

**FUTURE OF EDUCATIONAL PROVISION IN GAMLINGAY**

**To:** Cabinet

**Date:** 14th June 2011

**From:** Executive Director: Children and Young People's Services

**Electoral division(s):** Gamlingay, Bassingbourn, Hardwick, Bourn

**Forward Plan ref:** 2011 / 037 **Key decision:** Yes

**Purpose:** To:

- i) Advise Cabinet of the outcome of the consultation which has been undertaken on options for the future of educational provision in Gamlingay in response to Gamlingay Village College having been placed in special measures by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted); and
- ii) Seek Cabinet's agreement to proceed with reviewing educational provision in Gamlingay with the purpose of determining which of the identified options for change should be the subject of further consultation as part of formal statutory proposals for change to be undertaken at the start of September 2011.

**Recommendation:** Cabinet is recommended to:

- a) Note and comment on the consultation responses and the views expressed at the various consultation meetings held in respect of options for the future of educational provision in Gamlingay;
- b) Endorse the educational case for change and the conclusion that status quo is not an option; and
- c) Identify a preferred option for change which should be the subject of further consultation as part of formal statutory proposals for change to be undertaken at the start of September 2011.

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**Note the appendices referred to in this report have been produced as a separate information pack for Cabinet Members**

## **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 The village of Gamlingay is in South Cambridgeshire, but very close to the border with the neighbouring Children's Services Authority, Central Bedfordshire.
- 1.2 There are two schools in the village, Gamlingay First School, which serves children in the 4-9 age range and Gamlingay Village College, which serves children in the 9-13 age range.
- 1.3 The schools are organised on the three-tier educational model which exists in Central Bedfordshire of First, Middle and Upper schools. At age 13 children transfer to Stratton Upper School in Biggleswade, Central Bedfordshire, a journey of around 6 miles. Stratton serves the 13-19 age range.
- 1.4 All other schools in Cambridgeshire are organised on the two-tier educational model of primary (4-11 age range) and secondary (11-16 or 11-19) schools.
- 1.5 The two Gamlingay schools serve a common catchment area (a map is attached as **Appendix 1**) which comprises: East Hatley, Everton Heath, Gamlingay, Hatley St George and Tetworth. However, the schools are providing very different educational and learning experiences and outcomes.
- 1.6 Gamlingay First School is a high-performing school. In contrast, the Village College was placed in Special Measures by Ofsted following an inspection of the school which took place on 9-10 February 2011. The Ofsted report is attached as **Appendix 2**.
- 1.7 A Special Measures judgement by Ofsted places a requirement on the Local Authority to produce a detailed action plan. As part of this action plan it must assess the scope for the school to be closed or for it to enter into a Federation (a statutory partnership) with one or more schools. In considering these options, the Local Authority must take account of the number of surplus places at better-performing schools. The Local Authority's response to that report is attached as **Appendix 3**.
- 1.8 At the start of April 2011, a consultation was launched to seek views on three options for the future of educational provision in Gamlingay:

### **Option 1: To:**

- retain the current three-tier system of Gamlingay First School and Village College feeding into Stratton Upper School in Biggleswade; and
- develop formal federation proposals.

### **Option 2: To:**

- establish Gamlingay First School as an all-through primary school serving the 4-11 age range;
- close Gamlingay Village College;
- include Gamlingay in the catchment area of Bassingbourn Village College; and

- provide for students to continue their post-16 education in Cambridgeshire.

**Option 3: To:**

- establish Gamlingay First School as an all-through primary school serving the 4-11 age range;
- close Gamlingay Village College;
- include Gamlingay in the catchment area of the new secondary school to be established in Cambourne; and
- provide for students to continue their post-16 education in Cambridgeshire.

1.9 All three options for change have the potential to deliver improvements in children's education. However, Option 2 was identified as the Council's preferred option for change.

1.10 The consultation period concluded on 25 May 2011.

## **2.0 MAIN ISSUES**

### **2.1 Educational Standards and Pupils' Attainment**

2.1.1 In June 2009, the Council designated Gamlingay Village College as a school requiring High Level Contact. Since September 2009, the school has received significant, additional, targeted support to secure improvement in children's education. This has included:

- an additional School Improvement Partner (SIP), a Local Leader in Education (LLE) who was brought in to provide additional challenge and guidance to the school's Head teacher and leadership team;
- additional resources;
- additional mathematics support;
- establishment of a Local Authority Intervention Group (LAIG), with meetings held monthly to review progress and identify further action to raise standards;
- allocation of a consultant inspector; and
- review of teaching and learning culminating in the production of a detailed action plan aimed at achieving the rapid improvement identified as necessary.

