

Appendix 8 - Public meetings notes

As part of the consultation process, two public meetings were organised for January 10th, 2023 and January 18th, 2023. The former meeting was not attended by any members of the public. The notes below relate to the meeting held on January 18th, and include the presentation provided to the attendees at the meeting.

Note of Public Consultation Meeting on proposals to temporarily remove residential provision at Welburn Hall School

Held online on 18 January 2023 at 6pm

Attending: 3 consultees and Martin Surtees, Finance Projects, Central Services, NYCC, John Lee, Strategic Planning Officer, CYPS, NYCC.

Agenda

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Presentation
3. Questions and Comments

Martin Surtees welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave the following presentation.

Purpose of consultation meeting

- We are planning to provide a short overview presentation to
 - - clarify the proposal under consideration
 - - discuss the consultation process and decision-making route with the local authority
 - - explain the local authority's rationale for the proposal
 - - discuss some significant wider implications of proposals
- We will then open up the session for any questions – and will respond within the meeting, but may take details in case we need to follow up with a further response

A note of this meeting will form part of the report that the Executive consider when deciding whether to proceed with this proposal

Consultation process

- We are consulting as a local authority upon the proposal that we pause the offer of residential provision at Welburn Hall for two years from September 2023
- This will mean that no new placements will commence residential provision until September 2025.
- There are currently 12 young people in residential provision at Welburn Hall, but only 2 of those placements would have continued into the academic year 2023-24. We will work intensively and closely with the families involved to identify alternative placement opportunities that will support the desired outcomes in the EHCPs for these young people.

Consultation process

- This public consultation process runs to 31 January

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- Within that process, we are particularly keen to hear the views of young people and families directly impacted by the changes to residential provision, residential care staff and their staff side representatives, and any stakeholders interested in the ongoing development of Welburn Hall Special school
- Following the consultation process, the feedback will be evaluated and reported to the County Council Executive on 14 February
- If the outcome at that stage is that the County Council intends to continue with the implementation of the proposal (which is not known at this stage) then there will be a need for a period of statutory consultation in relation to the proposal

Background / Rationale 1

- We have been working to evaluate the implications of some serious heating and drainage issues associated with the school – but which particularly impact upon the House which have been identified by our technical property experts.
- At the outset we want to emphasise that the school buildings are a safe working environment but we cannot disregard the increasing risk of chronic failure of the heating and drainage systems going forwards.
- They have been working to identify what are the best solutions that we can develop which balance wanting to ensure we have a reasonable degree of service continuity with providing high quality education and support to pupils and families

Background / Rationale 2

- Unfortunately we have to share that our technical experts advise that the optimal response is to plan on the basis of an urgent maintenance programme being undertaken at the House – starting in September 2023 - and effectively taking the House out of operation for two academic years
- The local authority is mindful that whilst we are facing an emergency scenario, we need to plan well ahead to ensure that families have clarity on the support that we can offer, and that SEN Caseworkers, school management, and staff have a degree of planning certainty (even if the implications are not what we would have wanted)
- As a result we are planning on the basis that the House will need to be out of action for two years to provide a window to undertake the remedial works
- That decision is informed by the judgement that we can work effectively to secure appropriate alternative placements for the two young people who would have otherwise been in residential provision next year
- The implications of this are that we need to pause residential provision for a period of two years through 2023-24 and 2024-25

Background / Rationale 3

- We need to share that the estimates of the cost of the heating and drainage programme are estimated as being between £4 million and £5 million, so that the

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local authority is having to consider the optimal plan for ensuring the long-term continuity of Welburn Hall

- All of our planning is in the context of Welburn Hall school being a highly valued part of our special school capacity across the County, delivering high quality outcomes – which we see as integral to our future capacity needs

Background Context 4

- Therefore, the local authority agreed via a meeting of its executive on December 13th to :-
 - - consult on the principle of pausing residential provision from September 2023 for a period of two academic years
 - - secure permission to proceed with a planning application to install temporary accommodation at the school site to provide spaces to support the curricular delivery and dining activities that take place in the House The consultation process regarding the proposal to temporarily discontinue residential provision will begin at the start of the Spring term – and your views, alongside those of all Welburn staff and pupils and their families will be particularly welcomed within that process

Wider Implications

- The proposal to pause residential provision will have very significant implications for the cohort of residential staff at the school – and the School Governing Body will commence shortly an HR Consultation process with the specific group of staff impacted by these changes
- We will work intensively to identify alternative placement arrangements for any young people impacted upon by the pausing of the residential offer
- We would want to emphasise that Welburn Hall school remains an integral part of our Special school provision in the County
- However, whilst our desire is to retain residential capacity – at this stage we cannot readily say the capital resources required to update the House are available – and further work is being undertaken to assess the optimal and deliverable future options for residential provision.

