

# **WILTSHIRE COUNCIL**

## **CABINET**

**26 March 2019**

### **Item 4 - Leader's Announcements**

#### **Development of Proposals for Special Educational Provision in Wiltshire**

I am taking this opportunity to update you on the current position regarding the Council's proposals for special educational provision in Wiltshire.

Yesterday evening the Council issued a press statement advising that Wiltshire Council is extending its consultation on transforming special school education.

A group of families had taken a case to court challenging the process which had been followed in the period leading up to the publication of statutory proposals in January 2019. On 15 March 2019 they were granted permission to take some aspects of their case forward to a hearing, which was scheduled to take place in April.

In order to promote good working relationships with families, prevent further delay and uncertainty, and to conserve public money and cost for both parties, the council has now agreed a new way forward with the parties concerned as a better alternative to court proceedings.

1. Wiltshire Council has agreed to withdraw the decision to approve a statutory notice about the closure of three special schools (Larkrise, Rowdeford and St Nicholas), and the related notice regarding the opening of a new special school in Rowdeford.
2. We will now treat all previous consultation and responses that took place between 9 January 2019 and 1 March 2019 as part of a pre-publication consultation. This means they are treated as part of an initial consultation on what proposals should be published for further consideration. This is a process with a number of steps, and the council is re-opening the first stage. The council will reach a decision about the next steps after the end of the extended consultation period.
3. We will open the consultation again today, 26<sup>th</sup> March, and close it on 6<sup>th</sup> May at 5 pm. We have extended the consultation longer than the 4 weeks agreed with the families as this does fall over the Easter holidays. As part of this consultation, all responses, including responses putting forward options that differ from the proposal

to close the three schools and open a single school in Rowdeford, will be fully considered.

4. If anyone has already responded (we had over 2,400 on-line responses and 100 emails) they do not have to resubmit as these will automatically be taken forward into the report for Cabinet. Any further comments or proposals can be sent to the email address that has been used throughout - [specialschools@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:specialschools@wiltshire.gov.uk).
5. Officers are planning to hold a further two consultation meetings, and these will be promoted on the Council and WPCC websites and through the schools.
6. A new decision on the steps to be taken should then be made by the Council's Cabinet this summer. A summer decision will mean that the timetable for future SEN provision will still be met.