

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 59
Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject: St Luke's Infant and Junior School Merger
Date of Meeting: 1 December 2008
Report of: Director of Children's Services
Contact Officer: Name: Gillian Churchill Tel: 29-3515
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Key Decision: Yes Forward Plan No. CYP6439
Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 As part of the Council's future development of Schools within the city it is proposed to amalgamate St Luke's infant and Junior Schools
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to set out the background and rationale for this proposed amalgamation and to seek Cabinet Member endorsement to proceeding to the next stage of the statutory process, which is the publication of the required Statutory Notices.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To note and endorse the proposal to amalgamate St Luke's Infant and Junior Schools.
- 2.2 To agree to the publication of the required Statutory Notices to progress this proposal.
- 2.3 That the results from the statutory consultation process are referred to Cabinet Member Meeting on 2nd March 2009 for decision.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The consideration of amalgamating St Luke's Infant and Junior schools has arisen as a result of the Councils merger protocol. This states that we will consider merging linked infant and junior schools when the head teacher of one of the schools leaves. In this instance the head teacher of St Luke's infant school left in July 2008.

- 3.2 The amalgamation would require the closure of St Luke's Infant School and the extension of the age range of the junior school to cater for pupils from age 4 to age 11.
- 3.3 It is proposed that the newly created primary school will be a three form entry school (with a yearly intake of 90 pupils). This would mean that there will be a small increase in the overall numbers of pupils as the current intake for the infant school is 85.
- 3.4 The proposal to amalgamate the schools was discussed with the governing bodies of both schools prior to the decision to go ahead with the initial stages of the consultation on the proposal. The Governing Body of the Infant school is opposed to the proposal and the Governing Body of the junior school supports the proposal.
- 3.5 The views of the governing bodies will be finalised in light of the consultation.
- 3.6 In proposing the amalgamation of St Luke's Infant and Junior schools the following programme is to be followed:

Publication of Consultation Document	12 th September 2008
Public Consultation Meeting	18 th September 2008
Last date for responses	31 st October 2008
Report back to Cabinet Member	1 st December 2008
Issue Public Notice	12 th January 2009
End of public notice period	23 rd February 2009
Decision by Cabinet Member	2 nd March 2009
Provisional Opening	1 st September 2009

- 3.7 In order to achieve the opening date of the proposed new primary school in September 2009 the statutory notices must be published on 2nd December 2008. The timetable will allow then allow full analysis of responses to the notice to be prepared and presented to the Cabinet Member Meeting on 2nd March 2009. The report to that meeting will seek the final decision on the proposal.
- 3.8 A copy of the draft statutory notice is attached to this report at Appendix 1

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Following the key decision taken by the Director of Children's Services and the CYPT Cabinet Member on 21st July 2008 to commence public consultation a document outlining the amalgamation process was issued to governors, staff, pupils and parents and carers of both schools and copies were made available to

any other interested parties. This consultation document is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

- 4.2 As part of the public consultation process a public meeting was held on 18th September 2008. This meeting gave parents and carers, governors and others the opportunity to put forward their views. A summary of the questions posed and answers offered at that meeting is included at Appendix 3 to this report.
- 4.3 This initial stage of the consultation came to a close on 31st October 2008. The responses to this consultation exercise have been collated and analysed and are shown at Appendix 4 to this report.
- 4.4 In summary 120 responses were received of which 11 were in favour of the proposal and 109 were against the proposal. In addition to individual responses a petition containing 328 names was received by the Council on 31st October 2008. The Cabinet Member also received 87 duplicate letters provided by the St Luke's Against Merger (SLAM) group signed by separate individuals. Copies of the petition and other consultation letter responses have been placed in the members' room for information.
- 4.5 The majority of those against the proposal cited the increased size of the new school and the absence of an educational argument for creating an all through primary school from two successful single phase schools, as reasons to oppose the proposal. The petition expressed the same concern.
- 4.6 In the consultation document the Council states the educational advantages they believe will be achieved by the creation of an all through primary school. These are repeated in section 7.2 of this document.
- 4.7 Although the size of the proposed new school would make it one of the largest in the City this has to be considered against the fact that the two existing schools are within the same building with a single door between them. Equally there are many schools nationally that are of similar size and larger that have outstanding results. There is no evidence to suggest that combining schools with good and outstanding OfSTED assessments should produce anything other than a successful school.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 Any revenue costs of the proposal would have to be met from the existing Individual School Budget (ISB) as there are no additional resources available to fund any associated costs that may arise as a result of the merger. Any capital costs arising from the proposal would have to be met from within the Education Capital Programme which includes streams such as the Primary capital Programme and NDS modernisation

Finance Officer Consulted: Andy Moore

Date: 06/11/08

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 In order to achieve the proposed amalgamation statutory notices will need to be published in accordance with the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and associated regulations. There will then follow a period of 6 weeks within in which any person may make comment or objection to the proposal.

At the end of the publication period for the notice a decision will have to be made within 3 months.

Lawyer Consulted: Serena Kynaston

Date: 07/11/08

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 Planning and provision of school places is conducted in such a way as to avoid potentially discriminatory admissions priorities or planning processes. The city council and voluntary aided school governing bodies must be mindful of bad practice as described in the Admission Code of Practice.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 Planning and provision of school places are intended, so far as it is possible, to provide pupils, parents and carers with local places where they have asked for them. This is subject to limitations in school capacity, the funding available and the priority order for capital development determined by the Council.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 There are no implications for the prevention of crime and disorder arising from this report.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 There are no risk issues in terms of resources or risks to children as a result of this proposal.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 All planning and provision for school places in the city should be operating on the basis of admission limits and admission priorities which have been the subject of broad consultation. The effective coordination of planning arrangements should lead to sufficient school places in all areas of the city and the removal of excess provision.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 The alternative option is to leave the schools as separate infant and junior schools.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The Council produced their Primary Strategy for Change in June 2008. This document reflected Brighton and Hove City Council's policy of supporting the amalgamation of infant and junior schools where appropriate.

- 7.2 The Council believes the advantages of the creation of all through primary schools are as follows:
- Greater continuity in teaching, pupil care and development under a single head teacher and teaching staff. It is very important to ensure continuity in planning the curriculum across the stages of education so that pupils make the best possible progress in learning.
 - The school could offer a greater range of teaching skills, including the opportunity to appoint curriculum co-ordinators with the time to oversee the effective teaching of individual subjects across the whole 4–11 age range.
 - Greater flexibility that a 4–11 school has in organising classes, deploying teachers and support staff and using resources, including buildings, more effectively.
 - Closer contact with parents over a longer period of time and covering the full span of the children’s primary education.
 - Practical advantages to parents’ e.g. same staff development days, the same school policies relating to home links, uniform, codes of conduct etc.
 - Transfer to a different school environment after three years or less of schooling might be seen as an unnecessary disruption to pupil’s sense of security and well being. A positive feature of 4–11 schools is the social interaction between younger and older pupils.
- 7.2 The proposal will create one larger school from two. However the schools currently operate from this one building at present, the infant school has a separate entrance and playground from the junior school and there is no intention to change this as a result of the proposal.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Draft Statutory Notice
2. Consultation document for the proposed merger
3. Q & A from the consultation meeting held at the school on 18th September
3. A summary of responses to the consultation exercise.

Documents in Members’ Rooms

1. Petition submitted by parents and pupils of the school
2. Copies of all consultation responses

Background Documents

1. Merger protocol

