

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

To: Education and Young People's Services Cabinet Committee
17 February 2016

Subject: Proposal to Close Pent Valley Technology College

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: Education and Young People's Services Cabinet Committee
15 December 2015

Future Pathway of Paper: Cabinet Member decision

Electoral Division: All Shepway divisions

Summary: This report sets out the results of the public consultation on the proposal to close Pent Valley Technology College.

Recommendation(s):

The Education and Young People's Services Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform on:

- a) the decision to close Pent Valley Technology College to all year groups except Years 10 and 12 in August 2016, and to all year groups on 31 August 2017;
- b) whether any exceptions should be made to the County Transport Policy or whether individual circumstances should be considered by the usual appeal process;
- c) retaining the Pent Valley Technology College site, on its return to KCC, for future educational need; and

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Pent Valley Technology College is a Secondary school in the Cheriton area of Folkestone. It has a published admissions number (PAN) of 180 pupils in Years 7-11 with a total capacity of 900 pupils, plus the sixth form. On commencement of the public consultation on a proposal to close the School (6 January 2016) there were 417 pupils on roll in Years 7-11, and 158 pupils in the sixth form.
- 1.2 The School was inspected by Ofsted in January 2013 and was judged to be 'Good'. Since this date there has been a significant drop in standards leading the Local Authority to issue a Formal Warning Notice to the Governors in February 2015. This required the governors to take specified actions to improve the school and to secure new executive leadership. Recent GCSE results show that there has continued to be a decline in attainment and results in 2015 declined to 15% of students achieving 5 GCSE's graded A* - C, including English and Maths (compared to 53.8% National Average and 57.3% Kent Average). This is below the results achieved in any year since 2004, and far below the Government's floor target of 40%. Only one third of pupils at Pent Valley made expected progress in either Maths or English compared to 72% nationally (in English) and 66% (in Maths). Since April 2015 the School has been well led and managed by

The Swale Academies Trust on behalf of the Governing Body and the Local Authority. The Local Authority has recognised that the leadership of Swale Academies Trust has achieved significant improvements in a short amount of time. However, while the improvements are good for the pupils currently at the school, the progress achieved will not be enough to mitigate the issues outlined below that have led to the proposal to close Pent Valley. The Local Authority is still of the view that the the school would be judged inadequate if inspected by Ofsted.

- 1.3 The School has become less popular with parents. Many parents now choose to send their children to other schools. In 2010 the number of pupils in Years 7-11 was 1026; as at October 2015 it was 417 pupils. The pupil numbers have fallen year on year, with smaller intakes being admitted annually (see Table 1 below). The current Year 11 is the largest cohort (122 pupils), the smallest cohort is the current Year 7 with 43 pupils. For September 2016 only 54 first preferences were received. Since the consultation on closure the number of first preferences has dropped to 26. The School has an admission capacity of 900 pupils for Years 7-11 and therefore is operating at 46% of its capacity as of October 2015. That will decrease to 36% in September 2016 if the school remains open. Table 2 below shows future forecast numbers for the School, which shows continued decrease until 2019-20.

Table 1: Pent Valley Technology School Roll 2010-2016

	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Year 13	Total 7-11	Total 7-13
2010-11	145	180	224	234	243	151	127	1026	1304
2011-12	125	152	181	220	230	123	99	908	1130
2012-13	117	128	163	173	215	125	108	796	1029
2013-14	87	109	127	169	177	139	94	669	902
2014-15	58	84	110	130	165	126	95	547	768
2015-16	43	63	79	110	122	85	73	417	575

Information from Planning Provision Toolkit 2015

Table 2: Pent Valley Technology School Forecast Roll 2016-2020

	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Year 13	Total 7-11	Total 7-13
2016-17	71	43	63	79	110	63	57	366	486
2017-18	78	71	43	63	79	57	48	334	439
2018-19	74	78	71	43	63	41	43	329	413
2019-20	83	74	78	71	43	33	31	349	413

Information from KCC Management Information

- 1.4 Similarly to Years 7 to 11, there has been a significant decline in the number of pupils accessing Post-16 places in the sixth form at Pent Valley and this is forecast to continue (see Table 3 below). The percentage of pupils who choose to transfer into the sixth form from Year 11 is low with around 50% transferring into Year 12, and 40% staying from Year 11 through to Year 13. This has impacted on the Post-16 curriculum that can be offered.

Table 3: Pent Valley Post-16 Roll Numbers 2011-16 and Forecast Roll 2016-20

	Actual Numbers					Forecast Numbers			
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Year 11	227	214	173	162	122	110	79	63	43
Year 12	118	99	121	99	85	63	57	41	33
Year 13	89	100	83	80	73	64	48	43	31
Year 12-13 roll total	207	199	204	179	158	127	105	84	64

1.5 As school budgets are predominantly based on pupil numbers, annually the School has needed to respond to a fast diminishing budget. It will need to do so for each of the next few years, as larger cohorts leave, and smaller Year 7 cohorts are admitted. This has impacted on the curriculum offer, support for pupils, and we see the situation becoming more challenging for the School if it were to remain open. The School has a sizeable budget deficit which is not sustainable. This was previously reported as £552k, but the 9 month monitoring shows the predicted year end position being a deficit of £2.136m. This is projected to rise to £3.7m by August 2017. This deficit has arisen despite significant action during the past few years to reduce costs. The declining school budget will be insufficient to sustain the current staffing levels, and the necessary reductions in staffing will impact further on the curriculum. Delivering a broad and balanced, high quality curriculum in the circumstances is likely to prove impossible.

2. Proposal

2.1 The published proposal was to close Pent Valley Technology College to all pupils except Year 10 from September 2016 and to all pupils from September 2017. During the consultation period we received representations regarding the impact of this on Post 16 pupils who would be part way through a two year examination course. We agreed to look again at whether it was possible for Years 12 and 13 pupils to remain until September 2017 to complete their courses. This will now happen. All students will remain for their second year studies for Years 12/13. The only exception is Hair and Beauty, but this will be delivered at Folkestone Academy. Pupils and parents have been written to advising them of this information.

2.2 This report sets out the results of the public consultation, which took place between 6 January 2016 and 3 February 2016. A public meeting was held on Monday 18 January 2016.

2.3 The Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform is asked to make a decision immediately after the Education and Young People's Cabinet Committee. We feel that any delay in the decision will lead to further uncertainty for all associated with Pent Valley.

2.4 The Local Authority recognised that this proposal would cause concern to parents, carers and pupils at Pent Valley. In order to reduce the uncertainty KCC approached schools within the locality to identify alternative places in the relevant year groups. The Admissions Code (December 2014) places a duty upon the Local Authority to collaborate with schools to secure provision for pupils in the area in the event of a potential school closure. At the same time as the consultation parents and carers of pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 were provided with an offer of an alternative school place at either Folkestone Academy or Brockhill Park Performing Arts College, should Pent Valley close. This offer was made according to the 'nearest appropriate school' to

each pupil's address. A summary of places offered is shown in Table 4 below. Parents and carers have been given until 30 April 2016 to accept or reject their child's offer, by which time it is anticipated a decision about the future of Pent Valley will have been made.

Table 4: Offers Made to Pupils on Roll at Pent Valley School

School	Ofsted	Total	7	8	9
Folkestone Academy	Good	148	34	47	67
Brockhill Park	Good	30	9	12	9
Total		178	43	59	76

- 2.5 Annual reviews are being undertaken for the seven pupils in Years 7 to 9 in Pent Valley who have statements of SEN/Education, Health Care Plans. Through these reviews, the future school placement of these pupils will be discussed with parents. Final decisions will be made in the normal way.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 a. There are no Capital implications.
- b. Revenue – The estimated costs of closing Pent Valley Technology College are £5.9m. The most significant element of this cost is writing off the predicted £3.7m debt of the School. The remaining sums relate to redundancy costs, securing the site, terminating service contracts, and retention payments for staff remaining until August 2017. The figure also includes providing pupil level funding for Folkestone Academy and Brockhill Park Performing Arts College. We are currently in discussion with the Education Funding Agency as to whether they will meet this cost (£1m) as both schools are academies.
- c. Human – The School currently employs 162 staff. If the proposal is implemented, all staff will be made redundant. This will happen from 31 August 2016, except for 24 teachers and 36 support staff who will have deferred redundancies until 31 August 2017.

4. Vision and Priorities for Improvement

- 4.1 These proposals will help to secure our ambition “to ensure every child can go to a good school where they can make good progress and every child can have fair access to school places” as set out in ‘Vision and Priorities for Improvement 2015-2018’.
- 4.2 The Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2015-19 identified that in Shepway District the total Secondary school numbers continue to fall until 2017, when 21.5% of places will be vacant. As rolls rise in the subsequent years surplus capacity will reduce to 10.9% by 2023.

