

**From:** Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director for Education, Learning and Skills  
**To:** Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform  
**Subject:** Proposal to merge and relocate Foxwood and Highview Schools  
**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Future Pathway of Paper:** Cabinet Member decision

**Electoral Divisions:** Hythe (Foxwood) and Folkestone North East (Highview)

**Summary:** This report asks the Cabinet Member to take the decision to merge Foxwood and Highview Schools, by closing Foxwood school and relocating Highview School to form a “new” school, in addition to increasing the designated number of Highview School to 336 from 282.

*Recommendation(s):*

**The Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform is requested to take the decision to:**

Issue a public notice to merge Foxwood and Highview Schools by

- (i) closing Foxwood School
- (ii) relocating Highview School and increasing the designated number from 282 to 336 for September 2015

And, subject to the closure of the Public Notice a further Cabinet Member decision will be taken to:

- (i) close Foxwood School
- (ii) relocate Highview School and increase the designated number from 282 to 336 for September 2015.
- (iii) Allocate £16.8m from the Education, Learning and Skills Capital Budget in order that the proposal may go ahead.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This proposal forms part of the Special School Review whereby the Local Authority is seeking to deliver on its commitment to rebuild or refurbish all of its special school buildings.
- 1.2 Foxwood School currently provides for pupils with Profound and Severe Needs and Highview School provides for pupils with Complex Needs. The schools are federated and work closely together under the leadership of one executive headteacher and leadership team. This proposal would formalise the current working arrangements to create one school providing for pupils with Profound, Severe and Complex Needs which will bring Shepway into line with the rest of the County.

- 1.3 It is proposed to merge the two schools to form a “new” school with a designated number of 336 (an increase of 54 places) for September 2015. The “new” school will relocate to a new, purpose-built building in Park Farm Road, Folkestone in January 2016.
- 1.4 The intention is that the schools merge, taking the best from each to create a stronger school. Legally, the process needed to merge these schools is to close one school and redesignate the other to provide the 336 places. As Highview School is adjacent to the new site and is the larger school, we propose to close Foxwood School and redesignate, relocate and rename Highview School to create the new provision. Highview is a good school.
- 1.5 The Education Cabinet Committee was informed of the public consultation on this proposal by email on 2 December 2013.
- 1.6 This report sets out the results of the public consultation, which took place between 3 December 2013 and 17 January 2014. A public meeting was held on 10 December 2013.
- 1.7 This decision is being taken in accordance with process set out in Appendix 4 Part 7 paragraph 7.18 of the Constitution as it has not been possible for this decision to be discussed by the Cabinet Committee prior to it being taken by the Cabinet Member due to the timescales of the project and the schedule of Cabinet Committees.

## **2. Financial Implications**

- 2.1
  - a. Capital: The proposal requires the provision of a new purpose built building on KCC owned land at Park Farm Road, Folkestone. A feasibility study has been completed. The total cost is estimated to be in the region of £16.8m. Appropriate funding has been identified as part of the Medium Term Capital Programme, which includes funding from the Targeted Basic Need allocation from the DfE made in August 2013. The costs of the project are estimates and these may increase as the project is developed. If the cost of the project is greater than 10% the Cabinet Member will be required to take a further decision to allocate the additional funding.
  - b. Revenue: The schools delegated budget will be allocated on the combined numbers of the two predecessor schools.

The Place Plus funding rate will include an element to reflect a lump sum. The Place Plus funding rate for the amalgamated school will only include one lump sum element and will result in a reduction of £360,148 over time when compared to the total of the two predecessor school budgets.

Full protection will be provided on the lump sum elements for the period from the point of amalgamation to the end of the financial year and at 85% of the combined lump sums for the full financial year following the year in which the schools amalgamated.
  - c. Human: The school will appoint additional teachers and support staff as required.

## **3. Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework**

- 3.1 These proposals will help to secure our ambition “to ensure every child will go to a good school where they make good progress and can have fair access to school places” as set out in ‘Bold Steps for Kent’.

