

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Lead Member for Children's Services
Date:	20 January 2016
Title:	Proposed closure of Residential Provision at Osborne Special School
Reference:	7002
Report From:	Interim Director of Children's Services

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. In October 2015 permission was sought from the Executive Lead Member for Children Services to enter the pre-consultation phase on the proposed permanent closure of residential provision at Osborne Special School.
- 1.2. It is considered by Officers and the Leadership of the school that the funding of the residential provision is not an efficient use of resources. The unit has 10 beds and is funded for this number on a per bed basis but it has never been full. A significant amount of funding (2014/15 £330,000/2015/16 £300,000) from high needs block is allocated to the provision annually. The residential provision is also not fit for purpose and would require financial investment to make the required alterations to accommodation. It is considered that this funding would be better allocated to support educational provision for children with special educational needs across the county.
- 1.3. The Leadership of the school were particularly concerned about the inequity of the provision and the fact that with only 10 places available the provision is not available for all the children in the post 16 provision.
- 1.4. The purpose of this paper is to report on the outcome of the pre-statutory public consultation which took place between 6 October 2015 and 13 November 2015 regarding the proposal to permanently close the residential provision at Osborne Special School and to increase the number of places for post 16 students from 20 to 50. The report will also outline the next steps if the Lead Member agrees to move to statutory consultation.

- 1.5. If the Lead Member agrees to move to the statutory phase of the consultation the County Council would propose to publish the Statutory Notice on the proposed closure of residential provision at Osborne Special School following the meeting.
- 1.6. January 22 2016 to February 26 2016, four week period for representations.
- 1.7. March 18 final decision taken by Lead Member for Children's Services.

2. Contextual information

- 2.1. In October 2015 permission was sought to consult on the permanent closure of the residential provision at Osborne Special School and increase the number of places in the post 16 provision from 20 to 50.
- 2.2. The pre-statutory consultation took place between 6 October 2015 and 13 November 2015. Letters were sent to all statutory consultees and non-statutory consultation with local residents. The full list of consultees statutory and non-statutory for this pre-consultation is at (Appendix 1).
- 2.3. The consultation document and a frequently asked questions document were placed on the County Council website at the start of the consultation and a drop-in session held at Osborne School on 3 November 2015 from 4.30pm to 7pm. This session allowed consultees to engage with County Council Officers and make comments on the proposal. There was also the opportunity for consultees to make their views known either through the website or directly to a named officer.
- 2.4. One written objection to the proposal was received.
- 2.5. Two emails in support of the proposal were received.
- 2.6. Six people, three of whom were staff, attended the drop in session but no written comments were received.
- 2.7. The written objection (R) with officer response (C) is provided in Appendix 2.
- 2.8. To summarise the discussion with Officers - parents attending the drop in session were supportive of the plan to increase the post 16 places and recognised the need. They understand the school and local authority reasons for the proposed closure of the residential provision; however they were concerned about losing what they considered to be a successful provision. Parents were reassured, when informed, that Officers and the school would be working closely with Adult Services to support successful transitions for pupils at the school.

3. Analysis of responses

- 3.1. Overall very few comments about this proposal were received.

- 3.2. All comments received were supportive of increasing the number of places in the Post 16 provision from 20-50 and recognised that there was a need for this additional provision in the local area.
- 3.3. All parents and staff who attended the drop in session supported the Headteacher of the school and understood her concern about the inequity of the current provision and the difficulty that she faced when allocating these very few places. 10 places for 155 students. They understood why the Headteacher, Governing Body and County Council were proposing to close the residential provision.
- 3.4. Parents and staff who attended the drop in session felt that children benefitted from being taught life and independence skills in a residential setting. They were clear that the fact that teachers and skilled assistants were involved in this setting was of benefit to the young people's outcomes. They felt that this was very different from care and that this element should be considered as part of a wider Council Strategy about transition to adulthood post 18.
- 3.5. Based on the feedback from consultees it is proposed that the Council does move forward to the statutory phase of the consultation on the proposed closure of the residential provision at Osborne Special School.
- 3.6. However it is essential that this feedback from parents of young people accessing the residential provision regarding transition is considered. It is recommended that Officers from Children's Services work in partnership with Officers from Adult Services to address all matters relating to transition for this potentially vulnerable group of young people.

4. Finance

- 4.1. Detailed plans are being prepared by Property Services to convert the internal residential accommodation into classrooms, specialist facilities, offices and a new reception should the decision to consult to close the residential provision be agreed. The existing external workshops would be upgraded with the installation of power and lighting and external access would be made secure with the provision of suitable paths, fencing and gates. The estimated cost is £250,000 including professional fees, ICT and furniture and equipment and would be funded from the Improvements to Special Schools Capital Budget.
- 4.2. Revenue costs are already accounted for within the 15/16 financial year budget and in subsequent financial years should the decision be taken to consult on permanent closure.
- 4.3. As mentioned in paragraph 1.2 the residential unit currently generates £300,000 of funding per annum. This is equivalent to the cost of 30 post-16 places (funded at £10,000 per place). The post-16 pupils will also attract top-up funding (amount dependant on the level of need), however it is anticipated that the cost of this additional funding will be

offset by a reduction in the top-up funding currently paid to Further Education (FE) colleges.

- 4.4. Upon closure of the residential unit, the current funding would cease. Funding from September 2016 would depend on the number of additional post-16 places that would be commissioned. Discussions are currently being held with the school to identify what level of support is required for the period April to August 2016 should the decision to close be made.

5. Other Key Issues

- 5.1. The proposed closure of the residential provision has personnel implications for staff at the school. These are being considered and it is believed that arrangements could be put in place to largely mitigate the impact of any such changes on staff at the school. The Headteacher of the school is preparing a proposed staffing structure and it is hoped that most staff who currently work in the residential provision could be offered suitable alternative roles in the revised staffing structure, due to the increase in places in the post 16 provision. All affected staff and unions would be consulted throughout and as part of the proposed restructure.

6. Future direction

- 6.1. If the Executive Lead Member agrees, the Council will move to the statutory consultation phase and publish a formal statutory notice, following the Executive Member meeting, on the proposed closure of the residential provision and the increase in places in the Post 16 provision from 20-50. Following this four week formal consultation the Executive Lead Member would be asked to make a final decision on closure.

7. Recommendation(s)

- 7.1. That the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services agrees to the publication of the formal statutory notice on the proposed closure of the residential provision at Osborne Special and the increase in places in the post 16 provision from 20-50.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	yes
Maximising well-being:	yes
Enhancing our quality of place:	no
OR	

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Date</u>
Residential Provision at Osborne Special School	N/A	Discussed with Lead Member 5 October
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>	
None		

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equality Duty

1.1. The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;

Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;

Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;

Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;

Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

1.2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

It is considered that this development will have a positive impact on disability by increasing the number of educational placements for young people post 16 in the Winchester area. Any negative impact with the proposed closure of the residential provision will likely be mitigated by the development of the additional day educational provision. Please see Appendix 3 for further information and detail.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

2.1. N/A

3. Climate Change:

How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

N/A