

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION

Tuesday, 19 November 2013

Decision No: (CAB 13/14 11397)

DECISION-MAKER:	CABINET
PORTFOLIO AREA:	CHILDREN'S SERVICES
SUBJECT:	BITTERNE CHURCH OF ENGLAND INFANT & JUNIOR SCHOOL MERGER PROPOSAL
AUTHOR:	Graham Talbot

THE DECISION

- (i) To consider the outcome of statutory consultation and approve the implementation of proposals to discontinue Bitterne CE Infant School and extend the age range of Bitterne CE Junior School to establish an all through primary school from 1 September 2014.
- (ii) Subject to complying with Financial and Contractual Procedure Rules, to delegate authority to the People Director, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, to do anything necessary to give effect to the recommendations in this report.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

1. The Council has adopted a policy of exploring the possibility of merging linked infant and junior schools to form all through primary schools where the situation arises. That is:
 - When the governing bodies of linked infant and junior schools seek support to establish a primary school;
 - If a headship of a linked infant or junior school becomes vacant; or If a school with a linked infant/junior school is placed in special measures through an Ofsted inspection.
2. The Local Authority favours the primary model, where the situation arises, for the following reasons:
 - Educational benefits – all through primaries are in a stronger position to plan for continuity & progression and enable the school to develop relationships with pupils over a longer period of time;
 - Professional outcomes – all through primaries can provide staff with greater opportunities to gain a broader and deeper understanding of the learning continuum for children from 4 to 11 years old;

- Efficiency – all through primaries have a single, larger budget that offers the opportunity to deliver quality more efficiently, through greater economies of scale. There would also be a reduced spend on leadership and governance arrangements, which could enable an increased spend on front line teachers; and
 - Parental benefits – there is a direct benefit to parents in the admissions process. Parents have to apply to secure a place in an infant school, at Year R, and a junior school, at Year 3. Only one application is required for primary school, for admission to Year R.
3. At the end of the 2012/13 academic year, the headteacher of Bitterne CE Infant & Junior School vacated her post and after discussions between Local Authority officers, the Church of England Diocese and Bitterne CE Infant & Junior School representatives it was agreed that consultation would take place on a proposal to merge the two schools by closing the infant school and extending the age range of the junior school.
 4. The consultation has now concluded and the vast majority of responses received have been positive (see Appendix 2).

DETAILS OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

1. Under the regulations Cabinet may either:
 - a. Reject the proposals;
 - b. Approve the proposals;
 - c. Approve the proposals with a modification (e.g. the implementation date); or
 - d. Approve the proposals subject to them meeting a specific condition.
2. The alternatives to the proposal are:
 - The infant school could appoint a headteacher and the schools could remain separate. This was rejected because both governing bodies and the Local Authority wanted to explore the primary option;
 - It could be proposed that the junior school closes and the infant extends its age range. This option was rejected because the infant has a headteacher vacancy and it is more appropriate to close the school that has such a vacancy; or
 - Both schools could be closed and a brand new primary school opened in their place. This option has been discounted because there is a desire to retain the leadership and governance structures that are currently in place. If this option were taken forward the Schools Adjudicator would be the decision maker for the proposal. The Local Authority would prefer to keep the decision making process at a local level, so this option was rejected.

OTHER RELEVANT MATTERS CONCERNING THE DECISION

None

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None

CONFIRMED AS A TRUE RECORD

We certify that the decision this document records was made in accordance with the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2000 and is a true and accurate record of that decision.

Date: 19 November 2013

Decision Maker: The Cabinet

Proper Officer: Ed Grimshaw

SCRUTINY

Note: This decision will come in to force at the expiry of 5 working days from the date of publication subject to any review under the Council's Scrutiny "Call-In" provisions.

Call-In Period expires on

Date of Call-in *(if applicable) (this suspends implementation)*

Call-in Procedure completed *(if applicable)*

Call-in heard by *(if applicable)*

Results of Call-in *(if applicable)*