5. Consultation Outcomes

- 5.1 A total of 41 written responses were received, 1 supported the proposal, and 40 opposed it. There was also a paper petition against closure with 227 pupils' signatures.
- 5.2 A summary of the comments received is provided at Appendix 1.

- 5.3 A summary of the views and comments given at the public consultation meeting is attached at Appendix 2.
- 5.4 A second petition is live and will not close until 18 March 2016. At present there are 84 signatures. The final number will be reported to the Cabinet Member.
- 5.5 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as part of the consultation. One person commented that the number of pupils with Additional Education Needs at Pent Valley was higher than was recorded in the initial report to Members on the 15th December 2015. The numbers reported were the percentage of pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs. We recognise that a further 23% of pupils have additional educational needs. KCC officers are working closely with Pent Valley staff and staff at receiving schools to ensure that, should there be a decision to close Pent Valley, pupils with additional needs are appropriately supported.
- 5.6 A summary of the issues raised during consultation is provided below. Full details are in the appendices. These include the following points:
- The school should be given more time to continue the journey of improvement.
 - The school is needed. It is illogical to close it and re-open the site in a few years.
 - KCC should financially support the school and pay off the debt.
 - The proposal will be disruptive to pupils, especially those in the sixth form.
 - Sixth form pupils should be able to remain to conclude their courses.
 - It is unfair that families will have to meet travel costs if they do not like the school allocated, or if their child is in the sixth form. KCC should provide travel assistance to these pupils and those who will have further to walk to their allocated schools.
 - KCC is simply planning to sell the site for housing.
 - Loss of parental choice.
 - Pupils with SEN need a smaller school environment. The alternative schools do not adequately support pupils with SEN.
 - The school is performing well. It is unsurprising pupils with English as an Additional Language are not attaining 5 A* - C graded GCSEs including English and Maths.
 - Future forecasts may not be the reality. There is localised housebuilding.
 - The other schools will be overfull and this will affect standards.
 - Pupils' progress will be negatively impacted if they have to change school.
 - Folkestone Academy finishes at 5pm, which is too late.
 - Pupils will be bullied in their proposed new schools.
 - The needs of the children are being ignored.

6. Views

6.1 The views of the Local Members

Cllr H Birkby- Folkestone West: I think KCC acted far too late to save Pent Valley. They are supposed to be professional, they should have seen this long before they tried to do something. Too little, too late! They haven't given the new leadership time to turn things around. To me it's a fait accompli.

Cllr C Waters- Romney Marsh: No comment

Cllr S Carey- Elham Valley: I regret the closure but accept that the current pupil numbers make the School's future unsustainable.

Cllr F McKenna- Folkestone North East: Why are we not getting behind the new Head Teacher and her team and giving them full support they need. East Kent College in Folkestone is a good example of what we can achieve when we give them our support. We should not be closing Pent Valley Technology College.

Cllr M Whybrow- Hythe: The current situation reflects very badly, I believe, on KCC and will ultimately see another educational establishment going out of local authority control. While the history cannot be overturned, KCC should have acted much earlier to put in the new management team and seek to turnaround the School's situation.

While there is a deficit and this will increase due to the low pupil numbers at present, there has been no insight into how this projected deficit compares with all of the costs that would be incurred with the School's closure (redundancies, moth-balling the site, maintaining staff for one year for Year 12s, transport and uniform for relocating pupils etc.).

I believe that a better route would be for the 'significant improvements in a short period of time' (KCC's own words, of course) to be built upon not thrown away. There should be a concerted effort by all stakeholders to seek additional funding and rally round the management team, staff, pupils and their families.

We know there will be a strong demand in the medium-term for secondary school places in Shepway and it would be much better to have a revived, local authority controlled Pent Valley than a new academy.

The other point I would make is that, being aware of consultation best practice, I think there is a lot of evidence that the decision has already been made (including in the messages, slides and language used at the consultation meeting on 18th January at the School) and that this consultation could therefore be successfully challenged.

6.2 The View of Folkestone Town Council

Folkestone Town Council has expressed their opposition at the proposed closure of Pent Valley School. Having faced a difficult time during the last few years with the decline in pupils the Authority, Kent County Council, are proposing to mothball a school that was beginning to improve with increasing first choice numbers. In the next few years a growing number of primary school children will hit the secondary sector which the Authority has acknowledged.

6.3 The View of the Governing Body:

The Governing Body responded to the consultation. The complete response is included in Appendix 3. The section below is the introduction to their response.

Kent County Council's proposal to close Pent Valley Technology College was met with considerable disbelief, shock and dismay by the Governing Body, staff, parents/carers, students and the local community in December 2015, particularly as KCC had stated quite clearly in June 2015 (six months previously) that the School would not close. While, as a Governing Body, we understand a number of the reasons put forward to consult on the School's closure, we are very unhappy with the speed at which the actual closure is taking place, even before the consultation period is over!

After due consideration we have decided neither to uphold nor oppose KCC's proposal to close the School. It is evident that, although a consultation is taking place to ensure KCC follows its statutory duties, most of the work involved in closing the School is already underway – staff have left, a number of students have already transferred to other schools, redundancy notices are imminent and Year 6 parents have, understandably, voted with their feet and selected other schools for their children. In other words it is a “done deal”. Despite this we would like to put on record that as a Governing Body we originally agreed unanimously to oppose the closure, as is our legal right. However, following a number of veiled threats including that of removal as a Governing Body by KCC or that Ofsted would be “called in” if we were to oppose the closure and, as a result, some considerable soul searching and reflection, we have decided to abstain. To remove us as a Governing Body and establish an Interim Executive Board, unfamiliar with the School, would incur considerable administrative time, energy and cost to the tax payer and if Ofsted were to visit Pent Valley then further unnecessary costs would be incurred. Furthermore neither scenario would be in the best interest of staff, parents/carers, students or the local community.

As a Governing Body we recognise that our first responsibility is to the staff, parents/carers and students and it is important that we remain in situ for the duration of Pent Valley Technology College's life. We are members of the public who for a variety of commendable reasons have invested much of our own free time to help turn the School around over the past year. We are passionate about the School and we want to see that it provides the best possible education to the students that remain until July 2017.

6.4 The View of the Area Education Officer:

Closure of a school is always the last resort. Nevertheless the County Council has a moral and legal duty to ensure that pupils receive a good standard of education and a broad and balanced curriculum in a school that can thrive due to the number of pupils. We have recognised the improvements to behaviour, attendance, teaching and management arrangements made under the leadership of the Swale Academies Trust, however these will not deliver improved results in a way, and in a period of time, that would impact on parental confidence and numbers. Parents are not choosing to send their children to Pent Valley, thus the funding of the school will reduce to a level where the viability of the school becomes untenable. The Swale Academies Trust has agreed to support the pupils remaining at Pent Valley during 2016-17 so that they are able to complete their GCSEs or sixth form qualifications. Forecasts show that there will be a need for places in Year 7 from 2018 and it is the opinion of KCC that Pent Valley Technology College school should close in August 2017 and a Free School should open on the Pent Valley site in September 2018, allowing a fresh start for the pupils in this area of Shepway.

6.5 It is assumed that if Pent Valley closes, the Secretary of State for Education will determine that the land and buildings currently owned by the Governing Body will revert to KCC. In this event these assets will need to be retained. Should a free school promoter come forward, the assets would be subsequently leased for 125 years.

6.6 During the public meeting it was agreed that we would look again at the issue of travel assistance. Some parents expressed concern that their child would have further to walk to school, or would be returning in the dark. They believed this to be unfair, and felt KCC should provide travel assistance. Some also believed it

unreasonable that if the School closed and they send their child to a school other than that allocated, they may not be eligible for travel assistance.

- 6.7 Currently, eight pupils receive travel assistance to Pent Valley because it is their nearest appropriate school, and the home to school distance is over 3 miles. Based on the allocations in Table 4, the number would rise to forty pupils receiving travel assistance in the event Pent Valley closes (29 of those attending Brockhill Park, and 11 attending Folkestone Academy). Currently 27 pupils attending Pent Valley receive travel assistance under the low income family criteria. This number would reduce to a maximum of 21 in the event Pent Valley closes. All other pupils live less than 2 miles from their allocated school. 78 of the 178 pupils allocated new schools live closer to those schools than they do Pent Valley.
- 6.8 The parental concerns about travel costs for Post 16 pupils has been addressed by modifying the proposal to enable Post 16 pupils to complete their courses at Pent Valley.
- 6.9 Ordinarily, home to school transport will be provided in accordance with Kent County Council's published policies, with individual cases being considered on their merits via the appeal process. Members may wish to consider whether, in view of the circumstances, to recommend an exception should be made to the transport policy to provide free travel to those displaced pupils who would not normally receive free travel. Three groups are identified:

- Those under 2 miles from their nearest appropriate school, but the distance is further than the current home to school distance to Pent Valley (54 pupils):

Costs:	Year 1	£32,400
	Year 2	£32,400
	Year 3	£16,800
	Year 4	£ 6,000

- Those living between 2 and 3 miles from their nearest appropriate school who may not meet the low income family criteria (12 pupils):

Costs:	Year 1	£7,200
	Year 2	£7,200
	Year 3	£2,400
	Year 4	£ 600

- Those seeking alternative schools which are not their nearest appropriate (cannot be determined at this stage).

