

Cabinet**18 December 2006****9. WYRE FOREST SCHOOLS REVIEW: ACCOMMODATION ISSUES - POSSIBLE AMALGAMATION OF LICKHILL AND STOURPORT PRIMARY SCHOOLS****Local Members**

Ms J Fairbrother-Millis and Mr J Holden

Recommendation

1. The Director of Children's Services recommends that the Cabinet:

- a) authorises him to consult on the possible amalgamation of Lickhill and Stourport-on-Severn Primary Schools to create a new two-form entry primary school on the existing Lickhill Middle School site; and**
- b) authorises him to finalise the consultation paper as appropriate in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Young People.**

Background Information

2. In April 2005 the School Organisation Committee (SOC) approved the changes as published by the Council following the 'Review of Education Provision in Wyre Forest'. This decision followed two years of extensive consultation and the consideration of a number of options.

3. Since that decision an enormous amount of detailed work has been undertaken to implement the changes that will come into effect on 1 September 2007. Significant progress has been made on staff appointments, accommodation changes, and catchment areas for the 30 new schools and the Review is on track for implementation.

4. As with any initiative or change of this size and complexity, developments occur which require further consideration to be given to alternative options that are in keeping with the Review, yet which vary from the original proposal.

5. At the conclusion of the Wyre Forest Review the SOC decision was for:

- a primary school on the current Stourport First School site with a PAN of 30;

Possible Amalgamation Of Stourport And Lickhill Primary Schools

- a primary school on the current Lickhill Lodge First school site with a PAN of 30.

This was proposed to minimise disruption, keep as many local schools open as possible but also because the level of capital funding was uncertain to commit to the building of a new school.

6. Plans are progressing to implement the SOC proposals with:

- Temporary Governing Bodies for both schools established;
- A Headteacher Designate appointed for each school;
- Procedures in place to appoint the necessary teaching and support staff;
- Arrangements for the accommodation of the pupils on the current school sites.

The intention is that this work will continue and any amalgamation will not take place until September 2009 at the earliest.

7. The use of the Lickhill Middle School site for the new Stourport Primary School was always a possibility if the capital resources were available. A scheme to demolish the middle school and build a one-form entry primary school has been prepared.

8. The Chairman of the Temporary Governing Body (TGB) of the new Stourport Primary School has written to the Council on behalf of the TGB suggesting Stourport Primary and Lickhill Primary amalgamate to establish a single two-form entry primary school on the current Lickhill Middle School site.

9. There are a number of advantages such as:

- Close geographical location of all three sites (Map with school locations and catchment areas is attached as an Appendix);
- A larger school budget offers more flexibility;
- More teaching and support staff to cover a wider range of curriculum expertise;
- Both the existing first schools have restricted sites with little space to expand;
- Benefits for St. Wulstan's RC Primary School which currently shares the same site as Lickhill Lodge First School;
- Reduced school traffic for the residents of Almond Way; The new school buildings can be constructed with no disruption to the pupils.

10. The Council uses a model of closing both schools and opening a new school when it progresses an amalgamation. This method while fair and transparent to all those involved

Advantages of merging the two schools

Disadvantages of the amalgamation

Potential Time line for amalgamation

does, for a period of time, give a degree of uncertainty to staff. While staff work hard to minimise the disruption to pupils, prolonging this uncertainty for these two schools after the Wyre Forest Review may be unreasonable.

11. The change required to move from 2 x 1FE schools to 1 x 2FE school requires a statutory process with a period of consultation and the publishing of a statutory notice. The process takes as a minimum two terms. The intention would be for the two new primary schools to open as planned in September 2007 and any amalgamation of the two schools would then take place once the brand new 2FE primary school was ready for occupation: this would not be before September 2009.

12. The following is an example and could be varied.

Example:

1. Consultation period from early January 2007.
2. End of consultation – February 2007.
3. Cabinet receive results of consultation – April 2007.
4. (If decide to proceed) Publish statutory notice – April 2007.
5. Notice period of six weeks – end of June 2007.
6. SOC meeting (if required) – by the end of July 2007.
7. Implementation date to be set and published in the statutory notice.

Different Approaches to amalgamation

13. Close both schools and open a new school.

In line with the above timetable a possible implementation would be September 2009 to coincide with a projected new build completion. If the building for the new school was not ready by September the new school could operate from the two sites and then move into the new building when completed. This is the approach that has been taken for all of the mergers in the county as it is seen to be fair and equitable to all parties.

14. Close one school and make the remaining school bigger. This would minimise the disruption for one school but would not be treating the two schools equitably. There is no evidence to suggest one school should close while the other school remains open. Both options could be explored during the consultation.

Financial Implications

15. The current cost estimates for the provision of the new school is as follows:

- Stourport Primary (1FE Lickhill Middle Site) £3.7m (including demolition of former Middle School)
- Lickhill Primary School (1FE on existing site) £1.3m
- Possible 2FE Primary School on Lickhill Middle School site, including demolition of Middle School £6.0m.
- There is an additional potential capital receipt from the disposal of part of the Lickhill Primary site.

Local Members' views

Supporting Information

Contact Points

Background Papers

16. Whilst the new 2 FE school is approximately £1m more to construct than the current schemes for the two schools, there would be an additional capital receipt and this new 2FE school would benefit from purpose built accommodation to the latest guidelines and standards. The new accommodation would be fit for purpose and have lower lifetime maintenance costs. The existing Lickhill First building even after capital investment would still fall short of desirable provision, for example Hall size and soft play.

17. The two local members have been briefed and are of the view that public consultation should take place on this proposal.

- Appendix – Map showing the school location and new catchment areas for the Lickhill and Stourport Primary Schools.

County Council Contact Points

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In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Children's Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

- Cabinet Report, July 2004 - Final decisions on the outcome of the Wyre Forest Review