

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

CABINET –18 OCTOBER 2012

PLANNING OF SCHOOL PLACES: HOLLINSWOOD INFANT AND JUNIOR SCHOOLS

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SKILLS- JIM COLLINS

LEAD CABINET MEMBER – CLLR PAUL WATLING

PART A) – SUMMARY REPORT

1. SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS

Following the decision of the Cabinet Meeting held on 26 July 2012 Statutory Notices were published on 30th August 2012 proposing the merger of Hollinswood Infant and Junior schools to establish a primary school from January 2013. The period for representation ended on 11th October 2012. A final decision from Cabinet is now required on the proposed merger.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet, as Decision Maker following the publication of Statutory Notices, agree to the closure of Hollinswood Infant School and the expansion and alteration of the lower age range of Hollinswood Junior School, to form a primary school from January 2013.

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>To make a decision on whether to merge both sets of schools to take effect from January 2013, following the formal Statutory Notice period which ended on 11th October 2012.</i>	
FINANCIAL/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT	Yes	<i>With an anticipated merger date of January 2013, the proposed change would take place shortly before new government school funding arrangements take effect from April 2013. 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</i>

		<p><i>merger would be the lump sum. The lump sum must be a figure between £0 and £200,000. There will be a lump sum in the T&W funding formula but its value has yet to be decided.</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 and the lump sum figure chosen in the new funding formula. However, in general terms, the savings generated by having only one Headteacher, administration savings and some savings on bought in services (as support for only one school rather than two would be required) are considerable. Thus, unless a very large lump sum figure is chosen, the merged school should not be worse off than the two separate schools.</i></p>
<p>LEGAL ISSUES</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p><i>Changes to school organisation are governed by the requirements of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and Guidance from DfE. The Local Authority 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 Local Authority is required to publish formal proposals. There is a four week representation period for objections or comments to be sent to the Local Authority. The Local Authority is required to consider the representations and decide whether to merge schools or change school status within six months of publishing the proposals. Relevant Bodies can refer the proposals to the school's Adjudicator if they have concerns that the Local Authority 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. If a referral is made, the Schools Adjudicator will decide the proposals in place of the Local Authority. If the decision is to proceed with the merger of schools and change of school</i></p>

		<i>status the Governing Body will be reconstituted. 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. In this instance there is no intention to change the status of any merged school and so the majority of these provisions would not apply.</i>
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES		
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	Yes	<i>The individual mergers will 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>

PART B) – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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 and Junior schools, the Headteacher of the infant school has submitted her resignation with effect from the end of the summer term 2012, in order to take up another Headship . It is intended therefore to apply the policy in respect of these schools to consider the options available following consultation with all stakeholders.

A decision to merge the two schools would be in line with the national trend to reduce the number of single phase schools. The benefits of aligning policies and curriculum planning which an all- through primary school would offer are more likely to lead to improved attainment for all children. A merged school would also afford opportunities for staff to enhance their skills by gaining experience across more than one key stage.

As both current schools are located on the same site this would be relatively easy to achieve. In the short term we are unlikely to join the two buildings physically but there would be opportunities to improve the access and circulation between the existing teaching blocks.

In the past 7 years records show that only 4 pupils have transferred from the infant school to a school other than the linked junior school at the end of key stage one. This indicates considerable parental satisfaction with progression to the current junior school.

A 6 week formal consultation process on the proposed merger was held in the second half of the summer term and officers were involved in several meetings with parents, pupils, staff and governors to seek and collate the views of all stakeholders. Letters were sent to the Parish Council, local MP and other relevant bodies such as neighbouring local authorities where appropriate, in order to alert them to the consultation process and to give them the opportunity to register their views on the proposals. Responses were received via meetings and also through the School Organisation email inbox.

3. INFORMATION

The consultation processes for the merger took place earlier in the year and were on the whole met with favourably by stakeholders at the junior school and in the community although some concerns were expressed by stakeholders at the infant school. These concerns centred on the physical separation of the two school buildings and the difficulties that this could cause if the schools were merged. A report was provided to the Cabinet on the outcome of consultation, asking for permission to publish Statutory Notices to merge the schools. Approval was given at the Cabinet meeting on 26th July 2012, (Cabinet minute CB 28) and Statutory Notices were published on 30th August 2012 in the Shropshire Star. Copies were also sent to the appropriate interested parties and displayed locally to the schools. The formal Statutory Notice period ended on 11th October 2012.