- 3.2 The 'Strategy for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and who are Disabled' (SEND Strategy) "has a priority to create at least 275 additional places for ASD and BESN" and aims to "increase the number of places in special schools from 3,491 to 3,700" (209 places).

#### **4. Consultation Outcomes**

- 4.1 A total of 24 written responses were received: 18 respondents supported the proposal, 3 objected and 3 submitted mixed responses.
- 4.2 A summary of the comments received is provided at Appendix 1.
- 4.3 A summary of the views and comments given at the public consultation meeting is attached at Appendix 2.

#### **5. Views**

- 5.1 The views of the Local Members: Both local Members, Mr Martin Whybrow (Foxwood School) and Mr Frank McKenna (Highview School) attended the public meeting.

Mr Whybrow was reassured to hear the positive comments and the enthusiasm staff showed for the project. This, coupled with the knowledge that the facilities proposed for the "new" school being considerably better than the current schools confirms Mr Whybrow's support for the proposal.

Mr McKenna had a tour of Foxwood School before the public meeting and could see that it was not fit for the needs of its pupils. It is great news to hear that KCC and the governing body are proposing to merge the schools and build a new school in Park Farm. Mr McKenna believes that the teaching staff will have an input to the design of the new school which will be specifically designed to meet the needs of the pupils and he will be looking forward to seeing the plans and design of the new school.

- 5.2. The view of the Headteacher and Governing Body:  
The Executive Headteacher and the Federation Governing Body are in full support of the proposal.

The Federation Governing Body have been working alongside the Local Authority for many years to develop a building scheme that allows our students to benefit from the high quality education both schools provide, but within new, purpose built accommodation. This scheme represents the culmination of that work and as such, the Governing Body are fully in support of the proposal. The development of a single school for PSCN youngsters allows not only the economies of scale present in a single building but also provides the best platform to develop cohesive education and effective teaching, learning, curriculum and behaviour strategies.

In addition it allows us to develop the current high quality outreach, guidance and support we offer to the schools and young people of Shepway as, by working in partnership with health and social care colleagues, we will be able to develop the services currently housed in the 'Children's Centre'. This will create a Multi-Agency Service Hub approach that is co-located with the Federation Specialist Teaching and Learning Service, giving a truly integrated model of support for the

young people of Shepway. This is an exciting and innovative new development of which Shepway can be proud

We look forward to working with the Local Authority on this exciting project.

5.3. The view of the Area Education Officer:

The Area Education Officer for South Kent fully supports this proposal and believes that this is by far the best option for the children. The staff work closely together now and share good practice, but being located in one school will further improve their skills.

Currently, Foxwood School is sited on a hillside with a range of buildings of varying quality. The site is not appropriate given the needs of the pupils. Highview School's site has many different levels due to the sloping nature of the site. Both sites are no longer able to meet the numbers or needs of their respective pupil cohorts.

Merging the two schools into one "new" school in a purpose built building specifically designed for the needs of the pupils will ensure that the pupils will have the best start to their educational journey.

## 6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.3 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as part of the consultation. To date no comments have been received and no changes are required to the Equality Impact Assessment.

## 7. Delegation to Officers

- 7.1 The Officer Scheme of Delegation (under Appendix 2 part 4 of the Council's Constitution) provides a clear and appropriate link between this decision and the actions needed to implement it. It is envisaged, if the proposal goes ahead, that the Director of Property & Infrastructure Support will sign contracts on behalf of the County Council.

## 8. Conclusions

- 8.1 This proposal will not only provide excellent accommodation for pupils at both schools but will also assist in providing some 25% of the additional numbers needed in Kent's special schools as set out in the SEND Strategy.

