

		AGENDA ITEM 4
Consultation about a proposal to close The Deanes secondary school		PAF/03/13
Committee:	People and Families Scrutiny Committee	
Date:	4th July 2013	
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Purpose of the Paper: To advise the Committee about this consultation and the decision making process and timeline, and to recommend the establishment of a task and finish group of the Committee to support and scrutinize this process.

1. Introduction

At its meeting on the 11th June the People and Families Scrutiny Committee, as part of its consideration of future work programme, agreed to establish a task and finish group to consider the proposals for The Deanes School and associated consultation process. This was with a view to feed any findings back to the full Committee as well as to the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning to inform forthcoming decisions needed on this subject.

This report provides the committee with an overview of the process to date and the timescales going forward. It is intended, subject to agreement of the Committee and agreement of Terms of Reference, that an initial paper is presented to the Task and Finish Group which sets out all the information that has been used to reach the point of launching the consultation document.

The consultation document is available on the Essex County Council website:

<http://www.essex.gov.uk/Education-Schools/Schools/Delivering-Education-Essex/School-Organisation-Planning/Pages/Consultations.aspx>

There will also shortly be available on the website a range of information including responses to frequently asked questions.

2. Recommendation

To establish a Task and Finish Group of the Committee to scrutinise the Deanes Consultation proposals and process.

3. Background

In February 2004 the Government announced the introduction of a £55bn programme to rebuild or improve significantly the premises of the vast majority of secondary schools in the country. The programme was called Building Schools for the Future (BSF). The BSF programme was to be delivered through 'waves' with a named group of schools in each wave. A project to rebuild Glenwood School was originally included in Wave 4 of the BSF programme but in view of the difficulty of securing a new site on which to rebuild the school, it was decided that the school would move to the site of The Deanes School which was due to be rebuilt in wave 5 of the BSF programme, and new premises for both schools would be built as part of a co-location project.

However, in July 2010 the new Coalition Government announced the cessation of the BSF programme in order to help address high levels of public spending and the project to relocate Glenwood School and rebuild it in conjunction with new premises for The Deanes School was stopped. At that time the project had reached the stage of submitting an Outline Business Case to Partnership for Schools, the Government body responsible for delivering the BSF programme.

The Appleton School and The King John School also had proposed capital investment under the BSF programme withdrawn.

Given the poor condition and suitability of its existing premises, the County Council was committed to seeing Glenwood School rebuilt, and it also had a desire to improve the premises of The Deanes School. The County Council therefore decided that it wished to proceed with the co-location project, albeit in a reduced form as far as The Deanes School element was concerned, and a sum of £22.85m was included in the capital programme from 2012 onwards to fund such a project.

This is a very significant capital project to which to commit in the current financial climate and whilst bids for the project were invited in March 2013 and a preferred bidder has been selected, the County Council has decided to halt procurement whilst it takes the opportunity to review the situation at both schools.

Glenwood School is an outstanding, popular and oversubscribed New Model Special School for children with severe and lifelong difficulties. Despite investment by the school the premises are in poor condition and are unsuitable in many respects. The project to rebuild the school remains a very high priority for the County Council. There have been attempts to rebuild or relocate the school for at least the last 15 years.

At the time of its most recent inspection in February 2012, The Deanes School was judged to be a 'good' school and there were 886 pupils on the school roll. In January 2013 this was 793 and for September 2013, it is estimated this will have fallen to 650 and in the next three years it is predicted that this will fall further to below 500. The intake for September 2013 (excluding 6 statemented pupils) currently stands at , 21 pupils living outside the areas served by the three local schools, 17 from Southend and 21 from the priority admissions area of The Deanes School . The remaining 9 pupils

are from The Appleton and The King John areas. There are therefore only 30 'local' children due to start at the school.

The fall in numbers impacts on the revenue funding the school receives to meet its day to day running costs as all schools receive a budget allocation based on pupil numbers.

Given this fall in numbers, the County Council needs to consider whether rebuilding The Deanes School is the best use of the Council's funding. The Council is determined to use the limited funding it has to best effect as there are many competing priorities. In the light of its decision not to proceed with the capital project at this stage, the County Council has decided to undertake a consultation on a proposal to discontinue The Deanes School with effect from 31 August 2016.

For schools to achieve and maintain high educational standards, strong leadership and governance and high quality teachers are vital ingredients. This is critically underpinned by buoyant pupil numbers generating a viable budget and a secure future which gives a sound basis for future planning and development. This helps to make a school attractive to good teachers and leaders seeking to progress their careers, and to parents wanting the best for their child. If popularity is low and pupil numbers decline at a school it becomes increasingly difficult for it to maintain this position.

The County Council is committed to parental preference and ensuring every child has access to the highest quality education to ensure they have the opportunity to maximise their potential.

For these reasons the Council felt that the future of the school should be considered.

3. The Timescale and consultation process

The consultation was launched on the 10th June and runs for 6 weeks until the 22 July 2013.

A range of meetings are being held with staff, governors, pupils, primary and secondary schools, parents and other interested parties during this period.

Date and time	Title	Venue
20 June 2013 14:00	Meeting for Pupils of The Deanes	The Deanes School
20 June 2013 15:00	Meeting for staff of The Deanes	The Deanes School
20 June 2013 17:00	Meeting for the governing body of The Deanes	The Deanes School
20 June 2013 7.30pm	Meeting for parents/ carers of pupils and prospective Year 7 pupils of The Deanes School	The Deanes School
26 June 2013 7.30pm	Public meeting for the local community and other interested parties	The Deanes School)
27 June 2013 7.00pm	Meeting for parents/ carers of pupils and prospective Year 7 pupils of The King John School	The King John School

1 July 2013 7.00pm	Meeting for parents/ carers of pupils and prospective Year 7 pupils of The Appleton School	The Appleton School
4 July 2013 6.00pm	Meeting for parents/ carers of pupils at Glenwood School and the wider school community	Glenwood School
4 July 2013 7.30pm	Meeting for parents/ carers of pupils at local primary schools	Montgomerie Primary School
8 July 2013 7.30pm	Meeting for parents/ carers of pupils at local primary schools	Thundersley Primary School

The proposals are public and specifically have been distributed to all statutory consultees:

- the governing body of any school which is the subject of proposals;
- families of pupils, teachers and other staff at the schools;
- any local authority likely to be affected by the proposals, in particular neighbouring authorities where there may be significant cross-border movement of pupils;
- the governing bodies, teachers and other staff of any other school that may be affected;
- families of any pupils at any other school who may be affected by the proposals including where appropriate families of pupils at feeder primary schools;
- any trade unions who represent staff at the school and representatives of any trade union of any other staff at schools who may be affected by the proposals;
- MPs whose constituencies include the schools that are the subject of the proposals or whose constituents are likely to be affected by the proposals;
- the local district or parish council where the school that is the subject of the proposals is situated;
- any other interested party or such other persons as appear to the proposers to be appropriate.

During August the County Council will consider the views expressed during the consultation. The Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning will then take a formal decision on whether to proceed with the publication of a statutory notice proposing the closure of The Deanes School. If there is a decision to continue towards closure, this notice will be published on 2 September 2013 and will give a further 6 week period for representations to be made. Once the notice closes on 14 October 2013 the County Council would expect to make the final decision within 6 weeks.

Once the County Council Cabinet has made a final decision, the governing body of The Deanes School has a period of 4 weeks in which to consider whether to refer this decision to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator. If the governing body chooses to do this then a final decision from the Schools Adjudicator might be expected in February 2014.