

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET
MONDAY, 13 NOVEMBER 2017 AT 2.00PM

Agenda Item

No.

8

OUTCOME OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSAL TO 'AMALGAMATE' REDBOURN JUNIOR SCHOOL AND REDBOURN INFANTS AND NURSERY SCHOOL

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Report Authors: Phil Brunt, Planning Officer, School Planning Team;
Tel: 01992 555811

Executive Member: Terry Douris, Education, Libraries & Localism

Local Member: Annie Brewster (Harpenden Rural)

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the outcome of the public consultation on the proposal to 'amalgamate' Redbourn Junior School and Redbourn Infants and Nursery School by closing Redbourn Junior School on 16 April 2018 and increasing the age range of Redbourn Infants and Nursery School from 3 - 7 years old to 3 – 11 years old from 17th April 2018 and seek agreement from Cabinet to publish statutory notices on these proposals.

2. Summary

- 2.1 A public consultation for the proposal began on 4 July 2017 and ended on 25th September 2017. The majority of respondents were in favour of the proposals (as were the governing bodies of both schools) and any concerns are explained in section 5.5.

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 proposals and authorise the Director of Children's Services to publish statutory notices to:
 - close Redbourn Junior School on 16 April 2018; and
 - increase the age range of Redbourn Infants and Nursery School to 11 from 17 April 2018.
 - (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 statutory notices.
- 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 The governing bodies of both the Infant and Junior Schools have asked the Council to amalgamate the schools to create one 2 f.e. primary school, providing education through from three to eleven, in the best interests of the local community and children. The governors' judgement is that one school will provide a consistent approach to each child's primary education under the leadership and management of one head teacher and one staffing structure. It is proposed to extend the age range of the infant school to create the new primary school because this school is currently high performing and is judged by Ofsted to be 'outstanding'.
- 4.2 A public consultation on the proposal began on 4 July 2017 and ended on 25 September 2017.
- 4.3 Consultation letters, attached at Appendix A to the report, were distributed by the schools to: parents/carers, school governors and staff at the schools. 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; 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

Redbourn (both schools)

- 5.1 Approximately 676 consultation letters were circulated to statutory consultees and governors, staff and families of both schools.
- 5.2 A total of 25 responses were received as summarised in the table below. Copies of all responses received are available to Members in the Members' Lounge and will also be available to the Panel at its meeting.

Category of respondent	Total responses	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
Governing Body	1*	1		
Parents/Carers	21	19	2	
Staff	3	2		1
Governor	1	1		
Total Responses	26	23 (89%)	2 (7 %)	1 (4%)

**joint response from both governing bodies*

Key Issues and responses

- 5.3 The Governing Bodies of both schools support the proposal relating to their schools.

Redbourn Junior

- 5.4 The two respondents who disagreed with the proposal were mainly connected with Redbourn Junior School.
- 5.5 The issues/questions raised are listed below together with a response to them:

'To what benefit to the current Year 6 students does the proposed amalgamation in April 2018 have?' (one respondent)

A. There is no direct improvement to the students in Year 6. The changes will not impact on the students as there will be no changes to staff, other than the Headteacher, and the physical environment and curriculum will remain the same. The proposal to amalgamate in April 2018, not at the end of the academic year, is the preference of the governing bodies for both schools to align with a parallel recruitment process for a new Headteacher and to coincide with the start of the financial year, which would aid budget planning.

'Will there be building works required?' (one respondent)

A. No building works will be required as the existing accommodation is sufficient to deliver the curriculums across all early years and key stage levels. There is no increase in the number of students and as such the existing accommodation is deemed to be sufficient.

'There will be a loss of the small-school / separate Infants and Juniors ethos' (one respondent)

A. The two schools have approached the County Council with the proposal to amalgamate as both schools feel that from a leadership perspective, joining together would be beneficial for all the students, in improving performance and creating a positive learning environment for the children

to thrive. The existing schools already share a site, albeit with separate entrances, which are highly likely to be maintained. The Governing bodies believe that with careful planning around the use of buildings and spaces, the combined school can continue to maintain a small village school ethos and feel. Following detailed consideration and consultation with all interested parties the Governing bodies believe that this is the right decision for the whole community at this point in the development of the village.

6. Financial implications

Revenue

- 6.1 There are no revenue implications for the Council. After a transitional period there would be an annual saving in school budget shares due to the reduction in the number of per school allocations from two to one. At current funding rates this would equate to approximately £160,000. However, it is anticipated that there would be a reduction in Hertfordshire's Dedicated Schools Grant of a similar amount.
- 6.2 Should there be a need for any redundancies it is estimated the cost to be approximately £15k and that there may also be transitional staffing costs of approximately £30k. These costs will be met from the budget of the closing school.

