



Stage 1 Consultation Report on a Proposal to move Furze Down School Sixth Form to the Short Breaks Day Service Building in Buckingham

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1. Recommendation

- 1.1 In view of the responses received, as set out below, and the fact that there was more support for the proposal than opposition, it is recommended that the Council moves forward with the publication of the Statutory Notice proposing to move Furze Down School Sixth Form to the Short Breaks Day Service Building in Buckingham.

2. Summary of Stage One Consultation

- 2.1 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 APPENDIX 1) 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">• The Leader of the Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Forward plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local Councillors
Buckingham East <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

2.2 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

- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 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:
- 2.5 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.

First Stage Consultation Outcome

- 2.6 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.
- 2.7 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

- 2.8 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.

Understand 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	45	1	2	48

- 2.9 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 (30).

Buckinghamshire Council Employee	2
Staff Member at Furze Down School	15
Governor at Furze Down School	1
Parent at Furze Down School	12
Service User Short Breaks Centre	1
Local Resident/live near Furze Down School	1
Local Resident/live near Buckingham Short Break Centre	3
represent a Parish / Town Council or Town Committee in Buckinghamshire	3
Work at another local school	8
Other	1
Represent community group	1
	48

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	16
No	0
Don't know/didn't say	0
Parent/Carer	
Yes	2
No	7
Don't know/didn't say	3
Work at another school	
Yes	8
No	0
Don't know/didn't say	0
Service User Buckingham Short Breaks	
Yes	0
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	0
No	1
Don't know/didn't say	0
Local Resident to Buckingham Centre	
Yes	3
No	0
Don't know/didn't say	0
BC Employee	
Yes	2
No	0
Don't know/didn't say	0
represent a Parish / Town Council or Town Committee in Buckinghamshire	
Yes	3
No	0
Don't know/didn't say	0
Other	
Yes	0
No	1
Don't know/didn't say	0

- 2.10 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 (7 – 15%). Overall a very low number of responses were received from parents, of the 12 who responded 7 (58%) were against the proposal; 2 (17%) in favour; and, 3 (25%) didn't express a preference.
- 2.11 The majority of the support came from staff/governors at the school and respondents who identified themselves as being staff working in other LA schools. In total 24 school staff/governors/staff working at another school responded which was 50% of the respondents, all of whom supported the proposal.
- 2.12 Of the three local residents to the Buckingham Centre who responded all were supportive of the proposal and of the three respondents who identified themselves as being a representative of a Parish/Town Council all were supportive of the proposal.
- 2.13 Of the respondents who disagreed with the proposal and made further comments, the main concerns/issues raised were:

Comments Submitted against the proposal:

- *Furzedown school was built specifically to house the needs of the older children being in a separate part of the building it's all set up for them it seems a terrible decision to change this for children that thrive on the routine of there surroundings. We would not*

be happy with this decision we have a wonderful set up at Furze Down so why change it to accommodate 26 extra pupils.

Response: 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.

It is acknowledged that for some pupils this will not be the right provision. There will be pupils who need a qualification based sixth form provision and those pupils, as they do now, will leave the School and go on to College. In addition, there will be pupils for whom the Buckingham Centre offer will not work. For what is envisaged to be a very small number of pupils the School will continue to offer provision on the Furze Down site as part of the Evolve Programme.

- *Is this another holding pen? The kids have space to run around and let off energy, they might be 6th form but still young and with lots of needs. Being stuck in a building with no outdoor space makes no sense.*

Response: The Sixth Form curriculum is an active one that involves working across a range of environments. Students usually have a day's external work experience (this may be supported or unsupported); two Vocational Days which may take place at the Winslow or the Buckingham site, depending on the activity; one Pathways day of classroom learning which would take place at Buckingham, and an Enterprise and Enrichment day where the site will again be dependent on the activity. When at the Winslow site students will still be able to access the outdoor facilities.

There is a small amount of outdoor space at the Buckingham Centre, including an enclosed courtyard and an outdoor area that will be fenced in with a Poly Tunnel provided for horticultural activities.

- *Children live locally so don't have to travel to school and can walk so seems a shame to change this for families that are local and are happy with the school as it is*

Response: The LA and School very much understand that parents have chosen the school for their child for many reasons including proximity to their homes. Any child that lives close enough to the Winslow site to be able to walk to school will still be able to walk to the Winslow site and then they will make their way from there to the Buckingham Centre either by mini bus or public transport.

- *The additional travel time means some of these young people will be spending an excessive amount of time travelling which is a waste of valuable education time.*

Response: The sixth form provision is about providing real life opportunities.

Travelling time will provide students with essential life skills preparing them for adulthood. Travel time is learning time. A personalised package will be put in place for each child. This may range from a child that will always need to be escorted by staff from the Winslow site to the Buckingham Centre to those pupils who after an initial supported phase may be able to travel unaccompanied to the Buckingham site as part of their independent living training.

