By: Ian Craig, Managing Director, Children, Families and Education Director - Operations

To: Mark Dance, Cabinet Member for Operations, Resources and Skills, CFE

Subject: A NEW MAINTAINED SECONDARY SCHOOL TO REPLACE THE HERESON (COMMUNITY) SCHOOL AND ELLINGTON (COMMUNITY) SCHOOL FOR GIRLS - RAMSGATE

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report sets out the results of the public consultation on the proposal received from The Local Learning Trust to establish a new Trust School on the Ellington site.

Introduction

1. (1) At its meeting on 14 June 2007 the School Organisation Advisory Board supported a proposal to undertake a public consultation on the possible amalgamation of The Hereson School and Ellington School for Girls. Subsequently the decision was taken, in consultation with the Cabinet Member, to go to public consultation on this issue.

(2) The results of the public consultation (undertaken in November and December 2007) were reported back to the School Organisation Advisory Board at its meeting on 10 January 2008. Following discussion, the School Organisation Advisory Board recommended issuing of a public notice to close both schools and establish a new 4 FE High school on the Ellington site by means of a competition. On 5 February 2008 the Cabinet Member for Operations, Resources and Skills CFE, agreed for the issuing of a public notice on the closure of The Hereson School and Ellington School for Girls and the issuing of the competition notice for a new school.

(3) The first competition notice (invitation to bid) was published on 2 May 2008. This notice ran for a period of 4 months and expired on 2 September 2008. The Department for Children, Schools and Families appointed consultants, the Office of Public Management (OPM) to market the competition to potential proposers. A seminar was held on 6 May 2008, arranged by OPM, where the Local Authority outlined its specification for the new school.

(4) One proposal was received in response to the competition. The proposal received from The Local Learning Trust is to establish a new Trust school.

(5) A second competition notice was published on 17 September 2008. Part 1 of the notice summarised the bid received from The Local Learning Trust and explained how people could send in their objections and comments on the proposal to the Area Children's Services Officer. Part 2 of the second competition notice was the linked proposed closure of both The Hereson School and Ellington School for Girls, dependent upon a Local Authority decision to establish the new school. Part 2 of the notice explained how people could object or make comments on the proposed closures.

(6) As the Local Authority has not taken part in the competition by submitting a proposal for a community school and does not have an interest in the proposal received from The Local Learning Trust, the Local Authority will be the decision maker. The Local Authority can approve (either conditionally or unconditionally), reject or request a modification to the proposal.

(7) Concurrent with the decision about this proposal for the new school will be the decision on the proposed closures of The Hereson School and Ellington School for Girls. The existing schools would only close if this proposal for the new school is agreed.

(8) A decision to close the schools would trigger a 4 week statutory appeal period starting from the date of the letter notifying the statutory bodies of the decision to implement. A copy of the decision letter would also be sent for information to those who made representations to the public notice.

Appeals against a decision to close Hereson and Ellington can only be made by the following statutory bodies:

- The local Church of England or Roman Catholic Diocese
- The Learning and Skills Council

If a statutory appeal is received the decision must be forwarded to the Schools Adjudicator for determination.

(9) If a statutory appeal is not lodged, the Cabinet Member decision can be implemented.

(10) If the proposal for the new school is agreed by the Cabinet Member, the decision would also be conditional upon the Local Learning Trust being formally established as a legal entity and a foundation being established for the new school. Other statutory compliance criteria would need to be met in full.

Proposal

2. (1) In response to the first competition notice, one proposal was received from the Local learning Trust to establish and run the new school. The Trust members will be drawn from the governing bodies of the existing Ellington and Hereson schools, Thanet College, St Lawrence College and The School of Emotional Literacy. A copy of the proposal is attached as appendix 2.

(2) The promoters of the proposal have confirmed that they would deliver a school which conforms to the Local Authority specification. This is supported by their detailed submission. At the time of publication of this report, the Local Learning Trust has not yet been formally established as a legal entity. However, the partners in the prospective Trust are currently pursuing trust status and have assured the Local Authority that the Trust will be in place prior to September 2009.

