



Report for Leader Decision (Education & Children's Services portfolio)

Decision Date:	21 December 2023
Reference number:	EC10.23
Title:	Proposal to relocate Furze Down Sixth Form to the Short Breaks Day Service Building in Buckingham
Cabinet Member(s):	Cllr Anita Cranmer Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services Cllr Angela Macpherson Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing
Contact officer:	Paula Campbell-Balcombe
Ward(s) affected:	Buckingham East, Buckingham West and Winslow
Recommendations:	The Leader is recommended to approve the proposal to relocate Furze Down School's sixth form (up to 40 pupils) to the Short Break Day Service Building in Buckingham and expansion of the number of pupils on the Winslow site by 26 places to 180 with effect from 1st September 2024.
Reason for decision:	As part of the SEND and Inclusion Strategy and the Adult Social Care review of the use of Buckingham Day Services building, a proposal is being made to relocate sixth form pupils from Furze Down School in Winslow to the building currently used by Buckingham Short Breaks Day Service. This proposal would in turn free up capacity on the Furze Down school site in Winslow to accommodate additional children.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 A key priority within Buckinghamshire's SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2022-27 (https://buckinghamshire-gov-uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/GD000712_SEND_Education_Sufficiency_Strategy_v5_web.pdf) is to ensure there are sufficient educational placements for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). One of the key areas of the Strategy sought to provide additional SEND places so that the Council can meet its statutory duty.
- 1.2 In parallel to this Adult Social Care reviewed the use of their day services building in Buckingham and found that it is underused with significant additional space and capacity which could be made available for wider use.
- 1.3 Buckinghamshire Council officers have been exploring the possibility of the two services working together using surplus space in the Buckingham Short Breaks Day Service to provide space for Children's SEND Provision. As a result of these discussions a proposal has been consulted on to relocate Furze Down School's sixth form students from the School's Winslow site to the building currently used by Buckingham Short Breaks Day Service. This proposal would in turn free up capacity on the Furze Down school site in Winslow to accommodate additional children.
- 1.4 **Following analysis of the responses from the informal and statutory consultations the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education & Childrens Services and the Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing, is recommended to approve the relocation of Furze Down School's sixth form to the Buckingham Short Breaks Centre and the expansion of Furze Down School by 26 places with effect from 1st September 2024.**

2. Content of report

- 2.1 Over the last five years, the number of Special Educational Needs and Disabled (SEND) pupils with an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) has increased by 50% (1805 pupils). Current projections forecast a further 32% increase in the number of EHCP pupils over the next five years.
- 2.2 Children and young people with communication and interaction needs is increasing most (1424 or 64% over the last 5 years) with projections forecasting a further increase of 1533 pupils or 42% over the next 5 years.
- 2.3 The Council's SEND Education Sufficiency Strategy identified the need for additional places for children with autism in Aylesbury Vale resourced by Furze Down School.
- 2.4 As part of the SEND and Inclusion Strategy and the Adult Social Care review of the use of Buckingham Day Services building, Buckinghamshire Council officers have

been exploring the possibility of the two services working together using surplus space in the Buckingham Short Breaks Day Service to provide space for Children's SEND Provision. As a result of these discussions a proposal is being made to relocate 40 sixth form pupils from Furze Down School in Winslow to the building currently used by Buckingham Short Breaks Day Service. This proposal would in turn free up capacity on the Furze Down school site in Winslow to accommodate an additional 26, 4-16 pupils.

2.5 **What are the benefits of this proposal?**

2.6 Furze Down School, working alongside Adult Social Care in Buckingham Short Breaks Day Service, would be mutually beneficial for several reasons:

