placement would better meet the child's needs.

A small number of parents have raised legitimate concerns about their children's safety, particularly from bullying, if the special schools share a site with a maintained school. Clearly this is an issue that the leaders of all of the schools on the site would take very seriously, and would continue to educate all children about respect for others. These

concerns need to be balanced against the positive benefits of co-location, and a recognition that isolating one community group from another may not help in the long term.

## **Resource Issues**

### *Capital & Revenue*

15. (1) The new building would be provided as part of the Building Schools for the Future programme.

(2) The schools will continue to receive their revenue budgets in line with the County's funding formula which is linked to the need type of the pupils. The provision of 6<sup>th</sup> form funding to Highview School will be negotiated as part of the implementation decisions.

### *Human*

(3) There were some redundancies on the closure of the residential provision at Foxwood School. The proposals in themselves do not have an impact on staffing at the schools. However, it is likely that staffing structures would be re-examined by the Governing Body to ensure these are appropriate for delivery in the new school buildings. It is possible that more economies of scale could be achieved through shared staffing. These would be decisions for the Governing Body.

## **Proposed Timetable**

16. If it is decided that the matter proceed, then the following timetable could apply:

|                                  |                  |
|----------------------------------|------------------|
| Issue Public Notice              | 15 April 2010    |
| Public Notice expires            | 27 May 2010      |
| Cabinet Member decision          | 11 June 2010     |
| Implementation:-                 |                  |
| Removal of residential provision | June 2010        |
| Redesignation                    | 1 September 2010 |
| Post 16 at Highview              | September 2011   |
| Relocation                       | January 2015     |

## **Recommendation**

17. The School Organisation Advisory Board is requested to: (a) recommend to the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education that a Public Notice be issued to redesignate Foxwood and Highview Schools; to remove the boarding provision at Foxwood School; and to change the age range of Highview School to include post-16 provision; and (b) recommend to the Cabinet Member which site should be included in the Public Notice for the schools to relocate onto.

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The Local Members are Richard Pascoe, Christopher Capon and Susan Carey

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*Background Documents:*

None

*Previous Committee Reports:*