

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## CABINET

11 JULY 2013

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION ON THE POSSIBLE RELOCATION OF FOXFIELD SCHOOL</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:</b>	<b>COUNCILLOR TONY SMITH</b>
<b>KEY DECISION?</b>	<b>YES</b>

### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To report on statutory consultations which have been held for the proposal to relocate Foxfield Special School from its current site in Moreton to Woodchurch and to request Cabinet to approve the publication of statutory notices.

### 2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 Foxfield School is located on Douglas Drive, Moreton, and is a local authority maintained special school for boys and girls aged 11 to 19, who have statements of special educational needs because of complex learning difficulties. The national Priority School Building Programme has given the Local Authority the opportunity to rebuild Foxfield School at a cost in the region of £7.5m. The current school is not purpose built, and increasingly not fit for purpose and the site is too small for a large construction project to be undertaken whilst the school and its pupils remain in its current building.
- 2.2 The Council's Special School Review in June 2010 concluded that any proposals to build new Special Schools for secondary aged pupils would consider the co-location on or adjacent to a Secondary School site. As a result of this recommendation and considering other sites in Wirral, a suitable piece of land owned by the Council has been identified which is adjacent to Woodchurch High School, Birkenhead.
- 2.3 The distance between the two sites is 2.5 miles therefore because it is greater than 2 miles in a straight line; this means that a "prescribed alteration" notice must be issued. Following delegated approval a formal consultation was carried out with the various stakeholders. This consultation ended on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2013 and the outcome is the subject of this report.

### 3.0 CONSULTATION

- 3.1 In order for all stakeholders to have access to relevant background information and have the opportunity to comment and respond, the following methods of consultation have been employed:
- (i) A consultation leaflet and comments form was sent to all parents/carers of pupils attending Foxfield School. The information was also shared with Meadowside School, feeder Special Primary Schools and relevant Ward and parliamentary representatives.
  - (ii) The Wirral Council web-site dedicated to consultations held all relevant information and comment forms and allowed e-mail responses.

(iii) The consultation leaflet was made available and advertised at local libraries and one-stop shops.

(iv) Two meetings were held at Foxfield School. These comprised a short presentation on the option, followed by audience comments, feedback and questions. The meetings were attended by parents, carers and staff. The dates of the meetings were in the parents' leaflets and a general notice was published in the local press.

(v) Opportunities have been provided for other means of response. Responses to the consultation have been received in paper and e-mail formats and are available prior to and at the Cabinet meeting, in addition to summaries contained in this report.

#### **4.0 OUTCOME OF THE CONSULTATION**

4.1 42 written responses to the consultation were received.

4.2 At the meetings held on 14 and 15 May 2013 a total of 26 people attended the two sessions.

4.3 It is important to note that the intention of the consultation is to seek views on the relocation of Foxfield School from its present site and not on the future of Special Education provision in Wirral or other more general issues.

4.4 Written responses received varied considerably and there were a number of comments raised both positive and negative regarding the proposed location.

Positive responses included:

- (i) purpose built school with new facilities
- (ii) increased partnership with a main stream Secondary school
- (iii) reduced running costs of the building
- (iv) central Wirral location
- (v) easy access to transport routes
- (vi) will remove the small teaching spaces
- (vii) increased outdoor space for play and learning
- (viii) removes temporary accommodation
- (ix) the new building will meet the particular needs of the pupils
- (x) positive opportunities for both student groups through co-location

Negative responses included:

- (i) additional traffic in the Woodchurch area
- (ii) loss of links with the Moreton community i.e. shops, café,
- (iii) additional travelling for cleaning, catering staff at Foxfield
- (iv) would Woodchurch High be able to engage with both Special schools in the area
- (v) longer travel times for some pupils
- (vi) construction inconvenience for the local area
- (vii) Council hidden agenda for Meadowside School
- (viii) excess of Complex Learning Difficulty places for pupils in Wirral
- (ix) no proper consultation with staff of Meadowside
- (x) parental choice affected having two schools in the same area
- (xi) affect on local habitat
- (xii) reduced work placement opportunities for pupils

- 4.5 The meetings held at Foxfield School were very positive and the questions raised centred around the practicalities of construction and transferring pupils to the new building, ensuring there was adequate parking for staff and visitors, involvement of staff in the design process, timescales for the construction, positive comments on the size of the land available for environmental and play areas for pupils.
- 4.6 Response to concerns raised during the consultation

Community interaction – Foxfield has enjoyed positive involvement within the Moreton community, the headteacher, governing body and staff will continue with this important aspect of pupil interaction in their new and current location.

