

# AMALGAMATION OF HUNDERTON INFANTS AND JUNIOR SCHOOL

## PROGRAMME AREA RESPONSIBILITY: CHILDREN'S SERVICES

CABINET

24TH MARCH, 2005

### Wards Affected

Belmont, St Martin's and Hinton

### Purpose

To approve the publication of a statutory notice to close Hunderton Junior and Infants Schools, and open a new three form entry Community School serving the 3-11 age range.

### Key Decision

This is a Key Decision because it is significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising one or more wards. It was not included in the Forward Plan. A Notice in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) Regulations 2000 was sent to the Chairman of the Education Scrutiny Committee.

### Recommendation

- THAT (a) the statutory notice be issued; and**
- (b) the funding for the capital cost be sought from the DfES from the Targetted Capital Fund, and in the event of failure from the Children's Services Capital Programme.**

### Reasons

The merger of the two schools is proposed to improve primary school provision in one of the most deprived wards of the county.

### Considerations

1. Hunderton Junior and Infants schools were established in 1953 and 1950 respectively and at a peak accommodated 1050 pupils in the two schools on the single site. Intakes have reduced to between 60 and 70 over the last few years, and it has become realistic to consider the creation of a single school to serve the area which could admit up to 90 children per year. i.e. the school would have a maximum capacity of 630 (excluding nursery) which is similar in size to Lord Scudamore Primary School and Trinity Primary School. A three forms of entry is proposed rather than two as unlike much of the county, pupil numbers in the future are likely to be greater than present.

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Further information on the subject of this report is available from  
George Salmon, Head of Policy and Resources on 01432 260802

2. The retirement of the headteacher from the Infants School initiated discussions with both sets of Governors and more recently with staff and parents. There is an overwhelming consensus that the creation of a single school would be in the best interests of pupils, parents and general community. This conclusion is based on the understanding that there will be new school buildings, given that the existing ones are in poor condition (outstanding maintenance work costed at £395,000 and the design of the existing buildings is not conducive to current methods of teaching and learning nor management of the school as a single entity.
3. The Education Scrutiny Committee approved the informal consultation on the proposal.
4. Feasibility work on a new school has been done, which has concluded with the idea that a new school could be best provided in a phased development of demolition and new build over a two year period, at the cost of £5.45m.
5. The cash flow is set out below:

2005-2006	£	50,000
2006-2007	£1,630,000	
2007-2008	£1,360,000	
2008-2009	£1,770,000	
2009-2010	£	580,000
2010-2011	£	8,000
6. The Director of Children's Services proposes that this project is given the highest priority in bids from the County to the DfES Targeted Capital Funds. Only two projects involving community schools can be submitted to a maximum value of £12m. Herefordshire Council would have to find 20% of the cost, which it is anticipated would be afforded from the Children's Services Capital Programme. In the event of the bid being unsuccessful the scheme would be financed by using the formulaic allocation given for primary school improvement that the DfES have informed the Council will exceed a total £2.7m in the three year period, 2005 to 2008, and the shortfall resolved through the Children's Services Capital Programme.
7. The current community facilities on site will be retained and the development of the Children's Centre which has already been approved will still be pursued. More detailed design work and assessment of resource availability will determine whether these facilities are retained in the better quality existing buildings or are included in the new build.

## **Alternative Options**

Option 1. The opportunity to merge the schools could be ignored. Given the level of deprivation in the area it serves and the priority to maximise the life chances of children in that area, this would represent a loss of opportunity to improve provision.

Option 2. Merger could be pursued without the new building. This would create a primary school that would be difficult to manage as an entity, and continue to require significant maintenance investment. It is likely that both Governing Bodies would reconsider their support that they have so far offered to the merger proposal.

## **Risk Management**

The issue of the statutory notice does not per se involve the Council in any significant risk other than raising expectations. A further decision will be required in June whether to proceed with the proposals in light of any comment or objections received during the formal consultation period. If there were objections and the Council still wishes to proceed the matter would be referred to the School Organisation Committee. If there are no objections, it is likely that the Council will be expected to proceed and commit expenditure over the four year period.

## **Consultees**

Education Scrutiny Committee, Governing Bodies, staff and parents of Hunderton Junior and Infants Schools and EYDCP.

## **Background Papers**

Consultation paper issued on 4th January, 2005.