



meeting CABINET

date 3 May 2006

agenda item number

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION

Colston Bassett CE (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School

Purpose of report

1. This report seeks the approval of Cabinet to consult with the staff, governors and parents of the above-named school and other interested parties about the discontinuance of the school.
2. This proposal is a key decision as defined by the category 'Opening, merging or closing schools' in the Constitution and was first published in the Forward Plan in May 2006. It has not been possible to get an entry in the forward plan for the minimum period as the April issue was published on 3 April and the Local Authority was not advised of the governors' course of action until 4 April 2006.

Information and advice

Background

3. The governors of Colston Bassett CE primary school have recently approached the LA with a view to initiating a formal process of consultation with the school's staff, governors, parents/carers of pupils and any other interested parties deemed appropriate.
4. This rural school is located in the Rushcliffe education area and comprises of two class bases, providing a net capacity of 56. During the 2006/07 school year there are 32 pupils projected to be on roll at the school. This takes account of there being no intake into the school's reception year in September 2006. By 2009/10, pupils on roll could potentially fall to 19.
5. The school is currently operating with a permanent headteacher in post together with 1.5 fte teachers, one full-time teaching assistant, one part-time clerical and other ancillary staff.
6. The nearest schools within a two mile radius of Colston Bassett are Cropwell Bishop and Langar CE primary schools.

7. Several factors have led the governors to seek the LA's assistance in looking at what options were available to them in making sure that the educational needs, of both current and future children at the school, would be best met.
8. Of those factors which the governors have recently shared in a letter to all its parents of pupils, the key ones are:
 - falling pupil numbers
 - changes in educational requirements placing greater demands on staff to adequately deliver the curriculum to smaller numbers of children
 - other larger schools in locality more able to offer additional facilities like pre-school and after-school clubs
 - the headteacher is due to retire in July 2007 and finding a replacement might prove difficult
9. Options that have been considered by the governors include:
 - school to continue with no change
 - amalgamation/federation with another school
 - closure
10. Having considered the information provided to them by representatives of the LA, the governors have decided that the long term interests of the children of Colston Bassett, and surrounding villages that feed into their school, would best be met by closure of the school.
11. This decision is supported by the LA's representatives who met the school's governors to discuss the above-mentioned options.

Reasons for urgency

12. Given the concerns raised by the governors that the educational interests of their pupils should not be detrimentally affected by the uncertainty of the school's future, a decision is needed urgently on how the pupils' needs will best be met.

Statutory and policy implications

13. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, personnel, crime and disorder and those using the service. Where such implications are material, they have been described in the text of the report. Attention is however drawn to the following:-

Personnel implications

14. Whilst there are no personnel implications arising directly from this report, the governors of Colston Bassett CE Primary School will be supported by Education Officers to ensure that decisions about staffing in the school are made in accordance with employment law and the Authority's previously determined policies.

Financial implications

15. There are no financial implications arising from this report. However, should approval be sought for the publication of statutory notices, any subsequent report would include financial implications.

Equal opportunities implications

16. Equal opportunities issues for staff will be addressed within an agreed standard format.

Implications for service users

17. If the recommendation is accepted, pupils on roll at the school at the time of closure will be offered alternative places as appropriate.

Strategic Property implications

18. There are no such implications arising from this report. The school building, and land on which it is located, are not owned by the LA.

RECOMMENDATION

19. That:-
 - (1) consultations be approved with the staff, governors and parents/carers of Colston Bassett CE Primary School and other appropriate interested parties to consider its discontinuance.
 - (2) a further report be submitted to Cabinet on the outcome of the consultations with recommendations for action.

MICHAEL STOREY

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education

Reasons for recommendation

20. This is perceived as being in the best interests of both the school and the Colston Bassett and surrounding communities.

Other options considered

21. These are set out in this report.

Legal Services' comments (LM/13.4.06)

22. Cabinet has delegated authority to discharge the County Council's functions as Local Education Authority for the provision of education. This is a key decision as it relates to the closure of a school. As such,

it should have been published in the Forward Plan. However, as it has not been possible to include it in the Forward Plan, a decision can only be made if it falls within the exceptions set out in Rule 15 and 16 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules and the process for approval within these Rules is followed.

Director of Resources' financial comments (NDR)

23. The financial implications are set out in the report.

Background papers available for inspection

Nil.

Electoral division(s) affected

Cotgrave

M19C1549