

DECISION-MAKER:	CABINET
SUBJECT:	CITY CENTRE PRIMARY SCHOOL EXPANSIONS – STATUTORY CONSULTATION
DATE OF DECISION:	13 NOVEMBER 2012
REPORT OF:	CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN’S SERVICES
STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY	
None	

BRIEF SUMMARY

Southampton is currently experiencing an unprecedented rise in the number of children in the City that require a school place, with the main pressure point being the central spine of the City running from Bassett in the North to Bargate in the South. This report sets out proposals for statutory consultation on increasing the number of places available in the City centre.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (i) To note the outcome of the pre-statutory consultation as set out in the report and appendix 1.
- (ii) To commence 4 weeks of statutory consultation in November and December 2012 on proposals to:
 - Increase the PAN of Bassett Green Primary School from 60 to 90 from September 2013 (the school has initially expanded for 1 year only from September 2012)
 - Increase the PAN of Bevois Town Primary School from 30 to 60 from September 2013 (the school has initially expanded for 1 year only from September 2012)
 - Increase the PAN of St John’s Primary and Nursery School from 30 to 60 from September 2014
- (iii) To delegate authority to the Director of Children’s Services and Learning, following consultation with the Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services, to determine the final format and content of consultation in accordance with statutory and other legal requirements.
- (iv) Subject to complying with Financial and Contractual Procedure Rules, to delegate authority to the Director of Children’s Services & Learning, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services & Learning, to do anything necessary to give effect to the recommendations in this report.

REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The centre of the City is experiencing greater pressure on places than any other area and whilst a number of schools in the City centre have already expanded, additional primary school places are required if we are to meet our statutory duty to provide a school place to all those children that require one.

2. Primary Review Phase 2 projects increased the number of year R places in the City to 3,030 from September 2012 and this number of places would be replicated in all primary aged year groups in subsequent years. While existing expansion plans would provide enough places Citywide, it is likely that there would be a shortage of places in the City centre if these proposals were not taken forward.
3. The demand in the City centre was greater than anticipated for the 2012/13 year and two schools had to be expanded, initially for one year only, to accommodate the extra demand. The schools selected were Bassett Green Primary and Bevois Town Primary, as they could admit an extra class at short notice and also had the potential to expand throughout all year groups. These two schools, along with St John's Primary, are now proposed to expand across all year groups.
4. If the proposal were approved, the City would have a total of 3,120 year R places from September 2014 and in subsequent years.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

5. If no action were taken, the City would have a significant deficit number of year R places from September 2014 onwards. It is estimated that we could need up to 3,240 places in 2015/16, but we do not believe that pupil numbers will stay at this level. It is anticipated that numbers will drop to around 3,100 in 2016/17. At the moment we only have enough funding to expand the three schools in this report and do not feel it would be prudent to permanently expand more schools when the places may only be needed for one year only. The creation of further school places (in addition to the proposals in this report) would be subject to the Local Authority receiving further allocations of capital funding from the DfE.
6. Other schools in the central spine of the City were visited (Portswood Primary and Swaythling Primary) both in relation to short and long term expansion projects. However, both these schools were discounted due to a lack of internal space and site restrictions, which would make expansion/capital works difficult and expensive. They had no rooms which could be converted at short notice into a classroom for September 2012 and had no outdoor space which could conceivably be used to accommodate multiple classrooms.

DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)

7. 4 weeks of pre-statutory consultation were held between 27 September and 25 October. Drop in sessions were held at all of the schools involved, at which members of the public could come and speak to Local Authority officers about the proposals. A consultation document and response form (see appendices 2 & 3) were distributed to all parents and pupils at the schools included in the proposals, local pre-schools, SureStart centres and libraries. Details of the consultation were also sent to local MP's, City Council staff, all Southampton headteachers, local Councillors, union representatives and neighbouring local authorities. Responses to the consultation can be found in appendix 1.

8. The responses to the consultation were largely positive, with the majority of people acknowledging that schools needed to be expanded in response to the increased numbers of children in the City. However, some concerns were raised:

- The small site at Bevois Town and concerns that outdoor space would be reduced;
- A preference to build brand new buildings rather than expand existing schools;
- Preference for smaller schools;
- Traffic issues near and around St John's Primary;
- Thought needs to be given to secondary school places in the City centre; and
- Concern that academic and disciplinary problems could worsen if number of pupils increased.