- *I fully understand and support the Council's aim to provide more SEND spaces, however this must not come at the expense of existing children who attend the school. Furze Down is located on a large site and you should consider extending there instead.*

Response: When the LA and School took forward the rebuild of the former Furze Down school buildings, we were very specific that the plans for the site were to create a building that sat well within the landscape and provided pupils with excellent outdoor space and facilities. The design of the building was very carefully thought through to ensure that the ethos of the school was maintained and that we didn't just build a "large square box" on the site that was imposing and unwelcoming. To build a sixth form centre on the site would take away valuable outdoor space and could start to make the site look over developed. The proposal being put forward is not just about creating more places, it is also about providing sixth form pupils with a bespoke provision that is aspirational, gives them a greater range of opportunities in regards to work placements and community engagement and most importantly prepares them for adulthood as well as making efficient use of underused accommodation.

- *If Buckingham Opportunity Centre loses over half of their space they would not be able to cater for many more people as there would not be enough room. I feel there must be more people with special needs etc who would benefit from this service.*

Response: There remains capacity within the building for additional adults to attend the centre if required.

- *Teaching support staff split across sites, how will they support the kids. e.g. social workers, speak and language etc.*

Response: Separate Therapists are attached to each key stage at the school. Therapists will therefore be moving with children and children will continue to have the support they require as they do now. There will be a coherent 6th form team of teachers, LSAs and therapists who will work with students across both sites to maintain consistency.

- *I cannot imagine this option will be popular with staff and it is therefore likely to make it harder to get specialised staff in addition to losing access to specialist facilities.*

Response: Of the 15 staff who responded to the consultation, all were fully supportive of the proposal.

- *I disagree with the argument that the children need to 'move on' so that it will help them when they need to access education / employment post 19. I think it is much more beneficial for young people to be in an integral supported sixth form in a familiar environment making use of all the available facilities to continue to grow and develop.*
- **Answer: 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.**
- *The answer to the Q and A about school dinners feels misleading - it states that school dinners will be available but then proceeds to say that pupils will make dinners in the kitchen - my child benefits enormously from a hot freshly cooked meal every day - appreciate that it will be useful for skills to be learnt around food prep but not every day.*

Response: The sixth form students will have a varied week which will include two Vocational Days which may take place at the Winslow or the Buckingham site, depending on the activity; one Pathways day of classroom learning which would take place at Buckingham, and an Enterprise and Enrichment day where the site will again be dependent on the activity. Depending on where the pupil is on each day will determine the meal provision that will be put in place. If they are on the Furze Down site they will have a school meal if they are in the Buckingham Centre then they may prepare their own meal or have one prepared for them by others. The School will ensure that all pupils who wish to have a school meal are able to do so or to prepare one for themselves.

- *the first year of young people who have to move - the 'guinea pigs' of the new system - how will it impact on their education - these young people have already lost a couple of years of their education to covid - feels very unfair that they will be the first to go through a completely new and untested system - which will undoubtedly have issues and concerns when it starts - even with the best planning.*

Response: Preparation is already taking place to ensure transition to the new site will be as seamless as possible. Students will be prepared for the move, having regular opportunities to visit. Staffing will remain as consistent as possible before and after

the move. The essence and ethos of the 6th form programme will remain the same, the new site will give better opportunities to enhance this.

- *How will bullying be managed in the new setting? –*

Response: Furze Down School values centre on respect for self and others and this not change. The Buckingham site will continue to manage any incidents in line with current Furze Down School Policy and Values.

2.14 Of the respondents who agree with the proposal to Furze Down School sixth form the main comments raised were:

- *Would benefit the sixth formers by giving them more opportunities to engage with the community and would help accommodate more students at the initial school site.*
- *Anything that builds capacity is a good thing!*
- *The building is currently underused. The independence from the main school will help FD students feel that they are moving on from their primary/secondary school, without making them feel that they have totally left it behind.*
- *This would create more space for younger students and allow for an increase in capacity which is greatly needed.*
- *As stated in the proposal, older students are able to obtain life skills, whilst still feeling safe and secure.*
- *The building is much under-utilised, which after the massive amount of money spent some years ago, is a disgrace.*
- *This will be in an ideal location to support young adults with SEN in the community and vice versa. This will enable more space in the current site for younger children. With an increase in population there is an increase in need for children with SEN needing high quality provision. Furze Down is the only special school for primary and secondary North of Aylesbury in Bucks. The demand outstrips their current capacity.*
- *Currently it is a huge cultural shock with Pupils leave school at 19 and go out into the local area I feel this transition would greater prepare them for adulthood as they would experience learning and working in the local community ahead of their final leaving the school*
- *The increase in opportunities it will offer students to develop their independence and employability skills.*
- *I believe there are huge benefits to Adult Social Care and Furze Down School being 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 inclusion and as part of their preparation for adulthood and follow the Principles for Better Lives .*

