

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 30

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Proposed Creation of a new all through Primary School to replace Benfield Junior School – results of initial consultation		
Date of Meeting:	11th October 2010		
Report of:	Acting Director of Children's Services		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Gillian Churchill	Tel: 29-3515
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Key Decision:	Yes	Forward Plan No: 17812	
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL

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 report the outcome of the initial consultation undertaken between July and October 2010 and to seek Cabinet Member endorsement to proceeding with the publication of the necessary statutory notice.

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.
- 2.2 To agree to the publication of the required Statutory Notices to progress this proposal.
- 2.2 That the results from the publication of the statutory notice are referred to Cabinet Member Meeting on 10th December 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 up to three forms of entry in to Year 3 in September 2010, 2011 and 2012 in line with its current published admission number.
- 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

21st July 2010

Public Consultation Meeting

15th September 2010

Last date for responses	1 st October 2010
Report back to Children and Young People Cabinet Member Meeting	11 th October 2010
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 Meeting 10th December 2010.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Following the delegated decision taken by the Director of Children's Services and the CYPT Cabinet Member on 12th July 2010 to commence public consultation a document outlining the process was issued to governors, staff, pupils and parents and carers of the school and copies were made available to any other interested parties. This consultation document is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 4.2 The consultation document was also made available on the councils web site and could be responded to via the web site.
- 4.2 As part of the public consultation process a public meeting was held on 15th September 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 1st October 2010. The responses to this consultation exercise have been collated and analysed and are shown at Appendix 2 to this report.
- 4.4 In summary by 27th September 2010 11 responses were received of which 4 were in favour of the proposal and 4 were against the proposal and 3 respondents were unsure.
- 4.5 The responses from those who supported the proposals said they understood the need for additional pupil places in this part of the city.
- 4.6 The responses from those who did not support the proposal said that they were concerned about the impact on other schools in the area and that they felt the proposal was premature. In addition they were concerned that Benfield was not a high performing school.

- 4.7 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.
- 4.8 If there are further responses by the closing date of 1st October 2010 these will be reported verbally at the meeting.

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. However given that the recent budget announcement indicates that government departments will have to find reductions of 25% over the next 4 years, we are not sure if this will impact on funding for Primary Capital. If this reduced in 2011/12 then the funding for any adaptations will have to be the first call on any reduced budget.

Finance Officer Consulted: Andy Moore

Date: 06 09 10

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 In order to achieve the proposed change in age range it has been necessary to carry out a formal consultation exercise with all interested parties. If the decision is now made to proceed with the proposals following this consultation, statutory notices will 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 admissions booklet published in September 2010 alerted parents to the prospect of a decision being made in December 2010 identifying arrangements for a change in age range of the school. It is recommended that in the event the decision is taken in December to approve the proposals to change the age range of the school, 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: 25/08/2010

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 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 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 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. Consultation document
2. Summary of responses to consultation

Documents In Members' Rooms

1. None

Background Documents

1. None