## 9. Recommendation(s)

**Recommendation(s): The Cabinet Member for Education and Helth Reform is asked to agree to:**

Issue a public notice to merge Foxwood and Highview Schools by

- (iii) closing Foxwood School
- (iv) relocating Highview School and increasing the designated number from .282 to 336 for September 2015

And, subject to the closure of the Public Notice a further Cabinet Member decision will be taken to:

- (iv) close Foxwood School
- (v) relocate Highview School and increase the designated number from .282 to

336 for September 2015

- (i) Allocate £16.8m from the Education, Learning and Skills Capital Budget in order that the proposal may go ahead.

## 10. Background Documents

10.1 Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework

[http://www.kent.gov.uk/your\\_council/priorities\\_policies\\_and\\_plans/priorities\\_and\\_plans/old\\_steps\\_for\\_kent.aspx](http://www.kent.gov.uk/your_council/priorities_policies_and_plans/priorities_and_plans/old_steps_for_kent.aspx)

10.2 Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2013-18

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s43253/ItemD3KentEducationCommissioningPlan20132018final.pdf>

10.3 Draft SEND Strategy dated April 2013 -

<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/SENstrategy/consultationHome>

10.5 Consultation Document and Equalities Impact Assessment

<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/FoxwoodandHighview/consultationHome>

## 11. Contact details

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## Proposal to merge and relocate Foxwood and Highview Schools

### Summary of Written Responses

Printed Consultation Documents distributed: 700  
 Consultation responses received: 24

	In Favour	Opposed	Mixed response	Totals
Governors	2			2
Staff	2	2		4
Parents	12	1	3	16
Pupils				
Residents	1			1
Other	1			1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>24</b>

#### Comments in favour of the proposal:

- Should be brilliant.
- A fantastic opportunity to create a first class provision for our young people.
- I am in agreement with the proposal but have concerns about speed bumps and congestion on Park Farm Road.
- I really welcome having an accessible site with facilities such as a hydrotherapy pool. I am very excited about the new provision. (2)
- It will be a good thing to have one school that can accommodate more children.
- I am in favour of the proposal as the current Foxwood site is very difficult to negotiate for those with walking difficulties or wheelchair users. The sharing of expertise within the two schools is already starting to pay dividends, but the distance between and within sites is very restrictive.
- We are one school so we need to be on one site.
- With both schools together in one building you will have the best special needs school in Kent.
- Our house overlooks the old Park Farm PS site which now stands empty and vandalised. We welcome the area being used for a wholesome educational purpose, such as being proposed.
- In favour of the proposal. Would like to see bright lighting in cloakrooms, plenty of cloakroom space and adequate moving around space in communal areas such as reception, corridors, hall etc.
- In favour of a new school with the facilities that would benefit the pupils. I do have concerns – transport arrangements for the children and the location, which is in the middle of a busy industrial estate.
- I agree with the proposal but would like to add that I hope consideration is given to provision for sufficient outside space to exercise, play sport etc. The allocated space seems small.

#### Comments against the proposal:

- I currently transport my child to school and do not want to drive into Folkestone each day. Park Farm Road is busy and noisy with a large amount of traffic already.
- I think Foxwood should stay as it is.
- The new site will not have enough parking or recreational space and is in a busy area with heavy traffic already. Will the infrastructure be able to take the volume of traffic?
- The schools need to be separate as they are for different special educational needs.

**Proposal to merge and relocate Foxwood and Highview Schools  
Public Consultation Meeting – 10 December 2013**

Leyland Ridings	KCC Member and Chair
David Adams	Area Education Officer (South Kent)
Neil Birch	Executive Head Teacher
Richard Hewson	Chair of Governors
Julie Hawkins	PA to the AEO and note taker
Jill Clinton	School Organisation Officer and roving mic

Also present: Mr Bob Neaves, Mr Frank McKenna and Mr Martin Whybrow (Local Members) and Diana Robinson (Interim Principal Adviser – Special and PRU)

Number attending: 28

Leyland Ridings (Chair) introduced himself and explained the process following the public consultation. As Chairman of the Education Cabinet Committee he would consider the proposal and responses and make his recommendation to the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform. He then handed over to DA to explain the proposal in further detail.

