
Special Meeting of the Select Committee on Children's Services
21st January, 2010

Report of the Lead Officer

Call-In of Delegated Decision Sheet DCS/1/2010 - The Future of Pensnett High School

Purpose of Report

1. To consider and respond to the call-in of the decision of the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services in respect of the future of Pensnett High School.

Background

2. On 6th January, 2010, the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services approved the proposals set out in the attached Delegated Decision Sheet Reference No. DCS/1/2010.
3. The decision has subsequently been called-in for scrutiny following a request by 5 members of the Select Committee in accordance with Paragraph 15(c) of the Select Committee Procedure Rules.
4. A list of questions to be submitted under paragraph 15 of the Scrutiny Protocol for Select Committees are awaited from the Members who have called-in the decision and these will be circulated as soon as possible.
5. The Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services have been invited to attend the Select Committee to address the meeting and respond to questions from the Select Committee. Paragraph 14 of the Select Committee Procedure Rules also provides that a Select Committee may invite other people to address it, discuss issues of local concern and/or answer questions. It is a matter for the Committee to decide whether or not any other person(s) should attend and/or address the meeting on this occasion.
6. In determining the call-in of the Cabinet Member's decision, the following options are open to the Committee:
 - a) To confirm the decision, in which case no further action is necessary, except that a "minority report" must be allowed if some members do not agree with the conclusions reached by the majority.
 - b) To refer the decision back to the Cabinet Member, as the decision maker.

c) To refer the matter to the full Council.

7. In the case of referral back to the Cabinet Member or referral to the full Council, the nature of the concerns of the Committee must be set out in writing. Should the decision be referred back to the Cabinet Member, the decision must be reconsidered within a further five working days.
8. The Delegated Decision Sheet and background papers are attached to this report. The documents may also be accessed via the Committee Management Information System (CMIS) on the Council's website.

Finance

9. The financial implications are as set out in the Delegated Decision Sheet attached to this report.

Law

10. The legal implications relating to the future of Pensnett High School are set out in the Delegated Decision Sheet. The provisions regarding the call-in of decisions are contained in the Council's Constitution under the Select Committee Procedure Rules and the Scrutiny Protocol for Select Committees. The Constitution was adopted by the Council under Part II of the Local Government Act, 2000.

Equality Impact

11. The background information supplied with the Decision Sheet indicates that the process was subject to a statutory consultation procedure. Responses were received from various sources within the local community, including children and young people.

Recommendation

12. That the Select Committee consider the decision of the Cabinet Member on Integrated Children's Services in relation to the future of Pensnett High School as set out in Delegated Decision Sheet DCS/1/2010.



.....
Bill Baker
Lead Officer to the Select Committee

Contact Officer

Bill Baker Interim Director of Finance
Telephone: 01384 814800: e-mail: bill.baker@dudley.gov.uk

Background Papers

Attached

The Future of Pensnett High School

Reference: DCS/1/2010

Decision Maker: Cllr Elizabeth Walker, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services

Decision

To approve the publication of a statutory notice to close Pensnett High School.

Background

In July 2009 the Council embarked upon a statutory consultation to elicit views on the future of Pensnett High School.

The consultation document highlighted two key areas of concern (see below) that were impacting upon the outcomes for young people who attend the school. These concerns question the long term education and financial viability of the school.

Extracts from the consultation document:

1. In January 2009, there were 402 pupils on roll at Pensnett School. The projected number on roll for September 2009 is 312. The number of places in each year group is 130 but the number of pupils admitted to Year 7 has fallen over the last five years. In January 2009, there were 39 pupils in Year 7, less than a third of the number in Year 11 (122). There have been 32 places offered to the new intake of Year 7 pupils due to start school in September 2009. As a result of the fall in admissions, 38% of the places at the school are empty/surplus. Some of the funding a school receives is based on the number of pupils on roll and a reduction in pupil numbers affects the financial viability of a school.
2. Although Pensnett School has been working to improve educational standards in the school for a number of years with additional support from the local authority and the Black Country Challenge, standards remain inadequate. The 2008 Key Stage 4 results were disappointing and show a downward trend over the last two years. 11% of the pupils attained 5 A* - C (including English and maths) in 2008. The school is in the bottom 10% of all secondary schools in the country. Its CVA which measures the progress made by pupils at the school is 965.3 one of the lowest in the country. Pensnett is identified as a National Challenge School and is required to make rapid improvement to secure 30% 5+ A* - C (including English and maths) GCSEs over the next two years. Early indications for 2009 do not suggest improvement will be rapid; it remains highly unlikely that the school will secure 30% in 2011.

The attached report summarises the responses from the statutory consultation. In particular the report highlights views on the possible closure of the school or other alternatives that would redress the concerns expressed in the consultation document. The attached report concludes;

1. That most of the responses received were opposed to closure as an option.
2. That alternative options did not sufficiently address the how the education and financial concerns could be addressed.

Consequently the report recommends that a decision be made to publish a statutory notice to close Pensnett school with effect from 31st August 2009.

Finance

Schools are funded through the local resource allocation formula, which is predominantly driven by pupil numbers. As the pupil numbers for Pensnett continue to fall this has adversely affected the financial viability of the school and for 2009-10 the school has been unable to set a balanced budget. The rationalisation of schools in the borough will result in financial resources being re-diverted to other schools giving better value for money in the longer term.

Legal

The provisions relating to the establishment discontinuation or alteration of schools is contained in part 2 of the Education Act 2006 and the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuation of Schools) (England) Regulations 2007.

Authorised by

Cllr Elizabeth Walker, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services (in consultation with Mark Wyatt, Director of Children's Services)

Date: Wednesday 6th January 2010

Related documents and images

Attached