

**FUTURE CONFIGURATION OF TRINITY SCHOOL**

*To:* **Children and Young People Committee**

*Meeting Date:* **8 December 2015**

*From:* **Adrian Loades, Executive Director: Children, Families and Adults Services**

*Electoral division(s):* **Godmanchester and Huntingdon East, Huntingdon, Little Paxton and St Neots North, Melbourn, Roman Bank and Peckover, St Neots Eaton Socon and Eynesbury, Waldersley, Wisbech North and Wisbech South**

*Forward Plan ref:* **N/A** **No**

*Purpose:* **To consider the responses received to the consultation undertaken by the Council on the future configuration of Trinity School and to seek the Committee's approval to proceed to implementation of the proposed changes.**

*Recommendation:* **The Committee is asked to:**

- a) Note the feedback from the consultation undertaken on the future configuration of the Trinity School;**
- b) Approve the proposal for the relocation of the staff and students from the Hartford and Foxton sites of Trinity School to new accommodation provided specifically for this purpose in Almond Road St Neots at the start of the autumn term 2016 and the subsequent closure of the Foxton and Hartford centres;**
- c) Approve continued use of the Wisbech site of Trinity School, which is leased by the Council.**

<b><i>Officer contact:</i></b>	
<b>Name:</b>	Hazel Belchamber and Judith Davies
<b>Post:</b>	Head of 0-19 Place Planning & Organisation Service and Head of Commissioning Enhanced Services
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:Hazel.belchamber@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">Hazel.belchamber@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a> <a href="mailto:Judith.davies@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">Judith.davies@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>
<b>Tel:</b>	01223 699775 and 01223 729150

## **1.0 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The Council as the local Children's Services Authority, has a statutory duty to provide a school place for every child living in its area of responsibility who is of school age and whose parents want their child educated in the state funded sector. To achieve this, the Council has to keep the number of school places under review and to take appropriate steps to manage the position where necessary. This includes the commissioning of special school places.
- 1.2 The Education and Inspections Act 2006 also requires local authorities to adopt a strategic role, with a duty to promote choice, diversity and fair access to school provision. In addition, it has a statutory duty under the Childcare Act 2006 to secure sufficient childcare for parents to work or to undertake education or training which could lead to employment (section 6) and secure free early years provision for all 3 and 4 year olds (and the most vulnerable 2 year olds) of 15 hours a week, 38 weeks a year, of early years education (section 7).
- 1.3 The Trinity School was established as a multi-site maintained special school in September 2012 in place of three unregistered alternative secondary educational facilities. The school operates from three sites: Foxton in South Cambridgeshire, Hartford in Huntingdon and Wisbech and provides a total of 105 places for young people with a statement of special educational need (SEN) aged 11-16
- 1.4 All of those placed in the school have primary needs relating to social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). In addition, they have complex learning needs. Currently there are 45 young people on roll across the three sites. This relatively low number results from a deliberate strategy to limit the number on roll in recognition of the poor quality of the teaching and learning environment at the Hartford and Foxton sites as well as to allow the school's leadership team to focus on the improvements identified in its 2014 Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) report. The judgement was to place the school in Special Measures.
- 1.5 On 23 November 2013 the Council's Cabinet approved the purchase of land and buildings in the ownership of Huntingdonshire Regional College in Almond Road, St Neots to be converted for use as:
  - Replacement accommodation for the Trinity School's Hartford Centre in recognition that the existing site was unsuitable for teaching and learning; and
  - Replacement for mobile accommodation used for the delivery of early years and childcare provision on the Priory Infant School site, Almond Road, St Neots.
- 1.6 The Council concluded the negotiations for purchase of the site earlier this year. The cost was met from the £5,060,000 allocated for this project in the Children, Families and Adults (CFA) 10 year rolling capital programme approved as part of the Business Plan for 2015/16.
- 1.7 As the plans for the refit of the accommodation progressed it became increasingly evident that they provided the opportunity to secure much improved teaching and learning facilities not only for the staff and students

of the Hartford Centre but of the Foxton Centre as well. This led to the decision to undertake formal consultation on proposals to relocate the students and staff from both sites to the new accommodation being provided in Almond Road, St Neots and then close the Hartford and Foxton sites. The proposals also provide for dedicated and segregated accommodation for delivery of early years and childcare in place of the mobiles currently used for this purpose. The consultation concluded on Friday 13 November 2015.