- Pupils who have attended Furze Down may benefit from some elements of this provision experiencing their own tailored Better Lives Outcomes Programme as part of developing and promoting their independence, such as key skills and independence programmes at home and in the community.
- Adult Social Care and Furze Down School, would also be able to develop an integrated supported employment and learning / Internship provision beyond Post 16. This would provide young adults with SEND a sense of purpose, community and belonging into their preparation for adulthood and would be underpinned by Better Lives Principles.
- Moving sixth form pupils onto a site in Buckingham would provide a sense of moving on. Buckingham is a larger town and currently has better transport links than Winslow. Being based in Buckingham would provide Young People with SEND more opportunities to develop independent travel skills. They would also have more opportunities to independently access Work Related activities.
- Currently over a third of Furze Down Post 16 pupils end up moving onto provision outside of Buckinghamshire. This is a mixture of day provision and residential provision. Day provision involves pupils travelling either to Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire or Milton Keynes. This travel rarely supports the development of independent travel skills. Residential provision results in pupils being educated outside their community which can lead to difficulties with reintegration back into their home community once a young person reaches 25. Shared occupancy with Adult Social Care would enable staff at Furze Down to liaise with adult social care providing seamless 16-25 pathways that prepare young people for adulthood. The development of these pathways would enable more young people to be supported within their community.
- The Centre in Buckingham could also support the school to forge links between mainstream settings in relation to Satellite Provision. It could also provide space to develop an Outreach Offer.

- Outreach: Furze Down have a large multi-professional team and with the right funding, they could grow this further to support sufficiency issues in relation to the delivery of Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Mental Health and Wellbeing. The School would be interested in piloting new ways of working with schools within the Buckingham and Winslow Liaison group. The Centre in Buckingham could provide a base to provide high quality SEND training for mainstream colleagues. This offer could be led by Furze Down teachers, Therapists and other Allied Health professionals.
- There are future plans for a partnership between Furze Down School and Buckinghamshire Adult Learning to provide supported internships for young people from 18-25 years old. Supported internships will enable young people with an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP) attending Furze Down School to achieve sustainable, paid employment by equipping them with the skills, knowledge and behaviours they need for work through learning in the workplace.

2.7 **How will this proposal allow Furze Down to expand provision on the Winslow site?**

2.8 Moving Furze Down's sixth form pupils to Buckingham would enable the School to expand the number of pupils aged 4 to 16 that they could accommodate on the Winslow site by 26 pupils.

2.9 The School is currently having to use specialist teaching areas such as science as general teaching spaces so the proposal would enable these space to revert back to specialist rooms.

3. Other options considered

3.1 The Local Authority is currently exploring a number of options to provide additional SEND places across the County to meet the increased demand for places. This proposal is one of number that the Education Service is seeking to take forward in order to meet the Council's statutory duty. This proposal offers an opportunity to utilise surplus space in a Council owned building whilst at the same time providing significant educational benefits to the young people who will be based at the Centre.

4. Legal and financial implications

4.1 In taking forward this proposal Buckinghamshire Council has complied with all applicable statutory requirements in accordance with section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act. The Council has complied with the DfE's published guidance: Opening and closing maintained schools Statutory guidance for proposers and

decision makers: January 2023. [Opening and closing maintained schools \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

- 4.2 The LA is the decision maker on any proposals to expand provision at an LA maintained school, which Furze Down is.
- 4.3 In order to facilitate this move such that both services can operate from the building, plans have been drawn up to divide the building to release approximately 70% of the current footprint for the use of Furze Down's sixth form. It is proposed that each service would have its own separate entrance. The separation between the two services would be in the form of a closed fire door which would open in the event of an emergency.
- 4.4 The cost of any works required to both separate the two uses and to make the building fit for purpose for a sixth form will be met from the S106 contributions.
- 4.5 S106 contributions from the following developments have been sought specifically for SEN provision at Furze Down school and are ring-fenced for the expansion of the school.
- 4.6 Detailed plans are currently being drawn up ready to be tendered. A full business case will be taken to the Council's Property Boards seeking draw down of the funding for the works once the pre tender estimate has been prepared. The works required include the following:

Buckingham Opportunities Centre side of the building:

- New entrance door with intercom to provide independent access to the building
- Conversion of two WCs into a reception office
- Reconfiguration of an existing room to provide a staffroom including lockers
- Minor works to a number of rooms to provide additional storage
- Wifi coverage to be expanded to all areas.
- New electronic gates to the entrance to the site
- Provision of a new shed
- Removal of fencing to the side of the entrance
- Separation of the security alarm and IT provision

Furze Down School's 6th Form side of the building:

- Minor adaptations to convert existing rooms into classrooms and therapy rooms.
- Provision of Teachers walls (pinboard, smart screen, 2 white boards)
- New vinyl throughout one of the proposed classrooms
- dividing acoustic wall between the community café and classroom
- Kitchen to be refurbished and adapted to include new DDA compliant life skills area
- One of the accessible WC's to be expanded
- New cleaner's cupboard to be installed
- 40 no. lockers to be installed

