

PRESS RELEASE

A LOCAL SOLUTION THAT IS BEST FOR BRENTWOOD A PROPOSAL FOR THE REORGANISATION OF SCHOOLS

A proposal from the Governors of Shenfield High School and Sawyers Hall College is about to be presented to Essex Council for its consideration. An outline of the proposal is attached.

The proposal was debated long and hard by each Governing Body in their respective school's simultaneous meeting on Thursday evening (26th March). Both Governing Bodies voted unanimously in favour of putting the proposal forward to the Local Authority and to the wider public.

Recent speculation in the local press about the falling rolls in Sawyers Hall has presented a further threat to the College's continuation, despite new leadership and the consequent significant improvement in its performance. This has caused the Governors and Headteacher of Sawyers Hall to develop a plan for the College's long-term future.

Numbers are falling, although, paradoxically, educational standards are rising. The Governors of Sawyers Hall have, therefore, approached Shenfield High School to help create a longer term proposal that will guarantee the education of students currently on roll at Sawyers Hall and continue to make appropriate use of the high quality educational facilities on the College site.

The schools are seeking a convergence of Sawyers Hall's curriculum provision with Shenfield's with the eventual aim of Shenfield managing a slightly enlarged traditional school on the Alexander Lane site (much as now), whilst also focusing on a range of vocational courses and community-based education activity on a "Community Campus" in Sawyers Hall Lane.

The two schools are already leaders in delivering a package of community-orientated educational activity. For example, Sawyers Hall is the nominated lead for a new package of vocational courses that Brentwood Secondary Schools have been planning together, with the Brentwood Vocational Centre located on the site. Shenfield is also heavily involved in teacher training and co-ordinates community-orientated sports projects, both of which would appropriately move to the new "Community Campus". Staff working at Sawyers Hall College will have considerable opportunities to be part of the combined educational institution, offering the best features of both schools.

John Fairhurst, Headteacher of Shenfield High School, said *"The implications for Shenfield are all positive. The Local Authority does understand that if this plan were to go ahead, facilities at Shenfield will need extending and improvement. Sawyers Hall has vastly improved its performance in the last two or three years. Joining with us will help us enrich and widen the curriculum on offer at Shenfield and contribute to*

the expanded school a good number of strong teachers and other staff that I know they have there.”

Stephen Capper, Headteacher of Sawyers Hall College, added *“It is vital that we secure a future education provision not just for our current students and staff at Sawyers Hall, but also for the future of the Brentwood community. Whilst we recognise that Sawyers Hall will eventually cease to exist as a unique institution, we are equally excited about what the future holds for the students of both schools.”*

This is, as yet, simply a proposal. Whether or not this plan is credible will take time to ascertain. Ultimately, the decisions on the way forward, the exact time scales and the formal consultation with the whole community are to be taken by the County Council after the June elections.

Brentwood Secondary Heads have agreed the strength of this proposal. They have commented: *“We welcome this proposal which we strongly support as an opportunity to both secure and enrich the educational provision for the whole of Brentwood”.*

They applaud the fact that Sawyers Hall with Shenfield is proactively putting a firm proposal on the table planning ahead for the future and making sure that the people of Brentwood and their children get the best educational opportunities possible.

Further details can be obtained from John Fairhurst, Headteacher, Shenfield High School, 01277 219131; and Stephen Capper, Headteacher of Sawyers Hall College, 01277 220808.