

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 24 January 2013

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director – Children & Enterprise

**PORTFOLIO:** Children, Young People and Families

**SUBJECT:** Re-designation and extension of age range at Ashley School

**WARD(S)** Borough-wide

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 This report provides a summary of the outcome of the first phase of consultation on the re-designation and extension of age range at Ashley School. It identifies the key issues raised and seeks approval to commence statutory consultation.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDED: That Executive Board:**

- 1) Considers the response to the first phase of consultation;**
- 2) Agrees to the revised post-16 capacity; and**
- 3) Gives approval to proceed to statutory consultation.**

### **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

#### **Background**

- 3.1 The Council is committed to providing a range of Special Educational Needs services that can respond to the needs of individual pupils and takes into account parental preference. These services begin with mainstream provision within all schools. It is then complemented by Resource Base provision within particular schools. Finally, the Council has a range of specialist provision in Special schools. Such a diverse range of provision means that schools can cater for individual needs of Halton's children and young people
- 3.2 A gap in special school provision has, however, 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. In addition, many of the parents/carers of these young people have expressed the view that the provision offered for these young people should be from 11-19 years.

- 3.3 The National Autistic Society (NAS) was commissioned to conduct a review of progress against the NAS report produced in 2008 and make further recommendations on improvements.
- 3.4 Two reports have been presented to the Executive Board one was in May 2012 and the other was in October 2012. The recommendations in sections 3.3 and 3.4 below were highlighted to members in the October 2012 report.
- 3.5 The NAS report in section 4.6.3 made the following recommendation:  
*Consider designating Ashley School as a Social Communication Needs and Autism 11 - 19 School. In this way, Halton Borough Council will be able to meet the needs locally of all pupils with Social Communication Needs and Autism in Halton, except those with autism and the most complex need.*
- 3.6 In section 4.8.5 the NAS having identified a gap in provision, emphasises the need to extend provision and recommends that the council: *Consider extending the age range of provision within Special Schools to 19, with appropriate curricula and post 16 options. This would then match that provision currently used for some pupils in out of borough placements.*
- 3.7 The Executive Board gave its approval for phase one (informal) of the consultation process to begin on the re-designation of Ashley Special School as an 11-19 school for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC).
- 3.8 Approval was given to:
- (i) commence consultation on changing the age range and the designation of Ashley School; and
  - (ii) to set aside £450,000 from the Schools Capital Basic Need budget for 2012/13 and that an additional £50K be put aside from any future Education Capital budgets allocated for 2013/14 to address the adaptations that will be required.

#### 4.0 CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The consultation timetable below was approved by members and the informal consultation closed on 7 December 2012.

<b>18<sup>th</sup> October 2012</b>	<b>29<sup>th</sup> October 2012</b>	<b>7<sup>th</sup> December 2012</b>
Executive Board meeting	Phase 1 of informal consultation commenced for 6 weeks	Consultation closes
<b>24<sup>th</sup> January 2013</b>	<b>31<sup>st</sup> January 2013</b>	<b>28<sup>th</sup> March 2013</b>
Executive Board	Phase 2 Statutory	Executive Board

meeting	consultation commences for 6 weeks	meet to determine the response to the proposal
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- 4.3 The consultation included: School Staff, Governors, schools, parents and carers, organisations supporting parents and carers, pupils, trade unions, neighbouring authorities, Riverside College, Diocesan authorities and Health representatives.
- 4.4 Consultation meetings were held with staff and governors. Pupils and parents were also consulted. A public meeting was held at the school on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2013. The notes of this meeting along with a map of provision, details of the proposal and a number of frequently asked questions were placed on the website for information.
- 4.5 The first phase of the consultation process to re-designate Ashley Special School closed on the 7<sup>th</sup> December 2012. 145 written responses were received and out of these 132 supported the proposal. 12 of the respondents did not support the proposal and 1 respondent did not indicate their position. A summary of the responses is attached at Appendix A.
- 4.6 A number of questions/issues were raised in the first phase of the consultation. Appendix B provides a summary of frequently asked questions following the consultation sessions. Appendix C summarises the written questions with the answers during the consultation.
- 4.7 The key issues raised during the consultation were as follows:
- the size of provision – would it be large enough;
  - training for staff;
  - expansion of the physical environment of the school;
  - increased choice;
  - whether the school would have to change its status to an Academy;
  - extension of the age range from 16 – 19; and
  - impact on the provision currently offered by Riverside College.

## 5.0 STATUTORY PROPOSAL

- 5.1 The re-designation and expansion of the age range at Ashley provides the Local Authority with the opportunity to address a gap in provision and ensures children and young people in Halton have access to appropriate provision within their community.

5.2 Executive Board is asked to consider the responses received to the consultation and give approval to the commencement of statutory consultation on 31st January 2013.

5.3 The statutory proposal will seek views on the following:

- Re-designation of Ashley School so that it can cater for vulnerable pupils, with a diagnosis of Autism and for those with identified Social Communication Needs who have a moderate to high learning ability;
- Provision of 70 places for pupils aged 11-16; and
- Extension of the age range to 19 with the provision of up to a maximum of 42 post-16 places

5.4 A full copy of the proposed statutory notice and proposal is attached in Appendix D and E.

## **6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 £450,000 from the Schools Capital Basic Need budget for 2012/13 and an additional £50K has been reserved from the capital budget to address the adaptations. A detailed feasibility study will be undertaken to identify the costs, the phasing and the timescale required for any capital development.

## **7.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 As a result of the review of special educational needs provision in the Borough the cohort of young people at Ashley has been gradually changing. There has been a reduction in numbers as many young people are now able to access appropriate provision in mainstream schools and resource provision settings. In addition, the school now has an increasing number of young people on role with Autism and Social Communication Needs.

7.2 To ensure improved provision for children and young people at Ashley there will be a need to further develop resources and the learning environment along with the skills and expertise of staff.

## **8.0 Implications for the Council's Priorities**

### **8.1 Children and young people**

The re-designation of Ashley school will ensure that children and young people placed in this provision will be not isolated from their peers and their local communities. This will have a positive impact on their achievement and well-being. Investment in the Ashley School re-designation will benefit local children and their families, and ensure opportunities for inclusion and sustained contact with their communities.

## **8.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

The capital development will provide some opportunities for local businesses and this will make a positive contribution to the local economy

## **8.3 A Healthy Halton**

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

## **8.4 A Safer Halton**

N/A

## **8.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

N/A

## **9.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

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 No change to the current provision was considered however this was rejected as it would not address the gap in provision identified and the views of the majority of the consultees.

## **12.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

12.1 The next phase of the consultation is scheduled to commence on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2013 for 6 weeks.

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

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
<b>NAS Report April 2012</b>	<b>Rutland House</b>	<b>Steve Nyakatawa</b>

<b>Executive Board Reports – May and October 2012</b>	<b>Halton Borough Council Website</b>	<b>As above</b>
<b>Phase 1 Consultation documents</b>	<b>HBC website</b>	<b>As above</b>