## **2.0 KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING THE CONSULTATION PROPOSALS**

- 2.1 The management of three sites of Trinity School has proved challenging. The 2014 Ofsted inspection identified issues around the quality and consistency of teaching across the three sites. The school's governing body was subsequently replaced with an Interim Executive Board (IEB).
- 2.2 Securing the significant improvements needed in teaching and learning necessary to achieve a Good or Outstanding Ofsted rating is directly affected by the physical distances between the three sites and the time taken to travel between them by the head teacher and senior management team. The three-site operational model also limits the potential to share staff knowledge, expertise and best practice. Rationalisation and relocation of the school onto two sites, one in Wisbech and one in St Neots will facilitate the creation of a larger, more flexible staff team.
- 2.3 The facilities, including the external play areas, at both Foxton and Hartford are inadequate and unsuitable for teaching and learning.
- 2.4 There is capacity in the new accommodation in St Neots for up to 60 young people, sufficient to replace both the Foxton and Hartford sites. The intention is to make full use of this capacity and, therefore, limit the potential for the need to place young people out of county.
- 2.5 The Headteacher and the Interim Executive Board of the Trinity School have been actively engaged in consideration of options for the future configuration of the school and support to the proposal to relocate staff and students from the Hartford and Foxton sites to the Almond Road site in St Neots.

## **3.0 THE CONSULTATION**

- 3.1 The consultation was launched on 16 October 2015 with the dissemination of a background consultation document and covering letter to staff, their union representatives, parents, local members and other interested parties, including MPs, District, Town and Parish Councils.
- 3.2 Staff and their union representatives were invited to attend a meeting at Longsands Academy on 3 November 2015 to find out more and have their questions answered about the proposed changes. In addition, they were offered the opportunity to visit the Almond Road site. Only three members of staff attended the meeting. They were positive about the proposals and made some helpful suggestions for minor adaptations to the plans for both the internal and external spaces.
- 3.3 Parents, pupils and other interested parties were provided with two

opportunities on 4 November at Hartford and on 9 November at the Meadows Community Centre, Cambridge to meet officers to find out more about the plans and have their questions answered. The only person to attend was one of the Godmanchester and Huntingdon East members who came along to the 4 November meeting and asked a number of questions of detail, including of the school's Headteacher and one of the members of staff who were present.

- 3.4 Views were also sought via an on-line survey. The closing date for submissions was Friday 13 November. Only four responses were received by the deadline:

- 1 from a parent
- 1 from a member of staff
- 2 from members of the IEB

Of these, three indicated their agreement to the proposals, with the fourth stating that they had not strong feeling either way.

- 3.5 The parent who responded stated that they could see benefits for the school and that the changes were needed to enable it to continue to improve. However, they did have some concerns over the potential for their child to become unsettled as a result of the move and the increased distance they would have to travel in order to attend events at the school in future.

- 3.6 The only other comment received related to the future of the Fenland site and the need to ensure that the students on roll there were not forgotten by their local community and that every effort should be made, therefore, to ensure they did not become socially isolated. Linked to this was a request to the Council that it should try to merge the Fenland Centre with another Academy in the Wisbech or Fenland area to develop more local service delivery.

- 3.7 In addition, the interim Chief Executive of Longsands College wrote to the Head of Commissioning Enhanced Services on 22 October 2016. Whilst this expressed some criticism over aspects of communication, it contained a number of statements which reiterated the Academy Trust's continued to wish to be an active stakeholder in the development of the Almond Road facility and its desire to work in partnership and explore opportunities for co-provision with Trinity.

- 3.8 The conclusion drawn from the very limited number of responses received to the consultation and the low turnout at the three meetings is that there is general support for the proposed changes. The recommendation to Committee is, therefore, that they should be approved for implementation.

#### **4.0 ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

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

- 4.1.1 Providing access to local and high quality education and associated children's services will enhance the skills of the local workforce and provide essential childcare services for working parents or those seeking to return to work. The school and early years and childcare services are providers of local employment.

