

CABINET
20th September 2016

CORPORATE DIRECTOR
Report No. CD1604

**EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT
CONSULTATION ON THE CONNAUGHT SCHOOL**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Attached to this report is a comprehensive briefing paper, which provides the Cabinet with the background to and the options, set out in the Hampshire County Council Consultation on the future of Connaught School, Aldershot. The paper is being circulated to all Members prior to a seminar on 19th September, which will be attended by representatives from the County Council. The paper has been prepared to be considered with the information provided at the seminar to enable the Cabinet to make the Council's formal response to the consultation.

2. PROCESS

- 2.1 The consultation process on the future of the school runs from 4th July to 30th September. The consultation identifies four different options and the briefing paper provides an assessment of each of them in the context of the current socio-economic data. A number of questions are also raised in the paper, which may need to be considered in forming the Council's response. The seminar will provide all Members with the opportunity to have an input into the response.
- 2.2 A report will be made on the outcomes from the seminar at the Cabinet meeting and will be incorporated into the response where appropriate.

3. CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 The future of the Connaught School is a major issue for the Borough and raises significant implications. Whilst the County Council has put forward four options, the Council may wish to consider whether there are other options. Whatever the outcome of the consultation and the County Council's final decision, the Council will want to maintain involvement in the next steps given the importance it has attached to improving educational attainment in the Borough.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The Cabinet is asked to:
- a) Consider the Council's response to the consultation on the future of the Connaught School
 - b) Authorise the Corporate Director to finalise the detailed response in consultation with the Leader and the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Youth

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Educational Attainment

Members' Briefing: The Future of Connaught School

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Briefing Paper

Educational Attainment – Consultation on The Connaught School. An Evidence based response to the HCC Consultation.

1.Executive Summary

The purpose of this briefing paper is to provide Rushmoor elected members with an evidence base to support discussions and consideration of the Council's response to the consultation on future options for The Connaught School, Aldershot.

A good education is fundamental to opening up opportunities in adult life. Education influences employment, income and social status and, arguably, better schooling means higher lifetime incomes.

For a number of years the performance of Rushmoor maintained secondary schools, with the exception of Wavell, has been below the Hampshire and England average for the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A*-C GCSEs. A significant proportion of our young people are leaving school with low-grade qualifications giving Rushmoor a high percentage of residents with the lowest levels of qualifications compared to the South East. This has implications for the long -term economic prospects and prosperity of our residents.

The Council recognises that low educational attainment levels in the majority of its local schools is not acceptable and has made improving educational attainment one of its priorities.

Working with Hampshire County Council (HCC) as the educational authority there has been some improvement in recent years; but there is still much to be done. While Wavell is rated as 'good', Fernhill, Cove and Connaught schools are currently rated as 'requiring improvement' by Ofsted. Recently, there have been positive signs of improved outcomes at Fernhill and Cove. In contrast, Connaught has under-performed over an extended period of time. Despite support from HCC, Connaught has suffered poor outcomes across all subjects. As a result, HCC have developed options and are now undertaking consultation on the future of the school.

Discussions about the future of a school provoke much debate and a strong sense of feeling and emotion. The outcome will affect many people and it is essential that the right decision is made for the students of today and tomorrow, and for the benefit of our community as a whole.

The Council is committed to working in partnership with HCC to support our schools and offer our young people the best start in life by providing a good education. This paper looks at the performance of all our local secondary schools and outlines the improvement options arising from the HCC consultation in respect of the Connaught school.

Members are invited to consider the information provided in this paper to help inform them prior to the meeting with Hampshire County Council on 20th September. Following this meeting, the Cabinet will consider the Council's response to the consultation.

2. Introduction and Purpose

For a number of years the performance of Rushmoor secondary schools has, with the exception of Wavell, been below the Hampshire and England average for the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A*-C GCSEs. The Council recognises that this is not acceptable and that young people leaving school with no or very few qualifications have fewer life chances, may require more public support in the future and make a smaller contribution overall to the economy. It also recognises the negative effect that a school's poor reputation can have on the desirability of the area. A poor reputation is a serious issue for the borough and our local economy, particularly in Aldershot where we need to attract new people into the town and the Wellesley development. In view of these collective matters, the Council has taken the decision to make educational attainment a corporate priority.

The borough of Rushmoor is served by four secondary schools maintained by Hampshire County Council: Cove, Fernhill, Wavell and Connaught. The location of these schools can be seen at appendix one, along with a summary of their statistics at appendix two.

This paper provides background information on the performance of all four secondary schools and summarises their position and current Ofsted rating. It outlines why, despite not being the accountable body, improving education is vital to the Council and provides some context to explain how and why we have been so active to date in supporting our schools.

However, despite such support, the Connaught school in particular has suffered under-performance and poor outcomes over a number of years. As this is not confined to any particular subject area and is general across the board, HCC (as the relevant educational authority) believe that a more radical and strategic intervention is necessary if the school is to sustain educational improvements and improve outcomes. HCC have therefore launched a consultation on the future of Connaught school.

This paper will therefore also focus on the options proposed in HCC's consultation and provide some context as to why efforts are being concentrated on Connaught. With reference to research and evidence, it will provide some commentary on each of the consultation options so that elected Members may make an informed response.

3. Background & Context

Over the past few years, it has become evident that the GCSE results of children who live in Rushmoor, and the GCSE results of Rushmoor secondary schools in general, are not as high as Hampshire and England averages. In some cases, they are significantly worse.

In 2013, Rushmoor ranked second lowest of all 326 local authority areas in England for the percentage of pupils achieving 5 A-C GCSE's. All four of our local secondary schools were below the national average. This prompted the Council to make the improvement of educational attainment in the borough a priority.

Having identified educational attainment as a priority at this time, the Council met with the Headteachers of each secondary school to ascertain what support was required and where we could help. The two main issues providing a barrier to improving educational attainment were identified as -

1. a growing concern for mental health issues arising in pupils; and
2. the recruitment and retention of good teachers.

With limited resources, the Council has tried to respond at a project level and has been able to support the schools with a number of projects and programmes to address some of the challenges identified by the Headteachers. These are outlined below.

