

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 8 March 2016.

PRESENT: Mr R J Parry (Chairman), Mr J E Scholes (Vice-Chairman), Mr G Cowan, Mrs T Dean, MBE, Mr E E C Hotson, Mr A J King, MBE, Mr R A Latchford, OBE, Mrs P A V Stockell, Mr R Truelove, Mr J N Wedgbury (Substitute for Mr L B Ridings, MBE) and Mrs Z Wiltshire (Substitute for Mr H Birkby)

ALSO PRESENT: Mr R W Gough, Mr P J Oakford and Mrs J Whittle

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr P Segurola (Director of Specialist Children's Services), Mr D Adams (Area Education Officer - South Kent), Mr P Sass (Head of Democratic Services) and Mrs A Taylor (Scrutiny Research Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

93. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2016

(Item A4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2016 were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

94. Corporate Parenting Select Committee - Implementation Plan (3 months on from County Council)

(Item A5)

1. Mr Oakford, Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services introduced this item and explained that there had already been a substantial amount of work on the Select Committee recommendations; work was progressing well with good results. Mr Segurola, Director, Specialist Children's Services, set out the highlights of the progress on the recommendations which included:

- Recommendation 4: The letter had been drafted and would be sent to the Children's Minister within the next week.
- The merging of the Corporate Parenting Panel and Corporate Parenting Group was underway, the last meeting of the Group had been held and a report which included its remit and composition would be discussed at Corporate Parenting Panel.
- Recommendation 13: There were concerns around care leavers and their NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) position, in part due to the large numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) entering Kent. This was a key priority for the Corporate Parenting Panel.
- Recommendation 15: There were complex issues around housing and the limited volume of social housing available across the country, with increasing numbers of young people with leaving care entitlements and an increase in UASC there was a gap between supply and demand.

- Referring to the Transformation programme there was a 16+ accommodation strategy. The aim of this strategy was to have a range of options appropriate for young people to ensure they were not left unsupported but that the service provided value for money and that the commissioning was 'smart'.
2. In response to a question from the Chairman Mr Oakford confirmed that in total there were around 1,400 UASC, 950 of these young people were under 18 years of age. The remainder were over 18 years and these young people presented a challenge in relation to their supported accommodation needs. By the end of 2016 there was expected to be around 800 UASC over 18 years in Kent requiring supported accommodation.
 3. Mrs Wiltshire, the Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Select Committee, welcomed the positive news around children in care and the supported housing arrangements for those children leaving care. There were concerns around other Local Authorities placing vulnerable children within Kent, but the partnership working was welcomed.
 4. Mr Oakford confirmed that the Council was lobbying Government on these issues, a dedicated officer had been appointed within the staff team of the Kent Safeguarding Children Board (KSCB) to coordinate and advise on placements made in Kent by other Local Authorities.
 5. Mr Segurola explained that the voluntary dispersal scheme, in respect of UASC, had resulted in 77 young people being appropriately placed outside of Kent County, further offers had been received for another 26 young people, however this represented just 10% of the young people who had arrived in Kent over the past year.
 6. Members reflected on the in depth work of the Select Committee and thanked Mrs Wiltshire and the Officers involved in the review for such a thorough report.
 7. In relation to young people leaving care a Member asked for details of the cost of 18+ young people being placed in their own supported accommodation compared to the cost of the 18+ young person remaining in the care of their foster carer until they were 21 years old.
 8. Mr Segurola explained that this was a very important but complex area, it was accepted that the recompense decreased at 18years and this was often problematic. As part of the 16+ accommodation strategy a balance was being sought to ensure that, where appropriate, young people were able to stay in their foster homes. With regard to 18+ young people living in their own homes there was the practicality of finding suitable accommodation, but there was a setting up grant available for young people. It was vital to ensure that each case was tailored to the individual and was suitable for their needs.
 9. Mr Segurola agreed to supply detailed costs of the difference between young people moving to their own supported housing compared to remaining in foster care.

