

**From:** Richard Long, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills  
Matt Dunkley CBE, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education

**To:** Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee – 11 March 2020

**Subject:** Proposal to add a 168-place satellite provision of The Beacon Folkestone at the former Walmer Science College, increasing the designated number of The Beacon Folkestone from 380 places to a total 548 places.

**Decision No:** 20/00001

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of Paper:** None

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

**Electoral Division:** All

**Summary:**

This report informs members of a proposal to add a 168-place satellite provision of The Beacon Folkestone at the former Walmer Science College, increasing the designated number of the Beacon Folkestone to a total of 548 places.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to **CONSIDER, ENDORSE or MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS** to the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills on the proposed decision to:

- i. Expand The Beacon Folkestone by opening a satellite provision at the former Walmer Science College and increasing the designated number of the School from 380 places to 548 places;
- ii. issue a public notice in regard to the proposal as set out in (i) above;
- iii. release the funding required from the Children's, Young People and Education Capital Budget to implement the proposal; and
- iv. delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education to take necessary actions, including but not limited to entering into necessary contracts or taking other legal actions as required, to implement the decision.

**1. Introduction**

**1.1** Kent County Council (KCC) as the Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places are available. The County Council's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2020-24 is a five-year rolling Plan which is updated annually. It sets out our future plans as Strategic Commissioner of Education Provision across all types and phases of education in Kent. A copy of the Plan can be viewed from this link:

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

- 1.2 The Local Authority is responsible for maintaining Educational Health Care Plans (EHCPs), not only for statutory school aged children but for children and young people between the ages of 0-25 years. Across Kent, the number of pupils with an EHCP has increased significantly which is having an impact on the need for places within our special schools and the specialist resourced provisions (SRPs) within mainstream schools.
- 1.3 Kent's SEND Strategy 2017 to 2019 is currently being refreshed. It will set out Kent's vision and intentions for the next few years and identify how they will be achieved. Kent's current strategy sets out its intention to provide additional places for pupils with needs in the following areas:
- Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
  - Speech and language and communication needs (SLCN)
  - Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)

## 2. Background

- 2.1 Across Kent, the number of pupils with an EHCP has increased significantly. Figure 1 shows that, as of January 2015, there were 7,374 pupils aged between 0-25 years of age with an EHCP, by January 2019 the number had increased to 11,763, an increase of 60%. There have been significant increases across all need types but particularly for Autism Spectrum Disorder, Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs, Speech, Language & Communication Needs and Moderate Learning Difficulties. The increase in the number of pupils with an ECHP is having an impact on the need for places within our special schools and the SRPs within mainstream schools. This is being particularly felt within our schools designated as PSCN, such as The Beacon Folkestone, which provide for pupils that have more than one need type.

**Figure 1: Increase in the Number and Percentage of ECHPs by Need Type 2014-15 to 2018-19**

Need Type	2014-2015	2018-2019	Increase since 2014-15	Percentage increase since 2014-15
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	2,671	4,742	2071	77.5
Social, Emotional and Mental Health	1,262	2,092	830	65.8
Speech, Language & Communication Needs	1,089	1,815	726	66.7
Moderate Learning Difficulty	533	824	291	54.6
Severe Learning Difficulties	698	891	193	27.7
Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulties	253	359	106	41.9
Physical Disability	491	559	68	13.8
Specific Learning Difficulties	130	196	66	50.8
Hearing Impairment	161	182	21	13.0
Visual Impairment	85	97	12	14.1
Multi-Sensory Impairment	1	6	5	500.0
<b>Total - All Primary Needs</b>	<b>7,374</b>	<b>11,763</b>	<b>4,389</b>	<b>59.5</b>

- 2.2 Access to a maintained special school place in Dover is limited by the fact that the two special schools in the District, The Elms and Portal House, both cater for pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs (SEMH). There is no special school designated to cater for PSCN; Dover and Dartford being the only 2 of the 12 districts in Kent not to have such a facility. Instead, Dover has two specialist resourced provisions (SRPs) designated for pupils with PSCN at Whitfield Aspen Primary School and at Dover Christ Church Academy. To support the increasing need for specialist places for pupils with PSCN within the District, particularly in the primary sector, the designated number of places available at Whitfield Aspen Primary School has grown from 58 in 2014 to 112 in 2019. However, this is clearly still not sufficient, as at January 2020 there were 128 pupils on roll in the SRP. The designated number at Dover Christ Church Academy is 40 and presently there are 54 pupils on roll. As pupils leave the primary sector there are insufficient local specialist places and pupils have to travel out of the District to receive appropriate support. This has become an increasing issue as larger primary school rolls enter the secondary sector. Opening a satellite of the Beacon at the Walmer site will go some way to ensuring there is sufficient specialist provision for pupils with PSCN within Dover district.
- 2.3 The pressure for PSCN places has not been limited to one need type. We have particular pressures for provision which will support needs of pupils with combined Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) or Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD). The buildings at the former Walmer Science College would be more suited to these need types.
- 2.4 The need to add additional ASD provision has been highlighted. In June 2019 the plan to add ASD provision via the commissioning of a new 168 place ASD provision within the former Walmer Science College building was brought to the attention of the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee. This was incorporated in a report which outlined how Officers proposed to allocate the additional £4,600,000 funding from the Government's Special Provision Capital Fund to increase specialist ASD provision across the County. The report can be accessed here:

