



School Organisation Committee

AGENDA ITEM 6

Title: Aylesbury Vale Primary Complex School

Date: 21 April 2004

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Electoral Divisions Affected: All

Summary

To report to the School Organisation Committee on the outcome of the public consultation on the proposal to re-organise primary phase special education in Aylesbury Vale, to explain the next stages of the process, and to request that the Committee re-schedule its next meeting in the light of the timetable appertaining to this project.

Recommendation

That the Committee notes this Report and consider delaying its July meeting to as close to 21 July 2004 as possible.

Background information

Representatives of different service areas within County Council have been working with Governors, Headteachers and representatives of the health service to develop a re-organisation of special school provision in Aylesbury Vale.

The complex primary school represents a change in the role of the special school, and a different philosophical approach to supporting children with special educational needs.

The proposal is to develop a primary complex school that would:

- enable pupils to be educated, within the school, alongside other children, appropriate to their individual needs and abilities;
- offer a multi-disciplinary approach to the planning and provision of appropriate support to both children and their families;

- as part of a partnership with mainstream schools the new school would offer, where appropriate, short-term or part-time placements to children;
- be a centre of excellence facilitating an exchange of training, resources and expertise between the special school and mainstream providers;
- offer outreach work to facilitate collaboration with mainstream schools, SEN departments and pupil referral units;
- support early intervention and inclusive practice.

Following a public consultation, and careful consideration of the educational argument in favour of a primary complex school, and taking account of the capital and revenue financial implications, the Cabinet Members for the portfolios for Children & Young People and Schools, have agreed to the publication of a joint decision paper proposing that statutory notices be published. It is anticipated, at the time of writing this report, that the notices will be published not later than 30 April 2004.

Attached as Appendix 1 is a copy of the joint member decision paper.

In the event that any objections to the proposals are received within the statutory objection period then the School Organisation Committee will be required to consider and determine the proposals at the July 2004 meeting. A substantial part of the capital funding for this project is dependant upon meeting the DfES time requirements on the supported borrowing approval of £3.5 that has been granted. The County Council would not enter into any contractual arrangement with developers prior to the final decision being made.

In order to minimize delays to the build project, and assuming that objections to the proposals are received, it is hoped that the LEA will be able to present the proposals and seek the Committee's decision directly after the end of the two month statutory objection period.

Appendix 2 details the timeline for the publication of statutory notices and demonstrates the reason for the request that the Committee postpone its planned July meeting to a date later in the month.

Feedback from consultation and Local Member views

The consultation consisted of four proposals:

1. That Stoke Leys School enlarges and changes status to become a primary complex school,
2. That Kynaston School closes with effect from 31 August 2007,
3. That with effect from 1 September 2007 Furze Down School changes its age range to take secondary-aged pupils only,

4. That with effect from 1 September 2007 The Park School changes its age range to take secondary-aged pupils only.

The consultation document asked for responses to four questions:

- Q1. Do you support the principle of creating a primary complex school?
- Q2. The proposal states that one of the elements of the building will be that a residential/ respite care unit is built. Do you support this proposal?
- Q3. Would you support the proposal for a primary complex school if the residential/ respite unit was not included in the proposed building?
- Q4. Do you support the development of the school at the Stoke Leys/Kynaston site?

A copy of the consultation document is attached as Appendix 3.

1172 consultation documents were sent and 158 written responses to the consultation exercise were received. This represents an approximate 13% response rate. Meetings for staff were held at The Park School, Aylesbury and Furze Down School, Winslow. Further meetings for the public were held at Furze Down School and at Kynaston School in Aylesbury: over 100 people attended these meetings.

In summary of those who returned the consultation document: the support for the four questions asked is as follows:

- Q1: 80% were in favour of the principle of creating primary complex school proposal,;
- Q2: 77 % were in favour of the proposal that a residential/respite be an element of the building
- Q3: 68% were in favour of the proposal for a primary complex school if the residential/respite unit was not included
- Q4: 73% were in favour of the development being at the Stoke Leys/Kynaston site

Overall the majority of comments at the four meetings were supportive of the proposals.

Appendix 4 gives an analysis of the written responses to the consultation. The analysis details for the four categories of those consulted, parents, staff, residents and others, the respective response rates to the questions asked.

The Lifelong Learning Overview & Scrutiny Committee considered this proposal at a number of meetings, and supported the proposal for a primary complex school because it sits well within the Council's Special Educational Strategy and it recommended that the project should proceed to the consultation phase.

Resource implications

The proposed new school requires a substantial build programme to adopt and add to the Stoke Leys and Kynaston schools, which share the site. The capital funding for this project includes £3.5million supported borrowing approval granted by the DfES, from the Targeted Capital Funding initiative, which is subject to time constraints; the eligible spend having to meet the specified cash flow for 2004/05 and 2005/06.

In order to optimise the authority's ability to benefit from this funding it is desirable that the County Council be able to move ahead with the capital works as soon as possible, subsequent to the outcome of the formal consultation and the due processes and decisions are made.

Legal implications

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers

Reports to Cabinet Member for Children & Young People and Schools dated 4 February 2004 and 7 April 2004 respectively.