

**Meeting:** Executive  
**Date:** 11 January 2011  
**Subject:** The Future of Special Schooling in the South of Central Bedfordshire  
Proposal to publish Statutory Notices to discontinue the Dyslexia Provision at Priory Middle School

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**Response of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
23/11/2010 to Future Delivery of Special Educational Needs (SEN) Services in  
Central Bedfordshire**

1. Members considered the report of the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services that set out the direction of travel for the delivery of provision for Special Education Needs (SEN) in Central Bedfordshire. The report focused on the development of provision that would meet children and young people's needs in Special Schools and SEN support services. It took account of the direction of travel set out in the current SEN Green Paper and gave an early indication of two statutory consultations that would be the subject of a more detailed report to the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December 2010.

Members were advised that the overall provision for SEN would be implemented in accordance with a staffing review and in accordance with Children's Services Commissioning Strategy when the budget for the Council was known and approved in February 2011, except for those proposals that required statutory consultation. The proposals which required statutory notice and an Executive decision was around the future direction of the three special schools in Dunstable and Houghton Regis and the provision for pupils with dyslexia at Priory Middle School. Members noted that the future configuration of the Area Special Schools and the Dyslexia provision would be part of a report submitted to the Executive on 11 January 2011. The Chairman invited Mr Hawthorne the lead petitioner for the 'Stop Cuts to the Sensory Impairment for Deaf and Visually Impaired Children' petition to reiterate the points that had been made at the beginning of the meeting.

Councillor Bastable was invited to speak as he had received representation from two residents in his ward. He read out the two letters that had been received, both of which were concerned with the proposals for the SEN and highlighted the good work that the service provides. Members acknowledged the importance of this service as it helped young children with learning, hearing and sight difficulties at an early age to improve their education. It was felt that helping children at a young age would reduce the costs spent on the children further down the line.

The Portfolio Holder thanked Members for their views and reiterated that no decisions had been made but early options were being considered before a final report was discussed by this Committee on 21 December 2010. Members had been provided with the three options for the delivery of Area Special Schooling in Dunstable/Houghton Regis. Hitchmead Foundation Special School and Sunnyside Community Special School had merged to become Ivel Valley Area Special School. Ivel Valley School opened on 1 September 2010 and was working well and would provide the agreed model of special schooling in the East of Central Bedfordshire across two sites.

Members debated all three options and agreed that the third option to merge Glenwood, Hillcrest and Weatherfield schools over two sites would be the preferred way forward. The location of the sites was yet to be decided.

Members discussed the process for a child to be given a statement as there were concerns that this process was very difficult. The Portfolio Holder explained that high statement numbers was not considered good practice. A Member requested clarification on the following areas:-

- what services would not be provided in the future;
- the number of employees that would be cut from 1 April 2011;
- how much would be spent on redundancies;
- what future services would be provided by the schools; and
- what future services would be provided by the community (paid) and volunteers (free).

The Portfolio Holder agreed to provide the relevant Member with a written answer. Members queried the phrase “truly vulnerable” and were advised that a definition for the phrase had been sent to them previously. Members discussed the future of the dyslexia provision in Central Bedfordshire. Members acknowledged that mainstream schools were now better qualified to deal with students with dyslexia. Teachers were provided with training which was funded by Central Government.

**RECOMMENDED to the Executive**

**that the Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s preferred option for the delivery of Area Special Schooling in Dunstable/Houghton Regis was to merge Glenwood, Hillcrest and Weatherfield schools through the closure of two and the prescribed alteration of one across all three sites initially or the closure of all three schools and the opening of one new school across three or two sites.**

**The Committee further considered this matter at their meeting of the 21<sup>st</sup> December 2010 and asked that they be given the opportunity to consider the outcomes of the informal consultation whilst acknowledging that to publish the notices in a timely way, there may need to be a special meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in May 2011. This is set out in the Overview and Scrutiny section of the main report.**

2. Explain any financial or other corporate implications associated with those comments or recommendations.

N/A