

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

CABINET - 31 MAY 2012

**PLANNING OF SCHOOL PLACES:
HOLLINSWOOD INFANT AND JUNIOR SCHOOLS**

**REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION CULTURE AND
SKILLS AND ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR FAMILY AND COHESION SERVICES**

LEAD CABINET MEMBER CLLR PAUL WATLING

PART A) – SUMMARY REPORT

1. SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS

To seek Cabinet approval to consult stakeholders on the possibility of a school merger to establish one primary school to replace Hollinswood Junior and Hollinswood Infant Schools.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Assistant Director for Education Culture and Skills be authorised to engage in formal consultation with key partners and stakeholders regarding the possible merger of Hollinswood Infant and Hollinswood Junior schools. A further report on the outcomes of consultation would be brought to Cabinet at its meeting on 26 July 2012.

SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Priority Plan objective(s)?	
	Yes	<i>Children & Young People – to consult and involve all stakeholders with a vested interest in children’s education and safety</i>
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	Yes	<i>Children and Families living within the Wards served by the schools</i>
TARGET COMPLETION/DELIVERY DATE	<i>Report on outcome of consultation process – Cabinet 26 July 2012. In the case of consultation on possible mergers, any changes to take effect from January 2013.</i>	
FINANCIAL/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT	Yes	<i>With a proposed merger date of January 2013, the proposed change would take place shortly before new school funding arrangements take effect from April 2013.</i>

		<p><i>The Department for Education is currently still consulting on some aspects of these proposals, but the new funding formula for schools will be required to have fewer factors than at present. The only one of these factors that would be affected by a merger would be the lump sum. The maximum allowable lump sum will be between £100,000 and £150,000.</i></p> <p><i>The impact of a merger on Telford & Wrekin's Schools Budget would be positive, as we would receive the same funding (which is based on the number of pupils in the area) but would only fund one lump sum rather than two. The impact of the merger on the new school's budget would depend upon the precise details of the new school's staffing structure. However, in general terms, the savings generated by having only one Headteacher, a likely lesser requirement for office staff and some savings on bought in services (as support for only one school rather than two would be required) would be likely to reach £100,000, possibly more. Thus the new school should be broadly in a similar budget position to its two predecessor schools.</i></p> <p><i>Balances of the closing Infants school, whether positive or negative, would revert back to the Local Authority.</i></p>
LEGAL ISSUES	Yes	<p><i>Changes to school organisation are governed by the requirements of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and Guidance from DfE. The Governing Body is required to follow a statutory consultation process to merge schools or to change the school status. The consultation period should be for a minimum of six weeks during term time. The Governing Body is required to publish formal proposals. There is a four week representation period for objections or comments to be sent to the Governing Body. The Governing Body is required to consider the representations and decide whether to merge schools or change school status within six months of publishing the proposals. The Council can refer the proposals to the school's Adjudicator if</i></p>

		<p><i>It has concerns that the Governing Body has failed to consult adequately or has not taken account of the consultation, or that the merger of schools and/or change of school status will have a negative impact on standards at the school.</i></p> <p><i>If a referral is made, the Schools Adjudicator will decide the proposals in place of the Governing Body.</i></p> <p><i>If the decision is to proceed with the merger of schools and change of school status the Governing Body will be reconstituted.</i></p> <p><i>A wide range of legal implications arise upon merger of schools and change of school status. These include negotiating the transfer of land; Assets Transfer; Joint Use Agreements; TUPE of Staff and Service Level Agreements for Support Services.</i></p>
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES	No	
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	Yes	<p><i>The individual mergers would impact on the individual wards within which schools are located. However there is potentially Borough wide impact due to parental preference in choosing which schools children attend.</i></p>

PART B) – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

School Mergers - The Council's policy on infant and junior school provision is that reviews take place, where appropriate, whenever particular circumstances emerge such as a pending head teacher retirement or resignation, or significant building issues including excessive numbers of surplus places. In the case of Hollinswood Infant the headteacher has submitted formal resignation with effect from the end of the summer term 2012. It is intended therefore to apply the policy in respect of this school (and its linked junior school) to consider the options available following consultation with all stakeholders.

3. INFORMATION

School Mergers - Initial discussions will have to be held with headteachers and governors to explain the timetable and process necessary for consultation to take place in time for any possible changes to take place by January 2013.

4. IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

School Mergers – If following consultation a decision is made to merge schools, to avoid lengthy competition rules regarding the opening of new primary schools and changes to school category, the recommendation will be to close the infant school and extend the age range of the junior school to accommodate infant aged pupils. This would enable final decisions to be made by the Local Authority, subject to any objections being received and considered.

If, following the consultation process, it is decided to proceed with any school mergers, the capital implications will be evaluated as part of the consultation with schools, staff and the wider community.

5. PREVIOUS MINUTES

Not applicable.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

Report prepared by Kathy Swallow, Service Delivery Manager - School Organisation, Admissions & Planning, Telephone: 01952 380905