

AMALGAMATION OF EASTFIELD INFANT & NURSERY SCHOOL AND WESTFIELD JUNIOR SCHOOL, ST IVES

To: Children & Young People's Committee

Meeting Date: 11 September 2018

From: Wendi Ogle-Welbourn Executive Director: People & Communities

Electoral division(s): St Ives South & Needingworth, St Ives North & Wyton

Forward Plan ref: KD2018/049 *Key decision: Yes*

Purpose: To advise the Committee on the proposal to amalgamate Eastfield Infant & Nursery School and Westfield Junior School in St Ives and create a 630 place primary school.

Recommendation: Subject to the approval of the Office of the Schools Adjudicator, the Committee is asked to support the request for increased capital investment to deliver the resulting all-through primary school.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Eastfield Infant & Nursery and Westfield Junior Schools were built in 1969 and 1964 respectively and have been supplemented over time with a number of mobile classrooms. Eastfield Infant & Nursery School currently provides early years education and childcare for children aged 2 to 4 years, all of which is currently delivered in the mobile accommodation. In addition, there are deficiencies with both schools' current accommodation which need to be addressed.
- 1.2 In October 2012, following a review of education provision in St Ives, the Council's Cabinet agreed to replace temporary accommodation at the Eastfield Infant & Nursery School and Westfield Junior School, with permanent, whilst at the same time increasing the number of places at both schools to provide for 90 children in each year group. Currently the published admission number (PAN) is 80 at both schools.
- 1.3 On previous occasions in the past three years, the governing bodies of the two schools, with the support of officers, informed themselves of potential future governance options including amalgamation, but had not felt the time was right to formally pursue a change. Amalgamation is the term used to create a new all-through primary school in place of separate infant and junior schools.
- 1.4 In the autumn of 2017 the two governing bodies each made a *decision in principle* to amalgamate the two schools. This decision initiated a series of consultation events both informal and formal/statutory, and milestone decisions by the respective governing bodies.
- 1.5 In the spring term, 2018, the governing bodies of the two schools each formally decided that the new primary school resulting from an amalgamation should maintain the community status of the current infant and junior schools. Under statutory guidance published by the Department for Education (DfE) in April 2016 the Secretary of State's consent is **not** required in the case of proposals for a new community or foundation primary school to replace a maintained infant and a maintained junior school, provided *a decision is made within a period of two months of the end of the representation period*.
- 1.6 If the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) approves the amalgamation, the two schools would formally close on 31 August 2020 and a new all through primary school would open on 1 September 2020 in their place. During the intervening period between the OSA's decision and September 2020 the necessary planning and construction phases would take place.

2 MAIN ISSUES

2.1 Educational Standards

- 2.1.1 The Council has a long-held policy preference for all-through primary schools over separate junior and infant schools. This does not mean that separate junior and infant schools cannot be successful in their own right, but the Council's preference results from a number of advantages, which include:

- consistent leadership and management across the key stages through one head teacher and one governing body.

- consistency of policy and whole school planning across the key stages.
- continuity and consistency for teaching, learning and achievement across key subject areas such as English, mathematics and science.
- strengthened tracking of pupil learning and achievement as common methods of assessment are deployed.
- no transition to a new school at age 7. School transition can be associated with a dip in educational attainment as it is a worrying time for some children who then have to learn different routines and behaviour policies.
- the relationship between pupils, parents and the school can build over a longer period of time, allowing the school to better understand the needs of each pupil.
- better staff retention and recruitment opportunities arising from the broader curriculum range and enhanced opportunities for professional development.

2.2 Consultation

2.2.1 The statutory process for opening and closing a maintained school has five stages.

2.2.2 **Stage 1**, referred to as informal or pre consultation, was launched on 19 April 2018 with the publication of a consultation document compiled, with the support of officers, by a joint working group of eight governors drawn equally from the two schools. In advance of this, on 19 March 2018, the governing bodies of the two schools had written jointly to the parents/carers of children at the schools alerting them to the forthcoming consultation.

2.2.3 At the back of the consultation document a comment sheet invited people to provide feedback. The document was made available to parents and carers through the two schools, was shared with the Local Member and the Town Council, and was also distributed at two public meetings. Opportunities to respond via an on-line survey and a local Facebook page were also provided. The details of all the responses received are collated in **Appendix 1**.

2.2.4 On 2 May, three consultation meetings were held. These meetings provided those present with an opportunity to hear more about the proposal and to ask questions rather than to express a view either in favour or against. The first, which took place at 15:30 at Eastfield Infant & Nursery School, was held jointly for the staff of the two schools. The vast majority of the combined staff attended.

2.2.5 Two further consultation meetings were held for parents and members of the local community on at 17:00 and 19:00 the same evening. These took place at Westfield Junior School. Around 30 people in total attended these two meetings.

