

**NOTICE OF DRAFT DECISIONS OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET PANEL ON  
SCHOOL ORGANISATION HELD ON THURSDAY, 16<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2016**

**5. Lowering the Age Range at Crowdys Hill Special School from 11-19 to  
4-19 from September 2016**

Councillor Fionuala Foley, the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, and the Head of Education, submitted a joint report inviting the Cabinet Panel to consider lowering the age provision that is recognised by the Local Authority as reserved for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) at The Crowdys Hill School from 11-19yr olds to 4 -19yr olds. It was noted that the report was necessary to enable the Local Authority to create additional provision that is reserved for pupils with Special Educational Needs, (SEN) by an lowering the age range to provide support for children from 4-19 years with Complex Learning Difficulties.

Councillor Foley introduced the report, outlining the background to the proposed lowering of the age range at the school and expanding on the Council's responses to issues of concern raised following the full and detailed consultation. In particular, Councillor Foley advised the meeting of the specific measures to be taken, and proposed to be taken, to address the specific concerns around traffic and car parking issues, including the provision of a turning circle as part of the new build project at the school and the provision of a further entrance, from Jefferies Avenue, to relieve any additional traffic pressures in residential areas

Councillor Foley asked that it be recorded in the minutes that the consultation exercise carried out in support of the proposal, which ran from 8<sup>th</sup> March to 29<sup>th</sup> April 2016, had encompassed all residents in the areas immediately surrounding the school, Ward Councillors and parents with children at the school (via a targeted leaflet drop). She also advised that a consultation session had been held to give interested parties an opportunity to view the proposed plans and to put questions about the proposal.

Resolved – That the Cabinet Panel on School Organisation approves the proposals, as set out in the statutory notice attached as Appendix 2 to the report, to lower the age provision that is recognised by the Local Authority as reserved for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) at Crowdys Hill School, Swindon from 11-19yr olds to 4-19yr olds and increase capacity by 36 places, with an implementation date of 1st September 2016, subject to the granting of planning approval.

In reaching its decision, the Cabinet Panel confirms that it -

- has carefully considered the joint report and the representations made at the meeting by Council Officers.
- is satisfied that
  - it has 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.
- has 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 Cabinet Panel's decision is approve the proposals as set out in the statutory to:

- 1) Lower the age provision that is recognised by the Local Authority as reserved for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) at Crowdys Hill School, Swindon from 11-19yr olds to 4-19yr olds and
- 2) Increase capacity by 36 places, with an implementation date of 1<sup>st</sup> September 2016, subject to the granting of planning approval.

The reasons for the decision 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 are able to expand and spread their ethos and success. Crowdys Hill School is rated by Ofsted as a good school with outstanding features.

The proposal to add a Primary provision has been developed due to the rising pressure across the borough to provide additional Specialist Primary school places in recent years. There has been a gradual increase in the number of statements and Education health and Care plans since 2007 and a growing demand for specialist provision. With Swindon's planned expansion bringing another 12000 houses to the town over the next 6 years, it is expected that this pressure will continue to rise.

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 has 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 believes that the proposal provides for greater inclusion and access for pupils within the existing school community.

### School size

The Cabinet Panel noted that Crowdys Hill is a 178 place special school, which would ultimately expand to 214 4-19 year old places under this proposal.

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

### Proposed admission arrangements (including primary provision)

The Cabinet Panel noted that when full, it was anticipated that the proposed primary element would provide up to 36 places for 4-11 year olds. The initial intake would be between 12 and 16 pupils in September 2016, the second intake in September 2017 should see the Primary element 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 believes that the proposed primary element would offer a full KS1 and KS2 curriculum. Designed to allow these young people to achieve their potential and achieve the highest possible educational standards.

### Community cohesion

The Cabinet Panel believes that the Local Authority will 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 notes that this proposal increases the choices and opportunities for the community served by Crowdys Hill School, and that the responses to the consultation highlight 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 £1,475,000 was provisionally allocated by Council in February 2016 (Council Minute 74, 2015/16 refers).

#### 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 lower the age range would include conversion of existing accommodation, 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.

#### Expansion of provision for 4 to 19-year olds.

The Cabinet Panel believes the proposal to extend provision to 4 to 19, will improve, extend the range, and increase participation in high quality educational or training opportunities for pupils within the Local Authority or local area. The new places will fit within the organisation of 4-19 aged provision in Swindon.

#### Views of Interested Parties

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

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