Costings of any exception will be approximately £600 per pupil per year. Members will also wish to be mindful of setting precedents.

7. Recommendation(s)

Recommendation(s): The Education and Young People's Services Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform on:

- a) the decision to close Pent Valley Technology College to all year groups except Years 10 and 12 in August 2016, and to all year groups on 31 August 2017;
- b) whether any exceptions should be made to the County Transport Policy or whether individual circumstances should be considered by the usual appeal process;
- c) retaining the Pent Valley Technology College site, on its return to KCC, for future educational need.

8. Background Documents

8.1 Vision and Priorities for Improvement

http://www.kelsi.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/29074/EYPS-Vision-and-Priorities-for-Improvement.pdf

8.2 Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2015-19

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/education-skills-and-employment-policies/education-provision>

8.4 Consultation Document and Equalities Impact Assessment.

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

9. Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1– Summary of Written Responses

9.2 Appendix 2 – Consultation

9.3 Appendix 3 – Response from the Governing Body

10. Contact details

Report Author:

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Relevant Director:

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- Director of Education Planning and Access
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Proposal to Close Pent Valley School

Summary of Written Responses

Printed Consultation Documents distributed: 900
 Consultation responses received:

A summary of the responses received showed:

	In Favour	Opposed	Undecided	Totals
Staff	0	10	0	10
Parents	1	16	0	17
Pupils	0	5	0	5
Resident/Public	0	9	0	9
Totals	1	40	0	41

Comment in favour of the proposal

Parent

Pent Valley should have closed 5 years ago. I get no support with my child's educational needs. There is no homework. The school has not changed with new leaders.

Comments against the proposal

Parents

- The proposal is disgraceful. This school is a good school, with good pupils and should remain open.
- My daughter has made good friends which is not easy for her to do. Her spelling has come on leaps and bounds. Teachers are friendly and helpful. My daughter is worried that she will lose everything she has worked for if she has to go to a new school. We feel this is unfair on the pupils and they are being unfairly treated as this is beyond their control. Do you think it would have been better to have warned parents that this was in the pipeline so they could have chosen another school from the start rather than uprooting the pupils and disrupting their education?
- As KCC have removed catchment areas favoured schools have been filled allowing Pent Valley to be under used.
- The closure is for financial reasons only (valuable building land).there is no direct bus route to Folkestone Academy so I assume KCC will be responsible for my children's safety when walking home on dark nights.
- Low exam results were due to previous year- nothing to do with the improvements made. Progress has been made in a short time. The low pupil projections are not a necessarily a reality. There are two large estates being built. As the budget is largely based on pupil numbers there must be other ways to plug the gap. My son is happy for the first time in his school years. The school has a lot of potential. Not enough was done to re-present the school when the Head changed. Dover has 3 secondary schools with 1/2 the population of Folkestone and Hawkinge it is only fair to have 2 schools to serve this area. There is already pressure around Folkestone Academy with parking on pavements and chaos at school finish time. If a school is needed in 1-2 years then it makes sense to make Pent Valley work especially when a lot of money has gone into it.

Free schools and academies do not want SEND children. Where does that leave my son?

- Child is happy at the school. Why put children in to other schools that are full. Son is stressed and worried. People do not understand the stress on parents and pupils.
- The education of the children is more important than the money.
- Since Swale Academies Trust took over there has been a significant improvement in pupils' attitudes. Pupils are responding well to boundaries. I am really pleased with the teaching at the school and the support for my son following several family bereavements. There are 1200 new homes being built in the area. School places will be needed for these children. Folkestone Academy has 1,891 pupils and Brockhill Park must have reached capacity as they have only been allocated 30 pupils from Pent Valley. There is a need for a third school in the Shepway area as Folkestone Academy is a large school and their exam results at 41% 5 A*-C are only 1% above the government target. They need to concentrate on the pupil they already have otherwise it is likely they will not achieve the government target and this would be detrimental to pupils from Folkestone Academy and Pent Valley. Losing Pent Valley will leave only two secondary schools in the Shepway area. One closes at 5pm and the second is 5.6 miles away. I object to my son finishing at 5pm and having to walk home from a busy industrial estate at that time of night. The Year 7 provisions that both schools have set out in their admissions policy of 270 (Folkestone Academy) and 235 (Brockhill Park) pupils do not match the figures stated on the Consultation Proposal of 300 and 250 pupils which could lead to a shortfall of 45 pupils without a school place if Pent Valley was to close. Pent Valley is one of only two visually impaired units in Kent. As a smaller school it is ideal for students with SEND. To place them in a school as large as Folkestone Academy may cause them and other students problems. My son had special educational Needs. He attended Harvey Grammar and struggled in a school half the size of Folkestone Academy. Parents have not sent their children to Pent Valley because: behaviour has been a cause for concern, there was 'bunking off', there was the perception that there was a lot of eastern European and other non-English pupils in the school. Pent Valley has 165 non-English speaking pupils (20.8% of the pupils), Folkestone Academy 144 pupils (7.6%) and Brockhill Park 30 pupils (1.4%). This shows that Pent Valley has been seriously disadvantaged. Poor exam results- This is an area with Grammar Schools so the secondary schools will not do as well as pupils are cherry picked. Not enough emphasis is placed on the vocational subjects. Not all students are academic so it is unfair to penalise the school by saying vocational subjects are not important. All three schools have struggled to meet the government targets. There was not a lot of confidence in the former Headteacher. Grammar Schools setting their own test has impacted. In 2014 Folkestone Girls took 44 pupils on appeal that had not passed their test or the Kent Test. These pupils could have gone to Pent Valley. KCC were planning to invest £1.5m into the school so they must have confidence that there was a need for Pent Valley. Consider the wellbeing of the pupils especially those who will not thrive in a larger school with long school hours. This has devastated our family. I have to consider home schooling.
- My child is comfortable in his environment and achieving fantastic results. Closure will impact on his independence as working home 3 miles in the dark after 5pm is not supporting his safety. Sending him to a school he is not familiar with will confuse him at an important stage in his education and will not help his results. Other county's secondary schools are being supported with emergency funding until pupil numbers rise. Why is my son's education not as important?
- I choose Pent Valley because it's within walking distance from my house. Why should I now have to send my son across town to the academy? The Academy was never my first choice. My son is quite happy there, if us parents had the choice what school to

send our children to, why don't we get a choice to keep the school opened? It's not right that KCC is making a decision that interferes with my son's future. KCC make decisions on tax payers' money, me and my husband pay our taxes, so why not let tax payers make some decisions for a change. Think of the children and the impact this will have on them, I attended parents evening on Thursday and I had nothing but good reports from the teachers about my son.