2.2.6 The questions raised and the officer responses, have been brought together in a single document which is attached as **Appendix 2**.

2.2.7 A total of 39 responses were received, with 90% of respondents either in favour or strongly in favour, of the amalgamation proposal.

2.2.8 At separate meetings held on 5 June each governing body, having carefully considered the consultation responses, decided formally to proceed with the next stage of the process.

- 2.2.9 **Stage 2** was launched with the publication, in The Hunts Post, of a combined statutory notice on 5 September 2018 to close Eastfield Infant & Nursery School and Westfield Junior School on 31 August 2020 and to open a new community all-through primary school on 1 September 2020. A link to the full proposal is set out in the list of Source Documents at the end of this report.
- 2.2.10 **Stage 3** is the formal 4 week consultation period. The statutory notice expires on 3 October 2018.
- 2.2.11 **Stage 4** is the decision-making phase. The decision rests with the Office of the Schools Adjudicator.
- 2.2.12 **Stage 5** is the implementation period, which has no prescribed timescale but the statutory notice has specified that the amalgamation would take effect on 1 September 2020.

2.3 Demography and school size

- 2.3.1 If the OSA approves the proposal to amalgamate the two schools the new purpose built primary school would be constructed on the site of the existing two schools and would be a three form entry (FE) school with a total of 630 places and a published admission number (PAN) of 90. The plans also provide for replacement of the mobiles used to deliver early years and childcare with permanent, purpose-built accommodation.
- 2.3.2 Demographic data indicates that the expansion of Eastfield and Westfield will provide sufficient school places for the current community and planned developments. Officers will continue to monitor the need for places.

2.4 Staffing

- 2.4.1 Once the Governing Body has been appointed for the new school, its immediate priority will be to determine the leadership and staffing structure.
- 2.4.2 It is not anticipated that staff will need to apply for posts when they transfer to the new school. If changes to roles are proposed, a restructuring consultation would be undertaken.

3. **ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

3.1 **Developing the local economy for the benefit of all**

Providing access to local and high quality education and associated children's services should enhance the skills of the local workforce and provide essential childcare services for working parents or those seeking to return to work. Schools and early years and childcare services are providers of local employment.

3.2 **Helping people live healthy and independent lives**

If pupils have access to local schools and associated children's services, they are

more likely to attend them by either cycling or walking rather than through local authority-provided transport or car. They will also be able to access more readily out of school activities such as sport and homework clubs and develop friendship groups within their own community. This should contribute to the development of both healthier and more independent lifestyles.

3.3 **Supporting and protecting vulnerable people**

Providing access to local primary education and childcare services will ensure that services delivered through the schools will meet the demands of those families within the respective catchment areas.

4. **SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 **Resource Implications**

4.1.1 Originally, £7m was identified in the capital programme. This figure was a best estimate prior to commissioning a feasibility study which explored a range of options before coming to the recommendation in this report. The study was commissioned in November 2015 by Atkins to explore all options for the two sites as follows:

4.1.2 **Option One:**

To expand both infant and junior schools, providing a 3FE infant and a 3FE junior school plus out of school club and nursery. The total cost of £10,816m would include £3,146m for a 10 year condition maintenance programme/property plan to maintain both infant and junior schools.

Option Two:

To create an all-through primary school but operating on two sites. The Eastfield site would function as early years facility with nursery and Reception classes and also provide wrap around care through the existing out-of school provision on the site. An expanded/altered Westfield site would offer 3FE primary provision for KS1 and KS2 classes. The total cost would be £9,715m including £3,146m for a 10 year condition maintenance programme/property plan to maintain both school sites.

Option 3 (the preferred option being presented to Committee):

To build a new 3FE primary school with early years provision, located on the existing school site, at a cost of £15,130,000. This would include the cost of demolishing the two existing schools which will be required in order to ensure that the playing field area is Sport England compliant. The final cost is more likely to be in the region of £14m because the project was initially costed against old government Guidance (Building Bulletin103). The Guidance has subsequently been revised and the build project would be undertaken using the new guidance which reflects a reduction in the size of teaching areas.

4.1.3 All options involve replacing mobiles with permanent accommodation. If two separate sites/schools were to remain (options 1 and 2) there would also be a cost attached to addressing condition/maintenance needs which would not, in officers' view, represent value for money. Before consulting on the amalgamation proposal

based on option 3 a business case for the increase was considered and supported by the Capital Programme Board in January 2018.

4.1.4 Following revisions to the DfE's capital funding formula, the Council has limited funds available and, therefore, must prioritise school sites where failure to address the poor condition of existing facilities could result in risk of closure of the school, for example, where the boiler needs replacing or the roof repairing. Realistically, therefore, a new primary school project is likely to be the only way to secure significantly improved facilities for pupils at both Eastfield and Westfield.

