

The **NUNEATON & BEDWORTH AREA COMMITTEE** met in the **COMMITTEE ROOM 7, HATTERS SPACE, UPPER ABBEY STREET, NUNEATON** on 7 November 2007

Present:

Councillor	Barry Longden (Chair)
“	John Burton
“	Alan Farnell
“	Pat Henry
“	Frank McCarney
“	John Ross
“	Kam Singh
“	Sid Tooth

Officers:

Andrea Buckley, Community Partnership Officer, Performance and Development Directorate.

Mark Gore, Head of Service – Education Partnership and School Development, Children, Young People and Families Directorate.

Alison Hallworth, Adult and Community Team Leader, Performance and Development Directorate.

Jean Hardwick, Principal Committee Administrator, Performance and Development Directorate

Peter Hunter, Warwick Area Manager, Performance and Development Directorate.

John Scouller, Head of Skills Tourism and Economy, Environment and Economy Directorate.

Also present: Yvonne Rose, Learning Skills Council, John Vale, Chair of Etone School Governors, Harry Atkinson, Vice Chair of School Governors, Peter Reed, Second Vice Chair of School Governors, Peter Kingham, Head Teacher of Etone School, Kelly McKay, Etone Association Head Teacher, Simon Gilbert and 2 members of the public.

1. General

Tribute

The Committee stood in silent tribute to the memory of the four fire-fighters who had died in the recent incident at Atherstone-on-Stour and to County Councillor Bryan Levy, who had died suddenly.

(1) Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors June Tandy and Richard Chattaway

(2) Declarations of interest

Members declared prejudicial interests as follows: -

Councillor Mick Jones as Governor of King Edward VI College
Councillor Bob Hicks as Trustee of King Edward VI College

2. Etone School: Proposal to establish Post-16 Provision

Mark Gore presented the report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families outlining the consultation by Etone School on a proposal to establish post-16 provision at the school with effect from September 2010. He also outlined a suggested response to the consultation, which elected Members were asked to consider.

In reply to questions Mark Gore and Yvonne Rose said that with regard to the proposal that there was little evidence –

- (1) of how standards in the area as a whole would be raised.
- (2) of the diversity or choice of courses to be provided.
- (3) of how increased progression would raise standards
- (4) of the extent of additional resources that would be required.
- (5) that supported a move away from the findings of the 2004 Strategic Area Review of post-16 Provision.

In reply to further questions they –

- (6) explained that the new Education and Skills Bill would require young people to remain in education or training beyond the current statutory school leaving age.
- (7) said that the projected % decrease in student numbers would equate to approximately 250 students.
- (8) That the increased capacity projected as part of the King Edward VI (KEGS) and North Warwickshire and Hinckley Colleges' collocation proposals was intended to meet broader student base e.g. adult learning.
- (9) Explained that paragraph 5.2 (ii) related to smaller 6th forms being unable to offer the diversity of courses and focussing on educational courses that resulted in "cherry picking" students. This could also impact on KEGS because of economies of scale.
- (10) Said that with regard to resources, paragraph 7.1 the two Colleges' collocation proposals offered the potential of reducing support staff.

The reference to increased transport costs related to travel between sites.

Members then commented that paragraph 5.2 (ii) and the reference in paragraph 7.1 to increase transport costs were inappropriate and should be deleted. Mark Gore undertook to amend the draft response to reflect Members' comments.

Peter Kingham, with the aid of a power-point presentation (attached), -

- (1) presented the background to Etone School.
- (2) outlined and explained the reasons for the Etone School Post 16 centre proposals

With regard to the specific issues raised in the Strategic Director's report and draft response he said that, in connection with –

