

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 14

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Proposed Creation of a new all through Primary School to replace Benfield Junior School		
Date of Meeting:	12th July 2010		
Report of:	Director of Children's Services		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Gillian Churchill	Tel: 29-3515
	E-mail:	gillian.churchill@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Key Decision:	Yes	Forward Plan No:	
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The Council has a statutory duty to provide a school place for any child that wants one. Current and projected pupil numbers for the city as a whole show there is an immediate and ongoing need for additional school places in the city. This need is most acute in south Hove and on the Brighton / Hove border
- 1.2 As part of the Council's future development of Schools within the city it is proposed to create an all through primary school by extending the age range of Benfield Junior School from 7 to 11 as it is at present to 4 to 11 from September 2011.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to set out the background and rationale for this proposal and to seek Cabinet Member endorsement to proceeding with the initial consultation required.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To note and endorse the proposal to create an all through primary school by changing the age range of Benfield Junior School from 7 – 11 as at present to 4 to 11 from September 2011.
- 2.3 That the results from the initial consultation exercise are referred to Cabinet Member Meeting on 11th October 2010 for decision.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 Pupil numbers across the city are rising generally and the rise in south central Hove is greater than the city generally and already causing a pressure on school places that cannot be met locally.
- 3.2 It had been planned with the support of the school to turn Benfield into an all-through primary school starting in September 2012.

- 3.3 Following the 2010 admissions round it was necessary to create additional reception places to accommodate pupils in the west Hove area owing to an increase in significant demand for reception year places. This was achieved by temporarily admitting reception age children to Benfield Junior School. Benfield was chosen for this because it was in the correct location and because it had spare capacity to accommodate the children.
- 3.4 The decision to create two reception classes at Benfield was a difficult one that had to be taken quickly but was made after full consideration of the situation. It was a response to significant pressure on reception places in the west of the city
- 3.5 In light of the increasing birth rates in the city consideration was already being given to the pattern of school places in Portslade and how this might be improved in the future. We believe that this process now needs to commence earlier than we had planned.
- 3.6 It is now proposed that Benfield Junior School is made in to a two form entry all through primary school from September 2011. The new school will have an intake of 60 pupils at 4+. Flexibility would remain for Key Stage 2 to take additional children to a maximum of 32 children per class.
- 3.7 Benfield junior school is currently a three form entry school admitting 96 pupils per year. Consequently this proposal on its own will reduce the number of junior places available in the city. It is intended that the school will continue to admit pupils in to Year 3 in September 2010, 2011 and 2012.
- 3.8 However this proposal is the start of a wider re-organisation of school places within Portslade which, if successful will result in an additional 2 forms of entry overall for primary phase education for this part of the city. This will be the subject of a separate report and a wide ranging public consultation exercise.
- 3.9 The proposal to permanently change the age range of Benfield School has been discussed with the governing body of the school prior to this report being prepared. The Governing Body welcomed the opportunities that this proposal offers and fully supports the proposal.
- 3.10 The views of the governing bodies will be finalised in light of the consultation.
- 3.11 In proposing changing the age range of the school the following programme will be followed.

Publication of Consultation Document	14 th July 2010
Public Consultation Meeting	September 2010
Last date for responses	1 st October 2010
Report back to Children and Young People	11 th October 2010
Cabinet Member Meeting	

Issue Public Notice	15 th October 2010
End of public notice period	26 th November 2010
Decision by the Children and Young People Cabinet Member	10 th December 2010
Provisional Opening	1 st September 2011

3.12 The timetable will allow full analysis of responses to both parts of the consultation to be prepared and presented to the Cabinet Member Meetings to be held on 11th October 2010 and 10th December 2010.

3.13 A copy of the draft consultation document is attached to this report at Appendix 1.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 This change is intended to meet the rapid growth in the demand for Reception places in Hove and Portslade, and to offer an immediate practical solution to the local shortfall in places. The Council has taken the view that it is better to bring these plans forward than expect children to travel to vacant school places in the East of the City

4.2 The consultation exercise will involve, the school, parents staff and pupils, the local community, ward councillors, MP's and anyone else who may have a view on the proposal.

4.3 As part of this process we will hold a public meeting at the school during September 2010 so that anyone with an interest in the proposal can attend and express their view or ask questions about the proposal.

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 change in age range it will be necessary to carry out a formal consultation exercise with all interested parties. If the decision is made to proceed with the proposals following the consultation, statutory notices will then need to be published in accordance with the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and associated regulations. There will then follow a period

of 6 weeks within which any person may make comment or object to the proposal.

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 December identifying arrangements for a change in age range of a school. It is recommended that in the event the recommendation is agreed following a decision in December 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: 09/06/10

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 school as a junior school.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The Council has a statutory duty to provide a school place for any child that wants one. Current and projected pupil numbers for the city as a whole show there is an immediate and ongoing need for additional school places in the city.
- 7.2 Pupil numbers across the city are rising generally and the rise in south central Hove is greater than the city generally and already causing a pressure on school places that cannot be met locally.
- 7.3 We are committed to working with schools to make them centres for community learning, and supporting them in meeting the wider needs of the community by engaging social services, health, the police, and the voluntary sector. For this to be successful it is important that children can access a primary school that is local to their home.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. None

Documents In Members' Rooms

1. None

Background Documents

1. None

