

## **REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES**

### **OLIVER QUIBELL INFANT AND HAWTONVILLE JUNIOR SCHOOLS, NEWARK - POSSIBLE AMALGAMATION**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. This report provides Cabinet with the outcome of formal consultation meetings about possible amalgamation of the Oliver Quibell Infant and Hawtonville Junior Schools.
2. This report also seeks approval to publish a statutory notice to discontinue the above schools as required under the provisions of Section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act (EIA) 2006. An application to the Secretary of State has been sent by the Southwell Diocesan Board of Education (SDBE) for consent to publish their proposal to establish a new Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School with early years provision in the existing premises of the Oliver Quibell and Hawtonville schools. At the time of writing this report, a response with approval has not yet been received by the SDBE but, given the need for efficiency in progressing the proposal, this report is seeking approval to publish simultaneously the County Council's statutory notice, pending the Secretary of State's approval.

#### **Information and Advice**

3. It is current policy that consultations take place to actively consider the advantages of amalgamating schools to form new primary schools and that reports be brought to Cabinet on the outcome of the consultations with recommendations for action.
4. Oliver Quibell Infant and Hawtonville Junior are both community schools and co-located on a single site with a shared vehicular and pedestrian access and will therefore be equally accessible and convenient for parents. The head teacher of the junior school is also executive head teacher of the infant school and has been since the establishing of the Cleveland Green hard federation involving the two schools in 2010.
5. The proposed amalgamation is not a reflection on the quality of education currently provided by either of the above schools. The main purposes for proposing the amalgamation are in respect of improved teaching and learning, greater opportunities for

social interaction across the primary age range, improved transition from age three to eleven, wider opportunities for professional development for staff and governors and the efficient use of resources at a single site serving a wider community of parents and

children. In addition to these school improvement focussed issues, the amalgamation also offers the opportunity for the creation of a faith based education facility to develop in Newark.

6. The Cleveland Green premises provide a combined number of 315 pupil places. The infant school is currently predicted to have 97 pupils on roll during 2012/13 and for the same academic year, the junior school is predicted to have 143. The combined number of pupils is forecast to rise to around 250 on roll by 2013/14. It is proposed that the new school will form a Foundation Unit, combining nursery and reception provision, which will be accommodated in the existing premises.

## **Consultation**

7. Since the introduction of the Education Act 2007, when a new school is to be established a new set of regulations must be applied - these are called the competition regulations and even apply in the case of straightforward amalgamations. In response to these regulations, an initial consultation document was sent to all parents/carers, staff and governors of the Oliver Quibell and Hawtonville schools. It was also sent to other local stakeholders and outside agencies to assess levels of interest for the status of the school that might be established, and whether there was any interest in proposing the new school. By the end of the consultation period two responses were received. One of these responses was from a local school, but their interest was subsequently withdrawn when the full implications of the process were explained to them. The other register of interest was received from the SDBE.
8. Following discussions between County Council officers and the SDBE, a formal partnership with the SDBE was agreed resulting in the application to the Secretary of State for consent to publish their proposal to create a new primary school as referred to in paragraph 2 above, outside the competition regulations. In this respect and subsequent to the initial round of consultation, informal discussions were held between representatives of the schools, the County Council and the SDBE about a possible amalgamation and the establishing of a new faith based primary school. Joint consultation meetings were then held with the schools' staff and parents/carers and the federated governing body. One of the two parental meetings was also open to members of the local community and other interested parties to attend. A consultation document was circulated prior to the meetings.
9. Consultation meetings were held on 10 November 2011 and enabled parents/carers, staff, governors and members of the local community to discuss with County Council and SDBE officers the implications of amalgamating the two schools.
10. Approximately 500 consultation documents were distributed and at the time of writing this report, 13 responses returned during the consultation period that expired on 2 December 2011. Of the responses, 12 agreed and 1 disagreed with the proposal to amalgamate. The executive head teacher and the governors support the proposal and feel it would be a positive step forward. In supporting the proposal, the head teacher and governors also support the proposed new primary school being established in their existing buildings.
11. The consensus of the responses in support of the proposed amalgamation felt that the amalgamation would result in a better service offering to local families, with a resulting

improvement in the quality of education delivered and the potential for developing school staff. No comment was provided in the response not supporting the proposal. Direct feedback from parents whose children already attend the school has been uniformly positive. Parental non-attendance at the consultation meetings has been interpreted as agreement with the proposal to amalgamate. This view coincides with the direct experience of staff and governors at the schools. There was a strong representation from school staff at their joint consultation meeting which indicated strong support for the proposal.