[https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s91100/Item%2011%20-%20Final%20Special Provision Capital Fund CYPECC ReportFinal.pdf](https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s91100/Item%2011%20-%20Final%20Special%20Provision%20Capital%20Fund%20CYPECC%20ReportFinal.pdf)

### **3. The proposal**

- 3.1 We are proposing to open a 168 place satellite of The Beacon Folkestone at Walmer Science College, formally a mainstream secondary school which was vacated in August 2018. We plan to refurbish the buildings in phases, with the aim that the initial provision is open in September 2020.
- 3.2 Initial, high level feasibilities have shown that the site and present facilities at former Walmer Science College could be swiftly reinstated to provide the facilities needed for the satellite of The Beacon Folkestone. In particular, the buildings would be more suited to pupils with ASD and a combination of SLD/MLD.

- 3.3 We are planning to deliver the satellite in phases. Phase one would see complete refurbishment of the Compass Centre, to provide an Early Years and Key Stage One block with outdoor play space, and further enabling works such as: a drop off and pick up area, car parking for staff, visitors and taxis/minibuses and the removal of the ROSLA building. The addition of the enabling works at this point will increase the capital outlay required during the first phase, reducing it in further phases.

## **4. Financial Implications**

### **4.1 Capital:**

It is estimated that the total cost of the proposal will be in the region of £4,000,000. Detailed plans for the first phase have been prepared. It is estimated that £1,600,000 will be required to complete this first phase.

Capital funding of £4,000,000 towards the project has been agreed, £3,000,000 of which would be from the second tranche of the Government's Special Provision Capital Fund.

### **4.2 Revenue:**

School places will be funded in line with KCCs standard school, funding arrangements. In addition, £50,000 start-up funding has been agreed alongside the standard classroom set up grant of £6,000 per classroom. A minimum of four classrooms are expected to be set up in the first year.

## **5. Kent Policy Framework**

- 5.1: The 'Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision, 2020-24 identified the intention to commission additional SEMH places in Ashford from 2020-21.
- 5.2 The SEND Strategy 2017-19 (being refreshed presently) identified an intention to increase ASD provision.
- 5.3 Opportunities, Improving Outcomes: Kent County Council's Strategic Statement (2015-2020) identifies the need to ensure: All children and young people are engaged, thrive and achieve their potential through academic and vocational education
- 5.4. The provision of sufficient school places is a statutory duty and contributes to the Strategic Business Plan Priorities to ensure that "Children and Young People in Kent get the best start in life".

## **6. Consultation**

- 6.1 A public consultation was held between 6 January 2020 and 14 February 2020, with a public meeting for stakeholders to raise issues and concerns held on 30 January 2020. There were 24 responses to the consultation. Of the responses 24 were in support and none against. The public meeting was attended by 9 people, including Mr. Murphy, the Local Member for Deal

and Walmer. A summary of the consultation responses and the public meeting are attached as appendices 1 and 2 respectively.

The consultation included a wider variety of stakeholders including:

- All parents/carers
- All schools in the Ashford Borough, Dover District and Folkestone and Hythe District
- Elected Members
- Parish and Town Councils as applicable
- Local MPs
- Dioceses of Canterbury and Southwark
- The Clinical Commissioning Group

2.2 The responses to the public consultation were overwhelmingly in favour of the proposal. A summary of the responses received, and the issues raised at the drop-in meeting are contained in Appendix 1.

## **7. View of the Local Members**

Cllr Derek Murphy, Deal and Walmer: I wholeheartedly support the move to provide 168 special needs (PSCN) places for children at the Walmer site. This will provide a much-needed facility in our part of the County for PSCN provision.

Hopefully this will reduce travel time for many pupils, bringing back into use an excellent educational facility in line with KCCs policy to maintain the school as an educational establishment

No comment was received from Cllr Trevor Bond.

