

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

SCHOOL ORGANISATION ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES of a meeting of the School Organisation Advisory Board held at Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday 17 March 2010

PRESENT: Mrs V J Dagger (Chairman), Mr C J Capon, Miss S J Carey, Mr M C Dance, Mr M J Northey and Mr M J Vye

ALSO PRESENT: Mr G Cooke, Mrs A Allen and the Rev. N Genders

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D Adams (Area Children's Services Officer, Ashford & Shepway), Mr S Webb (Area Children's Services Officer Education Officer Dartford and Gravesham) and Mr G Mills (Democratic Services)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Minutes - 4 February 2010
(Item 3)

Resolved that the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2010 be agreed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

2. Proposed Closure of Wilmington Enterprise College and its replacement with a Government Funded Academy.
(item 4 – report by Managing Director for Children, Families and Education)

(i) In presenting this report Mr Webb highlighted the main areas for members to consider in reaching a view on the proposal to close the College and to replace it with a government funded academy.

(ii) Mrs Allen spoke on this matter as the local County Member and said whilst she agreed with the principles of the proposal she did have some concerns of detail. She said she felt that over a period of time the school had been let down by the local education authority and the College had never been given the chance to develop its own local identity. At present student numbers at Wilmington were for good reasons 'boy' weighted and there were a number of students who had special educational needs or were 'Looked After Children. Mrs Allen said the development of an academy would need to be carefully managed and the changes must not be allowed to interrupt the robust progress that had been made at the school in recent times. In conclusion Mrs Allen said she supported the proposals and wished the school well.

(ii) During the course of further discussion officers responded to the points raised by Mrs Allen as well as to a number of points of detail raised by members of the Advisory Board.

(iii) **Resolved** that a public notice be issued in respect of the proposal to close the Wilmington Enterprise College and its replacement with a government funded academy.

3. Proposal to Expand the John Wesley School from 210 places to 420 places (*item 5 - report by Managing Director for Children, Families and Education*)

(i) This report set out the results of the public consultation and sought the views of the Advisory Board on the issuing of a public notice to expand the school.

(ii) Mr Adams briefed the Advisory Board on the outcomes of the public consultation and said whilst this had brought forward some concerns he was confident the proposal was the right way forward and the expansion would not lead to some of the problems some parents thought it would. The Rev. Genders also spoke in support of the proposals.

(iii) During the course of discussion members of the Advisory Board raised a number of points of detail to which Officers responded accordingly. As part of this discussion the view was reached that the time-scale for implementing this change by September 2010 would now be too tight for the proposal to be introduced in a reasonable and timely way. It was therefore agreed the implementation date should be moved back to September 2011.

(iv) **Resolved** that the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education be recommended that a public notice be issued for the expansion of the John Wesley School from 210 places to 420 places with a commencement date of September 2011.

4. Proposal to Re-Designate Foxwood School as a School for Profound and Severe Learning Needs and Highview School as a School for Complex Learning Needs; Relocate both Schools to an alternative site; Remove the Boarding Provision at Foxwood School and Change the Age Range of Highview School to include post -16.

(*item 6 - report by Managing Director for Children, Families and Education*)

(i)) Mr Adams gave a detailed introduction as to the background to this matter and highlighted the main areas for members to consider in reaching a view on the proposals detailed in the report.

(ii) Following publication of the consultation document, further discussions had been held with the Governing Body of Brockhill Park Performing Arts College regarding the precise siting of the schools. It was originally proposed to locate the special schools close to the college itself, but an alternative location on site, to the south, was now proposed. Additionally, the County Council felt it appropriate to consult on an alternative site location for the two special schools. The second site proposed was land fronting Park Farm Road - part of the former Channel School site. The site adjoined the Folkestone Academy which was an all ability school for boys and girls aged 4-

18 years. Also It had now been necessary to move the position of Foxwood and Highview Schools in the sequence of school rebuilds within Wave 5 of BSF. As a result it was now anticipated the schools would be completed by January 2015 and this therefore would alter the proposed relocation date.

(iii) Miss Carey and Mr Capon both spoke on this matter but in their capacity as local County Members. Miss Carey said the impact of this proposal on the local area had to be looked at very carefully with the concerns of local people being taken fully into account. She said that in and around the Brockhill Park Performing Arts College local residents were already twice a day experiencing considerable traffic problems and there were concerns that these coupled with other problems such as litter and graffiti could mean any expansion at the site could make an already difficult situation even worse. Miss Carey said that what ever site option was chosen sufficient money would need to be set aside from the development costs to address local traffic problems, particularly if the chosen site was Brockhill College. Miss Carey also said that KCC should not take a 'silo' view and the Council had to look at the proposal in the context of not just its education responsibilities but also in terms of its responsibilities for highways and communities. Overall and taking into account local circumstances Miss Carey said of the two proposed sites she believed Brockhill would present the most problems and for the reasons she had put forward was therefore in her view the least favourable of the two options.

(iv) Mr Capon also spoke as a local county member and said in hearing the views of local people it was obvious that the traffic issues were causing the most concern, and these issues would have to be properly addressed which ever site option was adopted. He said he believed Saltwood Parish Council had adopted a sensible stance in deciding not to comment at this stage and await the submission of a planning application, if and when received. Mr Capon also said that as elements of the proposal were in Hythe, the Town Council should have been consulted but to date that had not happened. Mr Adams apologised for this and said the views of the Town Council would be sought without delay. Mr Capon said the development of either site would present problems but with the County Council owning the land which formed part of the former Channel School that presented a more preferable alternative given that all the issues related Brockhill potentially made a successful relocation to that site impossible.

(v) Members of the Advisory Board then discussed the proposal in detail during and raised a number of specific points to which officers responded accordingly. Among the concerns members expressed was the need to ensure any disruption to the education of the children who would be attending the two schools at the time of the relocation had to be kept to an absolute minimum, the various concerns which had been expressed regarding the access arrangements in and around both sites should be investigated further, with the options being properly assessed. Also further discussions needed to be held with Brockhill College to clarify the perception of some that it may not wholly want the two schools relocated onto its site.

(vi) At the conclusion of discussion Mr Adams summarised his views on the relative merits of the two sites and what may be needed to be done in order to solve access and development issues. As to the choice of site he believed that the planning issues related to the land at the former Channel School site were less problematic and with that land being in the ownership of the County Council there was more certainty that a relocation to that site would be more easy to deliver.

(vii) The Advisory Board **Resolved** to

- (a) recommend the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education to issue a public notice to redesignate Foxwood and Highview Schools; to remove the boarding provision at Foxwood; and to change the age range of Highview School to include post 16 provision.
- (b) The Advisory Board decided that on the balance of the information to hand and the need for there to be further investigations and discussions it would not be appropriate for it to express a formal view as to which site to recommend to the Cabinet Member.