

<b>DECISION-MAKER:</b>	CABINET
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	EXPANSION OF WESTON PARK INFANT SCHOOL TO FORM AN ALL THROUGH PRIMARY SCHOOL AND THE CLOSURE OF WESTON PARK JUNIOR SCHOOL
<b>DATE OF DECISION:</b>	18 SEPTEMBER 2012
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES
<b>STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY:</b>	
Not applicable.	

**BRIEF SUMMARY:**

Weston Park Infant and Weston Park Junior school currently have an executive head teacher and are located on the same site. The infant school is currently rated as outstanding, whilst the junior school has been rated as satisfactory for the last few years. As a result, it is considered that the formal merging of these 2 schools would help to raise the standards across key stage 2 years groups and would provide greater stability to staff and pupils across all year groups.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Having complied with Rule 15 of the Council's Access to Information Procedure Rules:

- (i) To note the outcome of pre-statutory and statutory consultation, as shown in appendix 1.
- (ii) To approve the proposals, put forward by the Governing Body of Weston Park Infant School, to change the age range of Weston Park Infant School from 4-7 year olds to 4-11 year olds and expand Weston Park Infant school from a 270 place infant school to a 750 place all through primary school. These proposals are linked to recommendation (iii).
- (iii) To approve the proposal, put forward by the Governing Body of Weston Park Junior School, for the discontinuance of Weston Park Junior school from 1 January 2013. This proposal is linked to recommendation (ii).
- (iv) To note the change to the admissions arrangements for the school, which will see the PAN for year R remain at 90, whilst the PAN for year 3 will be 120, to accommodate children from Weston Shore Infant. The net capacity of the new primary would thus be larger than the current combined net capacity of the existing infant and junior schools.
- (v) To delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services and Learning, 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 REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. This report is presented as a general exception item in accordance with Rule 15 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules of Part 4 of the Council's Constitution. Amendments to the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to information) (England) Regulations 2012 require 28 days notice to be given prior to determining all Key Decisions. This new requirement was published by government mid August and comes into effect on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2012. It has not been possible to meet the requirement of 28 days notice between publication of the new Regulations and the scheduled meeting of Cabinet and it is not reasonable or practicable in the circumstances to defer all key decision items to a future meeting.
2. The infant school is currently has an outstanding ofsted rating whilst the junior school has had a satisfactory ofsted grading for a number of years. It is hoped that the formal merger of the infant and junior would help to raise standards across all key stages.
3. There is currently one head teacher working across both schools, who would become the Head teacher for the new primary school. This would provide staff and pupils with more stability.
4. The schools are located on the same site and in adjacent buildings. If the schools became one, it would make the operation and maintenance of the site and buildings more efficient.
5. The alteration to the admissions arrangements and net capacity of the school are required to ensure that pupils from Weston Shore Infant, the majority of which feed into Weston Park Junior School, continue to have access to local key stage 2 places.
6. The infant and junior schools could remain as separate entities but this could result in the junior school remaining at a satisfactory level. This would do little to improve the outcomes of key stage 2 pupils and since the motivation behind this proposal is to improve standards, maintaining the status quo is not considered to be a suitable option.
7. The option of closing the infant school and expanding the age range of the junior school was not considered because the infant is the better performing of the two.

## **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED:**

8. 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)
  - d. approve the proposals subject to them meeting a specific condition

## **DETAIL (Including consultation carried out):**

9. Both recommendations in this report (the proposal to change the age range of and expand Weston Park Infant and the proposal to discontinue Weston Park Junior school) are intrinsically related and therefore must be considered together.

10. The main motivation behind this proposal is to improve achievement and attainment at Weston Park Infant and Weston Park Junior schools. The former has an outstanding Ofsted rating while the latter has satisfactory rating. The formal merger of the two schools could provide the opportunity for the standards in place at the infant school to positively influence outcomes across key stage 2 year groups.
11. The proposal to discontinue Weston Park Junior and close Weston Park Infant (as opposed to vice versa) was drawn up as a result of a desire to improve the standards of the key stage 2 year groups by enabling to work more closely with infant year groups. There is an Executive Head teacher working across both schools, the infant and junior share site and the buildings are adjacent to one another. It therefore seems logical that schools come together to form an all through primary.
12. If approved, this proposal would reduce some of the administrative burden on both schools and the LA with regards to the admissions process as year 2 pupils would move straight in year 3, without the need for any application. Weston Shore Infant school pupils would still need to apply for a year 3 place at Weston Park.
13. While there would be a small increase in the number of places available at the all through primary (compared to the separate infant and junior) this is a necessity of the provision of key stage 1 & 2 education under the guise of 1 school. Weston Park Junior largely admits pupils from Weston Park infant (PAN of 90) and Weston Park Infant (PAN of 30) but has a PAN of 102. In order to ensure that key stage 2 provision continues to be available to Weston Shore Infant pupils, there would be 120 places available in years 3-6, compared to the 102 available now. Given that there will be a greater number of places available in year 3 at Weston Park than there currently are, it is not anticipated that any pupils would be displaced as a result of these proposals.
14. There are no travel or accessibility issues associated with this proposal, as the key stage 2 education will continue to be run from the existing site. Similarly, there will be no capital costs as the all through primary school would operate on the same site and in the same buildings as the existing infant and junior schools.
15. If the proposals are approved, separate infant and junior schools would be replaced by one all through primary school. However, there would be several infant and junior schools in the area, so parents would still have the option of attending separate infant and junior schools or an all through primary.
16. While the junior school will be formally closed, very little would actually change if these proposals were approved. Pupils would continue to be educated in the same buildings and on the same site. The only real change would be the name of the school.