All responses to the published Statutory Notices that were received by the closing date are attached at **Annex A**.

4. IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The process adopted to merge the schools has avoided lengthy competition procedures regarding the opening of new primary schools and changes to school category. The method proposed was to close the infant school and expand and extend the age range of the junior schools to accommodate infant aged pupils.

Guidance on the decision making process following the Statutory Notice period is attached at **Annex B**. The process has been completed thoroughly and the recommendations in this report to approve the proposals reflect that the Statutory Proposals have been adhered to thoroughly.

5. PREVIOUS MINUTES

Decision **CB-5** – Cabinet meeting 31st May 2012.

Decision **CB-28** – Cabinet meeting 26th July 2012.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Cabinet Paper 31st May 2012 - Planning of School Places: Hollinswood Infant and Junior Schools.

Cabinet Paper 28th July 2012 - Planning of School Places: Hollinswood Infant and Junior Schools

Report prepared by Kathy Swallow, Service Delivery Manager – Integrated Planning, Placements & Commissioning, Telephone: 01952 380905

Responses to Statutory Notices published 30th August 2012:

Responses to the Statutory Notice proposal to close Hollinswood Infant School and expand and alter the lower age range of Hollinswood Junior School to accommodate pupils aged 4 – 11.

1. No responses yet received.

Any representations received after the publication of this report will be detailed at the Cabinet meeting.

School Organisation Statutory Proposals: Decision Making Process

These notes are a summary of the full guidance and are taken from Stage 4 of the various School Organisation guidance documents available at the Department for Education Website:

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/schoolorg/guidance.cfm?id=3>

Relevant Excerpts from Guidance

The following are the most relevant excerpts from the guidance which relate directly to the decision that is required to be made in response to the Statutory Notices that have been published. Following each guidance note is an explanation which attempts to address each point which requires consideration by the Decision Maker.

Checks on Receipt of Statutory Proposals

There are 4 key issues the Decision Maker should consider before judging the respective factors and merits of the statutory proposals:

- Is any information missing?
- Does the published notice comply with statutory requirements?
- Has the statutory consultation been carried out prior to the publication of the notice?
- Are the proposals 'related' to other published proposals?

Response: *No required information is missing from the statutory notices and they do comply with statutory requirements (these were checked by the DfE School Organisation Unit prior to publication). The full statutory consultation was carried out between 11th June and 23rd July 2012 and the outcomes reported to the Cabinet on 26th July 2012.*

Effect on Standards and School Improvement

The EIA 2006 amends the Education Act 1996 to place duties on LAs to secure diversity in the provision of schools and to increase opportunities for parental choice when planning the provision of schools in their areas. The Government's aim is to secure a more diverse and dynamic schools system which is shaped by parents. The Decision Maker **should** take into account the extent to which the proposals are consistent with the new duties on LAs.

Response: *There are no major implications arising from the statutory proposals for diversification in the sector, however through the proposed closure of a maintained infant school, the direct impact is to increase the percentage of other categories of schools (i.e. Trust, Academy, Voluntary and Foundation).*

Standards

Decision Makers **should** be satisfied that proposals for a school closure will contribute to raising local standards of provision, and will lead to improved attainment for children and young people. They **should** pay particular attention to the effects on groups that tend to under-perform.

Where a school is to be closed so that it may be amalgamated with a more successful and/or popular school, the Decision Maker **should** again normally approve these proposals, subject to evidence being provided by the LA and other interested parties, that the development will have a positive impact on standards.

