

Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 23 November 2015

Additional Information

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 5 - DRAFT MINUTES OF THE
CABINET PANEL ON SCHOOL ORGANISATION**

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NOTICE OF DRAFT DECISIONS OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET PANEL ON SCHOOL ORGANISATION HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 18 NOVEMBER 2015

21. Increasing the Age Range at Crowdys Hill Special School from 11-16 to 11-19 from September 2016

The Head of Education and the Cabinet Member for Children's Services submitted a joint report concerning the increase in age provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) at the Crowdys Hill School from 11-16 year olds to 11-19 year olds.

Councillor Fionuala Foley, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, outlined the background to the proposal, referred to the outcomes of consultation process undertaken by the Council and highlighted the key aspects of the report, in particular the need to create additional provision and support that was reserved for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Complex Learning Difficulties for children from 11 to 19 years. She advised that the School confirmed its support for the proposed expansion and that this support was shared across the school community with only a small number of objections being received to the public notice.

Clarity was sought from Mr Andrew Ferguson, Head of Litigation, Law and Democratic Services and Peter Nathan, Head of Education, regarding revenue funding and related contingency plans to ensure financial support would be available for the project to ensure its success. The Panel noted the response and believed that there was a clear case for the need to increase provision at Crowdys Hill School.

The Chair noted the comments expressed at the meeting and concluded that he believed there was a clear case for the proposed increase of provision at the school. He noted the general support for additional provision from the school community as made clear by the pre-statutory and statutory consultation findings and the lack of a strong negative response to the proposal.

Resolved – (1) That the Cabinet Panel on School Organisation approve the proposals as set out in the statutory notice attached as Appendix 2 of the report, to increase the age provision that had been recognised by the Local Authority as reserved for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) at Crowdys Hills School, Swindon, from 11 – 16 year olds to 11 – 19 year olds

(2) Further to (1) above, that subject to planning approval by 1st August 2015, an implementation date of 1st September 2016 be agreed.

In reaching its decision, the Cabinet Panel confirmed that it:-

- had carefully considered the joint report and the representations made at the meeting by Council Officers.
- was satisfied that
 - it had the necessary information in order to make the decision referred to above,

- the Statutory Notice complied with the statutory requirements,
 - the statutory consultation was carried out properly prior to the publication of the Notice, and
 - the Notice did not relate to any other published proposal.
- had carefully considered the factors to be considered by the decision makers, as set out in the statutory guidance from the Department for Children, Schools and Families entitled 'Making Changes to a Maintained Mainstream School.

The reasons for the Cabinet Panel's decision to approve the proposals as set out in the statutory notice to increase the age range at Crowdys Hill Special School from 11-16 to 11-19 from September 2016 subject to planning permission were as follows:

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 - the Notice did not relate to any other published proposal.
- had carefully considered the factors to be considered by the decision makers, as set out in the statutory guidance from the Department for Children, Schools and Families entitled 'Making Changes to a Maintained Mainstream School.

The reasons for the Cabinet Panel's decision to approve the proposals as set out in the statutory notice to increase the age range at Crowdys Hill Special School from 11-16 to 11-19 from September 2016 subject to planning permission are as follows:

Education standards and diversity of provision

The Cabinet Panel believed that the Local Authority was responding to the Government's wish to see a dynamic system in which the best schools were able to expand and spread their ethos and success. Crowdys Hill School was rated by Ofsted as a good school with outstanding features.

The proposal to add a sixth form had been developed due to over whelming parental and student support and a desire to extend the choice open to current students of the school who were currently denied the opportunity of remaining in their school environment to study post-16 qualifications. In addition, the Local Authority had identified the proposal to add a 6th form to Crowdys Hill School as a key part of its long term Special Educational Need provision development strategy.

The Cabinet Panel noted in reaching its decision that Crowdys Hill School was a Local Authority maintained special school, and that therefore the proposal

was not consistent with the Government's policy on Academies.

Demand

The Cabinet Panel noted that Crowdys Hill School was very popular with parents and was operating at full capacity with requests from parents to attend. It further noted that Crowdys Hill School recognises the important role that parents play in the life of the school.

The Panel was aware that in common with many Local Authorities, Swindon had seen a large increase in the number of children with Statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and that it was likely that these children would struggle with the change attending a mainstream college.

The Cabinet Panel noted that the Local Authority was under a specific duty to respond to representations from parents about the provision of new schools, including requests to establish new schools or make changes to existing schools.

The Cabinet Panel believed that the proposal provide for greater inclusion and access for pupils within the existing school community.

School size

The Cabinet Panel noted that Crowdys Hill was a 128 place special school, which will ultimately expand to 178 under this proposal.

The Cabinet Panel believed that the school had the capacity to manage the increase in provision effectively, whilst maintaining its status as a good school.

Proposed admission arrangements (including post-16 provision)

The Cabinet Panel noted that when full, it was anticipated that the proposed sixth form would provide up to 50 places for 16-19 year olds in Years 12 and 13 combined. The initial intake would be between 15 and 25 in September 2016. The second intake in September 2017 would see the sixth form full.

The Panel further noted that the pupils would all be required to have Statements of Special Educational Need or an Education Health and Care Plan and would be commissioned by the Local Authority.

National Curriculum

The Cabinet Panel believed that the proposed sixth form would offer a range of qualifications which were best suited to the student profile. The core emphasis of Learning for Life would drive the curriculum, core skills, supported internships and vocational experiences would underpin the offer. The Panel believed this specifically tailored programme of learning and teaching would be designed to allow these young people to achieve their potential and achieve the highest possible educational standards.

Community cohesion

The Cabinet Panel believed that the Local Authority would be able to provide a range of provision and support that can respond to the individual needs of pupils and parents preferences.

The Cabinet Panel noted that this proposal increased the choices and opportunities for the community served by Crowdys Hill School, and that the responses to the consultation highlighted the support for the proposal from within the Special Educational Need community.

Travel and accessibility

The Cabinet Panel noted that whilst the proposals would not have the effect of unreasonably extending journey times or increasing transport costs, it was likely that there would be some increase in traffic to and from the school during drop off and pick up times.

Capital

The Cabinet Panel noted that the possible establishment of a sixth form at Crowdys Hill Special School was included within the Council's 2014 to 2017 Education Capital Programme, and that a budget of £800,000 had been provisionally allocated by the Council's Cabinet in February 2014 for this purpose.

School premises and playing fields

The Cabinet Panel noted that Crowdys Hill School was currently undergoing a major capital project to resolve issues associated with suitability of space. This project had already been subject to Section 77 Regulations and Sport England requirements through an extensive planning process.

The Cabinet Panel also noted that the proposal to increase the age range would include conversion of existing accommodation, released by the suitability project, and would not reduce the space available on the site for outdoor pitches and games courts. The proposal would enable the school to continue to provide suitable outdoor space for physical education in accordance with the school curriculum.

Addition of post-16 provision

The Cabinet Panel believed that the proposal to add post-16 provision, would improve, extend the range, and increase participation in high quality educational or training opportunities for post-16 pupils within the Local Authority or local area. The new places would fit within the organisation of 16-19 aged provision in Swindon and Crowdys Hill School had collaborated with Swindon College and other local providers in drawing up a proposal. It was expected that this partnership will continue to offer students a comprehensive curriculum offer.

Views of Interested Parties

The Cabinet panel noted that during the consultation period, the majority of the responses (64 out of 73) were in favour of the proposal.

Date of Publication of Draft Decisions: 19th November 2015

Issued to Members of the Scrutiny Committee: 20th November 2015