Mental health issues

The Council worked with each individual school and their pastoral care teams to understand the level and range of mental health issues presenting in each school. Self-harm, anxiety and depression in particular were consistently identified by all schools. Working with partners, the Council was able to source funding from the Children and Adult Mental Health Service (CAMHS), the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the Troubled Families programme to provide a mental health professional for 2 days per week to work in schools. This service commenced in January 2016 supporting Fernhill and Cove (up until July 2016) and will be introduced at Connaught from September. It provides mental health support and advice to pupils and teachers and has funding until May 2017.

Recruitment and retention of teachers

In recognition of recruitment problems, HCC agreed to host a Teacher Recruitment Fair at the Princes Hall, Aldershot in January 2016. However, recruitment of teachers remains a significant issue. Whilst a well-documented national problem, recruitment is exacerbated in Rushmoor by two further factors as schools compete against neighbouring authorities who offer London weighting and, in some cases, are prevented from employing newly qualified teachers because of their current Ofsted rating.

School finances also contribute to recruitment issues. For example, earlier this year Fernhill identified that they would need to recruit four English teachers in time to start in September 2016. Notably, there is an extreme lack of English teachers, in particular, in the borough.

In April, Fernhill interviewed two outstanding candidates but the school's challenging financial position meant that, from September 2016, they could only fund one teacher full time and one teacher for two days per week. The County, well aware of Rushmoor's commitment to raising educational attainment, asked the Council to consider contributing £20k to help Fernhill school meet the temporary funding deficit.

In May 2016 the Council agreed to provide a one off financial contribution of £20,000 towards the cost of an English teacher. It was agreed that she will work in Fernhill for two days per week and deliver in-reach support at the school. For the remaining three days she will support improved teaching and learning of English (coaching and modelling) across all Rushmoor secondary schools. Her work is to be prioritised according to each school's GCSE English outcomes in 2016 and the trend over the last three years. The impact of this appointment should be seen in improved outcomes.

Whilst the Council clearly has its own financial challenges, this was a unique opportunity for the Council to be innovative and to demonstrate its leadership and commitment to local schools and local children to improving education in Rushmoor.

Other initiatives

The Council has supported other programmes to raise aspirations. These include supporting schools to send pupils to the Hampshire Teen Tech event encouraging aspirations to work in engineering, working with schools and Enterprise M3 to identify work experience/mentoring programmes and several careers fairs. A summary of our involvement in other programmes, together with approximate costs, is shown at appendix three.

Future needs

The Council has continued to lobby HCC to recognise that a longer-term strategic response to supporting attainment in the borough is needed. Since 2013 when the position was at its worst, there has been some considerable improvement but despite this, the borough still has only one school above the Hampshire average and only one rated as good.

The Council has to date been encouraged by HCC's willingness to engage in discussions at political and officer level to debate the need for long term strategic change in order to improve local education and recognises that the current consultation is part of the HCC response to the long term issues.

4. Overall Performance of Rushmoor Secondary Schools

The following information provides a summary of the overall performance of each secondary school and it's current status according to Ofsted and Hampshire County Council.

A comparison table and graph that summarise the overall, national and regional averages can be seen at appendix four and five respectively. A map indicating the Ofsted ratings of all local schools (both primary and secondary) is also given at appendix one.

Wavell – Rated Good

Wavell has consistently been Rushmoor's highest achieving, state maintained, secondary school. It is currently above the national average and has regularly been performing in line with, or above, the national and Hampshire average with the exception of 2013.

Wavell's 2013 results are considered to be an anomaly and not in keeping with their previous standards. The English outcomes in 2013 were considered to be a dip because of changes to qualification requirements, some of which were implemented mid-year. The results have since returned to their usual level and in 2015, 61% of pupils achieved five or more A* to C passes at GCSE level, above the national average of 57%.

Wavell is currently judged as 'Good' by Ofsted. The most recent Ofsted report (October 2012) found teaching to be good and occasionally outstanding and judged that students do well in most subjects regardless of their academic ability. It judged the school to have great and 'determined leadership, well attuned to the needs of every student'. A copy of the most recent Ofsted report can be found here:

<http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/files/2087631/urn/116448.pdf>

Local Authority support and intervention for the school is low due to sustained performance. HCC are satisfied that they will continue to maintain their respected reputation and deliver good results; foreseeing no issues with the on-going performance of the school.

The situation at Cove, Fernhill and Connaught has been more challenging and problematic in recent years and GCSE results have consistently been below the national average since 2008.

Cove – Requires Improvement

Cove has performed below the national and Hampshire average for a number of years but in 2013 the results declined sharply. In 2012 the school fell from a 'good' Ofsted rating to 'inadequate' and a number of concerns were raised with the teaching and the standards in the school.

Since that time, following changes to the leadership and management of the school, there has been significant progress and results have improved.

In 2015, 45% of pupils achieved 5+ A*-C GCSEs. Whilst this is below the national average, it represents an improvement and a move in the right direction for Cove. Outcomes in 2015 were generally in line with, or above, those nationally; and the maths department has secured good improvement in its practice and should obtain further improved results in 2016.

A recent Ofsted report (November 2015) gave high praise and recognition to the interim executive Board at Cove for their role in securing the upward trajectory and bringing stability to the school. Whilst the School still 'requires improvement', there is every confidence that the school will continue to improve and be rated as 'good' in the near future. A copy of the most recent Ofsted report can be found here:

<http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/files/2528273/urn/116446.pdf>

Local Authority monitoring visits coupled with the Ofsted inspection suggest sustainable improvement has been secured and the school will be performing in line with an overall effectiveness judgement of good within a year.

Fernhill – Requires Improvement

The number of pupils who attend Fernhill is low and, in consequence, the school has budgetary difficulties. The most recent figures show that there are only 636 pupils on roll.

The school has faced severe staffing challenges. Recruitment to both permanent and short term positions (mainly to cover maternity leave, of which there are many, and some long-term health absences) is adversely affecting standards, with the English department particularly affected.