- Toilets to be upgraded and hoists installed where required
 - Garden/cultivation area to be created and polytunnel/shed to be installed
 - Fencing/gates to secure car park and outside area
 - Ideally sub-meters for water, electricity and gas required
- 4.7 In terms of revenue costs, the running costs for the building will be separated via sub-meters such that all bills going forward can be apportioned between both services.
- 4.8 Furze Down School will be responsible for all maintenance and utility costs in the proportion of the building that they will be utilising.
- 4.9 A lease will be drawn up between the Council and Furze Down School setting out the terms of the use of the building for education provision.

5. Corporate implications

- 5.1 This section will need to include the relevant corporate plan priority relating to this report and make reference to any other implication that needs to be taken into account such as:
- a) Corporate Plan – the proposal is in line with the key priorities set out within Buckinghamshire’s SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2022-27 (https://buckinghamshire-gov-uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/GD000712_SEND_Education_Sufficiency_Strategy_v5_web.pdf) to ensure there are sufficient educational placements for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). One of the key areas of the Strategy sought to provide additional SEND places so that the Council can meet its statutory duty.
 - b) Property – it is proposed that the Buckingham Short Break Centre will be reconfigured to enable both services to operate from the building. The School will be responsible for all maintenance/running costs for their portion of the building.
 - c) HR – there are no staffing implications associated with this proposal. The school will review its current staffing structure to determine if they need to recruit additional staff.
 - d) An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken as part of the consultation and decision making process. Mitigation plans and support will be provided for all pupils to ensure that their educational needs can be met and that they are not disadvantaged by this proposal. However, the proposal will have a wider positive impact on pupils and prepare them for

post 19 provision. If Post 19 provision is to be successful, pupils need to be increasingly confident to access community facilities, supported or independent work placements as well as being able to use public transport as independently as possible. The Buckingham site will provide greater opportunities to develop these skills and promote independence.

- e) Value for money: the proposal offers good value for money as it proposes to utilise an existing, underused, corporate building rather than having to find land and funding to build a purpose built educational building.

6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

6.1 As part of the statutory process on the proposal two consultation stages were undertaken. A summary of both of consultation stage responses is provided within this paper and more detailed responses are provided in ANNEX C and D

6.2 Stage 1 Consultation

6.3 The first stage consultation process on a proposal to move Furze Down School sixth form to the Short Breaks Day Service building in Buckingham commenced on 26th June 2023 and concluded on Sunday 6th August 2023. In line with statutory requirements the consultation letter (see ANNEX A) was sent to the following consultees and also promoted via a dedicated webpage and survey on Your Voice Bucks:

Consultees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member for Education and Children’s Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deputy Cabinet Member for Education and Children’s Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deputy Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Martin Tett
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forward plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Councillors
<p>Buckingham East</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Howard Mordue • Cllr Adekunle Osibogun • Cllr Warren Whyte
<p>Buckingham West</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Caroline Cornell • Cllr Patrick Fealey • Cllr Robin Stuchbury <p>Winslow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr John Chilver • Cllr David Goss • Cllr Sir Beville Stanier Bt
• Local schools
• Special Schools
• FACT Bucks
• Local MP – Greg Smith
• Council Officers
• Equality Impact Assessment
• LA teams
• Teaching associations and Unison
• RC and ODB boards
• Town Councils – Winslow and Buckingham
• DfE
• Short Breaks Centre Users
• Parents/carers
• PTFA/Friends
• School staff
• Residents near to Centre

6.4 Local Councillors from the Winslow and Buckingham Wards were invited to a briefing session on Thursday 22nd June 2023 ahead of the consultation going live such that they were aware of the forthcoming consultation and could respond to constituents' questions should they be approached. In addition to Cllr Cranmer, Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services, Cllr Angela Macpherson, Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing and Cllr Zahir Mohammed, Deputy Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing the following Councillors were able to attend the briefing:

- Cllr Howard Mordue
- Cllr Adekunle Osibogun
- Cllr Caroline Cornell
- Cllr Patrick Fealey
- Cllr Robin Stuchbury