2.1.2 In December 2010, prompted by increasing concerns over the lack of engagement, and recognition by the Head teacher and Chair of Governors of the urgency to secure improvement, the Director of Learning issued a draft Warning Notice, with a request that the school produce an action plan in response. When no response was received, a formal Warning Notice was issued. Alongside this, an Authority-appointed consultative Head teacher was brought in to drive improvement and support the Head teacher. Shortly afterwards, Ofsted undertook an inspection of the school and it was placed in Special Measures.

2.1.3 Special Measures is the lowest possible category of school performance. It is used to identify a school which is failing to provide an acceptable standard of education and where the persons responsible for leading, managing or

governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

- 2.1.4 The Ofsted Inspection judgement of Gamlingay Village College was that the school's:
- overall effectiveness was inadequate; and
  - capacity for sustained improvement was inadequate
- 2.1.5 Rapid improvement was identified as necessary to address key areas of teaching and learning identified as inadequate:
- Increasing attainment and improving pupils' progress to at least national averages in all subjects, but especially numeracy and literacy;
  - The quality of teaching to improve the proportion of good and outstanding lessons;
  - The quality of leadership.
- 2.1.6 An assessment of the school, undertaken at the end of May 2011, is that it remains inadequate. Key areas of concern are:
- Children's performance remains well below the Government's measure (floor targets);
  - Progress for children with special educational needs (SEN) is inadequate; and
  - Predictions for the next two years are that the attainment of children attending the school will remain well below expected standards.

## 2.2 Quality of Leadership and Management

- 2.2.1 Following the Ofsted Inspection, the school's Head teacher left the school. Changes also took place within the Governing Body, including appointment of a new Chair of Governors.
- 2.2.2 In recognition of the clear and urgent need to address the issue of quality of leadership, the Council increased its support to the school and the Governing Body. This included providing a consultative Head teacher and securing temporary leadership arrangements.
- 2.2.3 At the start of April, two highly experienced primary Head teachers (one recently retired and one a serving Head at a Cambridgeshire Primary School) took on a shared Acting Head teacher arrangement on a 3/2 day a week split. In addition, the Council was able to secure additional support for the school from Gamlingay First School and Stratton Upper School.
- 2.2.4 Through its action the Council has secured high quality leadership for the remainder of the school year.
- 2.2.5 Further, temporary arrangements will need to be put in place for the start of September as:
- The earliest date by which an experienced Head teacher could be appointed would be January 2012; and
  - it would not be appropriate to appoint a permanent Head teacher for the school whilst options for the future of educational provision in Gamlingay are under consideration.

## 2.3 Quality of teaching

2.3.1 An assessment of teaching at Gamlingay Village College undertaken in May 2011 by the Acting Head teacher is that:

- Over 51% of teaching is inadequate or barely satisfactory, rising to 65% satisfactory or below;
- There is no outstanding teaching.

2.3.2 Further significant concerns are that:

- Children's engagement in learning is weak, with compliant behaviour;
- Assessment of pupil achievement is not robust and requires external moderation;
- Curriculum planning is not in place and the curriculum timetable is inappropriate for children's needs;
- Professional development is required across all areas of the curriculum;
- Major staffing vacancies exist for September in Key Stage 2.

## 2.4. Risks of maintaining the status quo

2.4.1 As there is no evidence to indicate that the necessary, significant improvements required can be achieved quickly or that Gamlingay Village College has the capacity to improve quickly, the risks associated with maintaining the status quo are:

- The school's ability to provide a satisfactory level of education for children in the short to medium term – the professional judgement of the Director of Learning and Head of Standards and Effectiveness 11-19 is that it could take three years to reach this level;
- The negative impact on children and young people's future educational success and learning;
- The negative impact on children and young people's life chances, including future employment and their role in society;
- The ability to recruit an experienced, high-calibre Head teacher;
- The ability to recruit skilled, knowledgeable, high calibre teaching staff.

## 2.5 Consultation

2.5.1 The Council's consultation was launched on 6 April 2011 with the publication of a consultation document. A copy of this document is attached as **Appendix 4**. At the back of the document was a comment sheet for people to use to provide feedback on the need for change and the options identified for this.

2.5.2 A series of consultation meetings were held on 26 and 27 April 2011:

- Separate meetings for staff employed at Gamlingay Village College and Gamlingay First School to which their union representatives were also invited.
- Separate meetings for the Governing Bodies of Gamlingay Village College and Gamlingay First School.
- Two meetings for parents/carers of children attending one or both

schools and for those parents/carers of children of pre-school age.