In June 2016 Ofsted inspected Fernhill and judged it as 'requires improvement'. Previously it had been judged to be 'failing' and requiring special measures since September 2013. The Ofsted report highlights the particular challenge the school has faced recruiting specialist staff and recognised that in some subjects this led to variability in some lessons. The report outlined many strengths within the school and reserved high praise for the Headteacher who has made changes to improve teaching and raise outcomes. A copy of the latest Ofsted report can be found here:

<http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/files/2582006/urn/116447.pdf>

Since 2010 results at Fernhill have been steadily falling and continue to fall further below the national average. In 2015, 40% of pupils achieved 5+ A*-C GCSE's.

The 2016 predictions are more positive given the recent additions to the English department. The School is well led and the Head, highly regarded by the County, has actively engaged with the Council and local partners and has demonstrated his determination to improve the school and its local reputation. In September, they will have their largest number for Year 7 intake.

Connaught – Requires Improvement

Results at Connaught have been consistently below the national average for a number of years. In 2015, 29% of pupils attained five or more A-C* GCSEs, giving the school its lowest percentage in 6 years. This follows scores of 48% in 2014 and 36% in 2013. Following a run of disappointing results, the HCC now believes that a new approach is needed.

Connaught was judged 'satisfactory' by Ofsted in 2011, then 'requiring improvement' in 2013 and again in March 2015. A copy of the latest Ofsted report can be found here:

<http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/files/2474048/urn/116470.pdf>

The County reports that it has provided high levels of additional support to the school over recent years (English, Mathematics, generic teacher learning assessment and senior and middle leadership). Indeed, HCC report¹ that over the past two years the school's leadership has been diligent in its pursuit of improved performance in an attempt to drive up standards. However, the impact of this support and requisite improvements have not been realised.

¹ Brian Pope; Director of Childrens Services, HCC: Decision Report

It is recognised that the school faces a number of challenges, many of which are more complex than the challenges faced by the Farnborough schools, but the County argue that the need to improve educational provision and outcomes requires a more radical change. Consequently, they have launched a consultation on the future of the Connaught school.

It should be noted that the County undertook a similar response in the borough when primary education across Rushmoor was below the national average. Its success is highlighted by the positive status of the local primary schools today with three of our schools rated as outstanding and every primary school in Aldershot rated as good or above. The County report no significant concerns about the standard of performance of primary schools across Rushmoor and believe the future cohort is in a good position.

5. Latest Provisional Results

The official GCSE results for 2015/2016 are not yet in the public domain but some schools have chosen to post some results and headline figures on their websites. The Council has asked Hampshire officers to provide an in depth verbal update on results across Rushmoor at the briefing on 20th September.

The following table summarises the information that the schools have made available to date.

The information should be considered with some caution. This is because it is difficult to compare as schools may have chosen to report on different aspects; but also some outcomes may still be subject to appeal and individual school results can alter by several percentage points.

School	Information on school website for 2016 GCSE results	Official 2015 Results Percentage achieving 5+ A*-C GCSEs (or equivalent) including English and maths
Connaught	No information posted	29%
Cove	51% of students gained 5A*-C incl. English and Maths	45%
Fernhill	'66% pass rate and 53% passing English and Maths' (Figure not stated for % achieving 5 or more A-C GCSE's)	40%
Wavell	63% of students gained 5 A* to C grades including Maths and English	61%

6. Consultation – The future of Connaught School

Connaught School has been underperforming for an extended period. The underperformance is not confined to a particular core subject but is general across the spectrum and this increases the level of concern. Despite local authority intervention and high-level support there has been no sustained improvement and the County believes that there is a need for a more radical approach.

Hampshire County Council is proposing a solution to the under-performance of The Connaught School. The County Council is consulting on four different options aimed at raising educational attainment and outcomes.

The four options from Hampshire County Council are:

- 1: Maintain the current position; make no change
- 2: Find a strong academy sponsor to improve outcomes at the school
- 3: Merge The Connaught with The Wavell
- 4: Merge The Connaught School with the Federation of Newport Junior School and Belle Vue Infant School, to create a single all-through (age 4 to 16) school

The Consultation runs from 4th July to 30th September.

The purpose of this section is to provide more detail on the specific challenges faced by Connaught.

Focus on Connaught

The Connaught School is Aldershot's only secondary school and is located close to a deprived area of Aldershot. The school is located in Aldershot Park, which contains an area of multiple deprivation which is within the 20% most deprived in the country. Indices of Multiple Deprivation figures highlight that parts of Aldershot Park are within the 10% most deprived nationally for education, skills and training, adult skills, children and young people and health deprivation².

Within the school, 43% of the students are classed as disadvantaged (eligible for free school meals or in LA care) and 30% have English as an additional language³. This is considerably higher than the national figure of 15%⁴. There are 31 different nationalities at the school and one fifth of the students are Asian origin, predominately Nepalese.

There are many issues facing the school of which some are complex and compounded by its location. Connaught is in close proximity to the Hampshire/Surrey border and there are several more popular and generally higher performing Surrey secondary schools nearby. As a result, it has suffered from a low cohort for several years. The School has a capacity of 850 but in 2015 they only had 537 pupils on roll.

Given that a school's budget is largely determined by the number of pupils, the low cohort is having a significant negative impact on the schools budget, which puts the school at a greater disadvantage when trying to attract high calibre teachers. Like other schools nationally, Connaught has struggled to recruit teaching staff but this is particularly difficult given that it is competing against schools only two miles away in neighbouring authorities who offer London weighting. Connaught's budget constraints also mean there is no flexibility to offer recruitment incentives.

The retention of staff has also been a challenge. This is largely, but not exclusively, linked to the recruitment of overseas staff who can only remain in the country for defined periods or who wish to return to their home country.

² Index of Multiple Deprivation, Department for Communities and Local Government, 2015

³ <https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/school/116470?tab=absence-and-pupil-population>

⁴ Department for Education: Schools, pupils and characteristics (January 2015)

The current Headteacher took up post in April 2009. She is a popular Headteacher who is very proud of the school and the students. The Connaught School encourages students to 'be the best they can be'. The local community are very protective of the school and many of the parents have publically praised the school for fostering good attendance (96% whole school attendance) and behaviour.

The Headteacher has publically challenged the County's statement that the school has a poor reputation in the community. Her challenge is supported by the local reaction to the consultation and the high levels of anger and upset demonstrated by some local people at a drop in session held, by the County Council, at the Connaught School in July.