- Pent Valley school has so much to offer the people and children of Folkestone it's a great school which my son loves going to. We visited many schools for our son; none were as well presented by the teachers and head as Pent Valley. KCC has a duty to keep it open otherwise there will be only one secondary school in Folkestone. This gives parents no choice. Many professionals have told us it wouldn't be damaging to a child as ours with autism as it's seen as an oppressive environment also its OFSTED report was so bad.
- My son is in Yr. 7. We chose Pent Valley for him after visiting it as well as Brockhill School and Folkestone Academy. We did not choose Brockhill because of the journey on the bus every day and as a family we did not think Folkestone academy would be suitable because of the 5pm finish and many other things as well. I have a daughter in year 6 and wanted her to go to Pent Valley too. News of the possible closure was extremely upsetting for me and my son too. My son has been offered a place at a school he does not want to go to. This is affecting my son and he is very upset. I believe that the move to another school will affect him and his work and well-being. This is the same for everyone at the school in years 7, 8, 9 and 12. The children have the right to education but what is happening affects the right to an education where they are happy and where they will learn best. I oppose the closure of Pent Valley because of the detrimental effect it will have on my son and everyone else's child who goes there. Folkestone needs a choice of secondary schools.
- I have children in year 11 and year 7. The school has supported my son in year 11. My son in year 7 has settled in well. I should have been told of the possible closure before making the decision about which school to send my son to. He has been given a school he does not wish to go to.
- We disagree with the proposal to close Pent Valley. Our son attends Pent Valley, he is now in year 9. Our son has a condition called Osteogenesis Imperfecta (Brittle bone disease). He is under the Osteogenesis Imperfecta team at Great Ormond Street hospital. His bones are very fragile and he has suffered numerous fractures after very little trauma. He has had twelve operations to insert/replace metal rods into the bones in his legs. He uses a wheelchair, also a walking frame to transfer from his wheelchair to the toilet, etc. As you can appreciate, he is very aware of his safety, he is very mature for his age and knows it only takes one person to accidentally bump into him and he could end up in hospital, therefore he takes a long time to settle into new surroundings with new people, and only feels more assured when he knows that the people around him are used to him and are fully aware of his condition and limitations. As he has now been attending Pent Valley for nearly three years the staff and pupils are now used to his needs. He has had a statement since he was at nursery school. He receives excellent support at Pent Valley and they have been fantastic at accommodating his individual needs. When he has had to be absent due to recovering from operations the school have supplied work and a tutor to visit and keep him up to speed, they also brought a couple of friends round to visit him, they always go that extra mile! He starts school ten minutes later than other pupils to avoid the hustle and bustle of the corridors etc. for his own safety, he also finishes earlier for the same reason. He has to have an adult with him at all times when moving about the school. He enters the school through the leisure centre, where he is greeted by two young members of staff that are also wheelchair users, what an inspiration they are to him at the start of every school day!

His LSA comes to meet him and accompanies him into class. He thrives in small groups and obviously becomes anxious in large volumes of people, which is one of the reasons he is more comfortable at a smaller school. We chose Pent Valley for a number of reasons, the main one being our son had visited and expressed that he wanted to attend there, it is also very close to home which is very important as we could be called in at any time. Due to the support he receives, he has progressed with his learning and is doing very well, if a class becomes a little boisterous, the LSA takes him to the AEN department where he can complete his work in a more calm and safe environment.

- My daughter is now attending Pent Valley and is currently in Year 9 she is doing extremely well and has the most caring and supportive teacher. Folkestone Academy year 9's have started taking their GCSEs, I find this quite worrying that the pupils from Pent Valley are expected to join the Folkestone Academy in September to nicely slot in to their options and way of school life, it's not very acceptable as you want your child to do their very best at school but only to have a major setback that this will be. I find it very difficult to believe that the closure of this school is backed by the council. Us parents were made aware of the proposed closure a couple months ago and were also made to feel that it was a 'failing' school and also the results of last year's exam results were among the lowest in the South East. I also find this very disturbing and untrue, I felt like we were being told a pack of lies as I know for a fact that since Miss Gibson (acting head) took over the school from April last year that the school were making good progress. Cheriton is currently having 2 big housing estates being built and feel that this has to benefit the school greatly as obviously the population of children are only going to rise dramatically, surely having this school stay open is even more important to the local area. I also understand that the other secondary schools who are arranging to accommodate all pupils from Pent Valley are already at full capacity so how on earth are they going to cope with having another half of school students joining them? Why is there no money to support Pent Valley in these uncertain times? Why is our council not bending over backwards to help our school like you should be? I am going to do everything in my power to help other parents and pupils that want to see this school stay open. It's vital that it does and in my opinion should be getting more support from yourselves. I do hope that this email is read properly and taken very seriously. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need to.
- My daughter is doing well at PV and some of this is down to the good work done by Swale Academy. The current Yr. 9 will I'm sure produce some very good exam results if allowed to continue at PV. I feel that moving them would have a detrimental effect on their learning. The other 2 schools work differently so our children would be disadvantaged from day one. Parents were not given a choice they were just allocated a space with no consideration as to which school would best meet their child's needs. The Folkestone Academy do not have fantastic exam results as it is so why send children there as the likely hood is with all the disruption a lot will under achieve. Why cannot KCC keep the school open for the current children or even from year 9 upwards as it will already have all the costs associated with saying open for Yr. 10-11? The children don't want to leave PV and it is already causing a lot of stress which is not good for their learning! KCC have a duty of care which they have and are failing in!

Pupils

- 227 pupils signed. No individual comments.
- Give the school more time to turn around.
- You have ruined my life keep PV open.
- Moving schools will affect grades and chances.

- It will cost KCC to close Pent Valley as there will be new uniforms, redundancies and refurbishments to pay for. The lack of numbers is the fault of KCC for allowing local schools to take in more pupils. Concerns that classes in Folkestone Academy and Brockhill Park will be overcrowded leading to 'difficulty in learning'. Students 'terrified' about moving to other schools. Students have received threatening messages from students in other schools. Students 'petrified' that they will be bullied. Grades will go down. Lower achievement at PV is due to the large number of EAL pupils and number of children with disabilities. Students with disabilities have been told they need to go to special school- 'don't feel part of an ordinary society, they feel intimidated and isolated'. Autistic pupils love the fact classes at Pent Valley are small and quiet. Teaching staff care about the pupils' future. The new leadership team have made a big difference and need a further chance.
- I will lose all my friends and have to start again. The number of pupil is my year, year 7, is fine. We will get good grades because there are fewer children to teach and less children mucking around in the classes.

Public

- Lack of choice if PV closes.
- The issues must be the standard of teaching in an impoverished area. Teacher not showing any enthusiasm or commitment. Too easy to close the school and dump the students into others, there should be a greater emphasis on getting to the root of the problem.
- Unfair to disrupt the children for two years then open a free school. The cost of placing other children would be better spent at Pent Valley. Housing will need more school places.
- Increasing population will need secondary school places. Closing Pent Valley will lead to a shortage of places.
- Illogical to blame closure on falling numbers when there will be a need to secondary school places in September 2018. The previous GCSE results predate the improvements made by the Governors in April 15. More time needs to be given for improvements to be seen. OFSTED 2013 was rate Good. Folkestone Academy is not universally well regarded. The greater size leads to less personal pupil contact. Many parents face problems with the expense of travel. The SEND facilities have won praise at Pent Valley (including the Visually Impaired Unit). This service is unlikely to be matched in the schools on offer. Other alternatives for these pupils are close to capacity or inconveniently distant.
- A move is disruptive for the children. Welfare should be the priority rather than short term financial gain.
- Budget efficiencies could be made at the leisure centre and will reduce the deficit. Where will a new school get pupils from?
- I am very disappointed at the way in which the 'consultation' has been conducted. It is clear that the decision has already been made to close the school. Closure will have a negative impact on pupils and their parents and carers and will be disruptive to their education. I am also deeply concerned that the only alternative school seems to be Folkestone Academy, which means there is no choice, so if parents wish their child to attend another school they will be forced to pay travel expenses, and I despair for parents of SEN children. I also find it puzzling that a considerable amount of money and resources were recently invested in improving the school and standards have greatly improved.
- Pent Valley provides a valuable education to the students it serves. In 2013 it was found by Ofsted to be Good in all areas. Despite failing to meet government imposed floor

targets Pent Valley has continued to provide a curriculum and education suitable to the needs to the pupils it has on roll. In a selective systems where the top 25% are sent to an alternative provision to apply these targets is unacceptable and to judge a school by them and threaten to close it based on this is also very short sighted. What people seem to fail to see is that for the population that attends Pent Valley they are often successful. In addition Pent Valley ensured that SEN and AEN students were given access to the curriculum wherever possible and that the EAL students were provided with access to curriculum opportunities and English language learning. The school made the decision to choose the curriculum which was right for their students rather than fitting the league tables and this did cause in harm in Government statistics however for the future of those young people and their life chances the right decision was made. Closure of this school would cause disruption to a number of vulnerable groups who have been well served by this school with staff who have the expertise and knowledge to work with them. Moving them to different schools will be of detriment to their educational achievements. If you look at the example of the closure of The Channel School for comparison, the final year of The Channel School saw no permanent exclusion and a 35% A* - C pass rate including Eng. and Maths. In comparison the first year of the Folkestone Academy saw over 30 permanent exclusions and a far lower A* - C pass rate of approx. 25%. It took a number of years for students to settle and succeed. KCC have stated they faith in the new management team in which case allow them the time needed to develop the school. On a financial matter I fail to see how it can be of benefit to close a school, run it for 1 year with just one year group and then allow a Free School to open. This sounds more like bowing to Government pressure of lack of Free Schools in Kent. Ideology should not supersede young people's futures. A free school is not the way forward, closing Pent Valley will lead to no KCC or Foundation schools at all in Shepway all will be academies or alike this is not parental choice this is marketisation in its worst form privatisation through the back door. I strongly urge the members of the cabinet to think again regarding the closure of the school.

