

Stourbridge Area Committee 10 March 2008

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Old Park Special School as part of the Thorns Community Learning Village (TCLV)

Purpose of Report

1. This report sets out to inform Area Committee progress made in building a new Old Park Special School alongside Thorns Community College and Thorns Primary School Thorns as part of Thorns Community Learning Village. This is the first stage of a major development with further improvements planned for Thorns Primary School (Primary Capital Programme) and Thorns Community College (Transforming Secondary Education / Building Schools for the Future).

Background

2. In 2005 a successful bid was made to the government for Targeted Capital Funding to replace Old Park Special School. The school provides for around 120 children and young people aged 3 – 19 with a range of profound and multiple learning difficulties. The bid was successful because it emphasised the mutual advantages for children, parents and staff of direct links between Old Park Special School, Thorns Primary and Thorns Community College. The scheme is part of the *Dudley Strategy for Children with Special Educational Needs*, approved by Cabinet in 2005 and will create a campus style arrangement similar to that achieved with Campus 21 (The Brier School, Bromley Hills Primary and Crestwood School).
3. Old Park Special School is a good school and provides effectively for children and their parents. The school is located on an isolated site on the Russells Hall estate and the current accommodation is no longer fit for purpose. The funding will provide a new fit for purpose building to be created on the site shared by Thorns Community College and Thorns Primary School and enable all three schools to develop existing links.
4. Access to the new school will be along the line of the former quarry entrance road. An independent traffic impact assessment has been carried out to ensure that every opportunity to improve health and safety along this part of

the A4034 Thorns Road will be taken. It is also expected that subsequent stages of the scheme will also result in improvements for residents of Stockwell Avenue and other nearby roads. The planning application will include specific arrangements to ensure the arrival and departure of Old Park pupils most of whom travel by taxi or minibus, is managed effectively within the site.

5. All three schools are working effectively towards developing the new school as part of a new concept – Thorns Community Learning Village. Joint planning will result in a wide range of new facilities for use by pupils of all three schools and the wider community.
6. Regular briefings and consultations have been carried out over the last two years and will continue as the work moves to detailed design work. Consultations have been carried out with children and young people, parents, staff, governors, local residents, ward councillors and key stakeholders including Highways Directorate highlighted the need to consider a number of issues. Wherever possible the views expressed during consultation have been incorporated in the emerging scheme.
12. The planning application is in preparation now and will be submitted shortly. Subject to planning approvals the construction phase will start early in 2009 with a provisional opening date of September 2010.

Finance

13. The costs of the project will be met from the Targeted Capital Fund and the capital receipt of the existing Old Park Special School site.

Law

14. The Council's statutory powers relating to the building of schools and the provision of education are contained in the relevant acts.

Recommendation

15. Area Committee is asked to note the report and advise the Cabinet Member for Children's Services on any matters arising.



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Director of Children's Services

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List of Background Papers