

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

SCHOOL ORGANISATION ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES of a meeting of the School Organisation Advisory Board held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 10 December 2008.

PRESENT: Mrs V J Dagger (Chairman), Mr A D Crowther, Mr M J Northey, Mr A R Poole and Mr M J Vye

ALSO PRESENT: Mr M C Dance and Genders

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D Adams (Area Education Officer Ashford & Shepway), Mr M Doole (Area Education Officer Thanet & Dover), and Mr G Mills, Democratic Services.

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Minutes - 5 November 2008
(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2008 be agreed as a true record.

2. A New Maintained Secondary School to replace the Hereson (Community) School and Ellington (Community) School for Girls - Ramsgate
(Item 4 – Report by Director – Operations)

(1) This report set 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. An amendment to paragraph 8 of the report was circulated at the meeting confirming the views of the Learning and Skills Council.

(2) Mr Poole said that Hereson and Ellington were two very good schools and he believed the proposals would secure their long term viability. He welcomed the intention of the Trust to continue to maximise the opportunities for single-sex teaching and said Dr Ladyman, the local Member of Parliament, who supported the proposals but had expressed disappointment that the two local grammar schools were not included as part of these proposals. Mr Poole also said that a public right of way adjacent to the site was to be upgraded as part of the terms of a planning application. This upgrading of the right of way appeared to have been delayed for some reason and he wished to see that proposal progressed.

(3) Mr Doole said the promoter of the proposal had confirmed that they would deliver a school which conformed to the County Council's specification and this was supported in their detailed submission. The partners of the prospective Trust are currently pursuing trust status and they have assured the Council that the Trust would be in place prior to September 2009. Also, measures would be put in place

to ensure that students who attended the new school were not disadvantaged in terms of accessing post-16 provision. He also said that because of the timescales the local community had had an extended opportunity to comment on these proposals and he believed that the low level of responses to the consultation was in part as a result of the fact that there was wide ranging support for the proposals within the community and this was reflected particularly in the support of the two governing bodies.

(4) Following further discussion the Advisory Board agreed to the proposal received from the Local Learning Trust, for the establishment of a new trust school to replace the Hereson (Community) School and Ellington (Community) School for Girls, Ramsgate to be established on the Ellington site from September 2009.

3. Repton Park (also known as Templar Barracks), Ashford - Proposed New Primary School Provision - Outcome of Consultation on Proposal *(Item 5 – Report by Director – Operations)*

(1) In January of this year a consultation exercise was undertaken on the need for a new maintained primary school to meet the demand for places arising from new housing at Repton Park, Templar Way, Ashford. The outcome of the consultation was reported to the Advisory Board at its meeting in March of this year with the local community fully supporting the provision of a new primary school. In accordance with the legalisation, a competition notice was then issued inviting potential promoters to submit proposals for the new school. At the close of the competition period, one proposal had been received from “The Homewood Trust” which proposed to establish a new foundation school which would conform to the County Council’s specification and the Trust’s submission supported this assurance. The report highlighted the fact that “The Homewood Trust” had not yet been formed but it was the understanding of officers that the Homewood School was currently pursuing Trust status and the formation of the Trust was therefore imminent. Mr Adams also briefed the Advisory Board on the outcome of the public consultation exercise and confirmed that Mrs Elizabeth Tweed, who was unable to attend the meeting of the Advisory Board had confirmed her support for the proposal.

(2) During the course of discussion Members raised a number of issues, particularly in relation to the formation of the Trust and the legal and procedural framework around that. Mr Adams said that the Government’s guidance regarding promoting schools had changed during the course of the competition process. Government guidance was now that a governing body could not promote proposals of this nature and that could only be done by named individuals from the Governing Body. Those individuals would therefore form the Trust with other partners then being added. The Trust would be established on the basis of it being a charitable company limited by guarantee and would be formed using a template provided by the DCSF.

(3) Mr Adams said that whilst he appreciated the concerns, Members had expressed around the formation of the Trust he believed the County Council would be able to work successfully with the promoters and said officers would continue to work with the school and with the family of schools within the area in order to

ensure pupils had the best educational opportunities. He said that the County Council was legally obliged to run a competition process and the stage had now been reached when that needed to be determined. If the Cabinet Member did not make a decision then the matter would have to be referred to the School's Adjudicator. If the proposal was rejected by the Cabinet Member then the County Council would have to re-run the competition process. Mr Adams re-affirmed his view that he believed the County Council could work well with the promoters to establish a successful trust which reflected the needs of pupils and the wider community.

(4) In response to a question regarding the consultation process, Mr Adams said that had been undertaken widely and had included the district and parish council, residents of the Repton Park estate and nearby schools. Also nationally appointed consultants would be undertaking a marketing exercise, part of which would include placing adverts in the local media.

(5) At the conclusion of the discussion one Member of the Board said that they believed the proposal should be deferred until the Trust had been formally established. Another Member said they believed the proposal should not go ahead at present and the competition process should be re-run. Two other Members said that they generally supported the proposal but had reservations around the formation of the Trust. Another Member said the proposal should go forward as presented to Members in the report.

(6) Mrs Dagger confirmed that the final decision on this matter would be taken by Mr Dance, the Cabinet Member for Operations, Resources and Skills. Mr Dance said he very much understood and appreciated the views which had been put forward during the course of discussion.

4. Schools Applying for Foundation/Trust Status *(Item 6 - Report by Director – Operations)*

Members noted this report which informed the Advisory Board of the current situation regarding the Foundation/Trust proposals.