Connaught has continued to perform relatively weakly despite significant attempts to improve its performance and extra support from the County. In 2015 29% of students attained 5 good GCSEs including English and mathematics compared to a national average of 57%. This places the school well below the minimum Government Standard of 40%.

It should be noted that results improved in 2014 and there was a consistent and steady improvement between 2008 and 2012, but the trend has seen results remain below the national average and sharply decline from 2014 onwards.

The 2015 outcomes are significantly below those nationally but crucially the under-performance is not confined to a particular core subject but is general across the school.⁵

Connaught was judged requiring improvement in 2013 and again in March 2015. A summary of key findings from the Ofsted report identified that not all students make the progress they should, the school has weak teaching and that the achievement of the most-able students is too variable because the activities set for them are not always challenging enough. It also identified a number of strengths including students' good attitudes, that students feel safe at the school and it is led by a team of well informed and knowledgeable Governors.

The current Ofsted framework requires that any school receiving two consecutive 'requiring improvement' judgements must, on a third inspection, either be deemed good or be placed in special measures. The Connaught must be judged good at the next inspection (due in April 2017) or it will be placed in special measures.

⁵ HCC Data Report, School Improvement 2015

There are similarities between some of the issues at Connaught and those that faced Oak Farm School, particularly in relation to low pupil numbers and difficulties in appointing staff. The County closed Oak Farm and there is a risk that Connaught could also be closed leaving Aldershot with no secondary school serving the Aldershot population.

7. The Options

This section of the paper takes each of the four options in turn and looks at the advantages and disadvantages.

Option One: Maintain the current position; make no change

It is important to firstly recognise that the Connaught School has many strengths. Local residents and students are very positive and defensive of the school and their experience of it and there is a level of support to maintain the current position and make no change.

Regardless of this support, the school has been under-performing and the results are very clear. The latest outcomes in 2015 are significantly below the national level and despite additional support and intervention from Hampshire County Council, the impact has been limited or has not been sustained.

Whilst the overall performance of Aldershot primary schools is very good the performance is not sustained through secondary education and this is concerning.

Outlined below are some advantages and disadvantages that Members may wish to consider for option one:

Advantages

- There is significant local support to maintain the school. The local community are very proud and protective of the school and the local students feel happy and safe in the environment.
- The school is projecting an increase in numbers from 537 to 567 in September 2016 and 626 in September 2017. This will place the school in a better financial position (they finished 2015/2016 with a budget deficit of £94k but a new financial plan is being prepared and the proposal is to recover the deficit and return to surplus by 2018/2019 ⁶) which may have an impact on their ability to recruit.
- The School is due an Ofsted inspection in April 2017. Given the increase in numbers there is an argument for maintaining the current position until the inspection is complete.

⁶ Brian Pope Assistant Director, Education and Inclusion Children's Services, HCC

Disadvantages

- Recent attainment levels are below the national and Hampshire average and have been for a sustained period of time. Given the capacity and recruitment issues, it is arguably high risk to make no change and hope that the school will improve regardless.
- There is insufficient evidence or confidence from the County that the school has the capacity to secure the rapid and sustained performance improvement required.
- The Council has pushed for the County to take action as a result of what it believes to be unacceptable attainment levels. It could appear hypocritical for the Council to back Option One at this stage.
- It is high risk to wait and postpone change until the Ofsted inspection in 2017. Should the school be placed into special measures, it will have a considerable impact on the working conditions of teaching staff and the reputation will be further damaged.
- There is a risk that the school could be forced to close in the future. This would give Aldershot no secondary school provision.

Special Measures

Special Measures are taken if Ofsted inspectors conclude that the school is failing to give pupils an acceptable standard of education and the people responsible for leading, managing or governing are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

When a school goes into special measures, the local authority is required to produce a statement of action to turn around the school that addresses the areas for improvement highlighted by the inspection team. There will be an increased scrutiny of teaching and short notice inspections to monitor improvement. There can be a considerable impact on the working conditions of teaching and support staff and, if poor performance continues, the school may be closed.

Recommendations

Given the sustained weak performance of the school and the complex issues it has with budgets, recruitment and retention of staff, option one would not appear to be viable to meet the future educational needs in Aldershot.

The Council does not have specific expertise or experience in the workings of academies or through schools (options two and four). The following information has been taken from evidence and research from external sources.

Therefore, it is not appropriate to provide any recommendations for options two or four.

Option Two: Find a strong academy sponsor to improve outcomes at the school

Academies are publicly-funded schools free from local authority control, with no obligation to follow the National Curriculum and the ability to set term times independently from the local authority. The day-to-day running of the school is the responsibility of the Headteacher, but they are overseen by individual charitable bodies called academy trusts and may be part of an academy chain. Academies are required to follow the same rules on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions as other state schools.

Academies fall into two main categories:

- Sponsored academies—these have sponsors such as businesses, universities, other schools, faith groups or voluntary groups, who have majority control of the academy trust. Most, but not all, sponsored academies were previously underperforming schools that became academies in order to improve their performance.
- Converter academies—these don't have sponsors, and are schools previously assessed as 'performing well' that have 'converted' to academy status.

Academy Chains

Roughly two-thirds (65%) of academies work together with others in academy chains governed by a Multi-Academy Trust. There are about 389 chains with three or more academies, the largest one governing 56 academies.

In 2015, the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee criticised the DfE for allowing academy chains to grow in size without independent assessments of their capacity and capability to do so. As of November 2014, 17 sponsors had been formally paused from being able to expand further because of concerns over the performance of their schools by the Department.

Ofsted Chief Inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw raised concerns with the government in early March 2016 regarding the performance of seven multi-academy trusts. He said that “much

more needs to be done to reduce the variation in standards between the best and worst academy trusts'.⁷

Academies often divide opinion. Earlier this year the Government announced controversial plans to require all schools to convert to academy status, or have plans to do so, by 2020 but this has since been abandoned.