- Folkestone area has a rising primary school role and by closing Pent Valley you will deny residents in Folkestone of a choice of Secondary School. By KCC's own admission Pent Valley is an improving school. Although budget deficit the authority knew that a drop in numbers would affect secondary sector for several years. The question is why the authority supported Pent Valley to spend money last year on decoration and improvements to the school for one year. The cost of mothballing and keeping the school open should be considered with the cost of keeping a smaller school on site open and improving allowing the settled pupils to stay at school and give parents a choice in Folkestone

Staff:

- Why would KCC spent £1.5m on the school when it was decided to close 4 months later?
- The education programme at Folkestone Academy is different as the year 9's there have started their GCSEs- either the FA pupils will be held back or Pent Valley students will struggle to catch up. Forcing children into a position that they do not wish to be in will cause them psychological harm resulting in stress, post-traumatic stress disorder and suicides. Folkestone Academy is oversubscribed now and classes are oversubscribed-how will this be a satisfactory solution? If KCC have a waiting list of secondary school pupils why are these pupils not pushed in the direction of Pent Valley? The number of pupils needing AEN provision is greater than the figures given in the report to the Education and Young Peoples' Committee. The authority is blaming poor teaching standards when this is not the case. I was bullied at a previous school and achieved well at Pent Valley. The yr. 12 students should be allowed to complete their courses. KCC

have not given the new leaders the time to excel and prove themselves. The forecast pupil figures are only projected and are pie in the sky. What about pupils waiting for placements and increases in pupils through immigration? The report figures do not add up. Where will the pupils come from for a free school?

- There are a huge cohort of students that are vulnerable, we do some great work with them and there is not another school in the area that can match the provision. Student welfare has not been taken into account. Students who have ASD do not cope with change, they will be completely distressed and it will affect their education. As a staff member who attended the school in 2000 I have seen the highs and lows. The school is on its way up with the local community opinion is turning round. The staff have been through a lot over the last three years, they are fighters and loyal to Pent Valley. The school has been at the heart of the community for 76 years, closing it would be closing a piece of history around Cheriton. Please take care when making the decision not for the staff but for the students as they are the most important people in this matter.
- My three sons have attended Pent Valley. The eldest 2 achieved well. My youngest son however was not so fortunate with his education due to the learning environment during his final school years here at pent valley. During this time I would never have promoted any friend/ relatives off spring to attend this school for their education unless they had SEND. Since May 2015 I would recommend this school to anyone. It is wrong to say we have such a huge deficit that this school can no longer continue to educate students. One must ask one's self why this deficit is in fact here. It wasn't the school that requested £1.8 million on making it look nicer over the summer months and thus making our deficit even worse. Schools are known go through 7 year cycles of being the best school in the area so why shut Pent valley just when we are proving it's our turn? I hope it never happens, but be it on the head of those responsible making the decision to shut this local school when a Cheriton student goes missing getting home on these cold dark nights from a later finishing and/ or a further afield school that they will be made to attend.

**Consultation on a Proposal to Close
Pent Valley Technology College**

**Monday 18 January 2016
7.00pm – Pent Valley Technology College**

In Attendance:	Leyland Ridings – Chair	County Councillor
	Patrick Leeson	Corporate Director – Education & Young People’s Services
	Keith Abbott	Director – Education Planning and Access
	David Adams	Area Education Office – South Kent
	Ana Gibson	Acting Headteacher – Pent Valley
	Derek Trimmer	Representative for Jonathan Whitcombe – Executive Headteacher

Purpose of the Meeting

To discuss the proposal that Pent Valley Technology College (PV) would close from September 2016 for all pupils except the present Year 10, and for all pupils from September 2017. This would allow the present Year 10 pupils to complete their final year of GCSE studies at Pent Valley, with some staff being retained to deliver the courses and provide the pastoral support needed.

Councillor Leyland Ridings welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Patrick Leeson (PL). PL detailed the proposal and the reasons why KCC now felt this was the only option for Pent Valley (PV). David Adams (DA) then outlined ongoing education proposals for the pupils of Pent Valley.

Name	Question	Response
Bethany Smith Student	<p>I am the Leader of the campaign against the closure of Pent Valley. Is this actually a conservative council wanting the value of the land above students’ welfare?</p> <p>Overcrowded classrooms are in the news. If students move how is this going to help them within their adopted environment? There will not be enough staff to make sure pupils are achieving well.</p> <p>Low grades. There are a large percentage of students at Pent Valley who do not speak English. Take those out of the 15% achieved and 98% of students achieved the grades they should have done. Pent Valley should stay open. Students are distraught at the possible closure.</p>	<p>Patrick Leeson - I give you my absolute assurances that KCC has no plans to dispose of this land other than for another school. We closed Chaucer School in Canterbury and we are retaining the land for educational purposes.</p> <p>David Adams - Both Folkestone Academy (FA) and Brockhill Park (BHP) have welcomed the opportunity to accept further pupils. They have worked hard with their proposals to ensure that Pent Valley pupils are integrated into their new environment.</p> <p>David Adams - Yes, there are students who don’t speak English but this isn’t the only reason we are in the situation we are in, nor is it a reason why results were 15% achieving 5 A*-C GCSE including English and Maths.</p>

Name	Question	Response
Member of the Public	KCC should use its emergency reserves to protect Pent Valley.	Patrick Leeson – We can't do that. Schools are funded through the DSG and there is no emergency reserve within that. You cannot use EAL as an excuse for the performance of the school.
Ben Wallis Staff	<p>I would like to thank Ana and her team who have come into this school and turned it around. You have proven it to the pupils – thank you.</p> <p>I am an ex-student, if it's a consultation, why are a number of our students moving in February? When they do move they will be put in separate classrooms, not be allowed to integrate with other students – GCSE's etc. Pupils will be bullied. The Leadership Team have given me the confidence to go to University. I will lose the opportunity to qualify as a PE teacher.</p>	David Adams - Parents do not have to move pupils now. There is the opportunity to move to BHP sooner if parents want that to happen. I made a comment at a previous meeting that I phrased badly and I apologise for that. Youngsters will not be segregated but they will need to be supported in their new environment. BHP will provide after school support to help youngsters in the transition and cover any gaps in their knowledge. FA will be taking significantly more youngsters, approximately 150. They start their GCSEs a year earlier and will need to make sure pupils are not disadvantaged. They will not be segregated in the school; it is just that in some core curriculum areas their interests may be best served by being educated as a discrete group.
Lucy Webster	<p>BHP and FA pupils have said PV students are not welcome in their school. It is all over Facebook.</p> <p>What will you do for Y13 and Y14? I am taking Applied Science, I have 1 year left and nowhere else teaches it. Where will I go? What are you going to do?</p> <p>Why can't you keep us on for one more year? What about travel costs?</p>	<p>Patrick Leeson – This is totally unacceptable and we will ensure that this doesn't happen. It is in the interests of both BHP and FA to make a success of this. When we closed Chaucer, pupils moved to other Canterbury schools, the experience was enormously successful.</p> <p>David Adams – I do recall talking to you at the last meeting. For students on bespoke course like yourself we will struggle to find you something where you can carry on doing the same course. I believe you have two options, Whitstable and Northfleet. We will need to discuss this with you at a 1:1 meeting to find the best resolution. We may not be able to match every student.</p> <p>Patrick Leeson – We have a duty</p>

Name	Question	Response
		<p>of care to you. DA is quoting KCC policy but I promise you we will look at this and you will not be left in the 'lurch'. If there is a travel cost this will be picked up. This is an exceptional circumstance. We thought we could provide the Post 16 step but if this is not the case we will ensure these youngsters will be taught here at Pent Valley. We will try to sort this out in the next few weeks.</p>
Parent	<p>I have 3 children at PV. There has been no information re GCSE students. Nearest option for my child is Broadstairs!</p>	<p>Patrick Leeson – Current Y10 will remain and be taught on site. Arrangements are in place and staff will be retained. KCC has secured the commitment of these staff to stay and teach Y10s.</p> <p>Ana Gibson – We will not leave Y10 students in the 'lurch'. Excellent teachers will be here, resources maintained and we are very confident that the results for Y10 students will be very good.</p>
Darrell Price	<p>You say you care about the students and yet you are putting them through more stress.</p> <p>Isn't there some form of help to keep this school open?</p>	<p>Patrick Leeson – I understand that this is difficult and that it will cause a lot of upset when students change.</p> <p>We will provide help with uniforms and transport. This is not enough to solve the deficit problem. There is no emergency funding; the only funding is from the Education budget which is for all schools.</p>
Mrs Maxwell	<p>I have a Y7 child with SEN but not statemented. FA will not do anything regarding SEN until Y9. PV offered everything and you're taking that away from us. My son won't be able to go to BHP, he can't travel that far. I don't want him to go to FA where he will be left in the system for 2 years – where do I send my child?</p> <p>Academies don't listen how will you help?</p> <p>Some children were excluded from PV and now our children will be meeting them again.</p>	<p>Patrick Leeson – every child who needs help should receive it when they need it. We will not accept a situation where a child will move to FA and not get the help they need straight away. I will keep a close eye on this. We will make sure that he is properly assessed for his needs. Can I ask you to come back to me that this is happening?</p> <p>We are contracting with FA to provide the support for pupils from PV and ensure they get the support they need.</p> <p>Those pupils who moved to other schools have improved their behaviour. FA is a very different school, Ofsted judged it as a good school.</p>