10. In relation to the limited availability of social housing, one member suggested it was necessary to do something radical to ensure the security of the future of the young people leaving care. Mr Segurola explained that commissioned services were being explored, particularly for young people aged 18-21years. Services ranged from supported lodgings to accommodation with 'live in' support or 'outreach' support allowing young people to move towards independence. The Council was also exploring the use of private rented housing which was not ideal but necessary. Mr Oakford explained that it would not be possible to find appropriate accommodation for all care leavers unless the Government brought in a national dispersal strategy for UASC.
11. In relation to the use of University accommodation Mr Segurola explained that discussions had been held with universities. They could only provide accommodation over the summer and contacts were being used in the Canterbury area allowing the use of private properties as well.
12. In response to a question about the Government's role in assisting Kent. Mr Oakford confirmed that the Local Government Association (LGA) had an Asylum, Migration and Refugee Task Group which Mr Oakford attended representing KCC.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Committee thank Mr Oakford and Mr Segurola for attending the meeting and answering Members' questions and for the progress on the Select Committee recommendations to date. Members also thanked Mrs Wiltshire for chairing the Select Committee.

95. Progress report on Grammar Schools and Social Mobility Select Committee

(Item A6)

1. Mrs Whittle explained that the Committee had concluded its evidence gathering during February, a first draft of the report would be produced in the coming week, and a report would be submitted to Cabinet on 25 April and then to County Council on 19 May. Mrs Whittle highlighted a few key areas from the review:
 - a. At present 2.8% of the overall grammar population were on Free School Meals (FSM). This figure increased in the young year groups: Year 7 = 3.4%, Year 8 = 3.7% with Year 13 = 2.1%.
 - b. The Select Committee looked at the young people attending Grammar Schools who had been on FSM at some point within the last 6 years (so the school was in receipt of Pupil Premium for each of those young people) which was just over 8%.
 - c. The Committee had also focussed on those young people who were not eligible for FSM but were still low income families.
 - d. Within Key Stage 2 – Level 5 – 51% of young people on FSM went on to Grammar School
 - e. Within Key Stage 2 – Level 5 – 73% of young people not on FSM went on to Grammar School
 - f. Why were more children from low income backgrounds not going to Grammar Schools?

2. Evidence had been received from a range of sources including Education experts, Head Teachers and Parents and Young People and the Committee had focussed on the Social, Educational and Financial Barriers to entering the Grammar School system. Outreach and mentoring was also key but was not consistent across the County, this was particularly difficult with an increase in super selective grammar schools.
3. Mrs Whittle confirmed that the Select Committee had heard that there was a ban on coaching for the Kent Test, that families should be provided with a full range of information and that it was important for Head Teachers to be given the opportunity to network and share information. There was a lack of consistency across Kent.
4. Mrs Whittle was praised for her chairmanship of the Select Committee.

RESOLVED that Members note the progress of the Grammar Schools and Social Mobility Select Committee.

96. Progress Report on Energy Security Select Committee
(Item A7)

1. Mr Wedgbury explained that the Energy Security Select Committee was a pioneer Committee in looking at this topic. Members had received the first draft of their report and were due to meet with the Cabinet Member in the coming week. The Select Committee would report to Cabinet and then to County Council in May 2016.

RESOLVED that Members note the progress of the Energy Security Select Committee.

97. Call-In of Decision 15/00114 - Proposal to Close Pent Valley Technology College
(Item A8)

1. The Chairman introduced the item which was a call in of Decision 15/00114 – Proposal to Close Pent Valley Technology College. He welcomed the witnesses and explained the process of the meeting. The Chairman also referred to a written submission from Mr Whybrow, one of the local Members, which had been circulated to Members of the Committee.
2. Mr Cowan briefly explained his reasons for calling in this decision which were set out in the supplementary agenda pack. Mr Cowan had held a meeting with Mr Gough, Mr Adams and Democratic Services prior to the call-in being approved but was pleased that the decision would be fully scrutinised at the Scrutiny Committee meeting. Mr Latchford supported the call-in.
3. The Chairman asked the two external speakers, Mrs Claire Potts and Miss Bethany Smith, to set out their view on the proposed decision.
4. Mrs Potts thanked the Committee for allowing her to speak to them about this decision, she highlighted the main areas of concern for parents and the community which included the following:

- a. At the Education Cabinet Committee, 17 February 2016, it was stated that: if the intake for September 2016 was 100 pupils or more KCC would try to keep the school open with a recovery plan. Mrs Potts asked why, when the original 54 first choice requests were made, the remaining 46 places could not be filled with pupils who had requested Pent Valley as their second choice.
 - b. What alternative options there were to the proposal to close the school and what evidence of the alternative options?
 - c. Referring to the £1.5million investment into Pent Valley in June 2015 – why was this undertaken and now there is a proposal to close the school.
 - d. The consultation period ran from 6 January 2016 – 3 February 2016. On 9 December Pent Valley students received allocation letters to other schools. Teachers at Folkestone Academy had been informed that their class sizes would be increasing and there were concerns over the support staff needed in classes of 40 pupils.
 - e. Had all pathways been lit to ensure children could travel in the dark and was there a plan for buses on relevant routes?
 - f. Mrs Potts was aware that KCC had received emails from Folkestone Academy parents setting out concerns such as inadequate teaching and bullying. Parents were planning on moving their children from Folkestone Academy in to Pent Valley.
 - g. Why year 9 students at Pent Valley, who had recently chosen their GCSE options could not be guaranteed the same subjects at alternative schools due to class sizes and classes being full.
 - h. Pent Valley Ofsted report was 'good' in Jan 2013 the last Ofsted report for Folkestone Academy was 'requires improvement'
5. Miss Smith was then invited to speak to the Committee. Miss Smith raised the following points and questions:
- a. The Government had stated that by 2020 every school was to become a free school or an academy. Presumably the Council did not plan to close every school, some schools would have their status changed and why couldn't the same happen to Pent Valley?
 - b. Why was it not possible to write off Pent Valley's deficit and change the status of the school?
 - c. Miss Smith was a student at Pent Valley and stressed the impact this decision had had on her. Miss Smith had moved to a college and changed courses and during her course her teacher had left.
 - d. Why was KCC failing a good school whilst refusing to notice that Folkestone Academy was a failing school? Miss Smith was aware of concerns which had been raised on social media about discontent at Folkestone Academy.
 - e. KCC should be caring more about students' wellbeing than financial issues.
 - f. Miss Smith thought that there should be a closer examination of the schools in Folkestone.
6. The Chairman thanked the two speakers and invited Mr Gough to respond. Mr Gough explained that the financial position and the quality and sustainability of what was offered to students at Pent Valley could not be separated. The

accumulated deficits could only be written off if the school closed. Following changes to the national rules in 2013 it was not possible for the Council to write off the deficit therefore the only option for Pent Valley was to reduce its deficit by reducing its expenditure. Working with Pent Valley the Council assumed that the number of students entering at year 7 would increase, as it would across Shepway. There were a significant number of students leaving at years 11 and 12 and the school was operating at around 1/3 of its capacity. The school was building up deficits of around £1 - £2 million per year. There had already been reductions in staffing, non-teaching staff in 2012 and teaching staff in 2013 and in May 2014 there were concerns over the impact of these reductions. To remove the deficit it would be necessary to reduce teaching staff by 25% in year 1 and another 18% in year 2. There were sometimes more opportunities with primary schools, teachers were more generalised and staffing could be shrunk to match a shrinking roll, but with secondary schools, which required a wide curriculum with a range of specialist teachers, this was not sustainable. To close the school was a last resort and Mr Gough acknowledged the impact on the families involved. However it was not considered to be in the best interest of the community, students and staff at the school to be running the school down to far below what would be a sustainable level and removing more than half the teaching staff and non-teaching staff. The school was running a deficit of £1million with total expenditure £5million and there was limited room for manoeuvre. It was the case that a free school would likely be commissioned on the site in a few years' time, a new school would start with start-up funding; it would grow into its new position and would not be managed down to unsustainable levels. The decision to propose the closure of Pent Valley School was not welcomed, KCC had sought to avoid the current position but with regret Mr Gough signed the decision following recommendation by the Cabinet Committee and it was believed to be the right decision.