In January 2015, 61.4 per cent of state-funded secondary schools were academies (including free schools, university technical colleges and studio schools). This has increased from 56.9 per cent in January 2014. 14.6 per cent of state-funded primary schools were academies and free schools in January 2015. This has increased from 10.7 per cent in January 2014.⁸

Academies have attracted significant attention from researchers with strong arguments for and against them. The purpose of this section is to identify some of that research in order to help Members form a view on whether academy status would be an advantage for The Connaught School.

Research

There are many different types of school under the "academy" label and progress is from very different starting points.

Comparing the most recent Ofsted grade of each type of school, converter academies are the most likely to be rated outstanding while sponsored academies are more likely than maintained schools to be graded requires improvement or inadequate. This is to be expected as converters were high performing, and sponsored low performing, to begin with.

Evidence on the performance of academies compared to local authority schools is mixed. One analysis found generally little difference in GCSE performance between academies and similar local authority schools.⁹

The Local Government Association recently commissioned a report to analyse the performance of Local Authority maintained schools and academies.¹⁰ The report found that:

⁷ Letter from Sir Michael Wilshaw to Secretary of State Nicky Morgan, March 2016

⁸ Department for Education; Schools, pupils and their characteristics, January 2015

⁹ Fullfact <https://fullfact.org/education/academies-and-maintained-schools-what-do-we-know>

¹⁰ http://www.local.gov.uk/media-releases/-/journal_content/56/10180/7799763/NEWS

- 86 per cent of council maintained schools are now rated "good" or "outstanding" by Ofsted, compared to 82 per cent of academies and 79 per cent of free schools.
- 58 per cent of sponsored academies – those which converted due to poor performance – are now rated as "good" or "outstanding"
- 88 per cent of converter academies – generally those which were already high performing while still council-maintained before choosing to become academies – are rated as "good" or "outstanding".¹¹

The LGA further argued that the analysis it commissioned indicates that Ofsted figures show that poor performing council maintained schools are more likely to improve if they stay with their local authority as opposed to converting to an academy.

A survey by think tank Reform and education body SSAT concluded that in terms of providing "something new and different to the education that went before [...] academies remain an unfinished revolution".¹²

This argument is supported by recommendations from the House of Commons Education Committee who conclude that: 'Current evidence does not allow us to draw firm conclusions on whether academies are a positive force for change. It is too early to judge whether academies raise standards overall or for disadvantaged children'.¹³

In contrast, there is some evidence that sponsored academies have had a positive effect on pupil performance.¹⁴ The National Foundation for Educational Research concluded that there was some evidence that sponsored secondary academies have had a positive effect on pupil performance and specifically that attainment progress between KS2 and KS4 outcomes were higher after two years in 2013 compared to similar schools.¹⁵

This was reinforced by Machin and Veroit, who found evidence to show that the sponsored academies programme with its greater freedoms and flexibilities, lead to improved results.¹⁶

¹¹ Angel Solutions, LA Maintained Schools and Academies, 2016

¹² SSAT/Reform Plan A+ The Unfinished Revolution, March 2014

¹³ House of Commons Education Committee: Academies and free schools 2014/2015

¹⁴ National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) A Guide to the evidence on academies

¹⁵ Worth, 2014; National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) A Guide to the evidence on academies

¹⁶ Machin, S and Veroit, J (2011), Changing school autonomy: Academy schools and their introduction to England's education

The Department of Education also concluded that GCSE results, including pupils eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs, improved at a faster rate in 2009/11 compared with results in similar schools.¹⁷

It is fair to say that there are indications that academies have led to some improvement but this is still inconclusive for schools which are under performing. Based on the research identified above, some advantages and disadvantages that may wish to be considered in respect of option two are outlined below.

Advantages of an academy

- Two thirds of academies believe that the changes they have made have improved attainment. This is especially the case for sponsored academies. The longer an academy has been open, the more likely they are to say the changes have substantially improved attainment.¹⁸
- Academy status is a very significant lever for innovation, change and improvement. The change could prove to be the impetus needed to drive improvement in Connaught. Finding a strong academy sponsor would offer a re-branding of The Connaught School and may potentially lead to the school becoming the first choice for students. There would be some potential for the school to have greater flexibility to recruit and retain staff of a high calibre.

Disadvantages of an academy

- There are 6 sponsored academies in Hampshire. Their attainment fell in 2015 to 40%. The County do not consider that they have delivered change or improved outcomes in Hampshire. They remain unconvinced that this is the most suitable route for Connaught.
- The evidence on the success of academies is diverse and does not present a compelling argument as the answer for Connaught.

¹⁷ Department for Education, Academies Research priorities and questions, 2012

¹⁸ Do Academies make use of their autonomy – Research Report, July 2014, Department of Education

Option Three: Merge The Connaught with The Wavell

The Wavell has consistently been Rushmoor's highest performing secondary school for a number of years, achieving results above the national average. It has a very good reputation and a strong leadership team. Merging Connaught with Wavell is therefore a sensible and obvious option for the County to consider.

This option would be achieved by closing Connaught school and retaining Wavell as an expanded secondary school, but retaining the Connaught site, thereby offering split site provision.

Outlined below are some advantages and disadvantages that may wish to be considered for option three:

Advantages

- Wavell has a strong leadership and regularly delivers outcomes above the national average. The high standards of Wavell would hopefully influence the students who would have been traditional Connaught students.
- This option would increase internal capacity through a larger teaching staff and potentially provide an enriched teaching experience to both Wavell and Connaught students.
- The split site arrangement may assist the integration of the Wellesley development.

Disadvantages

- The Wavell School are strongly against merging with Connaught. The Headteacher has encouraged parents to respond to the consultation, urging them to express a lack of support for the merger.
- Whilst it is within the County Council's remit to force the schools to merge, it is, arguably, unwise to do so against such a strong resistance.
- This option would mean that there would be only one secondary school serving Aldershot (as opposed to the choice of Connaught and Wavell) and would limit parental choice potentially driving more Hampshire families to Surrey schools.

Option Four: Merge The Connaught School with the Federation of Newport Junior School and Belle Vue Infant School, to create a single all-through (age 4 to 16) school

Belle Vue Infants and Newport Junior Schools are popular and effective schools in the heart of the Aldershot community. They are currently led by one Headteacher, who was appointed in 2006, and they enjoy strong reputations.