Name	Question	Response
Eric Segal Secretary of SE Kent Trades Union Council	I have had three daughters at PV. If you want to keep the school fight together. Let's put a democratically elected party together to fight these proposals, start lobbying and petitioning. If you're interest come outside and start taking names.	
Councillor Emily Arnold Folkestone Town Mayor	The Town Council passed a motion at its recent meeting to oppose the proposal to close the school.	Patrick Leeson – nobody wants to close the school. If there was an alternative we would not be proposing to close.
Louise Wallace	It's all about budgets. It's a forgone conclusion that PV will close. Why did PV get £1.5m last summer?	Patrick Leeson – this was for improving the accommodation and students here now deserved to have better. This made a difference for the pupils who are here now.
Angela Maxted	I am the HT at Cheriton PS. I have dealt with a number of distraught ex-pupils over the last few weeks. PV has always been a community school and been the focus of community events. It is said we will lose this as well. There is concern about going to other schools that have a different culture. Please make sure that information is available in all languages.	
Hod Birkby Kent County Councillor	Why did you get a team in from the Swale Academy Trust and not give them a chance? Are you going to sell off this land and what will happen to the playing field?	Mr Ridings – I Chair the EYPS Cabinet Committee and I can confirm that the land will be retained for education purposes and will not be sold.
B Robinson Parent	What will happen with Post 16's? The only way for my daughter to finish her course is by going to Broadstairs!	Patrick Leeson – It is not right that a student should have to travel as far as Broadstairs. We will make sure this doesn't happen. It may be we offer some Post 16 courses on site. Every young person is being approached individually to discuss their needs.
P Gane	You knew five years ago there was a dip in numbers. The FA expanded. Why weren't the numbers addressed over the last few years. What will it cost to close the school and mothball it? The playing field is at Coolinge Lane, it's not the playing field here on site. You are depriving choice, the FA or nothing.	Patrick Leeson – the school has suffered a serious decline in numbers, parents have been voting with their feet. The numbers have drifted away to other schools. Other schools that are academies are able to expand without the agreement of the County Council. The County Council is operating in an environment where we are no longer completely in charge of admissions. This is a National policy that we have to do our best to manage in the locality. We are giving a choice. There will

Name	Question	Response
		be a new sponsor for a new school on this site in 2018.
Parent	What about transport?	<p>David Adams – explained the County policy on transport.</p> <p>Patrick Leeson – agreed that individual cases would be considered due to the exceptional circumstances.</p>
Rebecca Redman Parent	<p>If PV was failing so badly why in 2014 did you allocate the FA to have 30 more children?</p> <p>Folkestone Academy do not include their SEN pupils in their results. Do you include SEN children in GCSE results?</p> <p>Children excluded from FA are now at PV. I thought children excluded from a school could not go back.</p>	<p>David Adams – Academies can admit extra pupils if they wish. The County Council has no control over this. FA has capacity. It used to have the 6th form on site but this has now moved to the Glassworks. This has created at least 250 places.</p> <p>SEN children on the roll of the school will count towards the GCSE results for the school. This applies to all schools.</p> <p>You are correct. A permanently excluded child cannot go back into the school they were excluded from. We worked with the individual schools to identify the issues and manage these.</p>
S Comber	<p>This school has been failing for a number of years. We brought this to the attention of officials. Now KCC are failing our kids. Are the Council proud that their school is failing? FA is achieving. Give the recent administration a year to turn the school around – would it still be inadequate?</p> <p>Why don't you wait for the GCSE results this year and then see if you should close the school?</p>	<p>Patrick Leeson – it is unacceptable that any school should be inadequate. Yes, this school has had an unacceptable history. KCC ensured the leadership team was changed. Swale Trust have done a good job and the quality of teaching has got better. However, this is in a short period of time and we still believe that if Ofsted were to come into the school tomorrow the judgement would be a failing school.</p> <p>I have had several conversations with Ana Gibson, there is improvement but not enough to secure significantly improved GCSE results in 2016. This is as a result of poor teaching in the past, which was not addressed.</p>
Kevin Lincoln	Why were parents not informed that KCC were concerned about the leadership of the school?	<p>David Adams – KCC did work with the leadership team and intervened when improvement was not there. This is not carried out in a public way as this would destroy parental confidence.</p>

Name	Question	Response
	<p>What in % terms does PV's deficit represent for KCC's education budget?</p> <p>Why not close year on year?</p> <p>Many of the Nepalese community do not speak English and this is disadvantaging this community. Give AG and her team a chance.</p>	<p>Patrick Leeson – all schools should have regular parents meetings, reports, annual reports available on schools websites. This information should have been widely available. My staff have been working with this school. There have been changes in terms of governance and leadership.</p> <p>Patrick Leeson – That isn't the issue. The issue is the money has to come from other Kent schools.</p> <p>Patrick Leeson – This is not feasible. There will be year on year reductions and limits on curriculum offer.</p> <p>Patrick Leeson – Ana Gibson and her team have made improvements. However, if we don't do anything the staff will have to be reduced, the curriculum will be cut and the opportunities for students will become less and less. I recognise that it sounds odd to close this school and then open a new school, but Pent valley is not viable in its current form and with such a deficit. The Government's policy is for any new school to be a free school.</p>
Mr Bullen	My daughter is in the first year of her 6 th form course and there is no other course available to her. She is being told she has to start again. You say you are going to look at this on a case by case basis. When will we find out what is on offer? She excelled at PV. She is in turmoil.	Patrick Leeson – if it is not possible for EKC to offer the provision required we will make sure that provision is made and we will fund it. If necessary we will consider continuing provision at this school. We are looking at this and will let you know in the next few weeks, we will try and do this as quickly as possible.
V Chapman	Money is being spent all over the place. Where is it coming from? You're throwing it everywhere else, uniforms, travel, why can't you put it into PV?	Patrick Leeson – funding moves with the pupil when they move. There is not enough funding to make sure this school has a sustainable future. It needs a fresh start. Travel and uniform costs are small in comparison. New school will open from the bottom up and grow.
Parent	<p>If the school continues in its current format, what will the debt be in two to three years' time?</p> <p>How long would it take to get the numbers up?</p>	<p>Patrick Leeson –3m plus.</p> <p>Ana Gibson – It would take at least 5 years to get the numbers up, to increase confidence in the school.</p>

Name	Question	Response
	Can we sacrifice Coolinge Lane?	<p>We would need 180 children not dribs and drabs. We need to be staffed and funded for this number per year group. It takes 5 years.</p> <p>Patrick Leeson - we cannot do that. It's a one-off payment. It wouldn't give you guaranteed funding year on year. A dramatic increase in numbers is the only answer.</p>
Neil Jones	I think my question has been answered in part about protecting the land here and the playing field in Coolinge Lane. You have given us assurances regarding the land, would you be prepared to covenant the land in perpetuity for education use.	<p>PL – I can't say we will covenant the land, as that would not be my decision that would be for KCC elected members. Land will be retained for educational use and will not be disposed of. It's a decision for KCC Elected Members. You have a formal assurance that the land and the building here will be retained for educational use.</p> <p>Leyland Ridings – I Chair the EYPS Cabinet Committee and there will be a formal recommendation from my Committee to the Cabinet Member that the land will be retained for educational use.</p>
Y12 Student	I started A levels this year. Why can't I stay here? I need a Yes or No. I need to complete the rest of my course but I will have to travel to Canterbury. This will cost £20 or more a week. Will you pay for travel costs?	<p>Patrick Leeson – I don't think it's reasonable to have to go Canterbury. We will do everything we can. Maybe the solution is not EKC. We will speak to you on an individual basis. It is our responsibility to find the right solution for you. You should be able to do your courses here.</p>
Parent	What happens to my son when I refuse his place?	<p>David Adams – I suggest you don't refuse the place yet. You are entitled to look at other schools and go onto their waiting lists. There will be some swapping as places are rejected. If you reject without securing another place, there is no certainty you will have a place. We have tried to re-assure parents there is a school place available and I accept some parents will not be happy with that place. Speak to our admissions team and talk this through. I am happy to arrange for our admissions team to come back into school in order for you to discuss your individual case.</p>
Mrs Penfold	Will you fund places elsewhere?	<p>Patrick Leeson – Yes.</p>

