

Cabinet – 17 January 2007

Outcome of consultation on the provision of Special School provision for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties

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| Portfolio: | Councillor Zahid Ali, Children's Services |
| Service: | Education Walsall |
| Wards: | All |
| Key decisions: | Yes |
| Forward plan: | Yes |

Summary of report

The report provides details of the outcome of consultation on proposals for the reorganisation of special school provision for pupils with social, educational and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) in Walsall.

Recommendations

- (1) That Cabinet notes the consultation responses
- (2) That Cabinet approves the publication of statutory proposals to:
 - close Daw End School from 31 December 2007;
 - establish a new primary school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties with 30 places (including 6 assessment places) for pupils aged 4 – 11 years at the Priory site from 1 January 2008;
 - establish a new secondary school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties with 56 places for pupils aged 11 – 16 years in the Manor Farm building from 1 January 2008.

Resource and legal considerations

Daw End School caters for pupils with social, educational and behavioural needs (SEBD) at the Priory site (primary pupils) and at the Daw End site (secondary pupils). The school has 54 places across the age range and although the school is approved to offer residential placements for 10 children, none of these places have been taken up in recent years.

In autumn 2004, a review of specialist SEN provision in the Borough was undertaken and a report on the outcome of consultation was considered by Cabinet on 22 December 2004. Implementation of the various strands is being taken forward on a phased basis using Targeted Capital funding made available by the DfES and supplemented by Walsall Council.

In the case of Daw End School, originally it was hoped that a replacement school building could be provided on land adjacent to the existing Daw End building. However, in the intervening period, there has been a strengthening shift nationally away from all-age schools towards separate schools for primary and secondary pupils. In terms of best practice, the organisation of provision in this way enables the schools concerned to focus on a particular sector and to target support more effectively to individual pupils. It also supports the development of personalised curricula relevant to each phase and allows for good networking with mainstream schools through the primary and secondary fora and other groups. In the light of this, it was proposed to further develop the current organisation of provision by replacing the existing all-age school with separate primary and secondary schools with effect from 1 January 2008. This also provides an opportunity to increase the number of places without creating too large a school and will also better support the development of more effective and focused outreach provision.

The report considered by Cabinet on 29 November 2006 outlined the background regarding the availability of accommodation in the Manor Farm building for the proposed new school for secondary aged young people with SEBD and a proposal to increase accommodation in the priory building for primary aged children with SEBD. Additional information was also provided regarding the sum of £2 million from the Targeted Capital allocation which had been identified by Cabinet should these proposals be implemented.

These premises proposals represent the most cost-effective way forward in view of the resources available and Cabinet's earlier decision to use the Targeted Capital allocation strategically across Mary Elliot, Daw End and Joseph Leckie. Following the proposed closure of Daw End, the relocation of secondary-aged pupils into the new secondary school in the Manor Farm building would release the existing Daw End site on Floyds Lane as this would no longer be required.

Such changes can only be implemented following the approval of statutory proposals, and Cabinet is recommended to approve the publication of statutory proposals to:

- close Daw End School from 31 December 2007;
- establish a new primary school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties with 30 places (including 6 assessment places) for pupils aged 4 – 11 years at the Priory site from 1 January 2008;
- establish a new secondary school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties with 56 places for pupils aged 11 – 16 years in the Manor Farm building from 1 January 2008.

It is anticipated that, overall, the total number of staff required at the new primary and secondary schools from January 2008 would be similar and that this would normally include the staff already delivering education at Daw End School. However, it may be that some members of staff decide to seek retirement or a post elsewhere.

If the decision is taken to close Daw End School from 31 December 2007, every effort would be made to help staff find alternative jobs.

Citizen impact

These proposals would result in the provision of significantly improved learning environments for pupils with SEBD, some of whom are very vulnerable. Pupils are currently being taught in accommodation that is in very poor condition and is unsuitable for delivering education in the 21st century.

Community safety

There are no direct implications as a result of this report

Environmental impact

Schemes to refurbish / remodel accommodation would use sustainable resources wherever possible and designs would incorporate developments to reduce the impact on the environment.

Performance and risk management issues

The condition and suitability of the accommodation used by pupils at Daw End School is such that the proposed investment is essential in order to ensure continuity of education.

Equality implications

The proposal would give an opportunity to provide significantly improved learning environments for pupils with SEBD in the local community and contribute to further promoting disability equality in Walsall.

Consultation

On 29 November 2006, Cabinet approved the consultation on proposals to reorganise special school provision for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The consultation period commenced on 30 November 2006 and ended on 31 December 2006. A consultation document was circulated to parents, staff and governors at Daw End School and were circulated to all stakeholders and neighbouring authorities. The documents were also made available to the general public and were posted on the Education Walsall website.

Consultation meetings were held at Daw End School on 6 December 2006 with parents, staff and governors. Attendance at these meetings is detailed in the table below.

Table 1 Attendance at Consultation Meetings

| School | Parents | Staff | Governors |
|----------------|---------|-------|-----------|
| Daw End School | 1 | 24* | 5* |

* Including headteacher

An earlier meeting had been held with the Chair of Governors and the headteacher regarding the option approved by Cabinet as the basis for consultation.

The main issues raised during the consultation period related to accommodation for the proposed two schools and staffing issues. Three consultation responses have been received, two of which were from staff (one at each site) and the third was from an organisation with responsibility for the post-16 sector. A response from a group of staff endorsed the proposed establishment of a separate primary school in view of the benefits this would bring in terms of education delivery, resources and general operational effectiveness. The other staff response stated that the proposed accommodation for secondary pupils was significantly better than the existing accommodation and went on to voice staff's need for reassurance regarding job security. The third response was generally supportive and included a comment about the management of post-16 transition.

In the light of all available information, Cabinet is recommended to approve the publication of statutory proposals to implement the changes which were the subject of this consultation from 1 January 2008.

Details of the timescale for the remainder of the decision-making process are detailed in the table below.

| Date | Action |
|------------------|--|
| 29 November 2006 | Cabinet decision on consultation |
| 30 November 2006 | Letter and consultation document issued to parents, staff and governors Consultation period from 30 November - 31 December 2006 |
| 6 December 2006 | Separate consultation meetings with parents, staff and governors |
| 17 January 2007 | Report on outcome of consultation considered by Cabinet |
| 26 January 2007 | Publication of statutory proposals 2 months representation period during which further meetings would be held with parents, staff and governors |
| April 2007 | Statutory proposals determined by Cabinet (if no objections) or the School Organisation Committee (if objections received) |
| 1 January 2008 | Statutory proposals implemented |

Vision 2008

The proposed way forward would contribute to the delivery of Walsall's vision for 2008 – Section 4 Make Our Schools Great – by providing significantly improved learning opportunities for pupils with SEBD in Walsall.

Background papers

Cabinet report: Outcome of Targeted Capital Bid for Schools, 30 November 2005

Cabinet report: Targeted Capital Allocations, 12 July 2006

Cabinet report: Daw End School, 29 November 2006

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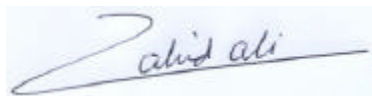
Signed:



Executive Director: David Brown

Date: 8 January 2007

Signed:



Portfolio Holder: Councillor Zahid Ali

Date: 8 January 2007



Signed:

Managing Director, Education Walsall

Date: 3 January 2007