

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 28 March 2013

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Children and Enterprise

PORTFOLIO: Children, Young People and Families

SUBJECT: Re-designation of Ashley School

WARDS: Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the statutory consultation process undertaken for the proposal to re-designate Ashley School as a school for vulnerable pupils with a diagnosis of Autism and those with social and communication needs who have moderate to high learning abilities and to extend provision from 16 to 19 years.
- 1.2 The report also outlines the decision making process which needs to be followed. A further update report on the outcome of the statutory consultation will be circulated following the end of the representation period on 13th March 2013.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That a further update on the outcome of the statutory consultation be provided to the Board at the end of the representation period.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At the Executive Board meeting on 24th January 2013 it was agreed that statutory consultation could be undertaken to re-designate Ashley School and extend the age range from 11-16 to 11-19.
- 3.2 The statutory proposal was published on 30 January 2013. Letters were sent to all parents, staff, governors, trade unions, neighbouring authorities, Diocesan authorities, health, schools and other local authorities. These letters contained a copy of the statutory proposals and included a feedback form and contact details for anyone to ring if they had any questions. They also provided the date, time and venue of consultation meetings.
- 3.3 In addition, a public meeting was advertised in the local press and posters were displayed at a number of special primary and secondary schools, Children's Centres, Community Centres, Direct Links and the libraries. The consultation details were also included on the circular, which is distributed to all schools and Children's Services setting. A copy of the statutory notice is attached at Appendix A for information.

- 3.4 A staff meeting was held on the consultation on 11th February 2013 and a meeting for governors was held on the same day. A public consultation meeting was held at The Stobart Stadium in Widnes on 27 February 2013. Following a request from parents a further consultation meeting was held in the afternoon of 6th March 2013 at Crmz.
- 3.5 The presentation used at the consultation meeting was placed on the website along with the minutes of the public meeting, a copy of the feedback form and frequently asked questions from the first round of consultation. A map of the provision available across the borough was also made available on the website along with the statutory notice.
- 3.6 Those people wishing to respond to the consultation were advised to put their views in writing to Mark Reaney, Operational Director Legal and Democratic services.. They were also advised to note that the representation period was 6 weeks and the consultation would close on 13th March 2013.

4.0 DECISION MAKING PROCESS

- 4.1 The decision-maker (Executive Board) must decide the proposal within two months of the end of the representation period otherwise the decision must be referred to the Adjudicator for a decision. If referred to the Adjudicator the proposal and any representations must be forwarded to the school Adjudicator within one week of the end of the two month representation period along with any representations received and not withdrawn.
- 4.2 The decision-maker can decide to:
- Reject the proposals;
 - Approve the proposals;
 - Approve the proposals with a modification
 - Approve the proposals subject to them meeting a specific condition.

Conditional approval can only be granted in a limited number of circumstances related specifically to Academy provision or changes in admission arrangements relating to another school. A date by which the conditions should be met must be set.

- 4.3 The reason for the decision must be given whether it is approved or rejected it should also include the factors and criteria for the decision. A copy of the decision must be sent to:
- Each objector;
 - The Secretary of State;
 - Local C of E Diocese
 - The Bishop of the RC Diocese; and
 - The Office of the Schools Adjudicator.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Executive Board agreed on 24th January 2013 to set aside £450,000 from the Schools Capital Basic Need budget for 2012/13 and that an additional £50,000 be put aside from any future Education Capital budgets allocated for 2013/14 to address the adaptations that will be required.

6.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The most appropriate provision for any current Ashley pupil will be determined at the annual review of the statement of SEN and will be based on the individual needs of the young people and the place that best meets their needs.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

7.1 Children and Young People

The proposal meets the requirement to provide diversity and choice within the Borough and addresses a gap in provision which was identified through the National Autistic Society (NAS) review.

7.2 Employment Learning and Skills in Halton

This additional provision and the extension of the age range ensures good access to a quality provision for pupils thus providing greater employment prospects for these children and young people in future.

7.3 A Healthy Halton

The re-designation of Ashley school will allow for multi-agency professionals working on the site. Health professionals will ensure the health and well-being of pupils are promoted and supported.

7.4 A Safer Halton

Any adaptations to school will be designed to ensure that children, staff and other community users feel safe and secure on site.

7.5 Halton's Urban Renewal **N/A**

8.0 RISK ANALYSIS

8.1 Failure to address the gap in provision as identified as identified by parents and the NAS review could leave the council exposed to challenge by parents through the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST). If the gap in provision is not addressed, parents will seek out of borough provision.

9.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

9.1 The re-designation of Ashley Scholl will ensure an inclusive and coherent approach to matching the needs of children and young with ASC locally. The quality of the provision will meet NAS standards and currently Ashley School is judged as a good school by Ofsted. Parents and carers will have a better choice of high quality provision for their children locally.

10.0 REASON(S) FOR DECISION

10.1 A gap in provision has been identified for vulnerable pupils with a diagnosis of Autism and for those with identified Social Communication Needs who have a moderate to high learning ability.

11.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

11.1 Retaining the current designation of Ashley and the current age range was considered this was rejected as it would not meet the gap in provision identified.

12.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

12.1 A decision will be required by Executive Board prior to 1st September 2013.

13.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Documents	Place of Inspection	Contact
NAS Report	Rutland House	Steve Nyakatawa
Executive Board Report 18 October 2012	Rutland Hose	Steve Nyakatawa
Executive Board Report 24 January 2013	Rutland House	Steve Nyakatawa