Response: *The school closure resulting in an all through primary school will significantly support transition between Key Stage 1 and 2, ensuring that good pupil progress is secured and, as a consequence, attainment is raised. Periods of transition are often stressful for children with Special Educational Needs and an all through primary school will help to eliminate these problems, as children will simply move to a new teacher within the same school. Other benefits which will help to raise standards, and increase rates of pupil progress, will be gained as staff benefit from professional development opportunities focusing on learning progression across the two key stages from the Foundation Stage through to Level 5. Furthermore there is increased opportunity for staff to share a wider range of learning resources, allowing them to target support strategically to address specific barriers to learning.*

Diversity

Decision Makers should consider how proposals will impact on local diversity. They should consider the range of schools in the relevant area of the LA and how the closure of the school will ultimately impact on the aspirations of parents, help raise local standards and narrow attainment gaps.

Response: *The closure of an LA Maintained school results in a larger overall proportion of diverse school types i.e. Trust, Academy, Voluntary, and Foundation schools.*

Every Child Matters

The Decision Maker **should** consider how proposals will help every child and young person achieve their potential in accordance with “Every Child Matters” principles which are: to be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution to the community and society; and achieve economic well-being.

Response: *Through the Council’s continuing involvement with Telford & Wrekin schools of all categories, the Council is fully committed to the principles of Every Child Matters, and the values it promotes form the basis upon which the decision to consult stakeholders on the proposed mergers was taken originally.*

Impact on the Community and Travel

Where the school was providing access to extended services, some provision should be made for the pupils and their families to access similar services through their new schools or other means.

Response: *The junior school which will expand to accommodate infant age pupils will continue to offer extended services in the form of before and after school clubs where applicable, and extra curricular activities at the end of the school day.*

Equal Opportunity Issues

The Decision Maker **should** consider whether there are any sex, race or disability discrimination issues that arise from the changes being proposed.

Response: *There are no identified equality issues resulting from the merger proposals.*

Early Years Provision

In considering proposals to close a school which currently includes early years provision, the Decision Maker **should** consider whether the alternative provision will integrate pre-school education with childcare services and/or with other services for young children and their families; and **should** have particular regard to the views of the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

The Decision Maker **should** also consider whether the alternative early years provision will maintain or enhance the standard of educational provision and flexibility of access for parents.

Response: *The junior school will continue to offer the nursery provision previously attached to the infant school. In the case of the private nursery located on the site of Infant school, the lease agreement is set to continue unaffected by the merger proposals. The Early Years service has been included in the statutory notice process as required.*

Views of Interested Parties

The Decision Maker **should** consider the views of all those affected by the proposals or who have an interest in them including: pupils; families of pupils; staff; other schools and colleges; local residents; diocesan bodies and other providers; LAs; the LSC (where proposals affect 14-19 provision) and the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership if one exists, or any local partnership or group that exists in place of an EYDCP (where proposals affect early years and/or childcare provision). This includes statutory objections and comments submitted during the representation period. The Decision Maker **should not** simply take account of the numbers of people expressing a particular view when considering representations made on proposals. Instead the Decision Maker **should** give the greatest weight to representations from those stakeholders likely to be most directly affected by the proposals.

Response: *All documentation received, produced and collated during the consultation process formed an annex to the report to the Cabinet on the outcome of consultation, and was also attached to the Complete Proposals documents made available to all interested parties as stated in the Statutory Notices. All responses to the Statutory Notices are attached at **Annex A**.*

Types of Decision

In considering proposals for a school closure, the Decision Maker can decide to:

- reject the proposals;
- approve the proposals;
- approve the proposals with a modification
- approve the proposals subject to them meeting a specific condition

Response: *The recommendation is that the statutory proposals are approved.*

Decisions

All decisions **must** give reasons for the decision, irrespective of whether the proposals were rejected or approved, indicating the main factors/criteria for the decision.

A copy of the decision **must** be forwarded to:

- the LA or governing body who published the proposals;
- each objector except where a petition has been received. Where a petition is received a decision letter **should** be sent to the person who submitted the petition, or where this is unknown, the signatory whose name appears first on the petition;
- the Secretary of State
- the local CofE diocese;
- the Bishop of the local RC diocese.

In addition, where proposals are decided by the LA a copy of the decision **must** be sent to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator

Response: *The outcome of the decision will be communicated to all relevant parties as required.*