

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 26th November, 2009

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

IMPROVING PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SPECIAL SCHOOL PROVISION FOR PUPILS WITH COMPLEX LEARNING DIFFICULTIES – report on progress so far and a proposal for the relocation of Stanley School

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On the 23rd April 2009 Cabinet gave approval to;

The rebuilding of both Stanley and Elleray Park Schools on new sites, each co-located with a mainstream primary school;

The implementation of a feasibility study regarding the possible creation of a 2-19 special school for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties, and;

The replacement of Foxfield and Meadowside Schools with a new build 11-19 complex learning difficulty school (CLD) built on split sites with the 11-16 provision being co-located with a mainstream secondary school and the 16-19 provision being co-located with Wirral Metropolitan College.

This report is intended to inform members of progress made thus far in implementation of these actions and, in particular, to seek approval to enter into public consultation regarding proposals for the relocation of Stanley School to the site of the new Pensby Primary School.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Local Authority currently maintains 5 special schools, 3 primary and 2 secondary, for pupils who experience complex learning difficulties. These schools meet the needs of pupils with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Such children require a highly modified and developmentally oriented curriculum rather than simple differentiated access to the national curriculum. Many of the pupils have significant additional needs such as autistic spectrum disorder, medical and physical needs and sensory disabilities.
- 1.2 All the schools concerned, Elleray Park, Stanley and The Lyndale at primary and Foxfield and Meadowside at secondary are considered by Ofsted to be either excellent or good with outstanding features. Nonetheless earlier consultations with parents, head teachers and governors have identified that the schools could improve the provision they make if they were provided with more up to date and purpose designed premises.
- 1.3 Currently the schools provide for the following range of pupil need (pupil's primary need as identified by the schools):

	NOR	ASD	BESD	MLD	PMLD	SLCN	SLD	VI
School								
Elleray	79	0	0	0	12	0	67	0
Lyndale	32	0	0	1	18	0	13	0
Stanley	87	1	0	0	0	1	85	0
Foxfield	129	10	1	1	12	0	103	2
M'side	78	9	2	4	17	5	41	0

Please note

NOR – number on roll

ASD – autistic spectrum disorder

BESD – behavioural, emotional and/or social difficulties

MLD – moderate-learning difficulties

PMLD – profound and multiple learning difficulties

SLCN – speech, language and communication needs

SLD – severe learning difficulties

VI – visual impairment

Members will see from the above that in any future developments we will need to provide for the needs of approximately 200 children in both the primary and secondary sectors. Despite the general fall in pupil numbers across the Wirral overall these numbers have remained fairly stable over time. Members will also be able to see the range of need for which each of our special schools for CLD provides.

2. Progress so far

- 2.1 Stanley School whilst being the only CLD school which is currently co-located (with Thingwall Primary) is also considered to be the least fit for purpose. It is also not accessible to wheelchair users. It was, therefore, considered as priority for action.
- 2.2 Given their history of positive working relationships both Stanley and Thingwall were extremely keen that the potential for re-building Stanley on its current site was investigated thoroughly. This has been done and unfortunately it has proven neither to be practical nor financially viable. This is due to the new guidelines on space requirements for modern special schools contained within Building Bulletin 102, which mean that the new school, at c. 3500 sq.ms, will be approximately three times the current size.
- 2.3 This size restricts the number of potential sites for co-location but Pensby Primary has been identified as a possibility. Pensby is currently subject to a new build programme and informal approaches to the head teacher and governing body have met with a very favourable response. Initial advice from Technical Services has indicated that the two schools will fit on the site and, with careful design, will maximise the benefits of co-location in a way that is sympathetic to the local environment.
- 2.4 Progress on this proposal would need to be subject to full public consultation.

