



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

C233

Cabinet 23 November 2011

Recommendations from Rural Area Working Party: 9 November 2011 (Dec11/03)

Cabinet Member:
Cllr John Griffiths

Chairman of the Working Party:
Cllr Jim Thorndyke

1. Suffolk School Organisation Review: Restructuring the Thurston Area (Report C210)

RECOMMENDED:- That

- (1) the comments expressed in Section 4 of Report C210, together with the additional comments attached as Appendix 1 to Report C233, should form the basis of St Edmundsbury Borough Council's (SEBC) response to the consultation on the School Organisation Review in the Thurston Area; and***
- (2) Suffolk County Council's Education Department be invited to work with SEBC officers to identify solutions that will mitigate the concerns raised in Report C210.***

Suffolk County Council (SCC) is consulting on the latest phase of restructuring the current three-tier school education system to two tiers. The consultation involves schools that feed into Thurston Community College and include a number of primary and middle schools in the rural north of the Borough.

Section 4 of Report C210 provided suggested comments on the proposals presented in the consultation document, which was attached as Appendix A to that Report.

On 9 November 2011, the Working Party received a presentation from Joy Stodart, an officer from the Schools Organisation Review team at Suffolk County Council to expand on SCC's proposals and answer Members' questions. Mr Gerald Brown, a representative from Ixworth and Stanton Free School Group was also in attendance to present the objectives of the Group to Members.

The Working Party endorsed the suggested comments but wished to add further comments to the consultation response and these are attached as Appendix 1 to this Report.

2. St Edmundsbury's Rural Youth Work Programme: Update (Report C211)

RECOMMENDED:- That

- (1) Supporting Contemporary Adolescence (SCA) or a similar group continue to be funded from the Rural Youth Work Programme budget and other external funding sources, to deliver a 'WOS UP' Project in the rural areas of St Edmundsbury, as outlined in Sections 6 and 7.1 of Report C211; and***
- (2) work be undertaken with Parish Councils with a view to increasing the number of 'WOS UP' sessions in rural villages.***

'WOS UP' is a detached youth work provision delivered in rural areas. In 2011 and previous years, the Council had commissioned Supporting Contemporary Adolescence (SCA) to deliver this project. This involves a 'Warrior' 4 x4 vehicle visiting a number of villages and providing young people with access to sports equipment, a tuck shop, DJ equipment and a mobile media suite, amongst others. Attendance of the sessions has risen from a total of 541 young people attending in 2010 to 583 in 2011, which is primarily due to an increase in the number of sessions from 60 in 2010 to 72 in 2011. In order to make provision for further sessions in 2012 and onwards, funding will need to be sourced from external partners, such as Parish Councils, in addition to allocating funding from the Borough Council's Rural Youth Work Programme budget.

The Working Party noted that where a Parish Council is unable or unwilling to match-fund the Borough Council's contribution to 'WOS UP' sessions in its village, then the Borough Council reserves the right to reallocate its funding to another village where match-funding is available.

3. St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Support to Rural Voluntary and Community Groups (Report C212)

The Council already provides support to rural voluntary and community groups in various ways. However, officers consider further work should be undertaken to ensure that this existing support and advice is fully understood and accessible by the groups that may benefit from it.

Consequently, attached as Appendix A to Report C212, was a leaflet detailing the support and advice currently available to rural groups from the Borough Council. The intention is for this leaflet to be distributed to as many rural groups as possible, with support from rural Ward Members. It will also be made available on the Council's website and printed in a format suitable for noticeboards. Any small costs of producing the leaflet in-house will be met from existing budgets.

The Working Party strongly supported the design and content of the leaflet; however, some concern was expressed regarding the extensive use of 'corporate blue' in the leaflet and that every effort should be made to save on colour printing costs. In response, the officers stated that the format will be reviewed and the leaflet amended accordingly, with a view to distributing it as soon as possible.

The Cabinet is asked to **NOTE** the production of this leaflet.



Cabinet

23 November 2011

Suffolk School Organisation Review: Restructuring the Thurston Area: Additional Comments to the Consultation from the Rural Area Working Party

- (1) the retention of primary schools in the villages is welcomed, but that there needs to be a reassurance that adequate resources are made available to implement both physical and learning improvements;
- (2) the increase in numbers at some primary schools could worsen local traffic conditions and there needs to be a deliverable commitment to manage travel, including the provision of adequate parking on each site;
- (3) Ixworth is geographically located much closer to the centre of the Thurston Partnership area, therefore transportation times and traffic movements from the north of the area will be reduced. In addition, Ixworth is served by both the A143 and the A1088, therefore access is far better than the roads accessing the sites at Thurston and Beyton;
- (4) the short-term investment required to increase the capacity at Ixworth would outweigh the long terms costs of transporting children in the north of the borough to Thurston and Beyton;
- (5) Beyton is not a suitable and sustainable location for a secondary school to serve this area where we are to lose two middle schools which currently serve 11 of the pyramid's 17 primary schools;
- (6) a Local Education Authority secondary school should be revived and expanded to the required capacity at Ixworth, on the current Middle School site;
- (7) if the County Council is not prepared to invest in the Ixworth site then a Free School on the site would be supported;
- (8) the relocation of Stanton Primary School to Blackbourne Middle site is supported if it is not to be used for secondary education. However, there must be positive engagement with the local community and the Borough Council to ensure the viability of providing community facilities on the remainder of the Blackbourne site and to explore options for the future use of the existing primary school site; and
- (9) the Borough Council needs to be reassured that the proposals have taken account of the planned development in the borough over the next 20 years.