On 19 May 2011 there was a further consultation meeting, undertaken in partnership with Gamlingay Parish Council, which was aimed at obtaining the views of the Gamlingay community. All meetings were very well attended. Notes of the public meetings are attached as **Appendix 5**. One of the parents attending the Gamlingay Village College parents/carers' meeting on 27 April expressed concern about the content of these notes. A copy of his email, outlining these concerns, is, therefore, also attached as part of Appendix 5.

2.5.3 Close to 700 written responses were received, in the form of emails, letters and completed comment sheets. The vast majority of these, 611, are in support of Gamlingay Village College remaining open and entering into a Federation with Stratton Upper School (Option 1). In a number of cases, multiple responses have been received from families, one for each member of the family. In many other cases, comment sheets have been returned indicating Option 1 as the preference but with no further information to support this choice.

#### 2.5.4 Arguments put forward against change

- Travel distance and transport routes to Bassingbourn Village College, the cost of additional transport and the environmental impact of more vehicles being used to transport children to and from school
- Access to post-16 education
- Timing of the consultation – the school should be “given the chance to improve”
- Belief that Gamlingay Village College is already improving and will be quickly deemed to no longer require Special Measures, and all that is needed to effect this improvement is to change the leadership and management of the school
- Community use, the future of the Village College site and the need for capital investment to support implementation of Options 2 and 3
- Transition arrangements.

2.5.5 Whilst far fewer people (54) expressed support for Option 2. The submissions supporting this option tended to set out the reasoning for this view. Only four people chose Option 3, with a further one indicating support for aligning Gamlingay with the two-tier pattern of provision in Cambridgeshire, but not for the options of Bassingbourn Village College or the new Cambourne secondary school.

#### 2.5.6 Arguments put forward in support of change

- The urgent need to address educational standards
- The opportunity to build on the high quality of educational provision at Gamlingay First School
- The opportunity to secure continuity of educational provision up to the end of Key Stage 2
- Entitlement to access two-tier education in line with the rest of Cambridgeshire.

2.5.7 Stratton Upper School responded to the consultation by indicating the Governing Body's willingness to pursue the option of a formal Federation with Gamlingay Village College. This would be on the understanding that the Head

teacher of Stratton Upper School would become the Executive Principal with responsibility for leading and managing both schools.

- 2.5.8 At meetings held with Bassingbourn Village College and Comberton Village College both have also expressed a willingness to work with the Council to successfully deliver either Option 2 or 3 depending upon the outcome of Cabinet's decision-making process. In addition, the Executive Principal of the Longsands Learning Partnership (Longsands College and St Neots Community College) has written in respect of a variation on Option 2, which would involve St Neots Community College becoming the designated secondary school for Gamlingay, and to set out his willingness to play an active role in its development should Cabinet wish to consider this option further.
- 2.5.9 A consultation response was also received from a group promoting a Free School for the Potton area of Central Bedfordshire and South West Cambridgeshire. The proposal suggested a fourth option of establishing a Free School on the Gamlingay Village College site should a decision be taken to close that school. The proposal is that the Free School would admit children at Years 7 (age 11) and 9 (age 13) to accommodate the different educational structures within Central Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire. Officers have met with members of the group to discuss their proposals. The group has now submitted an application to the Department for Education (DfE) seeking approval for their proposals. At this stage, therefore, the Free School cannot be considered as a fourth option as there is no guarantee that the group will secure the necessary approval from the DfE. In addition, should the decision be taken to pursue Option 1 this would mean that the Village College site would not be available for the Free School. Whatever the decision of Cabinet, officers will continue to liaise with the Free School promoters in respect of their plans.
- 2.5.10 The Local Member for Gamlingay has written in support of Option 1.
- 2.5.11 Lever arch files containing all of the responses received are available in the Members' Lounge. An analysis of the responses is attached as **Appendix 6**.
- 2.5.12 In response to the questions and concerns raised, both at the consultation meetings and in writing, a Frequently Asked Questions document was published on the Council's website in May 2011. A copy is attached as **Appendix 7**.

## 2.6 Option Appraisal

- 2.6.1 In order to inform Cabinet's consideration of the identified need for urgent change to secure improvements in education standards and attainment for the children and young people of Gamlingay, an option appraisal has been undertaken for all three options, together with a Community Impact Assessment for each one. These are contained in three separate appendices:

**Appendix 8:** Appraisal and Community Impact Assessment for Option 1

**Appendix 9:** Appraisal and Community Impact Assessment for Option 2

**Appendix 10:** Appraisal and Community Impact Assessment for Option 3

## 2.7 Transition Planning

- 2.7.1 A decision by Cabinet on 14 June is essential in order to enable work to begin on the detailed planning required to ensure as smooth a transition as possible for children, young people, staff, governors and parents/carers affected by the need for change.

