

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION

Tuesday, 19 February 2013

Decision No: (CAB 12/13 10048)

DECISION-MAKER:	CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES
PORTFOLIO AREA:	CHILDREN'S SERVICES
SUBJECT:	PRIMARY SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT - ST MONICA INFANT AND JUNIOR SCHOOLS
AUTHOR:	James Howells

THE DECISION

Having complied with the requirements of paragraph 15 (General Exception) of the Access to Information Procedure Rules, it is recommended:

- (i) To approve the commencement of six weeks of pre-statutory consultations on a proposal to discontinue St Monica Junior School and expand St Monica Infant School to accommodate 4-11 year olds.
- (ii) To approve the establishment of a steering group for both schools to oversee the consultation on the possibility of transitioning to a primary.
- (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 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 THE DECISION

1. This report is submitted for consideration as a general exception under paragraph 15 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the Council's Constitution, notice having been given to the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and the public. The matter requires a decision in view of the timescales for consultation and decision making that are required in order to implement this proposal from September 2013. Local Authority Officers were only very recently made aware that there would be a headship vacancy at one of the schools (which is a trigger for exploring the primary option) and, as a result, weren't able to bring forward this proposal forward earlier. It therefore cannot be deferred for inclusion in the next Forward Plan for decision following 28 clear days notice.

2. Children’s Services and Learning are committed to pursuing the development of all through primary schools where the situation allows. For instance:
- Where infant and junior schools are co-located and governing bodies seek support to establish a primary school.
 - If a headship of a co located infant/junior school becomes vacant
- Currently in Southampton the education estate has:
- 18 infant schools - 3 of which are Academies
 - 14 junior schools - 2 of which are Academies
 - 28 primary schools - 3 of which are Academies
3. There are 14 pairings of Infant and Junior Schools, see table 1. These pairings often liaise and share resources but operate as separate, individual schools.

Table 1

School pairings	Current status
Fairisle Infant and Junior	Maintained schools
Ludlow Infant and Junior	Separate Academies
Shirley Infant and Junior	Separate Academies – member Trust
Hollybrook Infant and Junior	Infant Academy, Junior transition
Bitterne C of E Infant and Junior	Maintained schools
Bitterne Park Infant and Junior	Primary development being completed
Tanners Brook Infant and Junior	Primary development being completed
Oakwood Infant and Junior	Primary development being completed
Glenfield Infant and Beechwood Junior	Maintained schools – separate
Maytree Infant and Mount Pleasant Junior	Maintained schools
Sholing Infant and Junior	Maintained schools
St Monica Infant and Junior	Included in this consultation
Townhill Infant and Junior	Maintained schools
Valentine Infant and Heathfield Junior	Primary development being completed

4. There are three infant schools across the City that are separate with no co-located school. These are: Weston Shore Infant; Woolston Infant and Wordsworth Infant. The latter is due to become a primary from September 2013.
5. Over the last year the Local Authority has been progressing the development of primary schools. The schools involved are: Weston Park Infant and Junior, Banister Infant and Wordsworth Infant – the later two taking the first cohort of year 3 (age 7-8 year olds) from September 2013.
6. The head teacher at St Monica Junior School is due to retire at the end of the 2012/13 academic year. Consequent consultation on school reorganisation is being pursued. The reorganisation, if successful, will allow for the creation of an all-through primary school. The primary school would be developed through expanding the age range of St Monica Infant School. The basic performance data of the schools included in the proposal is shown in Appendix 1.
7. The new primary school would accommodate the full primary age range; 4 – 11 years of age. To recognise its primary status, the school would be renamed as St Monica Primary School.
8. If the proposals are implemented the governing body from the expanding school would be the governing body for the new primary school. The governing body of the discontinuing school would be disbanded. However, the Local Authority would encourage the remaining governing body to reconstitute and incorporate members of the governing body that is disbanding. It is hoped that this would make for a harmonious fusion between the two schools and would be for the benefit of the new primary school and its key stakeholders.
9. The Local Authority has discussed the proposal with members of both governing bodies. Both governing bodies are supportive of the principle of all through primary education. A collective decision will be taken on 12 February with the anticipation of the proposal being fully endorsed.
10. To support the consultation, it is proposed to establish a steering group for the schools. The steering group's purpose would be to draw together the two governing bodies and school leadership teams to collectively address issues to aid the consultation. Membership of the steering groups would comprise, but not exclusively, of two head teachers, two business managers, representatives from the governing body and a Local Authority Officer. In addition, the head teacher of the proposed new primary will be invited to join a professional advisory group which is being established. This will be facilitated by the Local Authority Primary Inspector and will comprise of head teachers from St Monica and the other schools that are being put forward for primary development (Bitterne Park, Oakwood, Tanners Brook and Valentine/Heathfield).