Proximity to Meadowside – the two schools are currently 3.0 miles apart, the new proposals will mean that they will be 0.8 miles apart; concerns over the access to shops by an increase population appear to be one of the key concerns.

Travel – almost all pupils are transported from home by minibus from across the Borough, relocating Foxfield brings the travel to a more central location with good links to roads and the motorway. The Woodchurch estate has a number of entry routes and careful travel planning can reduce congestion. This is a matter which will be considered within the planning application.

Impact on Meadowside – indications show the numbers of pupils with CLD will rise therefore, the places available in both schools will meet the needs of the CLD population, and there is no intention to cause a reduction in numbers attending Meadowside. Capital investment will continue at Meadowside to ensure that building condition and suitability requirements are addressed.

Construction disruption – the Capital investment of £7.5m from central government under the Priority School Building Programme is the only opportunity the Borough has for significant investment in its school building stock. Anticipated construction times are less than 12 months, the land identified allows for construction traffic to be located in a dedicated off-road location and because there is no demolition of existing buildings this will reduce disruption to residents.

Links to Woodchurch High – Governors and staff of Woodchurch High school have expressed their delight at the prospect of having Foxfield co-located with them, there is no indication that pupils from Meadowside would have reduced access to Woodchurch High.

Curriculum opportunities – one of the most positive outcomes in having Meadowside and Foxfield school close to one another is the opportunity to share specialist resources particularly at post-16. The viability of specialist rooms may not be realistic for a small number of pupils but a real opportunity when more pupils are sharing the facility.

## **5.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 5.1 Risks associated with obtaining planning permission on the proposed site have been identified. However, initial discussions with the planning authority have been positive given the specialist facilities the new school building would provide adjacent to the high school and improvements planned to the remainder of the site.
- 5.2 The failure to secure the site for the relocation could result in funding being withdrawn from this scheme.
- 5.3 The consultation process has raised a number of perceived risks of having two schools in the same locality as identified in section 4.5. These will be addressed by the two schools concerned and officers in the Local Authority to ensure that the proposals add to the overall quality of special education provision on Wirral.

## **6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 6.1 The current Foxfield site was considered for the new building, however this would have meant that pupils would be required to use temporary accommodation and this is not advisable for pupils with complex needs. The site would also have restricted build option for the new school.
- 6.2 Other sites were explored for co-location but various factors such as transport routes, available land, complex PFI contracts and schools' expressions of interest to co-locate with a special school favoured the identified site.

## **7.0 CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 See sections 3.0 and 4.0 above.

## **8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

- 8.1 The new building will provide more opportunities for specialist facilities to be made available to the most vulnerable groups at a location which is central to the Borough.

## **9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS**

- 9.1 The cost of the new building will be met by the Education Funding Agency with an additional amount being made available from Council Capital for additional hydrotherapy facilities, demolition and additional pupil places. The school will also contribute to the new facility from its delegated budget. It is not planned to automatically increase numbers at the school, the modest proposed increase is to "future proof" the building, given its lifespan.
- 9.2 IT would be provided within the contract to a specification suitable for a special school.
- 9.3 As this is a relocation project, it is expected that all current staff will transfer to the new building.
- 9.4 The new building is being funded via grant and procured by the Education Funding Agency as part of a regional contract and will become a Council asset upon completion. The current site of Foxfield School will be considered for disposal or the possible use by another education establishment. This will be subject to a further report.

## **10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The Council is required to publish statutory proposals for the relocation of school more than 2 miles from its current site.

## **11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

(a) Yes and impact review can be viewed via the following link:

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-2010-0>

## **12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 Increase in Carbon usage will be minimal due to the low energy building components being specified and the transfer from a less efficient building. No other environmental issues have been identified at this stage with the project.

## **13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 Planning approval will be necessary for the proposed construction.

13.2 Replacement of schools allow the most vulnerable accommodation to be removed and other security improvements carried out to ensure the site is safe and secure.

## **14.0 RECOMMENDATION/S**

14.1 That statutory proposals be published in respect of a statutory “prescribed alteration” to transfer the site of Foxfield School from its current site in Moreton to the proposed site at Carr Bridge Road, Woodchurch.

14.2 That the Director of Children’s Services be authorised to take all necessary steps to publish these proposals, ensure the prescribed procedures are followed, including requesting permissions from the Secretary of State in furtherance of the proposal.

## **15.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

15.1 The proposed site is the most suitable in terms of location for Foxfield School and will enjoy benefits from co-location with a main stream Secondary school.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **REFERENCE MATERIAL**

Consultation responses

### **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Delegated Approval</b>	<b>May 2013</b>