

Subject:	Proposed Creation of a new all through Primary School to replace Balfour Infant and Junior Schools		
Date of Meeting:	12th July 2010		
Report of:	Director of Children's Services		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Gillian Churchill	Tel: 29-3515
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Key Decision:	Yes	Forward Plan No: 16441	
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 As part of the Council's future development of Schools within the city it is proposed to amalgamate Balfour Infant and Junior schools.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to set out the background and rationale for this proposed amalgamation and to seek Cabinet Member endorsement to proceeding to the next stage of the statutory process, which is the publication of the required Statutory Notices.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To note and endorse the proposal to amalgamate Balfour Infant and Junior Schools.
- 2.2 To agree to the publication of the required Statutory Notices to progress this proposal.
- 2.3 That the results from the statutory consultation process are referred to Cabinet Member Meeting on 11th October 2010 for decision.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The consideration of amalgamating Balfour Infant and Junior schools has arisen as a result of the Councils Protocol for the Creation of an All-through Primary School. This states that we will consider merging linked infant and junior schools when the head teacher of one of the schools leaves. In this instance the head teachers of both schools are retiring at the end of the current school year (July 2010).

- 3.2 The amalgamation would require the closure of Balfour Junior School and the extension of the age range of the infant school to cater for pupils from age 4 to age 11.
- 3.3 It is proposed that the new school be four forms of entry (i.e. an intake of 120 pupils at 4+). Flexibility would remain for Key Stage 2 to take additional children to a maximum of 32 children per class.
- 3.4 The proposal to amalgamate the schools has been discussed with the governing bodies of both schools prior to this report being prepared. Both Governing Bodies welcome the opportunities that this proposal offers them and both are fully supportive of the proposal.
- 3.5 The views of the governing bodies will be finalised in light of the consultation.
- 3.6 In proposing the amalgamation of Balfour Infant and Junior Schools the following programme is to be followed.

Publication of Consultation Document	26 th April 2010
Public Consultation Meeting	May 11 th 2010
Last date for responses	14 th June 2010
Report back to Children and Young Peoples Trust Board	12 th July 2010
Issue Public Notice	16 th July 2010
End of public notice period	27 th August 2010
Decision by the Children and Young People Cabinet Member	11 th October 2010
Provisional Opening	1 st September 2011

- 3.8 The timetable will allow full analysis of responses to the notice to be prepared and presented to the Cabinet Member Meeting to be held on 11th October 2010. The report to that meeting will seek the final decision on the proposals.
- 3.9 A copy of the draft statutory notice is attached to this report at Appendix 1.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Following the delegated decision taken by the Director of Children's Services and the CYPT Cabinet Member on 19th April 2010 to commence public consultation a document outlining the amalgamation process was issued to governors, staff, pupils and parents and carers of both schools and copies were made available to any other interested parties. This consultation document is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.
- 4.2 As part of the public consultation process a public meeting was held on 11th May 2010. This meeting gave parents and carers, governors and others the opportunity to put forward their views.
- 4.3 This initial stage of the consultation came to a close on 14th June 2010. The responses to this consultation exercise have been collated and analysed and are shown at Appendix 3 to this report.
- 4.4 In summary 133 responses were received of which 89 were in favour of the proposal and 43 were against the proposal and 1 respondent was unsure. Copies of the consultation responses have been placed in the members' room for information.
- 4.5 The responses from those who supported the proposals said they welcomed the continuity that the proposal would give to their children and the opportunities that it would provide for staff development.
- 4.6 The main reasons for opposing the proposal were that the combined school would be too large resulting in a loss of the personal touches that the current arrangement allows.
- 4.7 There was also concern that at the time of the proposal it is not possible to say exactly how the school would be managed. This is the case because this will be a matter for the new head teacher and Governing Body rather than the Local Authority and we cannot second guess their thoughts on the matter of organisation of the school.
- 4.8 In the consultation document the Council states the educational advantages they believe will be achieved by the creation of an all through primary school. These are repeated in section 7.2 of this document.
- 4.9 Although the size of the proposed new school would make it the largest in the City this has to be considered against the fact that the two existing schools are immediately adjacent to each other. Equally there are a many schools nationally that are of similar size and larger that have outstanding results. There is no evidence to suggest that combining schools with outstanding Ofsted assessments should produce anything other than a successful school.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 Any revenue costs of the proposal would have to be met from the existing Individual School Budget (ISB) as there are no additional resources available to fund any associated costs that may arise as a result of the merger. Any capital costs arising from the proposal would have to be met

from within the Education Capital Programme which includes streams such as the Primary capital Programme and NDS modernisation.

Finance Officer Consulted: Michelle Herrington Date: 14/06/2010

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 In order to achieve the proposed amalgamation statutory notices will need to be published in accordance with the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and associated regulations. There will then follow a statutory representation period of 6 weeks within which any person may make comment or object to the proposals.

At the end of this representation period a decision on the proposals will need to be taken within 3 months.

The absolute national deadline for expressing preferences for an infant/primary school place is 15 January 2011. To avoid a breach of the admissions code it is important that the final decision can be published in compliance with the admissions code. The recommendation does not allow for a decision to be made in time to go into the admissions booklet for September 2011, due for publication in August 2010. However the admissions booklet can alert parents to the prospect of a decision being made in October. It is recommended that in the event the recommendation is agreed following a decision in October all parents are contacted and notified of the new arrangement, so that they are given the option of including this when expressing a preference.

Lawyer Consulted: Serena Kynaston Date:09/06/2010

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 Planning and provision of school places is conducted in such a way as to avoid potentially discriminatory admissions priorities or planning processes. The city council and voluntary aided school governing bodies must be mindful of bad practice as described in the Admission Code of Practice.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 Planning and provision of school places are intended, so far as it is possible, to provide pupils, parents and carers with local places where they have asked for them. This is subject to limitations in school capacity, the funding available and the priority order for capital development determined by the Council.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 There are no implications for the prevention of crime and disorder arising from this report.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 There are no risk issues in terms of resources or risks to children as a result of this proposal.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 All planning and provision to for school places in the city should be operating on the basis of admission limits and admission priorities which have been the subject of broad consultation. The effective coordination of planning

arrangements should lead to sufficient school places in all areas of the city and the removal of excess provision.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 The alternative option is to leave the schools as separate infant and junior schools.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The Council produced their Primary Strategy for Change in June 2008. This document reflected Brighton and Hove City Council's policy of supporting the amalgamation of infant and junior schools where appropriate.

- 7.2 The Council believes the advantages of the creation of all through primary schools are as follows:

- Greater continuity in teaching, pupil care and development under a single head teacher and teaching staff. It is very important to ensure continuity in planning the curriculum across the stages of education so that pupils make the best possible progress in learning.
- The school could offer a greater range of teaching skills, including the opportunity to appoint curriculum co-ordinators with the time to oversee the effective teaching of individual subjects across the whole 4–11 age range.
- Greater flexibility that a 4–11 school has in organising classes, deploying teachers and support staff and using resources, including buildings, more effectively.
- Closer contact with parents over a longer period of time and covering the full span of the children's primary education.
- Practical advantages to parents' e.g. same staff development days, the same school policies relating to home links, uniform, codes of conduct etc.
- Transfer to a different school environment after three years or less of schooling might be seen as an unnecessary disruption to pupil's sense of security and well being. A positive feature of 4–11 schools is the social interaction between younger and older pupils.

- 7.3 The proposal will create one larger school from two.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Draft Statutory Notice
2. Record of the public meeting held in May 2010

Documents In Members' Rooms

1. Consultation responses

Background Documents

1. None