7. Mr Cowan thanked the Chairman for allowing the external speakers to address the Scrutiny Committee. He raised the following points and questions:
 - a. Numbers of applications to Pent Valley had slightly increased
 - b. Within the consultation proposals it was recognised that there would need to be some secondary school provision in the area and the increase in pupil numbers was expected to continue.
 - c. Referring to costs – these were estimated, it would cost more to move children to alternative schools. Mr Cowan requested a full breakdown of the costs of the proposed closure.
 - d. What did KCC intend to do with the school if it closed, what would it cost to 'mothball' the school, and the cost of transferring to a Free School or Academy.
 - e. What would it cost for the school to remain open, particularly when parents continued to be offered places for their children at Pent Valley.
 - f. Dec 2014 – assurances were given that despite falling pupil numbers Pent Valley would not close
 - g. March 2015 – Pent Valley signed an agreement with East Kent College to ensure a better deliver of subjects; this was supported by KCC and was considered to be a ground-breaking partnership.
 - h. June 2015 – KCC assured the Governing Body that Pent Valley would not close and £1.5million was spent on refurbishment.

- i. October 2015 – The Governing Body was aware of proposals to close the school and, following alleged threats to the Governing Body, the Governing Body abstained from commenting on the proposals.
8. Mr Gough explained that the proposal to consult on closure (announced December 2015) was put forward after the secondary offer round (by the end of October). Discussions had been held around the right timing for the announcement, KCC wanted to give families who had put Pent Valley as a choice for September 2016 chance to amend their preference. A number had remained with Pent Valley as their first choice; however some had amended their preference. The Council had a legal obligation to offer Pent Valley to those families who had expressed it as their first preference given that the school was currently open.
9. With regard to numbers of applications, there was an increase from 43 first choice during 2014 to 54 first choice applications in 2015. KCC had assumed that 70 students would join year 7 at Pent Valley in Autumn 2015, however there was still approximately 120 students leaving higher up the school therefore the numbers of pupils in the school would continue to decrease. Regarding the costs, if the school was to remain open the losses would have to be absorbed within the school, they could not be written off by KCC, and they would have to be met by a reduction in expenditure and staff. A significant effort was made by KCC to tackle the problem of reducing numbers, with investment to secure the schools future to enable it to survive. Unfortunately there was then a second year of very poor GCSE results which fell from 48% A* - C including English and Maths in 2012, 40% in 2013 to 20% in 2014 and then to 15% in 2015. The results combined with the first preference figures which, whilst higher than 2015, were still critically low resulted in an unsustainable situation.
10. Regarding the allegation of threats made to the Governing Body this was not recognised and the Cabinet Member was not aware of anyone having made such threats.
11. Mr Adams stated that he had attended a meeting of the Governing Body during February 2016 with the Corporate Director and there had been no threat whatsoever to the Governing Body about what would or would not happen if they did not agree. The consultation process was discussed but absolutely no threats were made.
12. Regarding the 43 students currently in year 7, 31 had put Pent Valley as their first preference, during 2015 this had risen to 54 students, however this was not viable for a secondary school. As previously stated KCC forecasted a possible 70 students entering Pent Valley in September 2016 but that would still result in the school roll for years 7-11 dropping from 417 currently, to 366. It was not considered sustainable or possible to offer the breadth of curriculum and specialisms required with such small pupil numbers. The school had already reduced its staffing and the Swale Academy Trust did not continue to run A-Level courses so the curriculum had already reduced. It was thought that parents had lost confidence in the school, Brockhill Park was oversubscribed on first choice preferences and Folkestone Academy was also due to fill all its 270 places available. KCC had a legal obligation to offer parents their first choice where space was available, therefore the remaining places at Pent Valley could not be