## **8. View of the Area Education Officer, David Adams**

The need for further specialist places is as evident in Dover District as it is across the County, with particular pressures for pupils who have ASD with SLD or MLD. It is increasingly challenging to find appropriate places for pupils in either our maintained special schools, or the local independent sector.

The former Walmer Science College is available to KCC as we committed to retain this facility for education purposes. Initial feasibilities have shown that, following refurbishment, the buildings would be ideally suited to the more ambulant ASD with MLD/SLD cohort. The layout of the site is such that the refurbishment can be completed in phases with the first phase, an Early Years/ Key Stage 1 facility, being available from September 2020.

The refurbishment of an existing facility will enable high quality additional specialist places to be available in a shorter timeline than would be the case if a new build was required and at a significant saving to the County Council's Capital Budget.

I have worked closely with the Governors and Staff at The Beacon Folkestone for a number of years. I am of the opinion that they are in the position to expand their current outstanding provision onto a second site.

## **9. The view of the Headteacher and Governing Body**

### **Headteacher, Neil Birch**

We are delighted to be developing this new provision alongside the local authority. There is a long accepted need for a special school in the Deal area and developing a satellite of The Beacon Folkestone, would allow us to be providing education for these young people in the environment in which they live rather than travel to Folkestone, Dover or Canterbury. This will be an exciting addition to the educational landscape in the town and we are very pleased to potentially be a part of that landscape.

Although currently set for 168 students, our work with the local authority SEN team indicates that there is the need for a larger number of students on roll. Current planning suggests that 168 may meet some of the initial need, however forecast planning indicates the need for potentially 240 students at the provision and we believe that we should be looking to provide to this level of district need at this point. The site can certainly manage a larger provision and all indicators are that by investing once, and getting it right, then there will be financial savings above building for 168 now and having to expand at a later date. We will continue to work closely with colleagues in SEN admissions and the Area Office to ensure that we provide not only the best possible quality of education but also accurately meet the demand for special school places in the area in the future.

We have already started to build on our existing links with mainstream schools in the area and they are delighted to be working with us and we look forward to ensuring that new provision works closely with all schools to ensure that it becomes a fundamental part of education in Deal. The phasing of the opening will allow this to happen in a planned and structured way as well as meeting need as soon as is possible given the remodelling of the building needed. By starting with an early years/Key stage 1 provision in September 2020 we can begin to create a fantastic provision that will grow to a full occupation over time. We are looking forward to being part of this exciting development and to being part of educational provision for the Dover/Deal area.

### **Julie Nixon, Chair of Governors**

As a governing body we have been frustrated by the capacity issues we have at the Beacon Folkestone. We are frequently approached by parents who would like their children to access our outstanding school but are unable to offer places to them as we are full and have no option to expand our setting.

We were excited to hear about the option of developing a further provision in Walmer, Deal. Particularly welcoming the opportunity to keep some of our pupils within their local communities rather than having them travel across the county to us. As a governing body we have discussed the implications of

this and we all have confidence in our Senior Leadership team in opening a new provision without negatively impacting on our current school. The Beacon's leaders successfully planned and opened our current school while they continued to provide outstanding provision in our previous settings. We have been very impressed with the success of our partnership with Castle Hill in establishing a Satellite to our school and are keen to continue looking outwards. We strongly believe that our ethos and drive can be replicated elsewhere.

The proposal is for 168 places, which would provide 1FE of primary provision and 2FE at secondary. We believe that providing 2FE of provision at primary and 2FE at secondary, 240 places in total, would be a better school structure and would improve the offer for children in Kent who are in desperate need of specialist provision.

## 10. Equalities Impact Assessment

An EqIA was completed as part of the consultation process and found that the proposal has an overall positive impact as it will increase the number of outstanding special school places available for pupils with an EHCP for PSCN, in particular those who have ASD/SLD/MLD or a combination of these needs. It will also release capacity in The Beacon Folkestone and other PSCN provisions for other need types.

Analysis shows that girls will be less likely to benefit from this proposal than boys. As of September 2019, there were 1,880 boys and 845 girls on roll in the nine PSCN special schools across the County.

<https://kccconsultations.inconsult.uk/consult.ti/beaconwalmer/consultationHome>

## 11. Recommendation(s)

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## 12. Background Documents (plus links to document)

12.1 Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes: Kent County Council's Strategic Statement 2015-2020

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-thecouncil/strategies-and-policies/corporate-policies/increasing-opportunitiesimproving-outcomes>

12.2 Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision

[www.kent.gov.uk/educationprovision](http://www.kent.gov.uk/educationprovision)

### **13. Contact details**

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