

From: **Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director for Education and Young People's Services**

To: **Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education & Health Reform**

Subject: **Proposal to make changes to Stone Bay (Community Special) School - 16/00141**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Past Pathway of Paper: None

Future Pathway of Paper: Cabinet Member decision

Electoral Division: Broadstairs and Sir Moses Montefiore
Alan Terry and Zita Wiltshire

Summary: This report informs Members of a proposal to make changes to Stone Bay School. Public consultation has started and ends on 6 February 2017

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform is asked to endorse the decision to:

- a) Authorise the Corporate Director - Education and Young People's Services to issue Public Notice to:
 - Change the age range of the school from 11-19 years to 8-19 years
 - Increase the designated number of the school from 66 to 80
 - Change the residential placements from fortnightly to weekly boarding, Monday to Thursday, term time only. The maximum number of residential places will be 30.
- b) Allocate funding from the Education and Young People's Service Capital budget for the accommodation works. Members will be informed of the estimated cost at the meeting;
- c) Authorise the Director of Infrastructure in consultation with the General Counsel (Interim) to enter into any necessary contracts/ agreements on behalf of the County Council; and
- d) Authorise the Director of Infrastructure to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts. Variations to contract value to be no more than 10% above the capital funding agreed by the Cabinet Member without requiring a new Record Of Decision.

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

1. Introduction

1.1 Stone Bay School was re-designated and expanded in 2005 to become an 11-19 residential provision for boys and girls with Severe Communication Needs, Autism and Severe Learning Difficulties for the County, and a day school for East Kent.

1.2 These proposals are coming forward for the following reasons:

- a) Financial – the school has worked extremely hard to manage the costs of running the residential provision in a climate of reducing referrals but this has resulted in the costs of opening and staffing the school for the weekend not being covered and having to be subsidised from the school's education budget. This has, in the past, played a part in the school accruing a significant debt and having to work within a deficit budget. It is not financially viable, given low numbers and reducing referrals, to continue to offer boarding provision other than term time, four nights per week (Monday to Thursday). It is recognised that some families value the opportunity for short break support which boarding can offer, but this is not a core statutory function of the Education Authority.
- b) There are an increasing number of younger children who would benefit from the excellent provision offered at Stone Bay where pupils consistently make good progress. Providing Key Stage 2 classes within a Lower and Upper School organisation would mean that the school could work with these children at a younger age and remove the need for families having to go through the secondary transfer process.

1.3 The unexpected closure of a non-maintained provider (the Royal School for the Deaf and Westgate College) earlier in 2016 reduced the number of specialist places in East Kent. Stone Bay is well placed to provide additional places for young people with the most complex needs along with The Foreland School, where expansion plans and new accommodation are already in hand.

2. Proposal

2.1 To permanently change the age range of the school from 11-19 years to 8-19 years by establishing a lower school starting at age 8. The plans will increase the designated number of the school from 66 to 80*. The designated number will be made up as follows:

- 40 places for Lower School
- 40 places for Upper School, including post 16

** The designated number can differ from the actual commissioned number of places in any given year. The actual commissioned number reflects the need for places in that particular year and can be lower or higher than an individual school's designated number. In exceptional circumstances schools can admit over their designated number by up to 10%.*

There would be a phased opening of classes for the proposed Key Stage 2. KCC has carried out a feasibility to secure additional class bases, which will be achieved principally through reconfiguration of existing accommodation.

2.2 To make changes to the way in which the school organises the boarding provision:

- It is no longer financially viable to offer boarding provision other than term time, four nights per week (Monday to Thursday) due to the low number of referrals for fortnightly boarding and the costs compared to income for this provision.
- It is recognised that some families value the opportunity for short break support which boarding provision can offer, but this is not a core statutory function of the Education Authority.
- The maximum number of boarding places will be 30.

3. Financial Implications

- a. Capital – A feasibility study has been completed to provide the school with additional classrooms for the new Key Stage 2 provision. This involves some

reconfiguration and refurbishment of existing accommodation. The estimated cost of this work will be verbally reported at the meeting.

- b. Revenue - The school will receive increased funding through the Delegated Budget. Special schools are funded using the DfE Place Plus funding methodology for High Needs Pupils. Revenue funding will also be allocated to enable the School to resource the new classrooms. At present, this is funded at a rate of £6,000 per classroom.

An impact assessment is being undertaken to consider the human and financial implications of the proposed change from fortnightly to weekly boarding provision. The school currently has four students with fortnightly boarding. Two of these students will move to adult provision at the end of this academic year. Two students will be impacted by this decision and, should this proposal go ahead, the Local Authority will have to continue fund fortnightly boarding in another provision.

- c. Human – The School is currently going through a staff restructure as the proposals include a reduction in the residential offer. There will be a few redundancies as a result of this restructure. The Local Authority will only fund redundancies where these are necessitated by budget constraints.

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 2017-2021 sets out how we will carry out our responsibility for ensuring there are sufficient places of high quality, in the right places, for all learners and this proposal supports that aim.

4.3 The ‘Strategy for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and who are Disabled’ (SEND Strategy) “has a priority to create at least 275 additional places for ASD and BESN”

5. Consultation Outcomes

5.1 A four week public consultation is currently underway and ends on 6 February. Members will be informed of the outcome of the consultation following this date but a verbal update will be given at the meeting.

5.2 A summary of the views and comments will be provided at the end of the consultation.

5.3 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as part of the consultation. To date no comments have been received, but the impact assessment being undertaken by the Children’s Disability Team, Commissioning and the Special Educational Needs Team may require changes to be made to the current Equality Impact Assessment.

6. Views

6.1 The Local Members, Allan Terry and Zita Wiltshire, Broadstairs and Sir Moses Montefiore, have been consulted.

6.2 The view of the Headteacher and Governing Body:

The Headteacher and Governing Body support the proposals as it will secure a sustainable future for Stone Bay School, ensuring young people in Kent will continue to benefit from the outstanding provision offered by the school.

6.3 The view of the Area Education Officer:

Stone Bay School has previously had to cater for the occasional Year 5 or Year 6 student. Providing Key Stage 2 classes on a permanent basis would enable the school to structure staffing appropriately and help to meet the needs of the increasing number of younger children who would benefit from the specialist provision offered at Stone Bay.

The number of students taking up the offer of fortnightly boarding has reduced considerably over the last few years resulting in this no longer being a financially viable option for the school to offer and impacting on the school's overall budget position.

7. Delegation to Officers

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

8. Conclusions

8.1 These proposals will support the school to become sustainable for the future and provide specialist Key Stage 2 places to meet the local need.

9. Recommendation(s): The Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform is asked to endorse the decision to:

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raised.

10. Background Documents

10.1 Vision and Priorities for Improvement

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

10.2 Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2016-20

www.kent.gov.uk/educationprovision

10.3 SEND Strategy

www.kent.gov.uk/sendstrategy

10.4 Consultation Document and Equalities Impact Assessment.

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

11. Contact details

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