Belle Vue Infant School and Newport Junior School have both secured significant improvement since forming under the leadership of one Headteacher. Both schools have been judged by Ofsted as good or better for over five years. The overall effectiveness of Belle Vue Infant School was judged by Ofsted to be outstanding in March 2016 and the Headteacher is highly regarded.

This option would be achieved by closing the Connaught and Newport Schools and retaining Belle Vue Infant School and expanding the age range to 4-16. The new provision would operate across the three existing sites.

This is the County's preferred option.

Information and Research on All Through Schools

The development of all-through schools is a growing trend within education in England. All-through schools used to be confined to the private sector where they remain popular, but they are becoming more common within the state funded sector with upwards of 60 such schools across the country, our closest being the Westgate School in Winchester.

The growing interest in all-through education is seen as an organisational solution to the problems that have been endemic in the English education system for some time; inclusive of the transfer from primary to secondary phases of education and its impact on pupils' progress, and early intervention when a child is experiencing difficulties.

Because the provision of all-through schools is relatively new, there is little academic research evidence that can be drawn on to accurately determine their long-term effectiveness.

Key Points from the Research:

The publication 'All-Age Schooling: A resource', commissioned by the Innovations Unit at the DfES (Department for Education and Skills) until it was split into various departments in 2007, highlights the unique opportunities that all-through schools provide and how people can learn in new, innovative ways.¹⁹

Research by the National College for School Leadership, concluded from interviews with leaders at all-age schools that there is an increased opportunity to reduce the barriers to learning and help teaching improve due to greater opportunities for sharing good practice and cross fertilisation of ideas.²⁰

Due to the relatively short time that all-age schools have been open, quantitative data that shows how all-age schools affect attainment is not available. However, the findings from interviews seem to show that the all-age school environment can reduce barriers to learning and support better progression.²¹

Whilst much of the findings are based on interviews and perceptions, it does suggest that the all-age school has a positive impact on the personal development and well-being of students, and this is enabled by schools having greater access to parents and the community.

The report highlights the great opportunity to reduce the barriers to learning.

Outlined below are some advantages and disadvantages that may wish to be considered in respect of option four:

Advantages

- Existing Leaders and governors of Belle Vue Infant School and Newport Junior School have experienced the benefits of structural change. They acknowledge the need to strengthen secondary provision in Aldershot, in order to build on good outcomes in the primary phase and it is believed they would react positively to merging with Connaught.

¹⁹ All Age Schooling: A Resource, Innovations Unit DfES

²⁰ National College for School Leadership, The Challenges and opportunities of leading and managing an all age school, 2007

²¹ National College for School Leadership, The Challenges and opportunities of leading and managing an all age school, 2007

- Creating an all-age school provides an innovative opportunity to schooling in Aldershot. It can help reduce the barriers in the transition from primary to secondary .
- All-through schooling will arguably enable early engagement with harder to reach parents and a maintenance of relationships into the secondary phase. This is particularly important given the demographic of existing Connaught families.
- The option presents opportunities for team teaching across all key stages; secondary subject specialists supporting primary colleagues with the planning and delivery of key concepts in the primary curriculum; primary colleagues leading the development of literacy and numeracy across all key stages.
- Provide value for money through greater economies of scale.
- The Westgate School in Winchester is an all-through school and existing arrangements are working well.
- Retains an Aldershot Secondary School.

Disadvantages

- The education model of 4-16 schooling in the maintained sector is still relatively untested. There may be some concern from the local community about changing the current provision of schooling.
- There is likely to be some concern from neighbouring Aldershot primary schools about the integration at Year 7 for their pupils and the potential detrimental effect on the desire and demand of other primary schools in the area.
- The provision of the all-through Westgate School in Winchester was a response to a lack of primary school places in the area and not a performance related issue. There should be some caution when comparing given the differing circumstances.

Alternative Options

The County has not bought forward any other options and it is not known whether alternative proposals have been identified through the consultation. The Council may wish to consider alternative solutions. One alternative could be to build a new school in a new location in Aldershot.

The Council is committed to delivering the regeneration of Aldershot. Sustaining a thriving economy and boosting local business is a priority for the Council and it is working in partnership to develop conditions for continued economic growth.

Addressing low attainment levels in secondary schools is a fundamental part of the regeneration process and, in particular, the drive for maintaining a healthy economy for the future.

The Wellesley development is underway and as Grainger attempts to entice people to Aldershot, a healthy, successful system of secondary education has never been more important for the area.

Now would be timely to consider a new approach to secondary education for Aldershot, to offer hope and aspiration to a new generation of students and residents.