### 3.0 **ALIGNMENT WITH PRIORITIES AND WAYS OF WORKING**

#### 3.1 **Supporting and protecting vulnerable people when they need it most**

- 3.1.1 All three of the identified options for change have the potential to improve educational outcomes for the children and young people of Gamlingay, including those with SEN. Currently progress for young people with SEN attending Gamlingay Village College is inadequate.

#### 3.2 **Helping people live healthy and independent lives in their communities**

- 3.2.1 Under Option 1, children and young people would continue their education in Gamlingay up to age 13, as at present. Under Options 2 and 3, children and young people would transfer to either Bassingbourn Village College or the new secondary school in Cambourne at age 11. There is no public transport operating between Gamlingay and Bassingbourn or between Gamlingay and Cambourne. Under Option 2, young people would be dependent upon their parents/carers for transport home from after-school activities as Bassingbourn Village College does not currently operate a late bus. No information is available in respect of Comberton Village College's plans for after-school activities at the Cambourne secondary school.

#### 3.3 **Developing the local economy for the benefit of all**

- 3.3.1 All three of the identified options for change have the potential to improve children and young people's educational outcomes which will have a direct impact on their future life chances, including their employment prospects and, therefore, their contribution to the economy.

#### 3.4 **Ways of Working**

- 3.4.1 All three options identified for change would involve new ways of working. Option 1 would involve a statutory partnership being established between Gamlingay Village College and another school. The Governing Body of Stratton Upper School has expressed a willingness to enter into a Federation with Gamlingay Village College. Under a Federation there would be one governing body with collective responsibility for the two schools and an Executive Head teacher with responsibility for leading and managing both schools. If the decision is taken to pursue this Option further, one of the challenges involved will be to ensure that Gamlingay First School does not become isolated and is provided with relevant and appropriate professional inter-school support.
- 3.4.2 Under Option 2, the opportunity exists to build on the established and developing links between Gamlingay First School and the schools in the Bassingbourn cluster.

### 4.0 **SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**



#### 4.1 **Resource and Performance Implications**

- 4.1.1 The Council has made available additional, targeted funding and intervention support for Gamlingay Village College over the last two years. That support has included negotiating with other Governing Bodies to release their Head teachers on a part-time, temporary basis to add strength and depth to the leadership and management of the school.
- 4.1.2 As there is no prospect of the school being judged by Ofsted to no longer require Special Measures in the short to medium term, the Council will need to continue its programme of additional funding and intervention support for the foreseeable future. This will be the case if Option 1 is pursued. Under Options 2 and 3, the Council would continue its support up to the point of closure.
- 4.1.3 Gamlingay Village College is categorised as a secondary school and is, therefore, funded as one under the Council's schools' revenue funding formula. Based on 2011/12 Section 251 budgets (including mainstreamed grants), the Village College is receiving £5133 per pupil compared to the Cambridgeshire secondary school average of £4503 and primary school average of £3669. Gamlingay First School is funded as a primary school. Gamlingay Village College is smaller than many of Cambridgeshire's primary schools.
- 4.1.4 A desk-top assessment has been undertaken of both the Gamlingay First School and Gamlingay Village College sites to determine the likely level of capital investment required to adapt the existing accommodation to provide for the full primary age range (4-11) should the decision be taken to pursue either Option 2 or 3 further. Similar levels of investment, around £1.2m would be required to adapt either school.

Gamlingay First School would be easier to adapt for the primary age range. However, investment in the Village College site offers the advantage of retaining the existing community infrastructure and assets for future use. Many of the respondents to the consultation were concerned about the impact of closure of the Village College on the wider community, given the important role played by the school in providing leisure and sports activities. Retention and development of the Village College site would be a means of addressing these concerns should the decision be taken to pursue either Option 2 or 3 further. It should be noted, however, that there is currently no provision in the Children and Young People's five year rolling programme of capital investment for Gamlingay.

- 4.1.5 The Council currently meets the transport costs for children living in the Gamlingay catchment area when they transfer to Stratton Upper School at age 13. Under Options 2 and 3, free transport would be provided to either Bassingbourn Village College or the new secondary school in Cambourne for children from age 11. The actual cost of transport would be dependent upon the number of children involved and the outcome of a competitive tendering process.

It should be noted that with effect from September 2011, the Council will operate a contract bus between the villages of East Hatley and Hatley St George and Bassingbourn Village College in response to parental preference admission applications for this school. Both villages are in the Gamlingay catchment area. The transport is being provided free to children living there as

Bassingbourn is their nearest secondary school. This is in line with Education law governing the provision of free transport to and from school.