17. Weston Park Infant and Weston Park Junior are both foundation schools and members of the Southampton Education Trust and as such only the Governing Body can consult on proposals to expand the age range of the infant school. The Head teacher informed Southampton Education Trust about the proposal at the beginning of the process and they have been kept informed every step of the way. The school have informed the Local Authority that the Chair of the Trust is very supportive of the proposal.
18. Both Governing Bodies carried out 6 weeks of pre-statutory consultation between 17 April 2012 and 29 May 2012. A consultation document and response form were distributed to local stakeholders (including local schools, Councillors, libraries and early years settings) and a consultation meeting was held in the junior school hall on 8 May 2012. Information was also available via the SCC website. A copy of the documentation and a summary of responses can be found in appendix 1.
19. The majority of responses to pre-statutory consultation were positive. Some of the reasons for support were; it would improve standards across all year groups and removes need to apply for a junior school place. There were a small number of respondents that didn't support the proposals. One respondent stated that the junior should sort out its existing problems before becoming a primary school. Weston Shore Infant (which currently feeds into Weston Park Junior) governors submitted a response raising a number of issues regarding the proposal, including: concerns about the future of Weston Shore Infant, the transition of Weston Shore Infant to an all through primary and requested that they be informed as to further developments. Both the LA and the headteacher at Weston Park Infant & Junior responded to this, allaying the concerns that were raised.
20. 6 weeks of statutory consultation were held between 11 June and 23 July. Statutory notices were published in the local newspaper and at the entrances to both schools. The statutory notice and full statutory proposals were also available via the SCC website. These can be found in appendix 2. There were no formal responses to this stage of the consultation.

## **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

### **Capital/Revenue:**

21. There are no capital costs associated with this proposal as the primary school will continue to occupy the same site/buildings as the existing infant and junior schools.
22. The revenue costs of all schools are met from the Individual Schools Budget Funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant. The number of pupils at the school will not alter as a result of this proposal so the school will receive a budget similar to the combined budgets of the current infant and junior schools minus one flat rate allocation.

### **Property/Other:**

23. There are no property implications as a result of this proposal.

24. The school may be required to reorganise the structure of non-teaching staff (administrative staff, site manager, caretakers, cleaners) if this proposal is approved and the two schools become one. As foundation schools, and hence the employer of staff, the schools will manage this process.

#### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:**

##### **Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:**

25. Alterations, changes, creation or removal of primary provision across the city is subject to the statutory processes contained in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 as amended by the Education & Inspections Act 2006. Proposals for change are required to follow the processes set out in the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) Regulations 2007 as amended. Discontinuance (closure) of schools is governed by the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Maintained Schools)(England) Regulations 2007. Statutory Guidance on bringing forward proposals applies, which requires a period of pre-statutory consultation (and additional rounds of pre-statutory consultation if further viable options are identified during initial consultation) which must take part predominantly within school term time to meet the requirements of full, open, fair and accessible consultation with those most likely to be affected (pupils, parents and staff often being on vacation or otherwise unavailable during school holiday periods) followed by publications of statutory notices, representation periods and considerations of representations by Cabinet.

##### **Other Legal Implications:**

26. In bringing forward school organisation proposals the LA must have regard to the need to consult the community and users, the statutory duty to improve standards and access to educational opportunities and observe the rules of natural justice and the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998, article 2 of the First Protocol (right to education) and equalities legislation.

#### **POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS:**

27. This proposal is in accordance with the Children and Young People's Plan.

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**KEY DECISION?** No

<b>WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:</b>	Woolston
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### **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

**Appendices:**

1.	Consultation documents and responses to pre-statutory and statutory consultation
2.	Statutory notice and full statutory proposals

**Documents In Members' Rooms:**

1.	Making Changes to a Maintained Mainstream School (Other than Expansion, Foundation, Discontinuance & Establishment Proposals) A Guide for Local Authorities and Governing Bodies
2.	Closing a Maintained Mainstream School A Guide for Local Authorities and Governing Bodies

**Integrated Impact Assessment**

Do the implications/subject of the report require an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) to be carried out.	Yes/No
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**Other Background Documents**

**Integrated Impact Assessment and Other Background documents available for inspection at:**

Title of Background Paper(s)	Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)
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1.	None	
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