- 6.5 All Councillors present at the meeting understood the reason behind the proposed consultation and were given the opportunity to ask questions about the proposal in advance of it being made public.
- 6.6 Two briefing sessions for parents/carers were held at the school on Tuesday 4th July 2023, 20 parents/carers attended the meetings in addition to staff from the school:
- 6.7 In addition, a drop-in session for the wider public/local residents was held at the Short Breaks Centre in Buckingham on Wednesday 5 July 2023, so that people could drop in to look at the plans and ask any questions that they had on the proposal. A small number of parents/carers from both the school and the Day Centre attended. Cllr Warren Whyte also attended to view the facilities and to understand how the two services would operate from the building.
- 6.8 **First Stage Consultation Outcome**
- 6.9 The Council received 48 responses to the consultation proposal. 44 of these came in via the Your Voice consultation page and 4 came to the consultation mailbox or by post to the School Commissioning Team.
- 6.10 In summary of the 48 who responded 35 (73%) were in agreement with the proposal to relocate the sixth form; 10 (21%) did not agree; and, 3 (6%) didn't know or didn't say.

Agree/Disagree to the proposal to open relocate Furze Down School's sixth form to the Short Breaks Centre in Buckingham				
	Yes	No	Don't Know/Didn't say	TOTAL
No. of Responses	35	10	3	48

- 6.11 Of the 48 responses received 45 (94%) said they understood the proposal to move Furze Down School sixth form to the Short Breaks Day Service Building in Buckingham; 1 (2%) said they didn't understand; and 2 (4%) didn't know or didn't say.
- 6.12 See ANNEX C for full details of the Stage One Consultation Responses.
- 6.13 **Stage 2 Representation Period – Publication of Statutory Proposal**
- 6.14 The second stage consultation process, (the publication of the Statutory Proposal and commencement of the formal representation period see ANNEX B), which proposed the relocation of the Furze Down School sixth form to the Buckingham Opportunities Centre commenced on 11th October 2023 and concluded on 7th

November 2023. In line with statutory requirements a Statutory Notice was published in the Bucks Herald on Wednesday 11th October 2023. In addition, a consultation letter was sent to the following consultees and was promoted to all those who would be directly affected as well as local residents, councillors and other schools. The consultation was also promoted via a dedicated webpage and survey on Your Voice Bucks.

Consultees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member for Education and Children’s Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deputy Cabinet Member for Education and Children’s Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deputy Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader of the Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forward plan
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local MP – Greg Smith
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Officers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LA teams
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching associations and Unison
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RC and ODB boards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Councils – Winslow and Buckingham
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DfE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short Breaks Centre Users
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/carers

• PTFA/Friends
• School staff
• Residents near to Centre

6.15 In taking forward this proposal Buckinghamshire Council has complied with all applicable statutory requirements in accordance with section 19 of the Education and Inspections Act. The Council has complied with the DfE’s published guidance (Making significant changes (‘prescribed alterations’) to maintained schools: January 2023).

6.16 Second Stage Consultation Outcome

6.17 The Council received 35 responses to the consultation proposal. 32 of these came in via the Your Voice consultation page and 3 came to the consultation mailbox or by post to the School Commissioning Team.

6.18 In summary of the 35 who responded 28 (80%) were in agreement with the proposal to relocate the sixth form; 5 (14%) did not agree; and 2 (6%) didn’t know or didn’t say.

Agree/Disagree to the proposal to open relocate Furze Down School’s sixth form to the Short Breaks Centre in Buckingham				
	Yes	No	Don't Know/Didn't say	TOTAL
No. of Responses	28	5	2	35

6.19 In terms of the respondents to the consultation, respondents were asked to state who they were responding to the consultation. Table 1 below shows how responses were broken down by each category.

TABLE 1: Who responded?	
Who - Respondents could select multiple options and therefore the total for ‘who’ is greater than the number of responses (35).	
Buckinghamshire Council Employee	1
Staff Member at Furze Down School	14
Governor at Furze Down School	0
Parent at Furze Down School	17
Service User Short Breaks Centre	2
Local Resident/live near Furze Down School	1

Local Resident/live near Buckingham Short Break Centre	1
represent a Parish / Town Council or Town Committee in Buckinghamshire	0
Work at another local school	1
Other	0
Represent community group	1
	38

Table 2 below shows responses by each category to the proposal to move Furze Down School Sixth Form to the Short Breaks Day Service Building in Buckingham.

