

From: Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director for Education, Learning and Skills

To: Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform

Subject: Proposal to expand Portal House School

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: Education Cabinet Committee – 14 March 2014

Future Pathway of Paper: Cabinet Member decision

Electoral Division: Dover North

Summary: This report sets out the results of the consultation on the proposal to expand Portal House School for September 2015 by 20 places.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform is asked to consider the responses to the consultation and decide whether to proceed with the proposal and

- (i) Issue a public notice to expand Portal House School by 20 places as part of the project to rebuild the school on its current location by 1 September 2015.

And, subject to no objections being received to the public notice:

- (ii) Expand the school by 20 places as part of the project to rebuild the school on its current location by 1 September 2015.
- (iii) Allocate £8.5m from the Education, Learning and Skills Capital Budget
- (iv) Authorise the Director of Property and Infrastructure Support in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance to enter into any necessary contracts/agreements on behalf of the County Council
- (v) Authorise the Director of Property and Infrastructure Support to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts

Should objections, not already considered by the Cabinet Member when taking this decision, be received during the notice period a separate decision will be required in order to continue the proposal and allow for proper consideration of the points raised.

1. Introduction

1.1 Kent's Strategy for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) aims to address, amongst other things, gaps in provision. Therefore, the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent (2013-18) set out the intention to commission 121 additional places for pupils with BESN.

2. Proposal

2.1 It is proposed to expand Portal House School by 20 places, taking the number of places from 60 to 80. The additional places will be provided as part of the project to rebuild Portal House School on its current site.

- 2.2 The proposal will provide additional places for children with Behavioural, Emotional and Social Needs in Dover.
- 2.3 On 14 March 2014 Education Cabinet Committee recommended to the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform that a consultation take place on the proposal to expand Portal House School.
- 2.4 This report sets out the results of the consultation, which took place between 22 September and 17 October 2014.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1
 - a. Capital – The capital cost of the rebuild of the school is £8.5m.
 - b. Revenue - The school will receive increased funding through the Delegated Budget. Special schools are funded using the DfE Place Plus funding methodology for High Needs Pupils. However, for September 2015 the Local Authority has agreed to purchase 55 places at Portal House School in order to limit the physical capacity of the school whilst the building project takes place. The school will therefore be unable to admit additional pupils during the academic year 2015/16. This will address the challenge of keeping the school open during the building work. Following completion of the project the Local Authority will purchase 80 places at the school.
 - c. Human – Additional staff will be appointed as numbers increase gradually at the school over the next few years.

4. Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework

- 4.1 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’.
- 4.2 The Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2013-18 identified the need for 121 additional places for pupils with BESN.

5. Consultation Outcomes

- 5.1 A total of 20 written responses were received, 16 of whom supported the proposal and four were opposed.
- 5.2 A summary of the comments received is provided at Appendix 1.
- 5.3 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.

6. Views

- 6.1 The view of the Local Member:
Mr Manion understands that whilst the principle of development is accepted there is concern over the proposed design. He himself does not have a problem with flat roofs but there is concern over how well constructed this one will be and how it will fit in with the existing street scene.

He still has concerns over parking arrangements during the construction phase as he understands that one proposal is to take all the places in the village car park and he could not support such an arrangement.

- 6.2 The view of the Headteacher and Governing Body:
The Headteacher and Governing Body of Portal House School are in full support of the proposal.

6.3. The view of the Area Education Officer:

Portal House is a popular school and the current building cannot accommodate more pupils than are presently on roll. Additional BESN places are needed in South Kent and we are taking the opportunity to provide some of these additional places in Dover as part of the project to rebuild Portal House School. I am confident that the Senior Leadership Team at Portal House School will work to ensure that existing children and the additional students who will attend Portal House in the future will settle into the new building easily and quickly.

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. For information 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 expansion will provide 20 additional BESN places in South Kent.

9. Recommendation(s)

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform is asked to consider the responses to the consultation and decide whether to proceed with the proposal and

- (i) Issue a public notice to expand Portal House School by 20 places as part of the project to rebuild the school on its current location by 1 September 2015.

