

Subject: Update on the Proposed Falmer Academy
Date of Meeting: 19 November 2008
Report of: The Director of Children's Services
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Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 In line with the Council's policy to ensure that all pupils are given every opportunity to excel, this report updates Members on the process for the proposed development of an Academy on the Falmer High School site.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Overview & Scrutiny Committee notes the progress towards the development of an Academy on the Falmer High School site.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Following the submission of the Expression of Interest in April 2008 and having received ministerial approval in early May 2008, the Council undertook the consultation process on the future of Falmer High School. This consultation was undertaken between 19 May and 4 July 2008 and was reported to Cabinet on 10th July 2008. It was then resolved to proceed to the publication of Statutory Notices for the closure of the school. Notices were published on 1 September 2008 and a statutory 'representation' period of 6 weeks then followed. This concluded on 13th October 2008. Cabinet considered the outcomes of the Statutory consultation on 16 October 2008 and determined to approve closure of Falmer High School on 31 August 2010 to make way for the opening of the Academy on 1 September 2010.
- 3.2 In addition to undertaking the Statutory Consultation, the following further progress has been made:

- 3.2.1 Positive detailed negotiations with Partnerships for Schools have resulted in their approval of the Options Appraisal for the site (a copy of the Options Appraisal document of 30 pages is available in the Members' Library).
- 3.2.2 The siting of the Academy and the phasing of its construction means that the Bridge Centre can remain in its current location until at least 2012, after which they could move to new purpose built accommodation in the proposed community stadium. The Trustees of the Bridge Centre have expressed their appreciation of the work that has been undertaken on their behalf to secure a long term capital future for the centre.
- 3.2.3 Similarly the Daisy Chain nursery is able to remain in its current location and their lease has been extended for a further two years. The Huggles Nursery's lease has been extended to May 2009.
- 3.2.4 The Swan Centre which will remain as Council wide provision, for the same number of pupils, and continue to be funded by the Council can continue to operate with no disruption until it is relocated in new purpose built accommodation, funded by the Council, housed within the Academy.
- 3.2.5 The monthly Staff Engagement Group, that now forms part of the governance structure, has commenced with over 20 Falmer staff taking part in positive discussions about the future curriculum and organisation of the school. Staff surgeries are held every Monday afternoon at the school and are welcomed. Future activities for the staff, pupils, governors and parents include a visit to a London Academy in November and to the Aldridge Foundation Academy in Darwen in December, further meetings of the Partnership Board in November and January and the formation of the Parents Council in January.
- 3.2.6 The students of Falmer High School have been actively expressing their desires for the proposed Academy and have made a DVD/film expressing these. The film can be accessed from the home page of the proposed Academy's website www.proposedfalmeracademy.org. The pupils have also written a booklet about the proposed Academy which has been given to all pupils, parents and prospective parents. An "Oscars" celebration with the Sponsor, staff and pupils took place on 15th October.
- 3.2.7 Meetings of the Staff Engagement, Education, Community Engagement and Design Groups continue throughout the Feasibility Stage and into the Implementation Stage as do discussions with unions

and their representatives. Discussions have also been held with the 14-19 Learning Partnership Board which represents all secondary schools, FE colleges and adult provision in the City and with the four main feeder primary schools (Moulsecoomb, Bevendean, Coldean and Coombe Road). A presentation will be given at the Governors' Briefing meeting and also at the Primary Heads meeting in November.

3.2.8 A proposed Falmer Academy website has been established to provide information and to answer some of the common questions from parents and members of the community. Newsletters and information about the website have been widely distributed in the Falmer area.

3.2.9 The Project Initiation Document has been submitted and approved by the DCSF in line with the conditions set out in Lord Adonis' letter of 7th May 2008, thus resulting in further Government support to the project.

3.2.10 Members of the Children & Young People's Overview & Scrutiny Committee were updated at the meeting of 24th September where a number of questions were asked and clarified.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 A wide ranging Statutory consultation was undertaken by the Council commencing in May and completing in October. In addition to this, and to ensure that the local community were fully informed about the proposal and the consultation, presentations and discussions have been held with:

4.1.1 Local Action Team in Moulsecoomb on two occasions on 11th June and 9th July. The group has representatives from residents committees, community workers, the Working Together project, Sussex Police, the Community Safety Team, Sussex and Brighton universities and local residents. At both meetings the Local Action Team has been unanimously in favour of the proposal.

4.1.2 The Action for Bevendean Committee. This group represents local residents, disability groups, tenants associations, residents groups, ward councillors and the Community Development Trust. At its meeting on 22nd September, the Group voted overwhelmingly in favour of the proposal.

4.1.3 On two occasions, the proposed Academy has been discussed and considered by the Focal People's Group hosted by the Vicar of St Andrews. The meetings have been attended by the MP Des Turner and his wife, representatives from Sussex Police, the Trust for Developing Community Youth Work, City College, the Living without Violence project, the Duke of Edinburgh scheme and Youth Service,

Brighton & Hove Albion Football Club, ward councillors, the Women's Refuge Project, Brighton University and the Action for Bevendean Committee. The Academy proposal was the featured item at the meeting on 3rd September where the proposal gained universal support.