DA: Kent County Council and the Governing Body of Foxwood and Highview Schools are proposing to merge the two schools to provide a school for pupils with Profound, Severe and Complex Needs (PSCN) in a new building in Park Farm Road, Folkestone. The school will provide for up to 336 pupils.

KCC was committed to providing high quality, fit for purpose learning environments for its pupils, and particularly for those who attend special schools. This proposal will bring Shepway into line with the rest of the County. Various projects had been investigated for Foxwood and Highview and both KCC and the Board of Governors believe that a new school is the answer. Need types change and become more complex and old buildings simply do not lend themselves to the constant modernisation and change that is required. Both schools have been on a journey over the last decade. They federated in 2008 under one Governing Body and re-designated in 2010. Now is the time for the schools to become one. As regards the buildings, design is in the very early stages, architects have been appointed and Neil Birch (NB) and the Governing Body have had many discussions with them to impart their vision of how the buildings should operate. The school will offer up to 336 places for pupils aged 3-19. The new build will provide the modern facilities that pupils require, hydrotherapy pool, physiotherapy and sensory rooms and the present 'village unit model' will continue. There will be a greater range of staff skills and the increased budget and shared resources will allow more of the funding to be focused on opportunities for pupils. Discussions are taking place on relocating the Multi Agency Service Hub (MASH) and incorporating the Smile Centre. Every child who had a place at Highview or Foxwood would be offered a place at the new school. Transport arrangements for some pupils may need to change but this will be discussed on an individual basis with parents/carers to ensure these changes are made as smoothly as possible.

NB: Discussions have been taking place since 2003. The two schools federated in 2008 and from that point on they have worked together. The Federation leadership team is responsible for both schools which brings consistency and continuity. Much of the

infrastructure is in place. Our staff, which number approximately 220 have joint meetings, share development plans, good practice and liaise between pupil groups. The Federation site manager works across the two schools. Both schools are working towards and planning for the January 2016 deadline. There have been numerous meetings with the architects to discuss accommodation schedules and to share the vision that both schools are working to. We want to develop a design, start with a new name and a new identity. We want to make this a new future for both schools. We are aiming to be an outstanding school that is a centre of excellence of which the pupils, parents, staff and County can be proud. We are not far off; the building blocks are in place.

RH: NB has given you the detail of this exciting journey. We will not compromise our children and we believe at last that they will have what they deserve. The Board of Governors will continue to work with KCC to see this project to fruition.

Question	Response
Member: How will this project be funded? Will it come from the sale of one site? Has this been agreed?	<p>DA: The funding is a mixture of monies received from KCC for rebuilding special schools, successful Targeted Basic Need funding (specific for this project) and Basic Need funding. Part will come from capital receipts, Foxwood and Highview sites are part of the funding package. We do not have to wait for the capital receipts before moving forward.</p> <p>LR: Funding has now been committed by County Council.</p>
Member: A statement really.	This is a fantastic project and the pupils do not realise how much their lives will change. A great idea.
Parent/Carer/Governor	I am so excited by the whole process. I have 2 children who are wheelchair users and this project is so exciting.
Member: With regard to pupil numbers. I note the new designated number will be 336. There is new housing development and the population is growing. Is 336 realistic and does this allow room for expansion?	<p>DA: There has been a lot of debate. The new school with its designation at 336 is as big as we would want it to be. Dover does not have a PSCN school, there are two units. Ashford's provision is smaller and we know some youngsters come down from Ashford. KCC would rather address the provision in Dover and Ashford.</p> <p>NB: There is a point where a school ceases to be special as it grows larger and larger. Potential growth is a good point but this will be addressed by other means.</p>

There were no further questions. LR asked if the consensus of opinion was that this project was heading in the right direct. All agreed.

DA – Reminded reiterated that comments should be received by 17 January 2014 and thanked everyone for attending the meeting.