

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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, 8 October 2009.

PRESENT: Mrs V J Dagger (Chairman), Mr D L Brazier, Mr C J Capon, Ms S J Carey, Mr M C Dance, Mr P J Homewood, Mr S J G Koowaree (Substitute for Mr M J Vye) and Mr B J Sweetland (Substitute for Mr M J Northey).

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D Adams (Area Children's Services Officer, Ashford and Shepway), Mr C Jones (Area Children's Services Officer, Maidstone and Tonbridge and Malling) and Mr M Doole (Area Children's Services Officer, Thanet and Dover) and Mr G Mills, Democratic Services.

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Minutes - 16 July 2009

(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2009 be agreed as a true record.

2. Proposed Closure of Astor of Hever (Community) School, Maidstone and its Replacement with a Government Funded Academy

(Item 4 – Report by Ms Rosalind Turner, Managing Director: Children, Families and Education)

(1) This report sought the views of the School Organisation Advisory Board on a proposal to undertake a public consultation on the closure of Astor of Hever (Community) School and its replacement with a Government funded Academy subject to Ministerial approval.

(2) Astor of Hever has been without a substantive Headteacher since April 2008. The County Council required the school to enter into a partnership with The Westlands School (a high performing high school in Kent) because of its challenging circumstances and lack of experienced senior leadership. Under this arrangement the Headteacher of Westlands School has acted as Executive Headteacher but from September 2009 a new collaboration had been established for 2009/10 with Mascalls School. In addition the existing school buildings are outdated, are a significant maintenance liability and some areas are not compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act. The proposal is therefore to develop the Astor of Hever into an Academy providing high performing comprehensive education for boys and girls of all abilities aged between 11 and 19 years located on the existing Oakwood Park campus. The intention is to develop the Academy in collaboration with neighbouring schools and developed by the sponsor Woodard Schools in consultation with the local community. If approved the Academy would be led by an Executive Principal and a Governing Body, whose membership would be appointed by Woodard

Schools, but would include additionally local authority representation and staff and parent governors. All pupils from Astor of Hever School would transfer to the new Academy which it was proposed would open in January 2011 in the existing buildings and then move into new buildings during the academic year 2013-2014. During the course of discussions Mr Dance said that he believed the high reputation of Woodard Schools would bring quality to this proposal and build on the positive benefits Astor of Hever had developed through its links with the Westland School. The Academy proposal would also result in the school being located in new buildings and it should be fully supported. Mr Koowaree said that he had spoken to both Mr Vye and to Mr Daley (as one of the local Members) who both said they supported the proposals.

(3) The Advisory Board agreed to support a public consultation being undertaken on the proposal for the closure of Astor of Hever (Community) School, Maidstone and its replacement with a government-funded Academy, subject to Ministerial approval.

3. Proposed Closure of Archers Court Maths and Computing College and its Replacement with a Government Funded Academy

(Item 5 – Report by Ms Rosalind Turner, Managing Director: Children, Families and Education)

(1) This report sought the views of the Advisory Board on the proposal to undertake a public consultation on the closure of Archers Court Maths and Computing College, Dover in order that it may be replaced with a government funded Academy.

(2) Mr Doole said that the establishment of an Academy would provide a radical solution to the school's existing problems and enable it to maximise flexibility in organising and tailoring its curriculum according to local needs and circumstances. An Academy would also deliver a substantial new build, providing first class learning facilities for all students and was an option which was strongly supported by the existing leadership and governing body of the school. The Academy would be sponsored by Canterbury Christ Church University, as lead sponsor, with Kent County Council together with Dover Grammar School for Boys and Dover Grammar School for Girls as co-sponsors. Collectively the sponsors and partners would therefore be able to draw on extensive skills and expertise in the fields of education, research, business and organisational leadership. Under the proposals the Academy would open in September 2010 in the existing buildings with a target occupation of new buildings being September 2013. The Academy would be focused on the five 'Every Child Matters' outcomes for children and young people within the context of the Children's Trust arrangements in Kent.

(3) During the course of discussion Members of the Advisory Board raised a number of questions of detail to which Mr Doole responded accordingly. Following discussion the Advisory Board agreed to support the undertaking of a public consultation on a proposal to close Archers Court Maths and Computing College to be replaced with a government funded Academy.

4. The Future of High School Provision in Deal

(Item 6 – Report by Ms Rosalind Turner, Managing Director: Children, Families and Education)

(1) This report sought the views of the Advisory Board on the need for a public consultation on the future of high school provision in the Deal area. In presenting this report Mr Doole said that both the Walmer Science College and the Castle Community College were good schools which served their communities well. However, the challenge was to secure viable long term provision for the Deal area which would enable standards to be maintained and improved against a background of falling rolls with consequential reductions in student numbers, funding and staffing if action was not taken now. The proposal was to therefore undertake a public consultation on the future of high school provision in Deal leading to the amalgamation of the Castle Community College and the Walmer Science College by closing the existing two schools and establishing a new successor school, if possible by September 2010. Under the proposals all students who attending the two existing schools at the point at which the new school was established would be guaranteed a place at the new school should they need one. As the Castle Community College site was the larger of the two and already had significant community use the proposal was that the new successor school would be developed at this location which would be substantially redeveloped with a significant new build, through the Building Schools for the Future Programme. The Walmer Science College site did have some good quality new building stock as well as other less suitable accommodation and therefore subject to the outcome of the consultation, it was proposed that part of this site could be retained for development as a vocational centre for all schools in the Dover area whilst some of the site could be declared surplus.

(2) During the course of discussion Members of the Advisory Board raised a number of points of detail regarding the proposal to which Mr Doole responded accordingly. When reporting back on the outcome of the consultation it was agreed that there would also be a discussion around whether the new school should be taken forward on the basis of it being a Foundation Trust school or a Community school.

(3) The Advisory Board then agreed that a public consultation should be undertaken in order to seek views on the future of high school provision in the Deal area.