- 4.1.4 The Swan Centre is also in support of the proposal and a new Service Level Agreement has been agreed until August 2010 when a new agreement will be issued.
- 4.1.5 At meetings held with each of the four main feeder primary schools (Bevendean, Moulsecomb, Coldean and Coombe Road), each headteacher was in support of the proposed Academy's development.
- 4.2 Both Brighton and Sussex Universities have further considered their support of the proposed Academy at board level and have reiterated their commitment. Brighton University has recently announced its sponsorship of two Academies in Hastings.
- 4.3 The Council is required to consult a number of bodies as part of the statutory process (see 4.3). No objections to the proposal were forthcoming from these bodies. At a meeting of the Governing body of Falmer High School held on 29th September 2008 to specifically discuss the Academy's development, the Governing body again stated their support for the proposal.
- 4.4 In addition to the endorsements given by the three community representation groups detailed above, one of which has been confirmed in writing, eight statements of support have been received from Brighton and Sussex universities, City College, the Learning & Skills Council, the 14-19 Learning Partnership Board and from the four main feeder primary schools. The Sussex County Cricket Club and Brighton & Hove Albion Football Club have also written as has the Director of Children's Services in her role as Statutory Officer.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 Financial Implications:

- 5.1.1 The capital cost of the Academy will be met by the DCSF. Negotiations continue with Partnerships for Schools to determine the exact amount as the outcome of the Options Appraisal is known. Allocated funding from the DCSF currently stands at £26.2m. This funding is only available within the Academy programme. It is not transferable to Falmer High School, the BSF programme or other schools in the City.

- 5.1.2 The next stage of the process to develop the Academy is the approval of the Outline Business Case. The approval enables the Funding Agreement to be signed by the Chief Executive of Brighton & Hove City Council and the Secretary of State, thus enabling the procurement of the design and build contract to commence and the recruitment of the Principal Designate to proceed.
- 5.1.3 The revenue budget for the Academy will be based on the existing Falmer High School budget and be finalised nearer the time.
- 5.1.4 In line with the Minister's condition, the Project Initiation Document was re-submitted and recently approved by Partnerships for Schools on 30th August 2008. This approval confirms release of grant funding through the Standards Fund to ensure appropriate development of the project in the early stages.

Finance officer Consulted: Catherine Vaughan Date: 10/10/2008

5.2 Legal Implications:

- 5.2.1 Statutory notices were published on 1st September 2008 in accordance with Section 15(1) of the 2006 Act and the accompanying School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools (England) Regulations 2007, as amended, ("the Regulations"). The statutory six week period for representations to be made followed. The closing date for receipt of representations or objections was 13th October 2008.

Lawyer consulted: Serena Kynaston Date: 7 /10/2008

5.3 Equalities Implications:

- 5.3.1 Young people leaving Falmer High School are presently the highest group in the City in terms of Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) being 11.6% in 2007, almost double the 6.2% average for the City. Although the figures for pupils undertaking further education have increased over the past few years, this rate in 2007 at 63% is lower than other schools in the City where sixth form provision is provided in the school environment. It is therefore hoped that over time, provision of the sixth form will increase the number of pupils fully engaged in post-16 education widening participation of the young people in this area of the City in further education thus improving the very high number of adults in the area who have no formal qualifications, currently 37.61%.
- 5.3.2 GCSE Exam results (non-validated 2008) for Falmer High School show improvement in the overall GCSE results 5 A*-C, improving from 30%

to 41%. However, when taking into account Maths and English, A-C grades fell from 24% to 19%. Provisional value added results, using Fisher Family Trust analysis, show improvement to 1031, meaning that Falmer High School remains as one of the highest value added schools.

5.3.3 Falmer High School was identified in the Minister's announcement on 10th June as one of the 638 schools who have not met the national requirement to reach 30% A-C grades and is therefore part of the National Challenge programme. The Children & Young Peoples Trust has submitted an Action Plan for consideration to the DCSF in relation to an improvement strategy. The development of the Academy in such circumstances is accepted by Government as an appropriate option for significant improvement.

5.4 Sustainability Implications:

5.4.1 The construction of the proposed Academy will adhere to DCSF guidelines (Building Bulletin 98) and will be in line with stringent new targets issued by the Government in March 2008 to reduce school carbon footprints to 60% for all new school buildings. Thus the proposed new building will take full advantage of all appropriate environmentally sustainable energy and recycling systems including proposals for ground source heat pumps, green roofs and solar gain. The final design must meet the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Model (BREEAM) standard at either Good or Excellent. The Outline Planning application approved on 18 June 2008 reaches the BREEAM Excellent standard. Thus the proposed Academy will be a flagship for environmentally sustainable schools for Brighton & Hove for the future and will be one of the "greenest" buildings in the City.

5.5 Crime & Disorder Implications:

5.5.1 Throughout the development of the proposed Academy, consultation with both community groups and the Community Safety team and police liaison officers will take place. Sussex Police Service endorse the view that the engagement of the community in the use of the facilities at the Academy and with the availability of those facilities outside normal school hours, it is envisaged that crime and disorder in the local area will be reduced, as will the numbers of pupils not in education, employment or training (NEET).

5.6 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

5.6.1 A Risk Register has been compiled and a full Risk Workshop was held on 3rd September 2008. Full consideration of risks is undertaken at every Project Steering Group meeting.

5.7 Corporate / Citywide Implications:

5.7.1 The development of an Academy on the Falmer High School site is in accord with the DCSF's policy on developing a range of schools in each Local Authority thereby increasing the variety of types of school available to parents.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices: None

Documents in Members' Rooms:

- 1 The full proposal including
 - a) The Expression of Interest
 - b) Informal Stage consultation documents and responses

2. Closing a Maintained Mainstream School – A guide for Local Authorities and Governing bodies

3. Representations received to the Formal Consultation Period

4. The full Outline Business Case

5. The Terms of Reference for all groups within the Governance Structure

6. The Options Appraisal Document

Background Documents:

1. Policy and Resources Committee paper: Development of an academy on the Falmer School site – 7 February 2008
2. Policy and Resources Committee paper: Update and Expression of Interest for an Academy on the Falmer school site – 6 March 2008
3. Cabinet Paper: Consultation on the Future of Falmer High School and the proposals for the development of an academy on the school site – 10th July 2008.