- 2.5 Elleray Park, being originally built as a special school, is more fit for purpose and is currently undergoing significant improvement. Nonetheless it is still not up to modern day standards and has a restricted life span. Additionally the creation of a new build Stanley School is likely to impact upon parental preference in the future and we need to progress a rebuild. Potential sites are actively being investigated in conjunction with the head teacher and governors of the school.
- 2.6 The feasibility study into the creation of a 2-19 school for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties is currently underway in close collaboration with the head teacher and governors of Lyndale School who were the main proponents of this option. The study will be completed by the end of December and a report provided to Cabinet in early 2010.
- 2.7 New secondary school for children with complex learning difficulties – 11-16 provision. All secondary school head teachers on Wirral have been asked to submit an Expression of Interest to co-locate with the proposed new 11-16 CLD provision and positive replies have been received from two schools – Hilbre High and Woodchurch High. These proposals will be evaluated and subject to recommendations to Cabinet in early 2010.
- 2.8 The proposal for the 11-16 CLD provision is contained within the authority's current Building Schools for the Future Programme.
- 2.9 New secondary school for young people with complex learning difficulties – 16-19 provision. It is intended that this will be co-located with a new build Wirral Metropolitan College currently planned for the waterfront development in Birkenhead. Members will be aware that the Learning and Skills Council capital programme underpinning this is currently under review and this is delaying the College in progressing their own plans. As our own plans are, in part, dependent on their successfully achieving their objectives we are liaising with the college in monitoring progress. There is also some lack of clarity with the cessation of the LSC over 2010 where various funding streams will eventually lie. Nonetheless we are in the process of compiling a bid for capital funding for the CLD VI form provision, which is due to be submitted in June 2010.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 Significant capital funding will be needed to build the new schools at Pensby to include both the Primary and Primary Special school. Funding for the new primary school is already secured and approved as part of the national Primary Capital programme, which is also funding the new Park Primary School. Dependent upon tender prices there is likely to be a balance remaining on the 9/10 and 10/11 Primary Capital allocations, which could be combined with other national capital funding, supplemented with local capital if required to fund the new Special school. It is proposed that once tender prices are known for Park and budget costings are in place for the full Pensby scheme that the funding be the subject of a further report. The Pensby primary scheme has secure funding and due to site logistics the scheme will need to be delivered in two phases, the first phase being the primary school and the second phase being the special school.

4. Staffing Implications

- 4.1 Under current proposals it is intended to increase pupil numbers at Stanley from 80 to 100 so it will be necessary to increase teacher and support staff numbers accordingly. Co-location may provide opportunities to rationalise other support staff requirements e.g. caretaking, kitchen and cleaning staff, which will need further investigation.

5. Equal Opportunities Implications

- 5.1 The new Stanley School will be designed to meet the full range of needs experienced by children with complex learning difficulties, which the current school cannot. This will enhance pupil and parent choice.
- 5.2 An initial equality impact assessment has been completed with the outcome that a full assessment will be required.

6. Local Agenda 21 Implications

- 6.1 The new school will be fully compliant to BREEAM (BRE Environmental Assessment Method) very good with an aspiration to achieve excellent.

7. Planning implications

- 7.1 Any proposed new builds would be subject to full and appropriate planning application and approval.

8. Anti-poverty Implications

- 8.1 Pupils who are receipt of free school meals are over represented within the CLD population. Provision of additional services may provide needed assistance to both the pupils and their families.

9. Social Inclusion Implications

- 9.1 Co-location of our CLD sites will vastly enhance the opportunities for our children and young people with CLD to become fully included within the Wirral community and meet our commitment to the inclusion agenda.

10. Local Member Support Implications

- 10.1 Children and young people within our CLD schools come from all wards of the borough. Stanley and Pensby Schools are located within the Pensby/Thingwall ward.

11. Background Papers

- 11.1 Cabinet report April 23rd 2009.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet;

- 12.1 Note the progress made in implementing the actions agreed on 23.04.09, and;
- 12.2 Approve a formal consultation regarding the proposed re-location of Stanley School on the new Pensby Primary site

Howard Cooper
Director of Children's Services

