

**CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION & FAMILIES
3 NOVEMBER 2014**

**FINAL REPORT ON THE PROPOSED EXTENSION OF AGE
RANGE AT ICKNIELD COMMUNITY COLLEGE, WATLINGTON**

Report by Director for Children's Services

Introduction

1. This report follows a public consultation and a subsequent statutory notice period relating to the governing body's proposal to extend the age range of Icknield Community College from its current 11 - 16 status to 11 - 19. The governors wish to establish a Sixth Form.
2. The public consultation ran from 9 June 2014 – 7 July 2014. The consultation leaflet is attached at Annex 1 and was circulated to all parents of pupils at the College, County Council teams, District, Council and Parish councillors and other groups and organisations. It was also available on the county council website.
3. Additionally, the College held two open meetings during the consultation period to answer any queries raised. Notes from these meetings are attached at Annex 6.
4. Cllr Melinda Tilley, Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Families accepted an invitation to visit the College to discuss the proposals during the consultation period. She also spent time talking to pupils at the College about the process it is going through in making the proposals.
5. The consultation leaflet contains the main body of the reasoning behind the College's proposals, and therefore these are not duplicated in this report, being set out in Annex 1.
6. The statutory notice (attached at Annex 2) was published by the Governing Body, supported by the Local Authority, in the Oxford Mail on 1 September 2014 and expired following 4 weeks of formal consultation on 29 September 2014. In accordance with legislation the notice was also posted at the school entrances and sent to the local library. A copy of the full proposal (attached at Annex 3) and the notices were sent to the governing body and the Secretary of State and made available on the Oxfordshire County Council website.
7. The decision-making power in terms of determining the notice lies with the Cabinet or can be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Families. In meeting as 'decision-maker' the Cabinet or Cabinet Member must have regard to government guidance and statutory timescales otherwise a

decision can be referred to the independent Schools' Adjudicator for reconsideration. The decision must be made within 2 months of the close of the notice period; as a consequence, it is necessary for the Chairman of the Council to determine that the decision cannot be subject to 'call-in' as this would, in most cases, prevent a decision being finalised within the required timescale and mean that the Cabinet's role would be negated by referral to the Schools' Adjudicator.

The Proposal

8. The governors propose to establish a Sixth Form at Icknield Community College from September 2015. Their anticipated pupil numbers over the first few years are detailed below, produced by the College for its consultation leaflet (Annex 3) and based on the county council's Pupil Place Plan:

Roll	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
11-16	615	630	656	665	695
16-19	0	35	80	90	90
Total	615	665	736	755	785

9. The governors believe that the College has sufficient capacity to accommodate the phased development of post-16 provision over a three year period. Having analysed the spaces available in the College, the governing body have stated that it has the existing building capacity to offer sixth form teaching, alongside study areas and common room spaces, in addition to providing for 11-16 education. In part, this is due to existing small teaching groups of pupils, which could be larger without occupying additional spaces. The Headteacher and Business Manager have planned new timetabling taking Sixth Form teaching into account, and are confident that the capacity exists to enable this proposal. The detail of staffing and timetabling is set out in the College's Sixth Form Feasibility Analysis (attached at Annex 4).
10. The Headteacher and Chair of Governors have signed a statement acknowledging that there is no expectation of funding for accommodation relating to this proposal from the county council. This statement is attached at Annex 5.
11. The range of subjects the College intends to teach post-16 is set out in the consultation leaflet (Annex 1) and the emphasis is on a traditional A-level offer.

Representations

12. The initial public consultation generated 40 responses. 39 supported the proposals while 1 was neutral.
13. The main reasons given for support were:
- No existing local post-16 provision, resulting in pupils travelling long distances to access it and a financial burden for families.
 - Benefit to the school in attracting quality teachers and in improving its offer and standards.

- Benefit to Watlington community as a whole in raising aspirations and improving social mobility for disadvantaged families.
 - Continuity of education for pupils attending the College and being able to stay on post-16 if they want to.
 - Teachers responded with enthusiasm to the opportunity to teach A Levels.
14. Some respondents raised some concerns and queries. These appear below, with the College's response to each in italics:
- Concern that the work spent on establishing the Sixth Form would detract from the focus of improvement in quality of education being offered 11-16.
We feel that it would not detract but enhance, particularly in terms of curriculum planning, staff retention and staff development. We have already made significant steps forward and are now self-evaluating as "good" under the new inspection framework. This has been tested and supported by Local Authority officers. We have sent our SEF to our HMI who is now working with us to schedule an early inspection, at which we expect to be judged "good".
 - A concern about sufficiency of outdoor space at the College.
There is plenty of outdoor space at to house additional sixth form students, including an exclusive sixth form outside area (something prospective Year 12 students said they would like during the informal consultation stage).
 - Concern that a small Sixth Form would offer less peer learning and student engagement than a larger post-16 establishment.
This is dependent on courses students choose. Whilst class sizes may be smaller than the average sixth form, we see this as a strength rather than a weakness. We have ambitious plans for student engagement in terms of enrichment opportunities. This is a strength of the school at 11-16, despite being a smaller school – it is in the culture of our school and we intend it to be in the culture of our sixth form too. We can see many opportunities within Watlington itself in terms of increased employer engagement as well opportunities for our sixth formers to carry out volunteer work at the local nursery, primary school and care home (amongst other establishments/institutions).
 - Assertion that as many pupils at the College arrive by bus from outside Watlington, they would still need transport to access the Sixth Form if they stayed on.
This would be the case for many students, but not for those who live in Watlington itself. We would hope, however, to be able to reduce travel distance/time for students who live closer to the school than other existing post-16 providers (e.g. Chalgrove). This would potentially, over time, have a positive impact environmentally too.
15. The Decision Maker is referred to the distances that pupils must currently travel, as set out in Annex 1, in order to access post-16 education, and the cost this engenders for their families, in addition to the environmental impact of these journeys being made.

