

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**CABINET
MONDAY, 13 NOVEMBER 2017 AT 2.00PM**

Agenda Item
No.

7

OUTCOME OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSAL TO CHANGE THE AGE RANGE OF WIDFORD SCHOOL TO ALLOW NURSERY-AGED CHILDREN TO BE ADMITTED FROM THE AGE OF 2

Report of the Director of Children's Services

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Executive Member: Terry Douris, Education, Libraries & Localism

Local Member: Eric Buckmaster (Sawbridgeworth)

1. Purpose of report

1.1 To inform Cabinet of the outcome of the public consultation on the proposal to change the age range of Widford School, Ware Road, Widford, Hertfordshire, SG12 8RE, ("the School") a community school, from 4 to 11 years to 2 to 11 years thereby allowing nursery-aged children to be admitted from the age of 2; for Cabinet to consider whether to publish a statutory notice to change the age range at the School.

2. Summary

A public consultation began on 20 June 2017 and ended on 31 July 2017. A total of 5 responses were received, of which 4 respondents agreed with the proposal, including the Governing Body of the School which expressed its support. One respondent was undecided and raised two concerns as shown below in 5.3.

3. Recommendation

3.1 The Education, Libraries & Localism Cabinet Panel will consider a report on this item of business at its meeting on 7 November 2017. The Panel will be invited to provide its views to Cabinet, so that it can decide whether to:

- (i) accept the proposal and authorise the Director of Children's Services to publish a statutory notice;
- (ii) take no further action; or

(iii) initiate a fresh consultation on any alternative suggestion(s).

- 3.2 In the light of the responses received, the Director of Children's Services, recommends the publication of a statutory notice to change the age range of Widford School, to allow nursery-aged children to be admitted from the age of 2.
- 3.3 The Cabinet Panel's recommendation/s to Cabinet will be reported orally at the Cabinet meeting and circulated to Members in the Order of Business sheet.

4. Background

- 4.1 Section 19 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires the publication by every Local Authority of plans to make a prescribed alteration to a maintained school. The framework for this is found within Statutory Guidance – Making 'prescribed alterations' to maintained schools, issued in April 2016 and The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.
- 4.2 Widford School is a Community School. Owlets Pre-School, the only pre-school provision in the village of Widford offering free early-education places for 2 and 3-year-olds, closed at the end of July 2017. This proposal to change the age range of the School from 4 to 11 years to 2 to 11 years will enable the School to offer free early-education places for these children to ensure continued provision in the local area. This proposal is at the request of the Governing Body of the School.
- 4.3 Currently the School offers 8 reception places each year for local children. It is proposed that the School, in addition to these reception places, would offer up to 10 early-years places in their nursery as either part-time or full-time places.
- 4.4 The School has sufficient space to accommodate nursery-aged children and therefore no additional spaces, buildings or site are required to implement this proposal. The current capacity of the School is 56, excluding the nursery, and it is proposed that this will not change.
- 4.5 The current number of pupils registered at the School in reception year to year 6 is 52; in addition there are currently 3 children in the nursery. The current admission number for the School is 8 and this will not change.
- 4.6 Should this proposal go ahead, there would be no automatic right for children attending the nursery to gain a reception place at the School; parents/carers of nursery-aged children would need to apply in the normal way for admission to the primary phase of the School.
- 4.7 A consultation letter, attached at Appendix A to the report, was distributed by the school on 20 June 2017 to: parents/carers, school governors and staff at Widford School. It was also sent to: Local Pre-Schools, Nursery and Primary schools; the local MP, County Councillors, District Councillors,

Parish and Town Councils and Local Authority Chief Executives; Trade Union representatives; Church Diocese representatives; NHS representatives; Parent Governor representatives on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at Hertfordshire County Council; Pre-schools, playgroups, Children’s Centres, toddler groups and day nurseries; Libraries and Citizen’s Advice Bureaux; relevant senior officers in Hertfordshire County Council. The consultation was also publicised on the Hertfordshire County Council website, www.hertfordshire.gov.uk.

5. Results of the public consultation

5.1 280 consultation letters were circulated. A total of 5 responses were received as summarised in the table below.

5.2

| Capacity of respondent | Total responses | Agree | Disagree | Don't Know |
|------------------------|-----------------|----------|----------|------------|
| Governing Body | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Local Member | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Parent/Carer | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Total Responses | 5 | 4 | 0 | 1 |

Copies of all the responses received will be available for inspection in the Members’ Room at County Hall and will be available at the meeting.

5.3 Key Issues and responses

5.3.1 The Governing Body supports the proposal.

5.3.2 One respondent raised two concerns to which responses are provided by officers as follows:

a) The pre-school should be run as a separate unit to the school as some rules do not apply to non-statutory age children.

Many primary schools successfully run units which have a mixed age range of children covered by the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school will ensure that all children at the school benefit from age-appropriate policies and working practices.

b) There will also need to be nappy changing facilities and other age-related areas

The school will continue to ensure that there are age-appropriate resources and spaces for all children who attend the school. The school will utilise the space used previously by Owlets Pre-School who cared for children under the age of 4.

5.4 The implementation date of the proposed changes will depend on whether or not objections are received to the proposals contained in the statutory notice, should Cabinet decide to publish one. In the event that no

objections are received following the publication of a statutory notice, the proposed implementation date would be the 8th January 2018; otherwise, subject to Cabinet approval, it would be the 5th February 2018.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 It is anticipated that there will not be revenue costs associated with this change in age range. Families will either be eligible for free early education funding or will self-fund if not eligible.
- 6.2 There is no impact on the capital budget.

7. Equalities Implications

- 7.1 When considering proposals placed before Members it is important that they are fully aware of, and have themselves rigorously considered the Equality implications of the decision that they are making.
- 7.2 Rigorous consideration will ensure that there is a proper appreciation of any potential impact of that decision on the county council's statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. As a minimum this requires decision makers to read and carefully consider the content of any Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) produced by officers.
- 7.3 The Equality Act 2010 requires the county council when exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to: (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 7.4 An EqIA has been carried out on the proposal to change the age range at Widford School which is the subject of this report. A copy of the EqIA accompanies this report, attached at Appendix B to the report

Background Papers

Consultation Letter attached at appendix A
EqIA attached at appendix B