

# **FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OSC**

## **REPORT TO CABINET**

**11 January 2022**

### **Outcomes of Consultation on the proposals for Atkinson House Special School**

Sue Aviston, Head of School Organisation and Resources, introduced the report to the Committee at their meeting on 6 January 2022.

The Committee had an in-depth discussion about the report and sought assurance on several issues such as traffic, drop offs and pickups, security and safeguarding. Members were informed that the most appropriate design solutions would be developed in order to address these concerns.

Co-opted members questioned whether the timeframe of September 2022 was achievable and whether starting work early, before the formal consultation, would help reassure residents of the viability of the proposal. It was agreed that September 2022 was a challenging date; however, members were told that the team felt this date was achievable. Starting work now would result in about a 6-week delay to the current timetable. It was felt that the design work currently being undertaken demonstrates a commitment and would be sufficient to demonstrate how the building would function.

In response to question about the change in distance and possibility of relocating children twice, members were informed that for some children the new site would be closer and would provide provision in the west of the County where previously there had been none. The Committee heard how children would not be moved twice over the next two years with the opening of Gilbert Ward academy. It was noted that in relocating Atkinson House the catchment area would also change.

Members had their attention drawn to a comment from parents who highlighted the change to co-education would create better provision for girls at the school and would be more representative of the world into which they will enter and so help to prepare them to be good citizens. Members raised problems with the perception of Atkinson House and felt the proposal was a step in the right direction for the children of Northumberland with SEMH needs.

It was **RESOLVED** that Cabinet be advised that this Committee supports the recommendations as outlined in the report.

**WAYNE DALEY  
CHAIRMAN**