- *Moving sixth Form pupils onto a site in Buckingham would provide a sense of moving to the next stage in life . Buckingham is a larger town and currently has better transport links than Winslow. Based in Buckingham would provide Young People with SEND more opportunities to develop independent travel skills, access Work Related activities. Buckingham offers greater educational opportunities for sixth formers to integrate into society, work experience etc.*
- *The opportunities in Buckingham to students on the PFA pathway will be much wider than those available in Winslow. This year we have engaged the students in travel training and this has been quite limiting as the timing of buses has often restricted the time we can spend in Buckingham before needing to be back to school. The opportunities to engage in a range of shops, services such as the post office, library, more local businesses both in town and within walking distance plus access to the leisure centre and the large supermarket will open up daily opportunities to develop both life and skills for work. We know many of our students won't live in Winslow beyond school and even more so for employment or education so it feels vital to give students the opportunities to experience a wider network of opportunities and then easily return to the PFA base in Buckingham.*
- *It will be a great opportunity to build young people's independence in the community and offer closer links for them to engage with work experience, adult social care and other service providers. Students will continue to have sessions at the main school site to support relationship and learning whilst having a more rounded 'real world' experience.*
- *More pupils in Bucks in need of special school education would be able to be placed at Furze Down, which would be of real value as demand outstrips the number of available spaces across the county. Children and professionals in other schools could receive the benefit of our school's expertise, which would help promote better provision for a larger number of children and families in the mainstream and Additionally Resourced Provision sectors.*
- *If pupils are to travel independently on public transport there needs to be public transport available at the right times. Some pupils will not be able to manage this on their own, but to travel first to Winslow and then back to Buckingham will not suit everyone. Will there be sufficient parking/dropping of spaces for parents cars, if that is what is needed to get a sixth former safely to school.*

Response: In the unlikely event that a young person is unable to travel independently and would not benefit from the travel training provided from Winslow to Buckingham, access and drop off/parking spaces for parents are available. The local authority and Furze Down School are doing a detailed piece of work with the transport team to model exactly what this might look like next year and in years to come.

- *FACT Bucks supports the aims of Furze Down school to have an offsite sixth form provision that will aid the preparation for adulthood of their older pupils. FACT Bucks also welcomes that the space freed up on the Winslow site will make a modest contribution to the extra special school places required in county.*
- *There is no discussion in the document of how the views of the young people concerned have been sought.*

Response: Consideration was taken about raising anxiety levels of students in consulting with them about a change that might not occur. The decision was made to consult in the Autumn Term through visits and student focus groups. Feedback will be considered in a number of forms to ensure we get true student voice.

- 2.15 In addition to the formal responses to the consultation, three elected members sent an email to Paula Campbell-Balcombe in acknowledgement of being made aware of the proposal all of whom confirmed that they were supportive of the proposal.
- 2.16 **Transport:** the consultation was also shared with the Client Transport Team, who are responsible for making suitable school transport arrangements for eligible young people. They have undertaken an analysis of the potential cost implications to the Council's school transport budget should this proposal be implemented.
- 2.17 From the data provided by the school it was calculated that 49 students currently attending the school may form part of the school's September 2024 sixth form cohort; students were included regardless of whether they currently travel to school on council-arranged transport, walk, or arrive by other means e.g. dropped off to school by a family member. Of the 49 students who make up the September 2024 cohort, 33 are currently eligible for Council-funded travel assistance. The 33 eligible students' data was analysed further to determine the high-level difference in cost and miles travelled if they were to travel to the proposed site in Buckingham rather than to the current Winslow school site.
- 2.18 The baseline total annual cost for Council-funded travel assistance for the 33 eligible students for the 2022-23 academic year was used to an assumption that all 33 pupils would remain eligible for travel assistance and would be transported in line with their individual transport needs assessments to the Buckingham site by Buckinghamshire Council's Client Transport Team in the future and not to the Winslow site. From this modelling the total variance in total annual transport costs for the 33 eligible pupils showed a 29% increase. To aid comparison, no inflationary increase or contract variance costs were factored into the modelling, however these are expected to increase at least annually. The increase in the total miles travelled per day by the 33 eligible pupils would be 537 miles versus the current 405 miles to the Winslow site.
- 2.19 Under the proposals a complete revision of Council-arranged transport routes going into the Winslow and Buckingham sites would be required. Buckinghamshire sixth form students who are eligible for travel assistance can apply for [Council-arranged transport for a fee](#). While transport eligibility and the related costs will clearly vary year on year depending on

the home location and the transport needs assessment of each eligible pupils who decides to stay on at the Furze Down Sixth Form, the above figure gives a guide to the potential impact that this proposal may have on the Council's school transport budget.

- 2.20 It is also important to note that if this proposal doesn't proceed and the school is not able to accommodate an additional 26 pupils, then these pupils could end up being transported to provision which may be out of county. Subject to where the pupils go and what existing transport provision is already in place this may put further pressure on the Council's school transport budget. In turn the cost of having to provide out of county placements to these pupils will have a significant impact on the Council's High Needs Budget and would be significantly more than the cost to keep the pupils at a provision within the county.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 Having analysed the consultation responses received on the proposal to relocate the sixth form from Furze Down School to the Buckingham Short Break Centre, whilst the overall response rate was relatively low, there is considerably more support for the proposals than opposition.
- 3.2 **In view of the responses received and the level of support for the proposal it is recommended that the Council moves forward with the publication of the Statutory Notice proposing relocation of the sixth form from Furze Down School to the Buckingham Short Break Centre.**