offered to parents putting Pent Valley as their second choice if their first choice was available. All parents who had been offered Pent Valley were offered an alternative school place in case Pent Valley closed. Mr Adams also commented on the results at Pent Valley, during 2015 15.3% students achieved 5 A*-C including English and Maths, that was considered to be very poor, and was compared to Folkestone Academy at 40.8% and Brockhill Park at 43.2%. Arguments had been put forward that results had been driven by the high numbers of students who had English as an additional language (EAL) or special educational needs (SEN) however this was not accurate. Regarding students with EAL, in 2014, 44.4% students gained 5 A*-C compared to 19.4% who did not have EAL. The figures were different during 2015 when 17.4% of non EAL students gained 5A*-C and 8.8% with EAL gained 5A*-C. However this made little difference overall. Students with EAL made consistently better progress. The school had 29% SEN in year 11 compared with Folkestone Academy at 28%. 21% of SEN students at Folkestone Academy secured 5 A*-C while only 7% of SEN students at Pent Valley did so. The school was not considered to be doing well enough with inadequate progress in English and Maths, and it was believed that an Ofsted inspection of Pent Valley would rate it an inadequate. Folkestone Academy was inspected by Ofsted last year and was found to be good. KCC had an obligation to ensure that students had the best opportunities; Pent Valley had budget difficulties and would have to make staff reductions. An adverse Ofsted finding at Pent Valley would impact on pupil numbers and this would result in a continued downward spiral.

13. Regarding the cost of closure, this was reported to be around £5.9million which included writing off the school's deficit of £3.7million at closure and £1.3million loan for capital works. £600,000 redundancy costs which was expected to reduce, £1.5million retention payments for staff to continue to closure, £1million pupil funding for Folkestone Academy and Brockhill Park, however this could reduce. This figure also included £20,000 for uniforms and £25,000 for school transport. Costs mirrored from closure of Chaucer Technology included £60,000 staff training, cancellation of contracts and mothballing. There were little costs for mothballing, due to previous investment, it was hoped that the leisure centre would continue to operate and discussions were had around continuing to use existing premises. £5.9million was considered to be a fair assumption of the costs.
14. A Member asked how the situation at the school had been allowed to get so dire, why had there been no successful intervention previously? Additionally how could there be a requirement in 2018 for a new school when the current school wasn't sustainable, was it an opportunity to turn an unsuccessful Kent school into a Free School? Mr Gough explained that there was a distinction between the pupil numbers entering year 7 and the number of pupils on the school roll. Overall the number of students in the school was falling. It was confirmed that KCC was not intending on turning Kent's schools into Free Schools and Academies any faster that it was going to happen. There was a Government Mandate which stated that every school should become a Free School or Academy by 2020 with a particular focus on schools which were coasting and inadequate schools. If Pent Valley were to remain open it would not be a KCC maintained school for long, assuming a sponsor could be found. Mr Gough referred to previous comments made about the ways in which, if the school remained open, the school could reduce its deficit, by drastic reductions in

teaching staff and a reduction in curriculum. A free school was able to start without accumulated deficits and with favourable start-up funding, with generally increasing numbers. Those were the national rules and regulations.