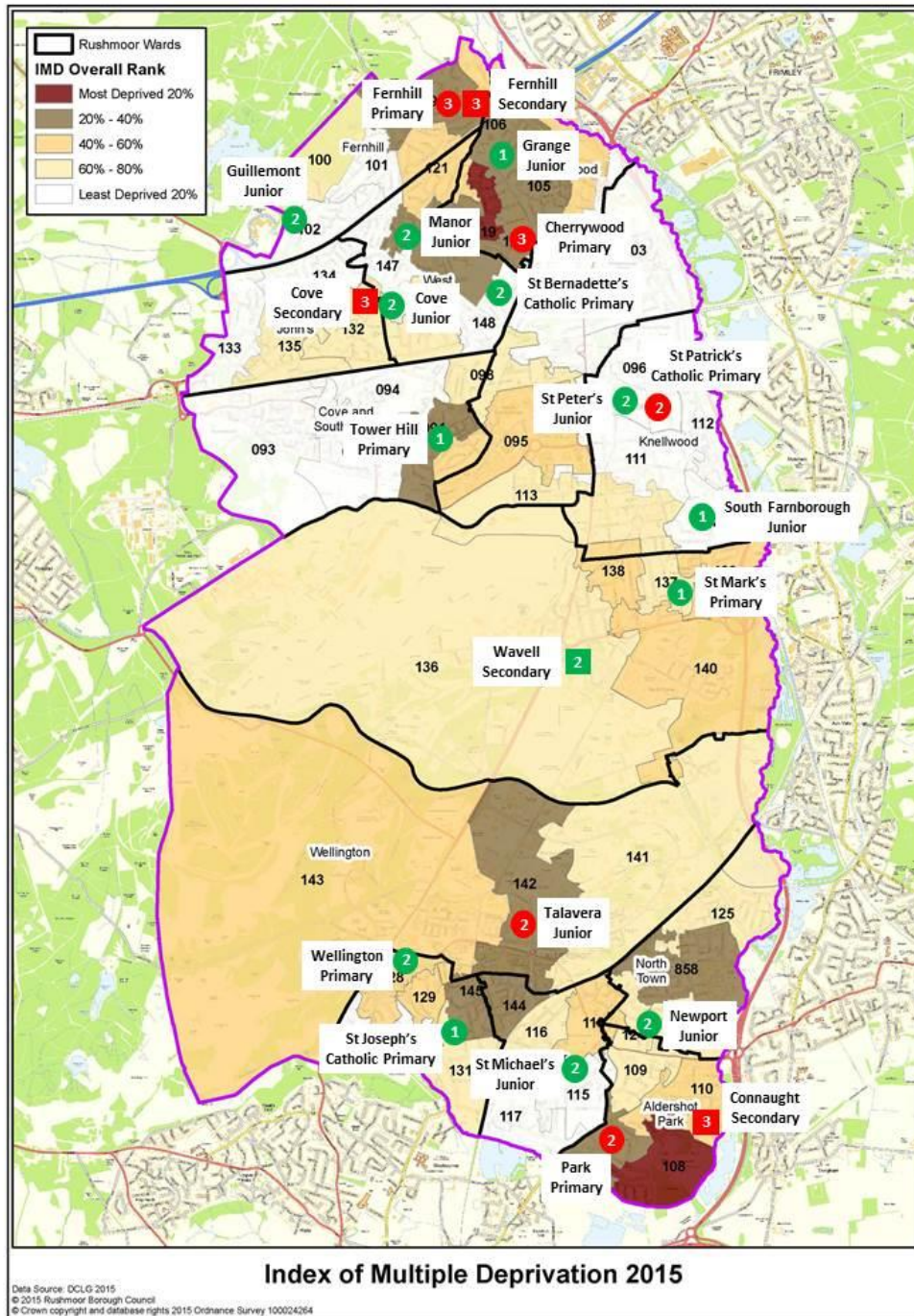
In view of this paper and the options put forward by HCC, Members may wish to consider the following:

- The importance of educational attainment to sustaining a thriving economy.
- The impact of the options in relation to the regeneration of Aldershot.
- The performance of all secondary schools across Rushmoor as a whole; and HCC's long- term aspirations and vision for education in the area.
- How the options outlined in the paper address local needs and support our communities.
- The social impact on the local community.
- A discussion with HCC about the future viability of alternative options, specifically building a new school in Aldershot.

Appendices

1. Map of Rushmoor with the location of all Primary and Secondary schools and their current Ofsted rating
2. Summary of the schools' statistics
3. A summary of Council involvement in school programmes and costs
4. Table to show the GCSE results of the four local authority maintained secondary schools from 2013-2015
5. Graph to show % of pupils 5+ A*-C GCSEs for Rushmoor Secondary Schools

MAP OF RUSHMOOR WITH THE LOCATION OF ALL PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND THEIR CURRENT OFSTED RATING



■ Below England average at Key Stage 4 ■ Above England average at Key Stage 4
● Below England average at Key Stage 2 ● Above England average at Key Stage 2
Ofsted rating: 1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3 = Requires Improvement 4 = Inadequate

SCHOOLS COMPARISON DATA

	Current Ofsted Rating	No of pupils on roll	Pupils whose first language is not English (national figure in brackets)	Pupils eligible for free school meals	Pupils with a statement of special educational needs or health plans
Connaught	Requires Improvement	537	30% (15%)	43% (29.4)	0.9% (1.8)
Cove	Requires Improvement	970	12.6%	21.8%	1.8%
Fernhill	Requires Improvement	700	17.3%	31%	1.1%
Wavell	Good	932	10.9%	17.1%	2.0%

Source: <https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/school/116448?tab=absence-and-pupil-population>

*Data for all pupils at the school during the 2014 to 2015 academic year

SUMMARY OF THE COUNCIL'S INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL PROGRAMMES

Project	Purpose of the project	Council Role	Cost to Council
Mental Health Worker	<p>To provide schools with a professional mental health worker to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train and support school staff to be able to have better awareness of mental health difficulties pupils might be experiencing and to be better able to deal confidently with these in the school setting. • Train staff to offer group work to parents to improve their children's mental health and wellbeing. • Train staff to be able to provide group work for pupils to enhance mental health and wellbeing. 	To identify and collaborate with partners to develop a project, to source, apply and secure funding for the project. To support the mental health worker to understand the overall project outcomes and represent the council on the steering group meetings.	£10,000
Fernhill/Rushmoor Schools English Teacher	To provide an English teacher 3 days a week in Fernhill and 2 days a week across Rushmoor secondary schools	To liaise with the school and the County and agree the role and provide funding	£20,000 one off.
Recruitment Fayre, Aldershot	To promote teacher recruitment in Rushmoor	To support the County to deliver the fayre in Aldershot	£3,000 towards Promotion and publicity including freebies for delegates
Careers Fayre – Fernhill School	To encourage pupils to think about the aspirations and future careers and to understand what opportunities are	To represent the council and talk to pupils who may want to learn more and understand the breath of career	Officer time

	available	opportunities in local government	
Careers Fayre – Connaught School	To encourage pupils to think about the aspirations and future careers and to understand what opportunities are available	To represent the council and talk to pupils who may want to learn more and understand the breath of career opportunities in local government	Officer Time
Moving on Day – Farnborough Sixth Form	To encourage pupils to think about the aspirations and future careers and to understand what opportunities are available	To represent the council and talk to pupils who may want to learn more and understand the breath of career opportunities in local government. Council officers also delivered workshops.	Officer Time, support with marketing and links to schools
Teen Tech	Prestigious event bringing together cutting-edge science, technology and engineering companies from across the UK to showcase career opportunities available to young people and promote aspirations in engineering	Member of the Teen Tech Board – the Council attended several developmental meeting and helped to ensure good representation from the Rushmoor area	£2,000 The council funded 10 pupils for each Rushmoor secondary school to attend
EM3	Enterprise Advisors Network – to provide a local business mentor to schools	Facilitation – to use our relationships with the schools to encourage involvement and support EM3 in programme co ordination	Officer Time
Community Matters	Education attainment has been identified as the CMP priority for 2016.	Attended workshops and encouraged attendance by local schools to ensure the continued promotion of the importance of attainment for the borough. Promoted the importance of employee volunteering to support this – inc: Draft proposals to support local primary schools with reading schemes.	Officer Time