TABLE 2: Question: Do you agree with the proposal to move Furze Down School Sixth Form to the Short Breaks Day Service Building in Buckingham	
Staff/Governor	Number
Yes	14
No	0
Don't know/didn't say	0
Parent/Carer	
Yes	11
No	4
Don't know/didn't say	2
Work at another school	
Yes	1
No	0
Don't know/didn't say	0
Service User Buckingham Short Breaks	
Yes	1
No	1
Don't know/didn't say	0
Community/Voluntary Group	
Yes	1
No	0
Didn't know/didn't say	0
Local Resident to Furze Down School	
Yes	1
No	0
Don't know/didn't say	0

Local Resident to Buckingham Centre	
Yes	1
No	0
Don't know/didn't say	0
BC Employee	
Yes	1
No	0
Don't know/didn't say	0
represent a Parish / Town Council or Town Committee in Buckinghamshire	
Yes	0
No	0
Don't know/didn't say	0
Other	
Yes	0
No	0
Don't know/didn't say	0

- 6.20 From the table above it can be noted that the majority of those objecting to the proposal to relocate Furze Down School's sixth form were parents/carers (4 – 11%). Of the 17 parents who responded, 11 (65%) were in favour of the proposal; 4 (24%) were against the proposal; and 2 (11%) didn't express a preference.
- 6.21 There was clear support for the proposal from staff at the school. In total 14 school staff (40%) responded, all of whom supported the proposal.
- 6.22 Of the two local residents to the Buckingham Centre and Furze Down School who responded both were supportive of the proposal.
- 6.23 No response was received from any elected Members or representatives of a Parish/Town Council.
- 6.24 See ANNEX D for full details of the Stage Two Statutory Consultation Responses
- 6.25 **Student Voice:** as part of the consultation process the Head of Sixth Form at Furze Down School undertook a workshop with the sixth form students to seek their views on the proposal. The following is a summary of the workshop:
- **Positives:**
 - Closer to people's homes
 - Easier for wheelchair users to access
 - More shops to use ("I think it would be good because we would have Waitrose and other shops nearby")

- Community Engagement easier
- Nice to just be for 6th form – less interruptions, more grown up.
- **Negatives:**
 - Meeting new people can be difficult
 - Change can be tricky (“It is worrying because I have been here a long time”)
 - Missing people at school

6.26 An email was sent on 4th December 2023 to the local Councillors, who had previously been briefed on the proposal, asking if they wished to add any further comments to the Leader Decision paper.

6.27 Cllr Chilver responded on 4th December confirming that he was happy to support this decision.

6.28 Cllr Stanier responded on 6th December acknowledging the recommendation in the report.

7. Communication, engagement & further consultation

7.1 Please refer to Section 6 above and Annexes A - D for full details of the consultation process that has been undertaken.

7.2 As noted in the section above, the proposal has been widely consulted upon and has followed the DfE guidance.

7.3 Once the decision is taken as to whether to relocate Furze Down School’s sixth form the school, clients of the Buckingham Short Break Service and all relevant parties will be formally notified of the decision and Officers from the Council will continue to work with the School and Short Breaks Centre to ensure that full support is provided to deliver the proposal.

8. Next steps and review

8.1 If the recommendation is supported by the Leader of the Council, the School’s sixth form will relocate to the Buckingham Short Break Centre from 1st September 2024. Building works will be undertaken ahead of this to ensure that all necessary adaptations to ensure that the two services can co-located within the building will be completed by 31st August 2024.

9. Background papers

- 9.1 Annex A: Consultation documents June 2023 [Proposal to move Furze Down School sixth form - Your Voice Bucks - Citizen Space](#)
- 9.2 Annex B: Consultation documents October 2023 [Statutory notice for the proposal to move Furze Down School sixth form - Your Voice Bucks - Citizen Space](#)
- 9.3 Annex C: Stage One Consultation Report
- 9.4 Annex D: Stage Two Statutory Proposal Outcome Report

10. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

- 10.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report, please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider, please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by email to democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.