(3) This paper seeks the views of the School Organisation Advisory Board on the Local Learning Trust proposal.

Responses to the Public Consultation

Written Responses

3. (1) A total of 7 written responses were received. 5 of the responses objected to the closure of both schools, rather than to the proposal for the new school, and should therefore be considered as representations for Part 2 of the competition notice.

(2) A summary of written responses is attached as appendix 4.

Public Meeting Responses

(3) A summary of points, questions and comments made at the public consultation meeting is attached as appendix 5.

Views of the Local Members

4. (1) The Local members are Mrs E Green, Mr A Poole, Mr W Hayton and Mr J Fullarton.

(2) Mr Hayton fully supports the amalgamation of the two schools and the bid received from the Local Learning Trust in response to the competition notice. Mr Hayton has been a governor of The Hereson School for 15 years and understands that it is not viable to continue to operate both schools separately. Mr Hayton recognises that both schools offer a good education to the pupils that they serve and he looks forward to the two schools coming together with continued opportunities for single sex teaching.

(3) Mr Poole, having read the Ellington/Hereson school competition bid document, believes that this is now the best way forward for the amalgamated school.
"I am pleased to note that the Trust will be 'maintaining a preponderance of single gender teaching within an overall mixed gender framework'. I have every confidence that The Local Learning Trust will provide a high quality education for all the students".

Views of the Local Member of Parliament

5. Dr S Ladyman, the local Member of Parliament, was invited to comment on the proposal submitted by The Local Learning Trust but has not submitted a formal response.

Views of Governing Body

6. The governing bodies of both Hereson and Ellington Schools support the proposal and have actively and significantly contributed to its development.

Views of the Learning and Skills Council

7. The LSC has confirmed that it has no objections to the proposal to establish a new maintained secondary school to replace Ellington School for Girls and The Hereson School
"The proposal seems to be a sensible development in relation to Key Stage 4 provision in the area; and it complements associated BSF-linked developments as well as Thanet College's relocation plans. We note that the proposal does not involve any reorganisation of school sixth form provision; and that Thanet College is a partner in the Trust bid."

Views of the Thanet Partnership Board

8. The two Thanet Partnership Boards were supportive of the proposal, recognising the local community focus, the commitment to preserving strong elements of single-sex provision and the commitment to building on the strengths of the two existing schools.

Resource Implications

9 (1) In the SOAB paper of 14 June 2007 it was reported that adaptations to the

new buildings would be needed to cater for a mixed intake and that a feasibility study was being undertaken. The initial assessment is that approximately £200K would be needed to support adaptations to the site from 2009 so that it can cater for boys and girls. This work would be completed prior to September 2009.

(2) As part of the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme, a submission is being made to secure significant additional funding which would be used to further enhance the excellent facilities already available on the Ellington site. Allocation of this funding is subject to ongoing discussion and negotiation and approval by Partnership for Schools and the DCSF.

Views of the School organization Advisory Board

10. At its meeting on 10 December 2008 the Schools Organisation Advisory Board unanimously supported the proposal received from The Local Learning Trust for a new Trust School to replace The Hereson School and Ellington School for Girls to be established on the Ellington site from September 2009.

Recommendations

11. The Cabinet Member is requested TO AGREE:

To the proposal received from The Local Learning Trust for a new Trust School to replace The Hereson School and Ellington School for Girls to be established on the Ellington site from September 2009, retaining use of the Hereson site until September 2010. The approval is conditional upon the establishment of the Trust as a legal entity by 31 August 2009 and the expiry of the representation period of one month in relation to the closure notices for the two existing schools

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The Local Members are Mrs E Green, Mr A Poole, Mr W Hayton and Mr J Fullarton.

Background Documents:
None

Previous Committee Reports:
Report to School Organisation Advisory Board 14 June 2007
Report to School Organisation Advisory Board 10 January 2008