APPENDIX 4

**TABLE TO SHOW THE GCSE RESULTS OF THE FOUR LOCAL AUTHORITY
MAINTAINED SECONDARY SCHOOLS FROM 2013-2015**

2015 GCSE results	The Wavell School	Cove School	Fernhill School	The Connaught School
Percentage achieving 5+ A*-C GCSEs (or equivalent) including English and maths GCSEs	61%	45%	40%	29%
Percentage of pupils achieving 5+ A*-C grade GCSEs (or equivalent)	74%	60%	54%	38%
Percentage of pupils achieving 5+ A*-G grade GCSEs (or equivalent)	99%	96%	97%	92%
Percentage of pupils achieving Ebacc (grade A*-C in English, mathematics, science, a language and a humanities subject)	32%	16%	23%	15%

(Source: Department for Education <http://www.education.gov.uk/>)

2014 GCSE results	The Wavell School	Cove School	Fernhill School	The Connaught School
Percentage achieving 5+ A*-C GCSEs (or equivalent) including English and maths GCSEs	62%	38%	46%	48%
Percentage of pupils achieving 5+ A*-C grade GCSEs (or equivalent)	71%	51%	60%	51%
Percentage of pupils achieving 5+ A*-G grade GCSEs (or equivalent)	100%	93%	93%	95%
Percentage of pupils achieving Ebacc (grade A*-C in English, mathematics, science, a language and a humanities subject)	34%	16%	23%	14%

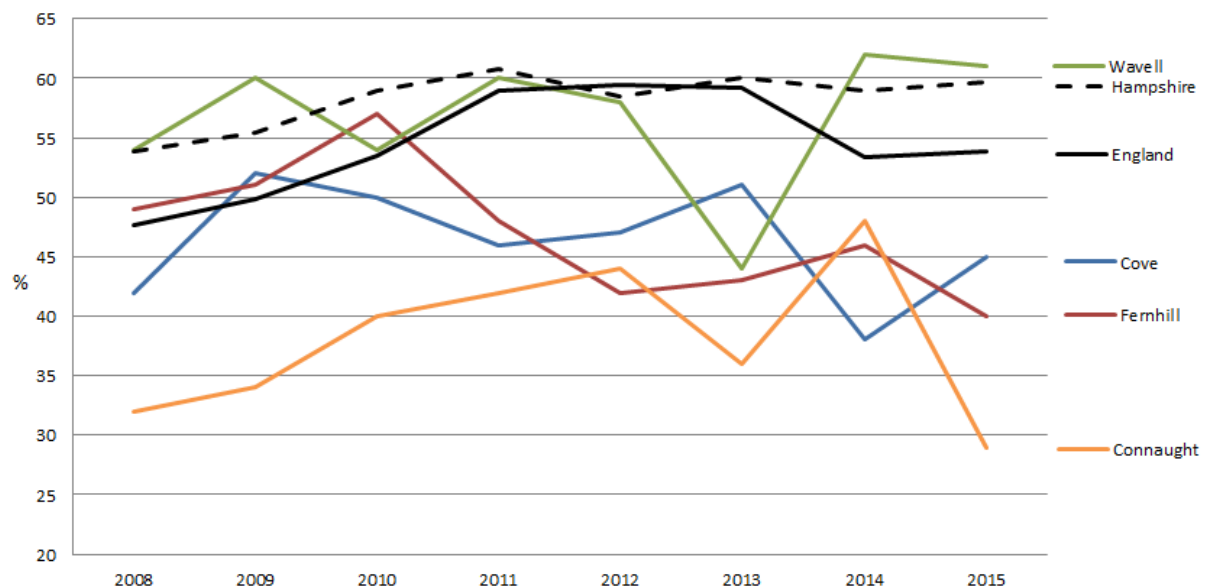
(Source: Department for Education <http://www.education.gov.uk/>)

2013 GCSE results	The Wavell School	Cove School	Fernhill School	The Connaught School
Percentage achieving 5+ A*-C GCSEs (or equivalent) including English and maths GCSEs	44%	51%	43%	36%
Percentage of pupils achieving 5+ A*-C grade GCSEs (or equivalent)	61%	70%	66%	85%
Percentage of pupils achieving 5+ A*-G grade GCSEs (or equivalent)	99%	98%	99%	97%
Percentage of pupils achieving Ebacc (grade A*-C in English, mathematics, science, a language and a humanities subject)	21%	15%	20%	8%

(Source: Department for Education <http://www.education.gov.uk/>)

GRAPH TO SHOW % OF PUPILS 5+ A*-C GCSE'S FOR RUSHMOOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

(Source: Department for Education <http://www.education.gov.uk/>)



School reforms

Due to school reforms in 2013-14 the results between 2013 and 2014 are not directly comparable. Between 2013 and 2014 International GCSE (iGCSE's) were no longer counted in results, only a pupil's first attempt at a qualification is included, and counting non-GCSEs has been capped at two.

Progress 8

In 2016 a new way of measuring performance, will be introduced for all schools. Progress 8 aims to capture the progress a pupil makes from the end of primary school to the end of secondary school. It is designed to encourage schools to offer a broad and balanced curriculum at KS4, and reward schools for the teaching of all their pupils measuring performance across 8 qualifications.

Progress 8 will be calculated for individual pupils solely in order to calculate a schools Progress 8 score. It will measure the achievement of a pupil across 8 qualifications including: English (double weighted); mathematics (double weighted); three other English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects (sciences, computer science, geography, history and languages); and three further subjects.

End