12. Copies of the written responses received are available as background papers to this report.

### **Statutory Notices**

13. If amalgamation were to be approved, the proposal requires that both schools shall formally close and that a new Church of England voluntary controlled primary school should be established. This will involve the simultaneous publication of statutory notices under the provisions of Sections 10 and 15 of the EIA 2006.
14. These notices will stand for six weeks and as they will be published 'outside' of the competition regulations, and the County Council is not the proposed new school's sponsor, the decision on the outcome of their publication will be determined by the County Council.

### **Other Options Considered**

15. Possible options for the future of these two schools were considered:

- both schools amalgamate to form a through primary school
- both schools to remain independent in a hard federation
- the creation of a faith based academy
- the creation of a primary academy.

During the consultation process invitations were encouraged from all interested parties to register an interest in sponsoring a new school.

16. The particular benefits of amalgamation include:

- making more efficient use of the available accommodation on the site to benefit not only the two schools, but also the local community as a whole;
- a larger, single primary school will benefit from a combined budget and be a more viable provision of educational places for the community it will serve.

### **Reasons for Recommendation**

17. There is support from staff, governors and parents/carers of both educational establishments for an amalgamation to be implemented in September 2012. A new single primary school for 270 pupils, with 60 full-time equivalent early years places, is

perceived as being in the best interests of both schools and the community. There have been no expressions of interest from academy providers, faith based or otherwise.

18. It is also felt there are sound educational advantages for the proposal to proceed which include:-
- greater opportunities for staff to develop and share their professional knowledge and skills
  - greater flexibility in the way management responsibilities can be shared, particularly in coordinating the curriculum and addressing the 'Every Child Matters' agenda
  - resources can be effectively focused on priorities and economies of scale and would mean that financial savings can be targeted appropriately.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

19. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of service users, finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Implications for Service Users**

20. When the proposal is implemented, pupils on roll at the infant and junior schools at the time of closure will automatically transfer to the new school as appropriate.

### **Financial implications**

21. If Oliver Quibell Infant and Hawtonville Junior were amalgamated the budget for a new school would be calculated on the same basis as other primary schools of a similar size. This means that if the amalgamation were approved there would be a projected revenue saving of approximately £79,200 per annum.
22. The arrangements will be that the new school will retain 100% of the identified savings in the first year, 60% in the second year, 40% in the third year and 20% in the fourth year. This gradual reduction will provide the new school with resources that will help enable a smooth transition to a single primary school.
23. It is the intention that the new primary school will operate from the existing buildings. In advance of this, the Authority would wish to work with the new school's governing body, headteacher and staff to determine, in the best interests of the children, the most appropriate way of utilising the existing accommodation.

### **Equalities Implications**

24. Equal opportunities issues for staff will be addressed within an agreed 'enabling document' and which will follow an agreed standard format.

## **Human Resources Implications**

25. The governors of the new school will be supported by County Council officers to ensure that decisions about staffing in the school are made in accordance with employment law and the Authority's previously determined policies.

## **Safeguarding of Children Implications**

26. An Equality Impact Assessment has been conducted and is publicly available.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That Cabinet agree:-

- 1) to the publication of a statutory notice, under the provisions of Section 15 of the EIA 2006, for the proposal to discontinue Oliver Quibell Infant and Hawtonville Junior Schools in Newark with effect from 31 August 2012;
- 2) and that a further report be submitted to Cabinet on the outcome of the respective representation periods of the County Council's Section 15 notice, and the SDBE's simultaneously published Section 10 notice.

**Councillor Philip Owen**  
**Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

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## **Constitutional Comments (NAB 29/11/11)**

27. Cabinet has authority to approve the recommendation in this report.

## **Financial Comments (NDR date 28/11/11)**

28. The financial implications are set out in paragraphs 21 to 23 of the report.

## **Background Papers**

- (1) Initial consultation leaflet regarding competition regulations.
- (2) The document for parents, staff, governors and other interested parties explaining the possibility of amalgamating the two schools.
- (3) Notes of questions and views expressed and discussed at the consultation meetings with parents, staff and governors.

- (4) Written responses received during the formal consultation period.
- (5) Equality Impact Assessment

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

Newark East: Councillor Stuart Wallace

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