

By: Ian Craig Director - Operations

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

Subject: PROPOSAL TO CLOSE TUNBRIDGE WELLS (COMMUNITY) HIGH SCHOOL (TWHS), IN ORDER THAT IT MAY BE REPLACED WITH A GOVERNMENT FUNDED ACADEMY.

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report presents the results of a public consultation exercise undertaken on the proposal to close Tunbridge Wells High School in order that it may be replaced with a government funded Academy. It seeks the views of the School Organisation Advisory Board on the issuing of a Public Notice to close the school.

Introduction

1. [1] The School Organisation Advisory Board, at its meeting on 5 November 2008, supported a recommendation to consult on the proposal to close Tunbridge Wells (Community) High School (TWHS), in order that it may be replaced with a government funded Academy.

[2] This report sets out the results of the public consultation exercise that took place between 10 November 2008 and 19 December 2008.

Academy Proposal

2. (1) The Tunbridge Wells Academy will be established following the necessary closure of Tunbridge Wells High School. The lead sponsor for The Tunbridge Wells Academy will be the Skinners Voluntary Aided Grammar School, while co-sponsors will be West Kent College and Kent County Council (KCC).

(2) The Tunbridge Wells Academy will be an 11-18 co-educational school for all abilities. It will have 6 forms of entry and admit up to 180 students into Year 7. The number of post 16 places available will be 250, taking the roll to a possible 1,150 by 2015. It is proposed that the Tunbridge Wells Academy will open in September 2009, in existing buildings and move into new purpose built premises from September 2012.

(3) Sponsors intend that the Academy will be a place in which all learners have a sense of identity, worth, aspiration and belonging, so that they can develop to the extent of their capabilities and achieve the 5 ECM outcomes for children and young people. The Academy will adopt and adapt the key transferable features that constitute a stable, supportive home life and a healthy, successful working life. The Academy should resemble a village rather than a school.

[4] Collectively, the Sponsors are able to draw upon considerable skills and expertise in the fields of learning, school and college management and the new learning technologies. The Academy will bring about a culture change and raise the attainment, ambition, thrill of creativity and aspiration for all the young people in its care, building on everything that makes Tunbridge Wells High School a high achieving school.

Responses to the Public Consultation

Written Responses

3. (1) A summary of written responses is attached as Appendix 5.

(2) As of 12 December 2008, 25 responses have been received, of which 24 are in favour, and 1 is opposed. As the consultation closes a few days after the deadline for reports for this meeting, a final version of this Appendix will be presented at the meeting.

Public Meeting

(3) A summary of the main issues raised and responses given, at the Public Meeting, on 4 December 2008, is attached as Appendix 6.

Views of Local Member

4. (1) The Local Member is Kevin Lynes. He fully supports the proposal and was pleased, at the Public Meeting, to provide a ringing endorsement of what he believes an Academy will provide, not only to the Sherwood Park community, to which he has a particular commitment, but to social cohesion across Tunbridge Wells as a whole.

Views of Local Member of Parliament

5. The views of Greg Clark MP have not yet been received.

Views of the Governing Body

6. (1) The Governing Body of Tunbridge Wells High School is in support of proposals for the establishment of an Academy.

Views of the Partnership Board

7. (1) The Tunbridge Wells Local Children's Services Partnership Board welcomes this proposal and is fully supportive of all that it sets out to achieve for Tunbridge Wells as a whole.

Resource Implications

Capital

8. (1) The Academy build will be Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) funded. Should any part of the current Tunbridge Wells High School site be disposed of, however, the DCSF would expect a contribution to the capital costs of the Academy and this would be negotiated at a corporate level within the context of Kent's Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme.

Revenue

(2) The Academy will receive its revenue funding directly from the DCSF each year. It will be funded at a rate equivalent to other Kent specialist schools, plus it will have a proportional share of central Local Authority costs.

Human

(3) Consultation would take place in accordance with the requirements of TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings, Protection of Employment, Regulations 1981). Costs of new staffing (TUPE applies to current staff) and costs associated with TUPE, including any valid redundancies of staff that cannot transfer or be deployed elsewhere in Kent schools, would be negotiated with the DCSF on a case by case basis, but are usually borne by the DCSF.

Views of the School organisation Advisory Board

9. (1) At its meeting on 8 January 2009 the Schools Organisation Advisory Board unanimously supported the proposal to issue a public notice to close Tunbridge Wells High School in order that it may be replaced with a government funded Academy.

Recommendation

10. The cabinet member is asked to agree to the issuing of a Public Notice to close Tunbridge Wells High School in order for it to be replaced with a government funded Academy.

Name Chris Lay
Title Area Children's Services Officer
Area Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells
Tel: 01732 525107

The Local Member is Mr Kevin Lynes

Background Documents:

Academy Newsletter available on the PKF website www.proposedtunbridgewellsacademy.org

Previous Committee Reports:

School Organisation Advisory Board – 8 January 2009

School Organisation Advisory Board – 5 November 2008