

By: Grahame Ward - Director – Operations CFE

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

Subject: PROPOSED CLOSURE OF PARK FARM (FOUNDATION) PRIMARY SCHOOL AND ITS REPLACEMENT AS A PRIMARY SCHOOL WITHIN THE FOLKESTONE ACADEMY

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report seeks the Cabinet Member’s agreement on the proposal to close Park Farm (Foundation) Primary School and replace it with a primary phase within the Folkestone Academy.

Introduction

1. (1) The School Organisation Advisory Board, at its meeting on 5 November 2008, supported a recommendation to consult (in conjunction with the governing body of Park Farm Primary School) on the proposal to close Park Farm Primary School, and replace it as part of the Folkestone Academy.

The Proposal

2. (1) The proposal is that the Local Authority ceases to maintain Park Farm School, and the Folkestone Academy enters into a new/amended funding arrangement with the Secretary of State enabling it to deliver education to pupils aged 4-18 years, rather than the current 11-18 years (ie extend its age range). It is proposed that the Park Farm Primary School buildings will be replaced by new provision. These new buildings may be located on Kent County Council’s surplus land adjoining the Academy. This land was formerly part of the Channel School site. This would free up the existing Park Farm site for disposal. In effect this may be a land “swap” between the County Council and the Governing Body of Park Farm Primary School.

(2) The Folkestone Academy will become an “All-age” school. It will admit 60 pupils per year group in its primary phase, and 240 pupils in the secondary year groups. It will continue to offer 280 post 16 places.

(3) The all-age school concept intends to ensure continuity of education for pupils. While it is envisaged that the primary and secondary elements of the school will be discrete, with separate identities, opportunities exist for expectations and structures to be common throughout, thereby supporting transition through the phases. Crucially, the all-age school has the ability to take the best practice from the primary sector into the secondary sector and vice versa. This affords significant benefits to help raise standards for all pupils. This practice and expertise would need to be shared and developed with other feeder primary schools in order to raise standards across the area and ease transition from primary to secondary school for all pupils. An all-age school offers enhanced professional development opportunities for staff, and increased flexibility to support personalised learning. It also affords possibilities to share resources and reduce costs which can be diverted to support pupil learning.

Responses to the Public Consultation

Written Responses

3. (1) 37 responses have been received, of which 23 are in favour, 2 are unsure, and 12 are opposed.

Views of Local Members

4. (1) Mr Richard Pascoe, Member for Folkestone North East is supportive of the proposal as it will be of great benefit to the primary school, good for the Academy and good for the pupils.

Views of the Governing Bodies

6. The governing bodies of Park Farm School and the Folkestone Academy are the driving forces of this proposal and brought it to the Local Authority. They are in full support.

Views of the Partnership Board

7. The Shepway 1 Partnership Board welcome this consultation on the proposal to open an all age Academy in Folkestone. We feel it would offer parents greater choice of provision on age 11 transfer as well as providing continuity of support for pupils. Primary schools in the partnership would be willing to work alongside the Academy to ensure quality of provision across all schools.

Resource Issues

Capital

8. (1) KCC's capital programme includes £1.4m for investment in Park Farm School to replace its Key Stage 1 building. This funding will instead be contributed to the cost of rebuilding Park Farm School as part of the Folkestone Academy. The DCSF have already committed £1m toward the development. Further funding will also be contributed from Roger De Haan (sponsor of The Folkestone Academy) and from the capital receipt of the Park Farm site.

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 schools, plus an allocation to cover central LA costs. A corresponding amount will be deducted by the DCSF from KCC's Dedicated Schools Grant.

Human

(3) The Governing Body are the employers of staff at Park Farm School. The Folkestone Academy Trust is the employer of staff in the Academy. Consultation with Park Farm's staff has taken place in accordance with the requirements of TUPE. Discussions are ongoing with the DCSF regarding funding for TUPE costs and funding for any necessary redundancies.

Views of the School Organisation Advisory Board

9. At its meeting on 23 April 2009 the majority of the School Organisation Advisory Board supported the proposal to close Park Farm (Foundation) Primary School, subject to the replacement within Folkestone Academy.

Proposed Timetable

10. If it is decided that a public notice should be issued in respect of this proposal, the following timetable is likely to apply:

Issue public notice	wc 11 May 2009
End of representation period	wc 22 June 2009
Decision by Kent County Council	July 2009
Implementation (earliest date)	1 September 2009

Recommendation

11. The Cabinet Member is requested to agree to the issuing of a public notice to close Park Farm (Foundation) Primary School, subject to the replacement within Folkestone Academy.

David Adams
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The Local Member is Mr Richard Pascoe

Background Documents:

None

Previous Committee Reports:

School Organisation Advisory Board – 23 April 2009

School Organisation Advisory Board – 5 November 2008