## **4.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives**

- 4.2.1 The provision of much improved teaching and learning facilities designed in consultation with the head teacher and staff can be expected to have a very positive impact on young people's experience of school, their self-esteem and confidence, supporting them to either continue into further education or into employment.
- 4.2.2 The location of the Almond Road site, specifically its proximity to Longsands College and Priory Park Infant School provides opportunities for students from Trinity to benefit from peer-to-peer support and develop their social and independent learning skills.

## **4.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people**

- 4.3.1 The proposal would significantly improve curriculum delivery for some of the most vulnerable young people in Cambridgeshire. An expected outcome resulting from the positive impact of the change in the teaching and learning environment would be to reduce the risk of students becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training).

## **5.0 SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Resource Implications**

- 5.1.1 As indicated in section 1.6, the Council has already committed capital funding for the purchase of the Almond Road site in St Neots. In addition, it has incurred design costs as the scheme for redevelopment of the accommodation is well developed. The project was originally expected to cost around £7.8m based on the assumption that the Council would need to purchase a site and provide a purpose-built facility. The total cost of the scheme has been revised to £5,060,000m based on the actual purchase price, surveys and design work.
- 5.1.2 Both the Hartford and Foxton sites are owned by the Council and would become surplus to the Council's educational requirements once they are vacated.
- 5.1.3 In the event that the school were to become a sponsored academy, the Council would be protected in that the sponsoring academy trust cannot profit from the conversion by acquiring land that is not required for the running of the school. The Council would expect, therefore, to sell both the Foxton and Hartford sites which would serve to offset some of the investment costs of relocation to St Neots. It would then enter into a 125 year lease for the St Neots site with the academy sponsor.
- 5.1.4 The annual cost of transporting the 28 young people currently on roll and the Foxton and Hartford sites is £152,665. Should the Committee support the proposals to relocate pupils from the Hartford and Foxton sites to the Almond Road site in St Neots, some of these young people would have further to travel to St Neots. A simple extension of their transport arrangements could, as a worst case scenario, increase the annual cost by around £14,250 (£8,312.50 for the 7/12ths of the period 1 September 2016 to 31 March 2017). In addition, there are three students who are presently able to walk to the Hartford site, who would require a new transport arrangement at an estimated annual cost of £16,150 (£9,420 7/12ths) based on the current daily rates. However, it is expected that as a result of

inviting tenders for new transport routes with the aim of maximising number of young people who are able to travel together, will limit the potential for costs to increase. Any cost increase would be met from the additional funding allocated to meet existing pressures and demography for SEND transport within the draft Business Plan.

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

- 5.2.1 The Council has a statutory duty to provide a school place for every child aged 5-16 whose parents want them educated in a state-funded school. This responsibility extends to the commissioning of special school places and to providing for students with statements of SEND up to the age of 25.
- 5.2.2 The main risk to not proceeding with implementing these proposals is the Trinity School will continue to be judged by Ofsted as failing to provide a sufficiently high quality teaching and learning environment to be judged as either good or outstanding.

## **5.3 Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 5.3.1 The Council is committed to ensuring that children SEND and additional needs are provided with high quality teaching and learning experiences.
- 5.3.2 The accommodation provided would fully comply with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty and current Council standards.

## **5.4 Engagement and Consultation Implications**

- 5.4.1 As indicated above, the Headteacher and the Interim Executive Board of the Trinity School have been actively engaged in consideration of options for the future configuration of the school and support to the proposal to relocate staff and students from the Hartford and Foxton sites to the Almond Road site in St Neots.
- 5.4.2 As set out in section 3, consultation has been undertaken on the proposals and the limited feedback received would appear to indicate broad support for the changes.

## **5.5 Localism and Local Member Involvement**

- 5.5.1 Local members were sent copies of the consultation documentation and had the opportunity to attend the meetings held for parents and the public on 4 and 9 November 2015. One of the Godmanchester and Huntingdon East members attended the meeting on 4 November held at the Hartford site.

## **5.6 Public Health Implications**

- 5.6.1 The expected outcomes from this proposal should improve curriculum delivery and reduce the risk of this vulnerable group of young people becoming NEET. The proposal therefore contributes to improving wider determinants of health amongst a vulnerable group.

<b>Source Documents</b>	<b>Location</b>
Report of Cabinet 26 November 2013 CFA capital programme Background consultation document Letters to parents/carers and staff	0-19 Place Planning & Organisation Service 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor Octagon Shire Hall Cambridge CB3 0AP