11. If the recommendations in this report are approved, the first of two, six week periods of consultation would take place. This is known as pre-statutory consultation and will involve the production of information documentation and questionnaires, as well as consultation drop-in meetings. Any queries or issues raised during the consultation about the implementation of an all through primary school will be picked up by the proposed steering groups referenced in recommendation (ii). If there are no significant objections to pre-statutory consultation, and subject to Cabinet approval, a second six week consultation period would take place, known as statutory consultation. Statutory notices would be published at both schools, in the local newspaper and sent to the DfE's School Organisation department. After this, a final report would be taken to Cabinet requesting permission to implement the proposals.
12. Primary education can be delivered through: an infant and junior structure, a primary structure or an all-through primary and secondary structure. Each model has pros and cons. This paper does not address the pro and cons of the different types of education structures, especially the current status quo – infant and junior configuration. Instead it focuses on outlining some of the benefits of primary education, specifically focussing on educational outcomes, professional outcomes and efficiencies of a combined structure.
13. Educational outcomes – benefits, all through primary schools:
- Are in a stronger position to plan for continuity and progression through the key stages of learning, Early Years, Key Stage 1 and 2;
 - Provide longer timescale for schools to work closely with families, year R to year 6, seven years to progress successfully children's education progress;
 - Provide opportunities for pupils to work and play together over a longer period of time and develop greater understanding of diverse strengths, skills and personalities, which help them in later life;
 - Offer consistent approaches to inclusion, absences etc; and
 - Increased opportunities for social development with older pupils having some appropriate pastoral responsibilities for younger children.
14. Professional outcomes – benefits, all through primary schools:
- Provide staff with greater opportunities to gain a broader and deeper understanding of the learning continuum for children from 4 to 11 years; and
 - Build capacity in issues of staffing and can better plan for succession.
15. Efficiency – benefits, all through primary schools:
- A single, larger budget offers the opportunity to deliver quality more efficiently, through greater economies of scale;
 - Reduced spend on leadership and governance arrangements; and
 - Increased spend on front line teacher, as a percentage of the whole school budget.
16. Parental – benefits, all through primary schools:
- 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.

DETAILS OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

1. Two alternative proposals could be put forward, including the closure of the opposite school or the closure of both schools and the establishment of a brand new primary school. These are addressed in points 18 and 19 and are not recommended.
2. To discontinue St Monica Infant and expand St Monica Junior. This option has not been proposed because the junior school will have a headteacher vacancy from July 2013. The infant school has a headteacher in post. It is more logical for the school to be expanded to become a primary to be the one that has a headteacher.
3. Discontinuance of each pair of schools, infant and junior, and open a brand new primary school. The development of any new school, under the Education and Inspections Act 2006, requires that an open competition takes place to secure an academy provider. To open a maintained primary school without a competition would require authorisation by the Secretary of State or regulations.

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 February 2013

Decision Maker: The Cabinet Member
for Children's Services

Proper Officer: Judy Cordell

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)*