

BRILLEY CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITY: CHILDREN'S SERVICES

CABINET

16TH AUGUST, 2007

Wards Affected

Kington

Purpose

To consider the response on the consultation on the proposal to close Brilley Church of England Primary School with effect from 31st August 2007.

Key Decision

This is a Key Decision because it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in Herefordshire in an area comprising one or more wards.

Recommendation

THAT Brilley Church of England Primary School close on 31st August 2007.

Reasons

- There are no pupils on roll at the school at present.
- At the end of the spring term parents voted to transfer the pupils to another school.
- In future there is no prospect of a greater number of children wishing to attend the school.
- There have been no objections to the statutory notice to close the school.

Considerations

1. A review of school provision was started in the Kington, Weobley and Wigmore Area in the summer of 2006 in light of falling numbers of children in the county.
2. At this point there were only 28 pupils on roll and only 20 children under the age of 5 living in the area. In January 2007 there were 19 on roll broken down in terms of boys and girls in the following age groups

(see table on next page)

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
George Salmon, Head of Commissioning & Improvement – Schools & Services on (01432) 260802

Age	F	M	Total
4	2	1	3
5	3	2	5
6	0	1	1
7	0	5	5
8	0	3	3
9	0	2	2
Total	5	14	19

3. Following the initial consultation, a proposals document was issued in Spring 2007 recommending for Brilley that 'the maintenance of the status quo was not an option....' and 'consideration should be given to federation with another school'
4. Meetings were held at Brilley School with Governors, parents and the community and at Eardisley Primary School.
5. No school saw advantage in pursuing federation. In the meeting on 15th March 2007, parents and Governors at Brilley Primary School voted that given the current and likely future low numbers, formal steps should be taken to close the school and, to minimise the impact on current children, all 17 children (who remained at the school) be transferred to Almeley Primary School for the start of the summer term 2007.
6. The Cabinet agreed on 12th April to issue public notices proposing to close the school. Places were offered and transport made available for all 17 children to Almeley.
7. Notices were issued on 15th May, and comments from schools, community and other statutory consultees listed in Appendix 1 were invited by 31st July. No comments have been received.
8. Consideration of a number of factors is required prior to a decision on closure is required. These are listed below.
 - The likely effect of the discontinuance of the school on the local community
 - At the meeting on 5th March 2007 the community expressed support for the school not least because it was due to celebrate its 200th anniversary in 2008. Many of the parents and Governors, who sought the transfer of children from the school also have roles within the community, judged that the needs of the children must take priority. It is also pertinent to note that no objections have been received to the public notice.
 - The availability, and likely cost to the local authority of transport to other schools
 - This is dealt with in the financial implication section below.
 - Any increase in the use of motor vehicles which is likely to result from the discontinuance of the school, and the likely effects of any such increase

- The provision of alternative schools is more likely to make more children eligible to free transport, and therefore a reduction in motor vehicles is probable.
- Any alternatives to the discontinuance of the schools
 - This is dealt with in the alternative options sections below.

Alternative Provided Schools: In the public notices the existing catchment area is divided with the larger part of the area being provided in the future by Eardisley VA Primary School, and a smaller more northerly area to be served by Kington Primary School. The respective capacity and number on roll at these schools is as follows

School	Capacity	NOR (Jan 07)
Eardisley Primary School	105	88
Kington Primary School	210	198

The normal transport arrangements will apply with those under 8 living over 2 miles from the alternative school and those 8 and over living over 3 miles from the alternative provided school being eligible to free transport. Transport to Almeley for those who attended Brilley Primary School will continue for the period during which any of the 17 children attend Almeley. There is no change in the provided High School which remains Kington Lady Hawkins High School.

Financial Implications

Funding from Brilley Primary School is met from the Dedicated Schools Grant and Standards Fund. In 2006/07 it amounted to £189k. In future the Dedicated Schools Grant will be distributed to the remaining schools. There will be additional costs for transport which are met outside the Direct Schools Grant. It is estimated that this will be £25k per annum. However, against this all maintenance liabilities cease. The cost of outstanding maintenance has been estimated at £72k. On closure, the building reverts to the trustees.

Risk Management

Given the acceptance of the situation by parents and governors, albeit with reluctance, the closure of the school and alternative provision elsewhere minimises the risk to the education of children in the area.

Alternative Options

1. Keeping the school open.

At present Brilley Primary School exists in legal terms, but without any pupils. Staff have been given notice. It is possible for Cabinet to decide not to close the school but this would be perverse in the absence of any pupils.

2. Making Different Alternative Provision. The alternative schools of Eardisley and Kington have been chosen because of their geographical position in relation to the existing catchment area, and the fact that they are in the same partnership area of Kington Lady Hawkins High School. Other schools could be considered, e.g. Clifford but geography and different feeder high schools suggests this would give rise to more problems.

Consultees

Published in the Hereford Times on 17th May 2007.

Sent for posting on Brilley C of E Primary School Notice Board, Brilley Village Hall Notice Board and Brilley Parish Council Notice Board on 15th May 2007.

Sent to Eardisley and Kington Primary School headteachers on 15th May 2007.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Public Notice

Background Papers

None identified.