Under Options 2 and 3, free transport would continue to be available to Stratton Upper School for children living in Gamlingay on the basis that this is their nearest Upper School. This is in line with Education law governing the provision of free transport to and from school.

## 4.2 **Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications**

### 4.2.1 There are five statutory stages for a statutory proposal to close a maintained mainstream school:

1. Consultation
2. Publication of statutory proposals for change
3. Representation
4. Decision
5. Implementation

Further details are provided in the Frequently Asked Questions document (question and answer no. 3).

If Cabinet supports the conclusion that maintaining the status quo is not an option, the next stage in the process will be to proceed to the publication of statutory proposals for change. The steps and timetables involved are dependent upon which option Cabinet agrees to pursue further.

If **Option 1** is to be pursued:

- The Governing Bodies of Gamlingay Village College and Stratton Upper School would need to consult on a formal Federation proposal
- Each Governing Body would consider feedback from consultation and decide whether or not to proceed with Federation. (Both Governing Bodies need to agree.)
- If both agree then they would proceed to implementation – September 2012

If **Option 2 or 3** is to be pursued:

- Publication of statutory proposals for change
- Six week period following publication of a statutory notice for comments/objections
- Report to Cabinet in November 2011 for final decision
- Implementation September 2012 or 2013

### 4.2.2 Under Option 1, the Council has no role in the decision-making process. There is a risk that one or both Governing Bodies could take a decision at any point during the statutory process to withdraw from discussions over Federation. The earliest the outcome would be known would be expected to be towards the end of the autumn term 2011.

### 4.2.3 In response to the numerous concerns raised in respect of the safety of the route between Gamlingay and Bassingbourn via Croydon Hill, the Council's Highways Department has undertaken a route assessment. This is attached as **Appendix 11**. The conclusion reached is that, overall, the injury accident

assessment does not highlight anything of statistical concern that would warrant not using the route for transporting children and young people to Bassingbourn Village College by bus.

As indicated above, a contract bus service will be operating along this route from September.

#### **4.3 Equality and Diversity Implications**

##### **4.3.1 Public Sector Equality Duty**

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, came into force on the 5th April 2011. The purpose of the provision is to consolidate the various pre-existing 'equality duties' under one statutory provision. The effect of S.149 is to impose a requirement on a public authority that, when exercising its functions, it must have due regard to the need to:-

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The relevant protected characteristics are—

Age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.

The above is applicable to decisions of the Council when acting in its capacity as the Children's Services Authority, including making decisions as to the provision of schools in particular localities. In exercising functions in this respect the Council, the decision maker, in this case the Council's Cabinet, is required to have due regard to its obligations under S.149 of the Equality Act 2010.

In recognition of the importance of this duty, three separate Community Impact Assessments have been undertaken, one for each option.

#### **4.4 Engagement and Consultation**

##### **4.4.1 The Authority has undertaken a wide-ranging consultation seeking the views of:**

- Parents/carers of children and young people on roll at Gamlingay First School and Gamlingay Village College
- Parents/carers of children of pre-school age
- Staff employed at Gamlingay First School and Gamlingay Village College and their union representatives
- The Governing Bodies of Gamlingay First School and Gamlingay Village College
- Bassingbourn Village College
- Stratton Upper School
- Comberton Village College
- The Longsands Learning Partnership

- Gamlingay Parish Council
- Bassingbourn Parish Council
- South Cambridgeshire District Council
- Central Bedfordshire Council
- Local Members
- The local MP

4.4.2 Gamlingay Parish Council has expressed a keen interest in securing continued access to community facilities on the Village College site, including taking on responsibility for these in the event of the school's closure and any decision not to retain the site for educational use.

Source Documents	Location
Catchment map for Gamlingay	Attached as Appendix 1
February 2011 Ofsted report on Gamlingay Village College	Attached as Appendix 2
Local Authority response to the Ofsted report	Attached as Appendix 3
Consultation document	Attached as Appendix 4
Notes of the public consultation meetings held on 26 and 27 April and 19 May and a letter of complaint in respect of the accuracy of the notes taken by the Authority's officers at the consultation meetings	Attached as Appendix 5
Consultation response analysis	Attached as Appendix 6
Frequently Asked Questions document	Attached as Appendix 7
Community Impact Assessment for Option 1	Attached as Appendix 8
Community Impact Assessment for Option 2	Attached as Appendix 9
Community Impact Assessment for Option 3	Attached as Appendix 10
Route Assessment	Attached as Appendix 11
Files containing all of the written responses to the consultation	Available in the Members' Lounge from 8 June 2011