Capital

- 6.3 There are no capital implications for the Council.

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 EqlAs have been carried out on the proposal to increase the number of places to the Schools which are the subject of this report. Copies of the EqlAs are attached Appendix B to the report.

Background Papers

Consultation Letter – Appendix A

EqlAs – Appendix B



**County Hall
Hertford
SG13 8DF**

Tel: 0300 123 4043

My ref: School Planning

Date: 4 July 2017

Dear Consultee

Consultation on a proposal to ‘amalgamate’ Redbourn Junior School, Long Cutt, Redbourn, Hertfordshire, AL3 7EX and Redbourn Infant & Nursery School, Long Cutt, Redbourn, Hertfordshire, AL3 7EX from 17 April 2018

What is the proposal?

We are consulting you on the proposal to ‘amalgamate’ these two schools. Technically, this means that the legal proposals are:

- 1. The closure of Redbourn Junior School on 16 April 2018**
 1. and
- 2. The extension of the age range of Redbourn Infant & Nursery School from 3 to 7 years to 3 to 11 years from 17 April 2018.**

These proposals, if enacted, would create one primary school (3- 11 years of age) for both infant and junior pupils. The two schools currently admit up to 60 pupils in each year group and it is proposed that the new primary school will also admit 60 reception aged pupils each year from September 2018.

Why is this being proposed?

The governing bodies of both the Infant and Junior Schools have asked the county council to amalgamate the schools to create a 2 f.e. primary school, providing education through from four to eleven, in the best interests of the local community and children. The governors’ judgement is that the new school will provide a consistent approach to each child’s primary education under the leadership and management of one head teacher and one staffing structure. It is proposed to extend the age range of the infant school to create the new primary school because currently this school is high performing and is judged by Ofsted to be ‘outstanding’.

How would the primary school work?

The current buildings will continue to be used as they are now, but it is intended that the primary school will have one main entrance for visitors.

The proposed new primary school would have a single governing body, head teacher and one staffing structure, ensuring flexibility throughout the new school.

The Governing Bodies of the Infant and Junior schools will work together to consider how the new single Governing Body might be constituted in terms of numbers and different categories of governors. Following agreement by the Governing Body a document called the "Instrument of Government" will be drawn up to complete the process.

What will the impact be on staff at the two schools?

The Infant School governing body has resolved to undertake a 'Junior staff first recruitment protocol' which is intended to minimise the risk to staff at the junior school. Initial projections indicate an anticipated retention of the majority of existing staff. It is hoped that other staff at risk of redundancy will be able to secure alternative posts. Existing staff at the Infants and Nursery School will not be affected by the expansion.

The main benefit to an all-through primary school will be to ensure consistency of provision for the children in their primary years, from three to eleven years.

What will happen about uniforms?

There will be no change to the existing uniform as both schools already share the same uniform.

Have your say

The county council supports the governing bodies' wishes and believes that the 'amalgamation' of Redbourn Junior and Redbourn Infant & Nursery Schools will have a positive impact for existing and future pupils and the local community.

You have until 25 September 2017 to let us know your views on this proposal. The easiest way you can do this is by completing the online form on our website at www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/consultations . You can tell us if you agree or disagree with the proposal and leave your comments.

If you do not have access to the internet you can visit your local library where free access is available to all Hertfordshire residents. Should you wish to request a hard copy of the response form or need help understanding this information you can email contact@hertfordshire.gov.uk or alternatively please call us on the number above. An interpreting service is available for those who need it.

Your comments must be received by 25 September 2017. We will not be able to acknowledge or respond individually to your comments but they will be taken into account, as explained below.

How the decision will be taken.

This is a consultation and no decision has been made yet. All responses received will be made available to elected members who make the final decision. All responses may be made available in public reports, although personal details will be removed to respect individual privacy.

The following timetable outlines the decision-making process. Please note that meetings marked with * will be open to the public. Although it will not be possible to inform everyone individually of the decisions made, you will be able to access this information throughout the process at:

<https://cmis.hertfordshire.gov.uk/hertfordshire/CabinetandCommittees.aspx>

Process	Date
Public consultation	4 July – 25 September 2017
Enterprise, Education & Skills Panel*	7 November 2017
Cabinet*	13 November 2017
Statutory notice period (4 weeks)	23 November– 21 December 2017
Cabinet* (for final approval if any objections are received)	22 January 2018
Implementation	17 April 2018

Yours faithfully

Jenny Coles,
Director of Children's Services