15. In response to where would the demand come from if a Free School was on the site, Mr Gough confirmed that there was a demand, however Pent Valley could not continue with the small absolute numbers and financial difficulties and therefore could not provide an adequate education. In Shepway there was a mild increase in birth rate, migration, and an increase in primary numbers, as was mirrored across Kent, and these numbers eventually entered year 7 in secondary school.
16. Mr Adams explained that the December 2015 Cabinet Committee paper contained details of forecast school rolls; this showed an increase of 110 students in year 7 in the next few years in the Shepway area.
17. In response to the previous question about how Pent Valley had become so inadequate Mr Gough explained that the school was rated as good by Ofsted in 2013, and at that point its 10 year trajectory showed GCSE results improving. However following concerns the Cabinet Member and Corporate Director visited in May 2014 with an aim to make Pent Valley more attractive to parents and students. Parental choice favoured Folkestone Academy and Brockhill over Pent Valley and during summer 2014 there was a dramatic drop in results, KCC undertook 6 weekly visits to the school and issued a formal warning to Governors in 2015 and work with Swale Academies Trust began. The results in 2015 were worse than in 2014 and levels of progress were bleak. In addition numbers were not due to increase to replacement level and the position was unviable, situations could evolve relatively quickly over 2-3years, and it was not possible to allocate students to Pent Valley who did not wish to go there if they had a higher preference which was available. KCC engaged with the school, a strategy and plan was put into place, but the numbers applying to Pent Valley dropped more quickly and there was a dramatic drop in GCSE performance in 2014/15 and at that point the school became unviable.
18. In response to a question Mr Gough explained that there was volatility in school places, reflected in the funding formula, the link between expenditure and pupil numbers became much tighter, and the scope for bail-out disappeared. There were similarities to the discussions had over the closure of Chaucer Technology College.
19. One Member commented that in the part the Council was allowed to 'nurse' schools in this position in order to keep it open because it would be needed in a couple of years. However the Government had changed the regulations around the debt of a school needing to be handled by the school. The Member asked what flexibility was available to the Council in dealing with the debt of the school. Was the £1.3million loan by KCC included in the debt of Pent Valley? It was assumed that any money spent on Pent Valley came out of the budget for all schools in Kent. Did it make economic sense to keep the school open? The investment in the school in summer 2015 was questioned if it was then due to be closed, although it was understood that the costs were not abortive as school may re-open in the future. The Member did not understand the Council writing to parents asking if they wished to reconsider their choice of school bearing in mind

the proposal to close the school. With regards to numbers of students, surely there had been evidence of problems with pupil numbers earlier in the process? Referring to the allegations made by the Governing Body of bullying these were considered to be very serious and should be investigated.

20. Mr Gough explained that there was no real discretion in dealing with the debt of a school. A fund used to be available to provide support but that was removed in 2013. A funding scheme was provided for schools and there was no scope to go beyond that. The loan of £1.3million related to the investment made in the school, the cost of the loan would be covered by the sale of a playing field. The school's debt was ongoing revenue loss. A judgement had to be made regarding the future of the school, if it had increased to an 80-90 intake, savings would still have had to be made but the school could have recovered. KCC was desperate not to close Pent Valley and was conscious that school provision would still be required on that site in the future.
21. Mr Adams confirmed that KCC had had discussions with the Department for Education around supporting schools such as Pent Valley. Regarding the admissions letters to parents, the Council had received criticism from parents with year 7 children about why they were not told earlier, and if parents had not been informed there would have been criticism from parents who had just expressed a preference for Pent Valley and now there were proposals to close it. KCC had offered alternative school places to students entering Pent Valley in year 7 and those currently in years 7-9. Parents had until the end of April to decide and by then the decision over whether Pent Valley would close would have been made.
22. Referring to the GCSE results at Pent Valley School one Member commented that until 2014 Pent Valley had achieved good results, but that they suffered with the changes to the GCSE examination system introduced in 2014. 47% of students at Pent Valley were on free school meals, 21% did not have English as their first language with 30% with special education needs, and therefore the school should have been treated as a special school. It had been accepted that there would be an increase in the birth rate and in housing in Shepway District so it was suggested that the proposal be reviewed and further attempts made to keep Pent Valley School open. Concerns were raised again over the comments made by the Governing Body of the School.
23. A Member asked, if students were moved from Pent Valley to either Folkestone Academy or Brockhill what would be the maximum number of pupils in each class? Concerns were raised about class sizes rising above 30 students and the effect on the education of the students and the number of pupils with special educational needs at the alternative schools.
24. Mr Gough reiterated his previous comments about the alleged threats to the Governing Body – that no threat had been issued and Mr Gough had not been present at a meeting or seen anything in writing threatening the Governing Body. It was agreed that the 2014 changes to GCSE were disruptive to a number of schools, however, very few schools fell as far and as fast as Pent Valley, and Pent Valley did not show any signs of recovery in its 2015 GCSE results. Mr Gough referred to his previous comments about the extremely poor GCSE results of non SEN and non EAL students at Pent Valley. Schools were not conventional

businesses, it was not possible for schools to cut large numbers of teaching staff and to offer a shrunken curriculum.

