

FULL COUNCIL – WEDNESDAY, 8 JULY 2015

Written question from Mr Dave Miller to Councillor Jonathan Bacon, Leader and Executive Member for Children's Services

Education Consultation

There appears to remain a lack of clarity over the student numbers required for a sixth-form provision to be considered 'viable' and the 250 number now presented may be simplistic, and the question of viability may be far more complex than a head-count, with numerous school-specific factors (particularly when the facility is not stand-alone) including staff retention and utilisation, predominantly-fixed premises costs, and educational benefits for 11-16 provision, therefore, noting the omission of Cowes Enterprise College from the recommendations section, could it be clarified what the purpose of Recommendation 4 is? (i.e. for what purpose, and to whom, is the 'recommendation' made.)

Anticipated supplementary

Given that the previous once-in-a-generation opportunity, just a few years ago, never materialised due to the BSF funding cessation (although the foreseen reorganizational detriment did materialise when the funding and reorganisation were decoupled), could it be clarified that any change now would be predicated upon the full PSBP being irrevocably approved, and that the refurbished and expanded Medina College (paragraph 80) would be in place for September 2017 for all displaced students, and that ALL students applying to Medina and Carisbrooke for September 2016, based on now-determined arrangements, would be accommodated?

Response

Recommendation 4 is to the Isle of Wight's Executive Committee, its purpose being to set out the recommended way forward for post-16 A-level provision on the Island. With regard to school sixth form size there is no published minimum number or standard formula for a school sixth form to be judged financially viable. However, historically it has been accepted that school sixth forms of less than 250 would usually require some form of financial subsidy, in most cases from the school's budget for 11 to 16 year olds.

The short answer to the anticipated supplementary is largely "yes". The fuller answer is:

With regard to the Priority School Building Programme funding, the Department for Education's Education Funding Agency have confirmed that funding is available for each of the three options as set out below.

Option 1 would see the provision of a 10 form entry (fe) 11-16 secondary school for Ryde Academy, a 9fe 11-16 secondary school for Christ the King College, joint post-16 provision for 350 learners for Ryde and Sandown Bay academies and a 4fe 11-16 secondary school for Carisbrooke College. With regard to Carisbrooke College the

Department for Education have expressed concern regarding the viability of a 4fe school given Option 1 provides over-capacity across the three Newport schools. The DfE require the school and local authority to submit a satisfactory business case in support of a 4fe Carisbrooke College before committing, or not, funding to this part of Option 1.

Option 2a would see the provision of a 10fe 11-16 secondary school for Ryde, an 11fe 11-16 merged Carisbrooke and Medina school on the Carisbrooke site, a 9fe 11-16 secondary school for Christ the King and no post-16 provision for Sandown and Ryde.

Option 2b would see the provision of a 10fe 11-16 secondary school for Ryde, a 10fe 11-16 merged Medina and Carisbrooke school on the Medina site, a 9fe 11-16 secondary school for Christ the King and joint post-16 provision for 350 learners for Ryde and Sandown Bay.

With regard to your query about Medina College being expanded to 10fe by September 2017, subject to decisions being made by the Isle of Wight's Executive Committee by the end of this calendar year the Education Funding Agency will deliver the expansion prior to September 2017. At that time, again subject to future decisions being made, it is anticipated that there will be three year groups who will need to transfer from Carisbrooke College, the expanded Medina College will have sufficient capacity to accommodate all of them.

I note your reference to the already determined admission arrangements for September 2016. Should the decision be taken to close Carisbrooke College, in keeping with the School Admissions Code, the local authority would seek the approval of the Schools Adjudicator to vary the September 2016 admission arrangements for Carisbrooke in effect reducing its published admission number from 226 to 0. Should admissions to Carisbrooke and Medina for September 2016 follow the same pattern of previous years then there will be capacity for all to be admitted to Medina should that be the wish of parents.