



Stage 2 Statutory Proposal to relocate Furze Down School Sixth Form to the Short Breaks Day Service Building in Buckingham. Consultation Outcome Report.

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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 a Leader Decision proposing to move Furze Down School Sixth Form to the Short Breaks Day Service Building in Buckingham.

2. Summary of Stage Two Consultation

- 2.1 The second stage consultation process, (the publication of the Statutory Proposal and commencement of the formal representation period), 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
• Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services
• Deputy Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services
• Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing
• Deputy Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing
• The Leader of the Council
• Forward plan
• 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
• 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 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).

Second Stage Consultation Outcome

2.3 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.

2.4 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

2.5 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

2.6 Overall there was a relatively low number of responses received. 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.

- 2.7 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.
- 2.8 Of the two local residents to the Buckingham Centre and Furze Down School who responded both were supportive of the proposal.
- 2.9 No response was received from any elected Members or representatives of a Parish/Town Council.
- 2.10 Of the respondents who disagreed with the proposal and made further comments, the main concerns/issues raised were:
- 2.11

Comments Submitted against or where responders replied don't know to the proposal:

- *I think it's ridiculous that you would move the 6th form when the school was built specifically for the needs of the older students. Learning life skills in the special rooms provided. We moved to Winslow so our child can walk to school with a parent and when the 6th form moves it means my child will then have to travel in transport to go to Buckingham. All to allow a few extra spaces for other children. Really what this area needs is another special needs school setting to be built to take all the extra children needing these special settings.*
- **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 disruption this will have to our children is not going to be good. And lots of these children thrive on routine and stability and won't appreciate being moved to a different setting.*

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.
- *While I agree with increasing capacity for younger children, I also feel the older ones would thrive and building on their learning in 6th form within the existing premises more than proposal even if the proposal isn't shared.*
- **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.

- *I feel older children can be better mentors to the younger ones if in similar setting and better synergies derived amongst staff. Alignment in standards and performance between non 6th form and 6 form should be more cohesive/ aligned with both settings in one place.*
- **Answer: The Sixth Form curriculum is an active one that involves working across a range of environments. Students usually have:**
 - **one day of 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**
 - **one Enterprise and Enrichment day where the site will again be dependent on the activity**
- *I feel if Furze Down School move their sixth form to Buckingham Short Breaks, even though they say short breaks will have a place, the very small area that short breaks are going to be given ,is dark and quite a narrow corridor, they would not have a big enough room for when they like parents and carers too come in for an afternoon of entertainment, and if short breaks wish to access their outside space, they will have to come out of the building through Furze Down Schools car park then into the outdoor garden.*

Answer: The current service operation at the site is significantly under utilising the existing space at the Centre. Having reviewed the space the operational staff believe that the area of the building that will be utilised by the Day Centre users will more than meet the needs of our clients. The outdoor garden will remain for the sole use of the Day Centre users and access to it will be very carefully managed to ensure the safety of all users of the building.

- *I'm not sure how therapy will take place in the room allocated to this as the noise will travel from the adjoining room as the wall doesn't go all the way to the ceiling. The existing space is in need of extensively updating.*
- **Answer: The Centre has been fully refurbished in recent years and is in very good condition. It is acknowledged that some minor changes will need to be made to make the building fully fit for purpose and proposals and funding is in place to ensure that the building will meet the needs of all users.**

- *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.**

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

- *More space, more learning opportunities, a sense of moving on, a bridge between school and the learners next step*
- *I think it would be a really good bridge for the students in 6th Form to become more independent (getting ready for college), whilst still having the safety of Furze Down staff.*
- *It would benefit the school by freeing up teaching spaces and being able to repurpose the rooms back to their original purposes e.g. a science lab, cooking space and Independent Living skills and have an Art and DT room - this would greatly enrich the curriculum for the students remaining on the Furze Down site.*
- *I think the people of Buckingham will also benefit, as the Furze Down pupils have so much they can offer the local community - they are wonderful young adults who will bring a richness to Buckingham as they go about their daily routines either at the new site or any future outreach work.*
- *I think this would help the sixth form to gain a sense of "moving on", more opportunities for travel training & hopefully gain more independence.*
- *The wonderful safe environment that is created at Furze Down school, for some students can be all they have know. For all it will have been their only world outside of their homes for many years. The move straight from this school to the outside working world is such a huge leap. I think it's too much. The sixth form, whilst having the same values and practices, by being offsite is a gentle but necessary transitional step for students in their preparation to work, study and live outside of their school environment.*
- *It is an excellent opportunity to develop the curriculum and offer a broader range of experiences which will be vital for this cohort.*
- *I think it's a brilliant idea, Buckingham is a bigger town than Winslow and will give students more choice and independence*

- *Extra opportunities for Furze Down Sixth Formers to experience vocational and community activities in as real a way as possible. A community based provision would also support students with their transition to their next destination after Furze Down.*
- *It would be a great opportunity for the students to experience a new setting with the support of staff they know. Some students have been at FDS for over 10 years so this can prepare them for moving on.*
- *There are more shops and businesses locally to the centre so they will be able to access the community easier.*
- *I have had a personal tour of the facility and spoken to a member of FDS SLT.*
- *I believe there are a lot of positives for the students if this move goes ahead.*
- *It will provide so much more opportunity for the sixth form students to develop independence within Buckingham and allow the main school to hopefully claim back rooms which have had to be converted into classrooms to take the amount of students currently on roll.*
- *I think as long as it is properly planned it will be very useful for students, to help them feel more grown up and will give them more opportunity to easily access not only Buckingham, Milton Keynes, but many other destinations, forging better links with local businesses and organisations can only be a good thing.*
- *For the many positives mentioned in the proposal including integrating students into the community and encouraging independence, proactively looking towards the long term future for our children. I also like the way that the proposal offers alternatives for the children that wouldn't cope with a move like this, with a bespoke package delivered onsite at Furze Down.*
- *I think it's a jolly good idea for the students and families of Furze Down School. It will help achieve the curriculum aims and aspirations of the school and it will pave the way for better outcomes for young people on their transition to Adulthood, employment and independent living.*
- *Hopefully keep building open for Adult Social Care facilities. As long as fund are kept for service users and enough space is given to them.*
- *FACT BUCKS were consulted on the proposal and were in support, providing the following feedback:*
- *There is a pressing need across the county for more special school places. The current shortage is causing children to be placed in less-than-ideal settings or to be left without a setting. Overcrowding at special schools, including Furze Down, is at risk of worsening outcomes for pupils and threatens staff morale.*

- *We are persuaded that the effects upon the sixth form pupils concerned will on balance be positive due to the added independence inherent in the separate site. We are sensitive to the concerns raised by some parents including those about extra travel, disruption to routines and lunch arrangements, but we are reassured that the staff will make every effort to minimise these.*

2.13 **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.
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- **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
 -
- **Questions (all of which have been responded to in the Q&A document and were discussed with the students):**
 - Will the physios and therapists get to Buckingham?
 - Will there still be sensory activities?
 - Will there be a wellbeing room?
 - What will happen to school meals?

2.14 **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.

2.15 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.

- 2.16 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.
- 2.17 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.
- 2.18 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.

In view of the responses received and the level of support for the proposal it is recommended that a Leader Decision Paper is taken forward recommending approval of the proposal.