4.1.5 Current there is approved provision in the 2018-19 Capital Plan for £7m prudential borrowing funding. Officers recognise the financial challenges the Council currently faces and the significance of seeking a further £8,130,000 of borrowing which would be required to fund Option 3. A request will need to be made to the General Purposes Committee (GPC) to approve this increase, which would need to be funded by prudential borrowing. The associated revenue cost based on an asset life payback period of 35 years for the £8.13m increase in funding that is being requested is £3,798,743. Should agreement from GPC not be forthcoming, in light of the challenging financial position the council faces, officers would need to review the project options.

4.1.6 The following criteria were adopted in 2009 to inform decisions on the relative priority for capital funding.

1. Investment, where required on the grounds of health and safety, where it would avoid the closure of a school or the loss of school capacity in an area where such places are required.
2. The statutory duty to provide sufficient school places (basic need).
3. The implementation of statutory changes, for example, an increase in the age range which a school serves.
4. Investment to support the implementation of recommendations resulting from a review of educational provision, for example the amalgamation of an infant and junior school to create an all-through primary school.
5. Implementation of new statutory duties or education policy for which there are no other sources of funding available, for example, the need to increase capacity to enable the Council to provide sufficient and suitable free early years and childcare places for children aged 3 and 4 in line with the requirements of the 2006 Childcare Act.

4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

4.2.1

Eastfield Infant & Nursery School provides early years education and childcare for children aged 2 to 4 years. CLUB4U, a voluntary, committee-run setting, currently

provides out of school care and mornings-only early years sessional provision (Playgroup) for children from 2 years old. CLUB4U would be offered a lease on similar terms as part of the amalgamation proposals. Any arrangements resulting in new contracts being awarded will be undertaken in accordance with the Councils Contract Procedure Rules.

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

4.3.1 The Council has complied throughout with the relevant DfE statutory guidance. Officers have responded to all questions and queries raised throughout the process. The Council published a statutory notice on 5 September 2018 to give effect to the amalgamation proposal. This commenced a four week period during which anyone with an interest in the proposals can make representations to the Council.

4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

4.4.1 The Council is committed to ensuring that children with special educational needs and/or disability (SEND) are able to attend their local mainstream school where possible, with only those with the most complex and challenging needs requiring places at specialist provision.

4.4.2 The accommodation provided by the Council will fully comply with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty and current Council standards.

4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

4.5.1 The detail of the informal consultation arrangements and the outcome are set out in paragraph 2.2 of this report. In addition, as required by statutory guidance, copies of the Council's proposal have been sent directly to:

- union representatives
- the governing bodies of the two schools
- the Local MP
- Huntingdonshire District Council
- the Regional Schools Commissioner
- the Church of England Diocese Ely
- the Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia

In addition the full proposal has been displayed in a conspicuous place on the premises of both the schools and a link to it has been published on the Council's website.

4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

4.6.1 In addition to the two public consultation meetings held for the schools' parents/carers and the local community, the local Member (St Ives South & Needingworth ward) has been kept apprised by officers of each stage of the process and its outcome.

4.7 Public Health Implications

4.7.1 It is Council policy that schools:

- should be sited as centrally as possible to the communities they serve, unless location is dictated by physical constraints and/or the opportunity to reduce land take by providing playing fields within the green belt or green corridors;
- should be sited so that the maximum journey distance for a young person is less than the statutory walking distances (3 miles for secondary school children, two miles for primary school children)
- should be located close to public transport links and be served by a good network of walking and cycling routes
- should be provided with Multi-use Games Areas (MUGAs) and all weather pitches (AWPs) to encourage wider community use of school

4.7.2 There is also an expectation that schools will provide access to and use of the school's accommodation for activities, for example sporting, cultural, outside of school hours.

Implications	Officer Clearance
Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?	Yes Name of Financial Officer: Martin Wade
Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by Finance?	Yes Name of Financial Officer: Paul White
Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by LGSS Law?	Yes or No Name of Legal Officer: Virginia Lloyd
Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?	Yes Name of Officer: Jonathan Lewis
Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?	Yes Name of Officer: Matthew Hall
Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact?	Yes Name of Officer: Jonathan Lewis
Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health	Yes or No Name of Officer: Tess Campbell

Source Documents	Location
<p data-bbox="193 300 927 405">Opening and closing maintained schools. <i>Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers.</i> April 2016:</p> <p data-bbox="193 533 655 571">Complete proposal document</p> <p data-bbox="193 636 922 712">The Future Pattern of Education Provision in St Ives, report to Cabinet 02.10.2012</p>	<p data-bbox="1010 300 1369 450">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools</p> <p data-bbox="1010 517 1358 591">www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/eastfield-westfield</p> <p data-bbox="1010 640 1366 824">https://www2.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/committee/Minutes/committees/Meeting.aspx?meetingID=425</p> <p data-bbox="1010 860 1358 972">Clare Buckingham, Octagon 2nd floor, Shire Hall, Cambridge</p>