Name	Question	Response
Joe Fishlock	Hawkinge and Folkestone have twice the population that Dover has. Dover has 3 secondary schools. BHP serves Hythe and surrounding areas. How is that fair when not long ago residents living nearby FA were moaning about cars being parked on the pavements? How will the academy cope? What about future housing?	David Adams – I can't comment if your figures are right or wrong. We are aware of housing development. Housing is going on in every District across the County. The difference at the moment is that schools in Dover have more stable pupil populations; none are full apart from the Grammar schools, so vacancies are not concentrated in one school. This is not the same for Shepway. Numbers are declining in Pent Valley as parents have chosen locally to send their children elsewhere. The Academy has the physical space to cope.
Parent of Y7 Karen Smith	You knew last year this school was going to close and yet you let Y7s come here. You are proposing to pay for school uniforms and travel. For one year or for more years?	David Adams – We did not know this proposal would come forward; a decision had not been made at that point. The proposal went to Cabinet Committee in December and the decision was made to proceed to consultation. In respect of Transport KCC policy will be applied. DA ran through KCC policy and advised parents to discuss with the transport department. Uniform – KCC will fund one set of compulsory uniform where the items differ from PV's.
Claire Potts	Your presentation earlier mentioned a meeting with the Academy in January but there was no date. When will we know?	David Adams – we wrote to parents recently with dates at both BHP and FA. The Academy has written out to all parents . There was a meeting last week for pupils allocated BHP where parents attended and FA had their Year 7 parents meeting last week. If you think you have not received this letter please talk to me afterwards and we will make sure you get the letters.

David Adams ran through the consultation timeline.

Both David Adams and Patrick Leeson thanked everyone for attending.

Approximately 150 people attended the meeting.

RESPONSE FROM THE GOVERNING BODY OF PENT VALLEY TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

Kent County Council's proposal to close Pent Valley Technology College was met with considerable disbelief, shock and dismay by the Governing Body, staff, parents/carers, students and the local community in December 2015, particularly as KCC had stated quite clearly in June 2015 (six months previously) that the School would not close. While, as a Governing Body, we understand a number of the reasons put forward to **consult** on the School's closure, we are very unhappy with the speed at which the actual closure is taking place, even before the consultation period is over!

After due consideration we have decided neither to uphold nor oppose KCC's proposal to close the School. It is evident that, although a consultation is taking place to ensure KCC follows its statutory duties, most of the work involved in closing the School is already underway – staff have left, a number of students have already transferred to other schools, redundancy notices are imminent and Year 6 parents have, understandably, voted with their feet and selected other schools for their children. **In other words it is a "done deal"**.

Despite this we would like to put on record that as a Governing Body **we originally agreed unanimously to oppose the closure**, as is our legal right. However, following a number of veiled threats including that of removal as a Governing Body by KCC or that Ofsted would be "called in" if we were to oppose the closure and, as a result, some considerable soul searching and reflection, we have decided to abstain. To remove us as a Governing Body and establish an Interim Executive Board, unfamiliar with the School, would incur considerable administrative time, energy and **cost** to the **tax payer** and if Ofsted were to visit Pent Valley then further unnecessary costs would be incurred. Furthermore neither scenario would be in the best interest of staff, parents/carers, students or the local community.

As a Governing Body we recognise that our first responsibility is to the staff, parents/carers and students and it is important that we remain in situ for the duration of Pent Valley Technology College's life. We are members of the public who for a variety of commendable reasons have invested much of our own **free** time to help turn the School around over the past year. We are passionate about the School and we want to see that it provides the best possible education to the students that remain until July 2017.

However we would like to make the following observations which we hope will be given due consideration by KCC:

1. GOOD FROM OFSTED:

Pent Valley Technology College received a 'Good' from Ofsted in January 2013.

2. PRAISED FOR ITS VOCATIONAL PROVISION

Pent Valley Technology College has prided itself on its vocational provision. Indeed it has been unique in the Folkestone area in offering both vocational and work related subjects alongside the traditional academic subjects. This has enabled students to follow a variety of pathways to gain relevant qualifications before entering the world of employment, or moving on to further or higher education. However, this position and the important alternatives it offered to academic achievement was dealt a significant blow by changes to the BTEC qualifications in 2014. (Ref: The Wolfe Report).

It was heartening to hear Sir Michael Wilshaw, Chief Inspector of Schools In England and Head of Ofsted, state recently (January 18, 2016) **that vocational provision should have a greater status nationwide** so that the talents of non-academic students are not wasted and he warned that the “one-size fits all” model leaves behind young people who do not succeed in exams.

To its credit Pent Valley has always felt it important to fulfil this vital need in the community and to equip its students for life and work, especially as its catchment area is one of high unemployment. Indeed, less than a year ago (March 2015) Pent Valley signed an agreement with East Kent College which was to ensure a better delivery of vocational subjects to students at both colleges. And this was supported by KCC:

Paul Carter, Leader KCC: *“Kent County Council is delighted to support this ground-breaking partnership which sees East Kent College and Pent Valley joining forces. In bringing together their specialisms, high quality teaching and resources, the school and college will transform technical curriculum pathways in the Shepway area.”*

3. GOOD GCSE RESULTS

Up until 2014 Pent Valley Technology College students were achieving good GCSE results.

Percentage achieving 5+ A*-C GCSEs (or equivalent) including English and Maths GCSEs	2011	2012	2013
Pent Valley	40%	48%	40%

However, the School fell victim to the changes to the GCSE examination system, which were introduced at very short notice in 2014. This impacted hard on Pent Valley students (c.47% of students are on Free School Meals, 21% of students do not have English as their first language and 30% are Special Needs students) as it did on many LA supported schools across the county. (Ofsted Dashboard, Unvalidated November 2015 – Years 7-11).

4. GOOD REPUTATION FOR POST 16

Pent Valley Technology College has a good reputation in terms of its Post 16 outcomes with many of its students going on to study at university: indeed a record number of students in 2014 continued to university and higher education (around 50%).

Year	No of students continuing to university
2012	27
2013	33
2014	35
2015	32

It also has a good track record for vocational Level 2 courses and is proud to be the only secondary institution in the immediate area offering this option. Some students are able to spend three years in Pent Valley’s Post 16 provision and the variety of courses on offer has enabled them to follow a range of pathways to gain relevant qualifications before successfully entering the world of employment.

5. EXCELLENT SUPPORT FOR SEN AND VULNERABLE STUDENTS

Pent Valley offers excellent support and education to its SEN and vulnerable students (Special Educational Needs students: 12.39%, Pupil Premium students: 41.59%, Free School Meals students: 23.01%, English as an additional language students: 22.30% and Looked After students: 3%). Indeed, this has been recognised in the very recent past:

"Safeguarding arrangements are detailed and thorough and meet statutory requirements. The SCR is presented well and is accurate and senior managers ensure that staff undergo all relevant training." Bill Stoneham, Kent LA, December 2014

Parents/carers with SEN or Vulnerable children have been highly vocal in their praise for the provision Pent Valley makes for their children. One mother (whose four SEN children have attended Pent Valley) stated at the recent Public Consultation meeting (January 18, 2016) that it was the *"perfect place for my children"*. Others have felt their children were in a safe and secure environment, were happy and in many cases achieving well.

6. 100% SUPPORT FROM THE STAFF FOR PENT VALLEY

Responses to a recent staff survey, undertaken by the Governing Body at the end of June 2015, revealed that 100% of the staff thought that the school was well led and well managed and that they were proud to be a member of staff at Pent Valley. 94% felt that behaviour was good. 88% felt that the leadership team was keen to help staff improve and appropriate provision was made for their professional development.

7. SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS AT THE SCHOOL

Since September 2014 the Governing Body has been working with the Senior Leadership of the School to improve outcomes for students, and in particular following the Warning Notice which it received in February 2015. In April 2015 a new Executive Head, Headteacher and Senior Leadership team were appointed and since then remarkable changes have taken place in the School including:

- ✓ **Attendance:** It is currently one of the top performing schools in the county with 95.7% reported by the Headteacher as at January 18, 2016.
- ✓ **Behaviour:** It has greatly improved. This was acknowledged in a Teaching and Learning Review (November 12 & 13 2015) undertaken by Kent LA.
- ✓ **Teaching:** It has improved in leaps and bounds. The most recent data reveals 58% of teaching is good and at the next review in March 2016 the Headteacher is confident that this will rise to 70%.
- ✓ **Learning:** As a result of improvements in behaviour and teaching, learning has also been improving and this was acknowledged in the Teaching and Learning Review (November 12 & 13 2015) undertaken by Kent LA.