Consultation responses

The closing date for responses is **31 January 2023**

Your views are important – please respond to the consultation

Consultees were then invited to ask questions.

A consultee asked what will be put in place for the two young people at the school who would still require residential care in September?

Martin replied that the SEN casework team are working with the families concerned and Health and Adult Services colleagues. The potential progression pathway for the young people would involve another placement after Welburn Hall and it is being investigated if these placements can be brought forward. Any interim transition would be avoided where possible.

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A consultee said that the council was planning originally for a larger 52 week provision. The school only had 11 students currently in residence. What would happen with the cohort that the school was going to supply the need for?

Martin replied that the plan for residential provision at Welburn Hall, following consultation, was for a cohort of 12 young people in a 52 week provision. Traditionally the school had had a cohort of around 25 young people, and they were managing the transition from 25 to 12 young people with higher and more complex needs than the school traditionally worked with, and who might otherwise have required provision in an independent residential special school. There will still be that need. In the interim it will be necessary to meet that need for places in the independent sector where the need emerges.

A consultee asked about applicants for residential provision at the school for September this year?

Martin replied that as eligibility for residential provision at the school had changed there was no longer a cohort of young people waiting for transition to residential provision. It was anticipated that there would usually be a maximum intake of two to three young people per year. At this stage there was no one identified for September. The old admission route into residential provision had been discontinued, and there was now a very high level of need assessment.

A consultee said that they were attending as a parent who was thinking of requesting a place for their son at the school for September 24. She wondered where the proposal would leave them. She asked if there was any option for day placements to transfer when work had been done? Could they still consider Welburn Hall or would they need to look elsewhere?

Martin replied that there would need to be further discussions, outside this meeting, to clarify what the child's specific needs were and what Welburn Hall could offer. It was being proposed that residential provision would not be available at Welburn Hall from September 2023. Day places would be open if the school could meet the needs of the child. If it was the view of the SEN casework team that the child needed residential provision, then options would be explored. He would provide the parent's contact details to a member of the SEN team who would be in touch with her.

Note :- the team have been in contact with the parent and will continue to explore options for future placements

A consultee asked if there would be some support for families that would potentially have been at Welburn Hall this coming year?

Martin replied that where the SEN casework team identifies that residential provision is required to meet the child's needs they will have to explore a more limited range of options. With these proposals, residential provision would not be available until September 2025 at the earliest at Welburn Hall.

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A consultee noted at Welburn Hall there was a very highly skilled staff providing brilliant care. Is there a risk that staff may be lost with the interim break in residential provision?

Martin replied that the County Council see the staff at Welburn Hall as an asset for the school and also for the care and support community across North Yorkshire. Briefing sessions took place with the residential care staff immediately prior to the proposals going public.. There is a risk that will have to be mitigated. The school will commence a consultation with staff will start immediately after February half term. If staff are at risk they will look at redeployment opportunities within CYPS.

A consultee asked if there was any consideration of increasing provision in alternative areas to bridge the gap for two years?

Martin replied that they had looked at alternative options but there was only one other residential special school in North Yorkshire at Brompton Hall. This served a different cohort of young people and the council had consulted and agreed to remove residential provision from September 2024 at that school. They will keep exploring alternative options but there is likely to be an increased use of independent provision over the next two years.

It was asked which independent provision would the Council look at increasing if necessary?

Martin replied that the County Council used a wide range of independent providers across the county which depended on the specific needs of individual children.

A consultee said that they felt that there was a lack of clarity and understanding about what the future may hold. This didn't bode well for confidence in where the school was going. How quickly can the relevant decisions be made on the future?

Martin replied that they were keeping everyone informed where they were in the decision-making process. They were moving as quickly as they could with a long-term strategic solution. He hoped that by May/June there would be proposals on what that might be. They were talking closely with the school governing body and colleagues. The Council had bid to the DfE school rebuilding programme for Welburn Hall but this had not been successful. They would keep lobbying.

The consultee replied that it was difficult to understand the future pathways which affected the school's ability to plan, did not help security and confidence and left people unsure on the decision-making process. More information would be helpful as and when they were able to share it. The head teacher had proposed a presentation in September for future pathways for residents without understanding the difficulties in the building. The credibility of information was doubted if people couldn't see a logical pathway.

Martin replied that they were working with the school and government body to try to provide as much clarity as possible and that there would be an ongoing dialogue.

A consultee said there they appreciated there was no certainty on funding of the work proposed - what if the funding was not agreed?

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Martin replied that that may mean residential provision may not be able to be offered from Welburn Hall.

It was asked if the council would have to find an alternative venue?

Martin replied that it would be necessary to find an alternative venue or rely more on the independent sector on an ongoing basis.

Consultees were thanked for attending and the meeting closed at 6:40 PM.