And, subject to no objections being received to the public notice:

- (ii) Expand the school by 20 places as part of the project to rebuild the school on its current location by 1 September 2015.
- (iii) Allocate £8.5m from the Education, Learning and Skills Capital Budget
- (iv) Authorise the Director of Property and Infrastructure Support in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance to enter into any necessary contracts/agreements on behalf of the County Council
- (v) Authorise the Director of Property and Infrastructure Support to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts

Should objections, not already considered by the Cabinet Member when taking this decision, be received during the notice period a separate decision will be required in order to continue the proposal and allow for proper consideration of the points raised.

10. Background Documents

10.1 Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/corporate-policies/bold-steps-for-kent>

10.2 Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2013-18

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

10.3 Education Cabinet Committee report – 14 March 2014 – Re-designation of Special Schools across Kent.

10.4 Consultation Document and Equalities Impact Assessment.

11. Contact details

Report Author:

- David Adams
- Area Education Officer – South Kent
- 01233 898559
- david.adams@kent.gov.uk

Relevant Director:

- Kevin Shovelton
- Director of Education Planning and Access
- 01622 694174
- Kevin.shovelton@kent.gov.uk

Proposal to expand Portal House School

Summary of Written Responses

Consultation letters distributed:	930
Consultation responses received:	20

A summary of the responses received showed:

	In Favour	Opposed	Undecided	Totals
Portal House				
Parent / carer				
Staff	8			8
Governor	1			1
Local Resident	5	3		7
St Margaret's-at-Cliffe				
Parent / carer	1	1		2
Staff				
Governor	1	1		2
Totals	16	5		20

Comments in favour of the proposal:

- We definitely need this to happen as the current situation is not conducive to a modern education. Happy to have more pupils in a purpose built building.
- It is clear that the current building is not fit for purpose and as adaptation of the building is not possible then a new building is the most obvious route. (2)
- This is an ideal way of using the expertise of Portal House staff to meet the needs of SEN children in a specifically designed building.
- We need a new building and the size and layout will benefit the school no end. However, I think the proposed building is too modern and will ruin the look of the village.
- I fully support the need for a school such as Portal House and believe that all pupils should have the best education possible. However, the current site is definitely NOT the best location for this school. It should be located to the outskirts of the village where there are better transport links.
- I am in favour of the proposed increase but have concerns about the lack of a footpath on Sea Street; both schools using the same entrance and the appearance of the new building (too modern).
- I am in favour of the proposal but would like the footpath to be widened.
- I do not think that increasing the roll will alter the dynamics of the running of the school.
- I am supportive but would not like to see an additional 20 taxis each day.

Concerns raised:

- The document sent to residents arrived at the same time as Portal House students vandalised cars on the primary school site. They have since vandalised the pond. KCC in their infinite wisdom have removed our policeman and closed our fire station. To compensate they propose to increase the size of Portal House but not improve the primary school.
- The opportunity to widen the road has been missed. This will impact detrimentally on the primary school. What about adequate parking for the primary school? There will be more vehicles using the main entrance.
- The location of the school is inappropriate in a small rural village with poor access / egress. Poor behaviour and bad language is a common feature and a poor example to primary school children.

- How will the new field be securely fenced? Will KCC level it and replant a suitable surface?
- The PTFA have raised and spent thousands redeveloping the woodland area at the rear of the current sports field. Will the school still have full access to this valuable teaching resource? If access is lost, what does KCC propose by way of viable alternative?
- During construction work all Portal House traffic will be direct in and out via the primary school entrance. If access at Chapel Lane is denied, more children will have to use the Sea Street entrance. The road is narrow, existing traffic is heavy, lack of pavement and safe crossing place, make this a disaster waiting to happen.
- The sports field and additional field were 'greyed out' on the plans displayed on open evening, why was this?
- The design for the building appeared to be an ugly block that looked like an industrial unit. This is an historic village close to a conservation area, there appeared to be no attempt to design anything sympathetic.
- Considering the needs of the pupils attending Portal House, it was surprising to see a multi-level design with standard corridor widths. I thought the understanding was to have single storey accommodation with wide corridors to minimise potential conflict zones around the building. This is not being designed with users in mind, especially as you are looking to expand pupil numbers.
- Is St Margaret's really the best site for the school?
- The site is shared by three users. It appears KCC are looking at Portal House in isolation with little thought to the wider impact and implications on the others, or indeed the village as a whole.