In particular, Year 7 students are making good progress and Year 11 students are working well towards their GCSEs, with the Headteacher predicting 30% of students achieving an A*-C in English and Maths in the forthcoming exams, which is a superb turn around. (cf. 15% in 2015)

- ✓ **Attainment:** Students understand and feel proud of their achievements and this can be evidenced by the Progress Charts in the School corridor. Students think they are good and one student, when questioned, was adamant that although he was in the bottom section that he was going to work *"really hard"* to ensure he was moved up by the end of the term.

- ✓ **General atmosphere:** In the classrooms and in the playground there is a sense of calm and purpose. All are eager to improve and this has been witnessed not only by Governing Body school visits but also recognised in the Teaching and Learning Review (November 12 & 13 2015) undertaken by Kent LA: *“students say that high expectations of behaviour are more consistent throughout the school and staff say that they have more support in managing behaviour. There was significantly less off task behaviour seen during this review.”*
- ✓ **Improvement** Pent Valley has made substantial and significant progress in ALL AREAS as has been noted in In the Teaching Learning Review (November 12 & 13 2015). *“This is a much-improved school”*.

In short, the achievements by staff and students have been remarkable in a very short space of time - a mere six months. All the vital signs clearly demonstrate that Pent Valley has been moving in the right direction and at a rapid pace.

8. KCC ACTING IN HASTE

Following on from Point 7 it is clear that KCC has acted in haste by not allowing the School an adequate chance to demonstrate how it can improve and provide students with the education and options they need and deserve. It should be noted that other LA schools in the area have been given over two years to improve and are still showing a decline in their GCSE results.

9. VICTIM OF EXPANSION BY OTHER LOCAL SCHOOLS

There is little doubt that Pent Valley has been a victim of the way in which Brockhill Park and the Folkestone Academy, as well as nearby grammar schools, have been allowed to increase their Year 7 intake in a completely unfettered and unregulated manner. Indeed, some have what could be deemed an aggressive expansion strategy e.g. Folkestone Academy 6th form transfer to new buildings. Again, unregulated.

Pent Valley has also been disadvantaged by KCC’s pre-empting of the School’s closure and enabling student transfers to other local schools.

By closing Pent Valley parental choice (a requirement of the Department of Education) is being limited even further than it is already in the locality.

10. WHY THE £1.5 MILLION REFURBISHMENT?

We fail to understand why KCC sanctioned a £1.5 million refurbishment over the summer period if it intended to close the School. However, we do concede that the money has been well spent and added to the positive atmosphere in the School.

11. WHY THE HURRY TO CLOSE THE SCHOOL?

What has changed in the last few months since the summer of 2015 that has altered KCC’s mind? In June 2015, we recall KCC stating categorically, at a Parent Meeting, that the School would not be closed.

If the Pent Valley brand is, as KCC says, “irrevocably broken” why did Swale Academies Trust agree to step in to support the School last March 2015 at very short notice and invest it with

excellent staff, considerable management time and commitment? They knew they could turn it around given sufficient time and have proved it already in just 6 months.

12. FINANCIAL VIABILITY – FIGURES DON'T ADD UP WHEN ONE CONSIDERS IT IS GOING TO COST APPROXIMATELY £5.9 MILLION TO CLOSE THE SCHOOL

The argument that the School is no longer financially viable is a strong one, and while we recognise that the School has a £2.14 million deficit (which includes a £1.5 million loan from KCC for the refurbishment), when one considers the costs involved in closing the School - including staff redundancy costs, new uniforms for students, transport costs for students, moth balling the building, and the costs to keep the School open until August 2017 - the figures don't seem to add up.

KCC estimates that it is going to cost c. £5.9 million to close the School as against the costs of keeping it open until the next uplift in Year 7 intake comes. Meanwhile it is happy to hand over c. £1 million to two local schools so they can accept Pent Valley students!

KCC appears to be playing two cards. On the one hand we are told that schools cannot have a deficit budget and that Pent Valley is not viable financially, based on the projected 2016 Year 7 intake. In addition, the cost of running Pent Valley for a number of years at a deficit will disadvantage every other Kent LA maintained School. But on the other hand KCC is happy to write off almost £6 million with the closure of the School!

13. WHY CLOSE A SCHOOL WHEN DEMAND FOR PLACES IS GOING TO EXPLODE?

The increase in demand for secondary school places is going to explode in the very near future in the Folkestone area. New primary schools are being built, and those that exist are full. More houses are being built which will result in more secondary school places being required. What is the rationale for closing a school which is currently in existence and improving and which would be in a position to accept students when required?

14. UTMOST CONCERN REGARDING PROVISION FOR SEN AND VULNERABLE STUDENTS

Sadly, KCC has not provided the Governing Body or parents with any robust assurances that our SEN and Vulnerable students will be catered for adequately at any of the proposed transfer schools, nor have they outlined how these students will be supported or how the transition will take place. This is of utmost concern for us, staff and parents/carers and was raised numerous times at the Public Meeting on January 18, 2016.

15. SIGNIFICANT CONCERN REGARDING POST 16 SUPPORT

Much emphasis has been put on GCSE attainment and how Year 11 will be managed in 2016/17 for those students who remain. However, little, if anything – until January 27 - appeared to be put in place for our 6th form students, a number of whom are hoping to sit exams in subjects which are not provided for at any other local school.

We are pleased by the reassurances from KCC that provision is now to be made for Year 13 at Pent Valley as this ensures that our 6th form students will be able to continue their learning on site and to pursue the subjects of their choice.

However, this process has created untold stress and upset for students and parents, and unnecessarily.

We sincerely hope KCC will take our observations on board and robustly adhere to the promises it has made to staff, parents/carers, and students in the past months including:

- ✓ Free travel to new schools for the duration of the students' schooling
- ✓ The school playing fields at Coolinge Lane will not be sold
- ✓ The existing school premises and land will be retained for educational purposes and not sold for redevelopment
- ✓ Year 13 students will be supported
- ✓ Folkestone Academy and Brockhill Park will be commissioned to have the right support for all SEN students who transfer from Pent Valley and that KCC will track their progress

We as a Governing Body are supporting the staff and students who have worked so hard over the past six months to prove that they can achieve great things and that:

THE PENT VALLEY SPIRIT IS FAR FROM BROKEN.

**SIGNED FOR AND BEHALF OF THE FOLLOWING GOVERNORS OF PENT VALLEY BY
PENELOPE JAMES, VICE-CHAIR**

Michael Chisnall, Chair
Penelope James, Vice-Chair
Keith Jones
Bernie Mayall
Daniel Stapley
Laurence Wells

Penelope James, Vice-Chair

Date: February 2, 2016

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Roger Gough,
Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform

DECISION NO:

15/00114

For publication

Subject: Proposal to Close Pent Valley Technology College

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform I agree to:

Issue a public notice to close Pent Valley Technology College from September 2016 for current Years 7, 8, 9 and 11 from 31 August 2016 and for all years from August 2017.

And following the ending of the public notice period:

Approve the closure of Pent Valley Technology College from September 2016 for current Years 7, 8, 9 and 11 from 31 August 2016 and for all years from August 2017.

Should objections, not already considered by me 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 a proper consideration of the points raised.

Reason(s) for decision:

In reaching this decision I have taken into account:

- the views expressed by those attending the public consultation meeting on 18 January 2016, and those put in writing in response to the consultation;
- the views of the local County Councillors and the Governing Body of Pent Valley Technology College;
- the Equalities Impact Assessment and comments received regarding this; and
- the views of the Education and Young People's Services Cabinet Committee which are set out below.

Financial Implications

- a. Capital - Nil
- b. Revenue – The estimated costs of closing Pent Valley Technology College are £5.9m. This includes writing off the predicted £3.7m debt of the School, redundancy costs, securing the site, terminating service contracts, and retention payments for staff remaining until August 2017. The figure also includes providing pupil level funding for Folkestone Academy and Brockhill Park Performing Arts College. We are currently in discussion with the Education Funding Agency as to whether they will meet this cost (£1m) as both schools are academies.
- c. Human – The School currently employs 162 staff. If the proposal is implemented, all staff will be made redundant. This will happen from 31 August 2016, except for 24 teachers and 36 support staff who will have deferred redundancies until 31 August 2017.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

To be added after Committee meeting

Any alternatives considered:

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

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Signed

Date