- (1) Increase in Traffic – Etone had a good track record on Green Travel and students would not be allowed parking facilities. Between 6-8 additional staff would be employed.
- (2) The Effect on the Colocation Proposals – he considered that there would be no adverse effect on the other two colleges. Etone School saw itself collaborating with them and being part of the local provision.
- (3) The 2004 Strategic Review, - many things had changed since that time including the College colocation proposals and the passing of two Education Acts.
- (4) The nature of courses offered at Etone - would add to diversity and choice and would not dilute what the other two Colleges offered. Courses offered would be tailored to students' needs.
- (5) Economies of Scale – Etone would continue to work with other schools and the Colleges. It was anticipated that 125 post- 16 students would be accommodated in the proposal and this number, added to the current 700 pupils on role would enable the provision of a range of courses. He also believed that all schools should have a post-16 provision and exchanging students and staff could also provide diversity of courses.
- (6) Colocation Proposals – he saw no reason why the projected number of students stated in the colocation option could not be reduced to accommodate Etone's proposal.

Harry Atkinson spoke in support of the proposal on behalf of the School Governors and –

- (1) praised the Head Teacher for his leadership of Etone School's proposal.
- (2) highlighted that the proposal would add £7m to the educational provision in Nuneaton
- (3) said that it was the unanimous wish of the Governors to take forward the post-16 proposal and, following consultation, had received the parents' support. He said that not everyone was satisfied with KEGS or NWHC and that the Etone proposal would add to diversity and choice. Etone School would collaborate rather than compete with the other two Colleges.

- (4) said that it would attract quality staff and encourage children to stay on at school in the 6th form, which they might not otherwise had done if they had had to move to another institution.
- (5) said that the Governors had been sufficiently confident of the proposal to pay for a consultant and architect out of the school's budget to support the idea.

In conclusion, referred to the need for perspective and vision in education and urged Members not to turn down the proposal, which he considered was a great opportunity for all.

Discussion followed during which the following comments were noted –

Comments in support

- (1) The provision of choice and flexibility should be supported if it improved the education of young people in North Warwickshire.
- (2) That students moving to College from school provided good experience before entering University.
- (3) That Etone was an excellent school that had a Head Teacher and staff who were fully committed to provide more choice and diversity and who had struggled to improve standards.
- (4) The School had put forward an excellent case and should be fully supported.
- (5) Personal observation was that the majority of students currently used public transport to travel to school or college.
- (6) That, despite the fabric of the school being old, it had provided the best results in the north of the county and the proposal should be given a chance to succeed.
- (7) That post-16 providers in the area would provide more choice and provide healthy competition.

Issues of concern

- (1) If Etone School numbers increased would the school continue to take difficult placements?
- (2) What impact would student parking have on the streets in close proximity to the school?
- (3) Re-assurance was required that the proposal would not have a detrimental impact on the two Colleges.
- (4) Notwithstanding that the Head Teacher had run an excellent school for many years, there was much information presented not to risk supporting the proposal. Whilst the Head Teacher was passionate about the proposal for Etone and for the opportunity of securing £7m funding the site was already overloaded and would put into jeopardy the schools' current excellent work. That currently students chose to go to schools in Coventry and Stratford not to Etone.
- (5) An example was referred to of a 6th form college in Atherstone not being viable.

In reply Peter Kingham said that –

- (1) the School would continue to take challenging pupils and would continue to work well with other schools
- (2) the School's Green Travel Plan would encourage students not to drive to school.
- (3) many pupils dropped out of education because there was no post-16 provision at their school.
- (4) there would be no set entry-level criteria – entry to each course would be on a points score basis and each child's needs would be assessed individually. This had an advantage over pre-set selection criteria that demoralised and demotivated some students. Additionally, some students considered that NWHC was too large.
- (5) many students performed better in a smaller environment.

Resolved, 5 Members voting in favour, 1 Member voting against (1 Member abstaining) that the Area Committee:

- (1) welcomes the possible enhancement of facilities at Etone School and would support the proposal in the area and recommend that Cabinet also support the proposal to establish post-16 provision at Etone School.
- (2) in connection with the draft letter of response, asks that paragraph 5.2 (ii) be deleted as it considers the comments to be inappropriate and also the reference to the increase in traffic generation in the last sentence of paragraph one of 7.1

3. Any Other Business

None.

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Chair of the Committee

The Committee rose at 8:50 p.m.