16. During the statutory notice period only two representations were made. Both were in support of the proposal and were made by Headteachers of other Oxfordshire schools. The reasons given for support were in line with those outlined above received during the initial consultation period.

Legal background

17. The establishment of a Sixth Form (post-16 education) is subject to statutory procedures, as set out in “School Organisation: Maintained Schools. Guidance for proposers and decision-makers” (The Guidance) published January 2014. When reaching a decision, Cabinet Member must have regard to The Guidance, in particular paragraphs 19 – 25.
18. In terms of reaching a decision all proposals should be considered on their merits but the following factors should be borne in mind but are not considered to be exhaustive. The Decision Maker should consider the views of all those affected. Details of the consultation should be included in the proposals. The Decision Maker must be satisfied that the consultation meets statutory requirements. If the requirements have not been met, the Decision Maker may judge the proposals to be invalid and should consider whether they can make a decision on the proposals. Alternatively the Decision Maker may take into account the sufficiency and quality of the consultation as part of their overall judgement of the proposals as a whole.
19. **The effect on standards, school improvement and diversity.** The government aims to create a dynamic system shaped by parents that delivers excellence and equality, closing weak schools, encouraging new providers and popular schools to expand. Decision Makers should be satisfied that the proposals will contribute to raising local standards of provision and improved attainment and consider the impact on choice and diversity. They should pay particular attention to the effect on groups that tend to under-perform including children from certain ethnic minorities and deprived backgrounds. The decision-maker should consider how the proposals will help deliver the ‘Every Child Matters’ principles.
20. **School characteristics.** The Decision Maker should consider whether there are any sex, race or disability discrimination issues that arise and whether there is supporting evidence to support the extension and take into account the existence of capacity elsewhere. The Decision Maker needs to consider the accessibility of the provision for disadvantaged groups as the provision should not unduly extend journey times or cost.
21. **Need for places.** The Decision Maker should consider whether there is a need for the expansion and should consider the evidence presented for the expansion. There is a strong presumption that proposals to expand popular and successful schools should be approved. If surplus capacity exists in neighbouring schools the Decision Maker should ask how it is planned to tackle any consequences for other schools.
22. **Funding and land.** The Decision Maker should be satisfied that any land, premises and capital required to implement the proposals will be available.

Financial and Staff Implications

23. There will be on-costs to the College for additional staff, with two new appointments. These appointments would be funded by the income generated by the increase in student roll at the College. In the main, the College will be using existing capacity of teaching staff to deliver the increased provision, with many of its new staff recruited over the past two years coming from 11-18 settings. The day to day revenue costs for repair and maintenance and staffing costs must be met through the College's delegated individual school budget.
24. Funding for post 16 students in schools, colleges and Academies is via national funding formula determined by the Education Funding Agency (EFA). The formula for the academic year starting in August 2014 would normally be based on lagged pupil numbers i.e: the number of students participating in the previous academic year.
25. The College has calculated its costs and income in its Sixth Form Feasibility Analysis (Annex 4). This sets out the detail of its financial planning for the proposals, which is not duplicated here.

Equality and Inclusion Implications

26. The Equality Impact Assessment of Oxfordshire's Pupil Place Plan (July 2014) identified that increasing school places at the heart of their communities has a positive impact on equalities through promoting social inclusion and minimising barriers to accessing education. The establishment of a Sixth Form at Icknield Community College will enable it to serve a greater proportion of its community.

Decision

27. In considering the proposals for a school expansion, the Decision Maker can decide to:
 - Reject the proposals;
 - Approve the proposals;
 - Approve the proposals with a modification (e.g. the implementation date);
or
 - Approve the proposals subject to them meeting a specific condition (see the Guidance).

RECOMMENDATION

27. **The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to approve the extension of the age range at Icknield Community College to include post-16 provision.**

JIM LEIVERS

Director for Children's Services

Annexes: Annex 1: Consultation leaflet
 Annex 2: Statutory proposal
 Annex 3: Full proposal document
 Annex 4: Sixth Form Feasibility Analysis
 Annex 5: Signed statement on funding for accommodation
 Annex 6: Review of consultation meetings

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