25. In relation to class sizes at Folkestone Academy and Brockhill officers had spoken to both schools and they anticipated that their class sizes would continue with some increases but they would not go above 30 per class.

26. The estimate from Pent Valley to balance its budget was to implement the following reductions:

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| a. 2016/17 | 25% reduction in teaching staff
35% reduction in support staff
15% reduction in non-teaching staff |
| b. 2017/18 | 25% reduction in teaching staff
25% reduction in support staff
20% reduction in non-teaching |
| c. 2018/19 | 15% reduction in teaching staff
15% reduction in support staff
20% reduction in non-teaching |
| d. 2019/20 | 5% reduction in teaching staff
5% reduction in support staff
7.5% reduction in non-teaching |

27. The school had significant issues with regards to standards and how could stability and continuity be provided against the reductions proposed? Therefore the cost of closure: £2.136million debt increasing to £3.7million, redundancy cost £588,000 worst case scenario, retention payments and other costs resulted in a total cost of £5.9million for the closure of Pent Valley Technology College. In relation to housing there were two major housing developments in the area, Folkestone Seafront which was estimated to be around 1000 houses in the next 15years and the Garrison Development which had a 10 year time frame.

28. A Member stated that having listened to the debate it was clear that the school had major problems, in relation to the Governors comments more evidence was needed on the alleged threats. Pent Valley was not a special school many schools had the same level of pupil premium, Free School Meals and Children in Care. With an assumed maximum of 70 students entering at year 7 and 120 leaving higher up the school and £1million deficit each year the school was in a dire situation. The highest expenditure in a school was staffing, and the only way to reduce the deficit would be a reduction in staff, leading to an alteration in curriculum. This accompanied with very poor GCSE results led the Member to consider that the proposals contained within the Cabinet Members decision outweighed the possibilities put forward by the speakers and the Member who had called the decision in. Questions could be raised about whether the education department could have done something sooner to prevent the difficulties but a short to medium term future could not be seen for Pent Valley School.

29. Referring to the alleged treats to the Governing Body, Mr Gough confirmed that KCC did not have the power to insist that Ofsted inspect a school.
30. Another Member stated the view that the school was unsustainable, and there was no other solution than to support the Cabinet Members' proposal.
31. It was confirmed that KCC did not have the option to 'bail out' Pent Valley School.
32. Mr Cowan moved recommendation (d) in the report: Require implementation of the decision to be postponed pending review or scrutiny of the matter by the full Council. This was seconded by Mr Truelove.

The Chairman put this to the vote: For – 3, Against – 7. The motion was lost.

33. It was agreed that the Cabinet Member and the Officer had answered all the questions put to them by the Committee. This was a difficult situation and there was considered to be no alternative. Mr Scholes remarked on the Governors comments, he considered that the Governors had the capacity to make a complaint about the treatment they had allegedly received, and that was what they should do. Mr King moved recommendation (a) Make no comment, this was seconded by Mr Scholes.

The Chairman put this to the vote: For – 7, Against – 3. The motion was carried.

34. Mrs Dean requested that a letter be written from the Scrutiny Committee to the Government to look again at the current arrangements for schools such as Pent Valley and requesting more flexibility for Local Authorities.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Committee thank the witnesses and Cabinet Member and Officer for attending the meeting to answer Members' questions on this item. The Committee would make no further comment on the Cabinet Member's decision but that a letter would be sent from Mr Gough and Mr Parry, as joint signatories, to the Government expressing the views of the Committee.