

SCHOOL ORGANISATION ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES of a meeting of the School Organisation Advisory Board held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 12 June 2008.

PRESENT: Mrs V J Dagger (Chairman), Mr R B Burgess (Vice-Chairman), Mrs C Angell, Mr C J Capon, Mr A D Crowther, Mr M J Northey, Mr A R Poole and Mr I S Chittenden (Substitute for Mr M J Vye)

IN ATTENDANCE: Dr I Craig (Director Strategy Policy & Performance), Mr M Doole (Area Education Officer Thanet & Dover) and Jones (Area Education Officer Maidstone, Ton.& Mall.)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

- 1. Declarations of Interests by Members in items on the Agenda for this meeting.**
(Item. 2)

The Chairman, Mrs Dagger, declared an interest in this item as she was a Local Member for Wrotham School.

- 2. Minutes - 7 May 2008**
(Item. 3)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 May 2008 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

- 3. The Proposed Relocation of Grange Park School, Leybourne, West Malling to the Wrotham School Site**
(Item. 5)

(1) The report sought the views of the Board on undertaking a Public Consultation concerning a proposal to relocate Grange Park School to a site within the grounds of Wrotham School.

(2) As part of the review and reorganisation of special schools in Kent, Grange Park School in West Malling was re-designated in 2004 from being a school for 55 pupils with 'Severe, Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties' from the ages of 11-19 years, to become a provision for 'Severe Communication Needs associated with a combination of Autism and Severe Learning Difficulties' for boys and girls aged 11-16. The roll remained at 55. Additional places were added to meet the needs of post-16 provision, based at Holmesdale School in Snodland.

(3) The school was currently based in 1970s single-storey buildings of SEAC construction and was located in Leybourne, West Malling. The buildings were considered inadequate for their re-designated purpose. The site was too restricted to accommodate further mobile accommodation. The existing building footprint now

contained an outside learning environment, and sports facilities. The needs of the particular pupils required small class sizes and the availability of 'break-out' spaces. The site which the school currently occupied was too small to accommodate the facilities which the school required. Recently, the school's utility services had been seriously affected by the adjacent housing development.

(4) Wrotham School was a Specialist Humanities Secondary School, which was situated between the villages of Borough Green and Wrotham. The school gained specialist status for humanities in September 2005. Wrotham was a Foundation School which held its land and buildings in Trust. The proposed relocation of Grange Park School onto the Wrotham School site would not affect the operation of Wrotham School, neither would it occupy too much of the school's site. Grange Park School would be a separate and self-contained school with its own headteacher, governing body and staff. Wrotham School's existing site area was approximately 82,511m². The minimum requirement for a school of its size was 51,440m². Grange Park School would require a site area of approximately 11,825m². There was currently a surplus site area of 31,017m² on the Wrotham site, sufficient space to accommodate Grange Park School in a building with the capacity to accommodate a maximum of 55 pupils.

(5) The Local Authority had been in discussion with the headteacher and governors of Grange Park School during recent years about the school's location. Other site options had been considered during this period, but they had proved to be inappropriate. Wrotham School was recently identified as a suitable site for the relocation of Grange Park School. Early discussions had taken place with both headteachers and Chair of Governors regarding the possible relocation. The governing body at Wrotham School agreed, in principle, with the proposal.

(6) The proposal was to relocate Grange Park School from its existing site in Leybourne, West Malling, into a new 2,000sqm school building on the Wrotham School site with a target date of September 2009. The new school would be built to accommodate 55 boys and girls from the ages 11-16 and would be designed to be a 'school for the future', able to meet the requirements of the curriculum now and in the future. There were three potential locations for the new school on the Wrotham school site. Jacobs Babbie had been commissioned to carry out the feasibility studies on all three locations.

(7) The local members, Mrs S Hohler and Mrs V Dagger fully supported the proposal and their views were set out in the report.

(8) The capital costs of building the new school would be in the region of £4m. It was expected that the funding to facilitate the new build would come from the Special School Review budget. There would not be any costs involved in acquiring land from the Governing Body of Wrotham School. All staff and pupils would transfer across to the school at its new site and it was not anticipated that job contracts would be affected.

(9) The Board supported the proposal that there should be a public consultation on the possible relocation of Grange Park (Special) School from its existing site at Leybourne, West Malling to an identified site at Wrotham School.

4. Portal House (Special) School Proposed Relocation - Outcome of Public Consultation

(Item. 4)

(1) Further to Minute 4 of 10 January 2008, the report set out the results of the public consultation on the proposal to relocate Portal House School. It sought the views of the Board on the issuing of a public notice to relocate the school to purpose built accommodation on the site of the former Newington Infant School in Ramsgate.

(2) The proposal was to relocate Portal House School from its existing site at St Margaret's-at-Cliffe near Dover to the site of the former Newington Infant School, on the Newington Estate in Thanet. Potentially, staff at Portal House would transfer to the new location. There would be no compulsory redundancies.

(3) The consultation document was distributed to staff, governors and parents at the schools, County Councillors, Member of Parliament, the Parish Council, the Diocesan Authorities, local libraries, the District Councils and others in accordance with the agreed County policy. The document was also posted on the KCC website. Prior to discussion on this item, an amended Appendix 4 was circulated relating to the summary of written responses.

(4) Views of the local members, Mr A Poole and Mrs E Green were set out in the report.

(5) During discussion Mrs Angell expressed a wish for the Board to be provided with a dot map. Dr Craig undertook to inform Area Education Officers that such maps should be included in future.

(6) Mr Dance informed Members that there were now two further sites available, and requested the Board's support to investigating their suitability prior to any decision being made. Time was of the essence, and should a different site be more favourable, Members would be consulted informally. A report on the outcome would be submitted to a future meeting of the Board.

(7) The Board agreed that the two further sites be considered and a report be submitted to the July meeting if that was possible within the timescale.