

News Release from Eric Pickles MP, Brentwood and Ongar – 27.3.09

Brentwood and Ongar MP Says School Plan Is Best for Brentwood

Proposals released this week to reorganise education facilities in Brentwood to form the “Shenfield High School and Community Partnership” have been welcomed by the town’s Member of Parliament, Eric Pickles, as being “Best for Brentwood”.

The proposal will see Shenfield High School gradually take on the academic teaching of pupils currently at Sawyers Hall College. The College’s site on Sawyers Hall Lane will become a Community Campus where specialist work-related learning programmes for 14-19 year olds (including Diplomas), apprenticeships, Extended Children’s Services and community sports development will be delivered.

Eric Pickles said:

“I am very impressed Sawyers Hall College and Shenfield High School have come up with this proposal to secure the educational future of children at Sawyers Hall College.

“Sawyers Hall College has had a difficult history in the last four years. I have been very supportive of the College and am aware it is making excellent progress under its new Head Teacher, Stephen Capper, since coming out of special measures in November 2007. However, the reputation of a school once damaged is difficult to rebuild and the resulting publicity has led to ever fewer numbers of pupils applying for places in the last two or three years.

“It has become obvious something needed to be done to tackle the falling numbers, and I am delighted Stephen Capper and John Fairhurst, the Head Teacher at Shenfield High School, have produced a local Brentwood solution, rather than waiting for the Local Authority to come up with one.

“If uncertainty continued there was a risk that Sawyers Hall’s most talented teachers would have sought more secure employment outside the town. The proposal enables the College and Shenfield High School to offer a stable future for the College’s existing pupils and for the wider community. The College site will be protected as an educational facility which will be of immense benefit to all those living in Brentwood.

“Shenfield High School enjoys a reputation for academic vigour, and its involvement in the partnership should do much to reassure parents.”

The proposal suggests Sawyers Hall College and Shenfield High School will work to integrate their curriculum and staffing **from 2010**. The Sawyers Hall site has already been earmarked for the development of a multi-million pound vocational learning centre which will enable young people across Brentwood to access first-class vocational learning opportunities.

Mr Pickles added:

“It is essential for all young people in Brentwood this vocational learning centre goes ahead as planned it fills a gap in local education provision. This seriously strengthens learning opportunities for all across the Constituency. I look to Essex County Council to do all they can to make this happen.

“This proposal provides certainty where previously there was insecurity and damaging speculation. I am pleased to support the vision of both Head Teachers, and the exciting opportunities that this monumental, but vital, change brings to Brentwood.”

ENDS

For further information or interview requests please contact Eric Pickles MP on 020 7219 4428 or picklese@parliament.uk