In response to these concerns, officers can provide the following:

- A limited amount of playground space may be built on, however some teaching space will be created using a Council owned building close to, but not on, the existing site; and
- The Local Authority does not have the land or the funding to build brand new schools. It is more cost effective to expand existing school buildings;
- It is becoming increasingly difficult to keep the size of schools small, when there is such a large increase in the number of children in the City. By expanding a number of schools we hope to avoid having very large primary schools;
- If the conversion of Eagle Warehouse is a feasible option, traffic issues will have to be looked at as there is a one way street (French Street) separating the existing site and Eagle Warehouse;
- At present, Children's Services & Learning are concentrating on the demand for primary school places in the City, although it is acknowledged that due to current demand for primary schools places and the lack of secondary schools in the City centre, additional secondary schools places in the City will be required; and
- The Local Authority have great confidence in the leadership and teaching structures at all three schools and are more than confident that they will be able to manage the increased pupils numbers.

9. In addition to these issues, it is recognised that there may be an increase in the amount of traffic near these schools, once they have expanded. Traffic congestion is an issue that affects most schools in the City at the start and end of the school day and we liaise with the Local Authority's school travel plan officer in an attempt to mitigate this risk.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Capital/Revenue

10. The revenue costs of all schools are met from the Individual Schools Budget Funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant. The amount of Dedicated Schools Grant that the authority receives each year is based on the number of children in the City. If the City's overall numbers grow, this will result in an increase in the amount of grant received which can be passed onto schools via budget shares calculated using Southampton's Fair Funding Formula.
11. The Council has received £3,899,000 of non-ringfenced Basic Need capital grant from the DfE, which was distributed to those authorities that had the greatest projected deficit of school places. If the proposals are approved the majority of this funding, £3,000,000, would be allocated to these projects.
12. Detailed cost estimates of the proposed capital projects will be brought for approval at the final stage of the consultation process. This detail will be included in the report which is planned to go to cabinet in January or February 2013.

Property/Other

13. It is proposed that the schools will expand as follows:
 - Bassett Green Primary – 7 new classrooms to be built on site
 - Bevois Town Primary – former SCC office space (on Cedar Road) to be converted into 2 classrooms and 4 classrooms to be built on the existing site. The staff room has already been converted into a classroom.
 - St John's Primary and Nursery – a nearby SCC owned and occupied building has been tentatively identified as a space that the school could use to expand. However, the use of this space for the school is subject to negotiation, consultation and decision amongst internal SCC management and staff. As St John's is not proposed to expand until September 2014, the capital project for this school is currently less well developed than the projects for the other two schools. St John's is a foundation school and a member of the Regents Park Trust. At present, we are in the process of transferring the land to the Trust.
14. Should it be decided (after considering any responses to statutory consultation) that these proposals be taken forward for final cabinet approval, the cabinet paper for that decision will include more specific detail on how the additional accommodation will be provided, an estimate of the capital cost, timescales for delivery and information on how each project will be funded.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:

15. Local Authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places in their area, promote high educational standards, ensure fair access to educational opportunity and promote the fulfilment of every child's educational potential. Local Authority's must also ensure that there are sufficient schools in their area and promote diversity and parental preference.

16. Alterations, changes, creation or removal of primary provision across the City is subject to the statutory processes contained in the School Standards & 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, together with the corresponding Admissions Regulations as appropriate. 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) followed by publications of statutory notices, representation periods and considerations of representations by Cabinet or considerations by the Admissions Forum and approval as part of the Admissions Process as required.

Other Legal Implications:

17. In bringing forward school organisation proposals the Local Authority 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

18. The proposals outlined in this document will contribute directly to the achievement of the outcomes set out in the Children and Young Peoples Plan by investing in new infrastructure and school buildings.

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KEY DECISION? Yes

WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	Bassett, Swaythling, Portswood, Bevois, Bargate
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SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices

1.	Responses to the consultation
2.	Consultation document
3.	Consultation response form
4.	DfE Guidance – Expanding a Maintained Mainstream School

Documents In Members’ Rooms

1.	None
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Equality Impact Assessment

Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) to be carried out.	Yes
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Other Background Documents

Equality Impact Assessment and Other Background documents available for inspection at:

<http://www.southampton.gov.uk/learning/schools/consultations/citycentreexpansions.aspx>

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.	Equality Impact Assessment	
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