



Report

Cabinet Member for Education & Skills

Part 1

Date: 29 June 2017

Item No: 03

Subject **School Reorganisation Proposal – Expansion of Millbrook Primary School**

Purpose To move to formal consultation on a school reorganisation proposal “to increase the capacity of Millbrook Primary School from 210 to 315, therefore creating a permanent 1.5 form entry school from September 2018”

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Summary This report makes reference to the Council's vision for “the right school in the right place” and the philosophy of “local schools for local children”. There is increasing parental demand for school places in this area of the city, and the site has both the space and infrastructure to support additional capacity without any detrimental impact on other schools in the locality. The Council has already carried out some maintenance work on the interior and exterior of the building to ensure that it is capable of meeting the full demands of the school curriculum with an increased pupil population.

The report therefore recommends increasing the capacity of the school from 210 to 315 pupil places, therefore creating a 1.5 form entry school. There is now a requirement to move to the formal consultation stage of the statutory consultation process.

Proposal **To move to a period of formal consultation on a school reorganisation proposal to increase the capacity of Millbrook Primary School from 210 to 315, therefore creating a permanent 1.5 form entry school from September 2018**

Action by Chief Education Officer

Timetable Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Strategic Director - People
- Deputy Chief Education Officer
- Senior HR Business Partner
- Senior Finance Business Partner
- Schools Resources Manager
- Headteacher, Millbrook Primary School
- Chair of Governors, Millbrook Primary School

Signed

Background

There is a significant demand for primary school places across the City, and therefore the Council is constantly looking at ways in which the school estate can be maximized to its full potential. This is particularly pertinent in respect of Foundation Phase year groups where the pupil cohort is increasing each academic year.

To support this, Council officers undertook a feasibility study of the Millbrook Primary School site, in conjunction with the Headteacher and Governing Body, to identify options available for the site. This appraisal exercise identified the potential for increasing the capacity of the school, and therefore raising the published admission number across all year groups.

In taking forward any school reorganisation proposal, the Council must ensure that there will be no detrimental impact on any other school in the locality. It is considered that this could be the case if the higher published admission number was applied immediately across all year groups as there could be the potential for large-scale migration of pupils from other schools, therefore destabilising school budgets and staffing arrangements.

A more sensible and logical approach would be to apply the increased published admission number only to the Reception year group during the phase transfer process in September each year. This would enable the size of the school to increase incrementally over a seven year period and thus would reduce any detrimental effect on any other schools.

The demand for Reception places in the area is such that the increased published admission number of 45 has already been applied informally under “bubble class” arrangements for the September 2016 and September 2017 intakes into this year group.

This consultation therefore proposes to formalise this arrangement by admitting 45 children to the Reception group each academic year until September 2022 at which point the higher published admission number will be applied across all year groups from Reception to Year Six.

The following sections describe the Human Resources issues leading into the Quality and Learning aspects of reorganisation, including the benefits of amalgamation. The school organisation section references the current premises and school arrangements with a view on the current and proposed new Published Admission Number.

Human Resources Issues

There would be staffing implications for Millbrook Primary School as a result of this proposal, in terms of appointing the staff required to support the additional classes. These additional staff would not be required immediately however due to the fact that the proposal will be implemented incrementally over a seven-year period.

Quality & Learning Standards:

This proposal will have a positive impact on the provision of school places and the quality of educational outcomes in the area. The school is already well-equipped to deliver a full curriculum across both the Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2, and increasing the number of places across the school will not have any detrimental impact on this. The perceived benefits of the proposal are outlined as follows:

- **Increased number of primary school places** – This would assist in meeting the current primary place challenge by injecting more school places in an area of high parental demand;
- **Better transition from nursery into statutory school education** – The increased availability of statutory school age places should reduce the possibility of displacing children attending the nursery class thus aiding transition;

- **Reduced travel time and costs** – Increasing the capacity of the school should ensure that more children can attend their local school thus reducing unnecessary travel times and associated home to school transport costs;
- **More effective use of resources** – There will be benefits in terms of a more effective approach to resource management;
- **Greater breadth of staff experience** – Recent curriculum developments have led to an increase in the number and range of specialist tasks to be done in schools. The sharing of these tasks and the availability of a wider range of experience would help to enhance the education of the children;
- **An increased opportunity for staff development** – A wide range of teaching and learning expertise is needed in a primary school with mixed-age classes. The skills and knowledge of teaching staff would be extended. This would benefit the children and would also support the recruitment and induction of new staff and the retention of experienced colleagues;
- **Budget and staffing flexibility** – The Headteacher and Governing Body of the school would gain more flexibility in responding to the needs of the school through having an increased budget to help to reduce the impact of fluctuations in pupil numbers across the whole age-range.

School Organisation

Millbrook Primary School was established in September 2007 following the amalgamation of the former Millbrook Infant School and Millbrook Junior School. The original schools operated in separate school buildings on the same site, each school having its own dedicated hall, with a single kitchen shared to serve all pupils. The school was established as a one-form entry school for pupils aged between 4 and 11 years in accordance with the pupil forecasting data available at that point in time. This represented a reduction in capacity compared with the previous Infant and Junior schools, and led to a number of rooms being declared as surplus to requirements. As a result, the governing body entered into short-term rental agreements with various internal teams and external agencies, including amongst others the Key Stage 2 Pupil Referral Unit and Flying Start. In September 2014, and as part of the Council's Nursery Reorganisation Programme, the age range of the school was extended from 4-11 to 3-11. A nursery class was therefore established with provision for 32 part-time places delivered over either a morning or afternoon session.

Under these current arrangements, the school has capacity for 210 pupils of statutory school age. Increasing the capacity to 315 requires a total of four classrooms to be brought back in to use and can be managed by ending some rental agreements and developing these areas back into suitable and effective learning environments. This will not however have any effect on either the Key Stage 2 Pupil Referral Unit or the Flying Start provision, both of which are able to continue to operate successfully from the site. This increased published admission number will build capacity for primary school places in the cluster and will support inward migration, housing developments and the increasing pupil numbers predicted for the city. In addition, there will be benefits in terms of transition from nursery into statutory school provision, since increasing the number of pupils able to enter Reception will reduce the possibility of children from the nursery class being displaced.

School Reorganisation Process & Timelines

All school reorganisation proposals are taken forward through a statutory consultation process in accordance with the Welsh Government School Organisation Code. This entails the following steps and approximate timescales:

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|--|---|--------------------------|
| • Cabinet Member decision to move to Formal Consultation | - | June 2017 |
| • Formal Consultation period (42 days) | - | September – October 2017 |
| • Cabinet Member decision to move to Statutory Notice | - | October 2017 |
| • Statutory Notice publication (28 days) | - | November 2017 |

- Final decision - January 2018
- Implementation of the proposal - September 2018

Governance Issues

There will be no changes to school governance arrangements as a result of this proposal. The governing body will continue in its current form.

Financial Summary

There is no capital funding associated with this proposal, although some maintenance works have already been carried out on the site to improve existing facilities in terms of previously unused classrooms to ensure their suitability and appropriateness for delivery of the national curriculum across all year groups.

The provision of additional school places may affect the current pupil demographics across the City but should not increase the number of pupils within the primary cohort. There may however be savings in terms of home to school transport, as increasing the number of school places available could reduce the number of children who require free transport assistance to their next nearest available school. These savings, if they arise, cannot be quantified at the present time.

Risks

| Risk | Impact of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L) | Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L) | What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect | Who is responsible for dealing with the risk? |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| That the increased places might not be filled immediately meaning that spaces exist in the year group | L | L | The Local Authority will work closely with the school to share information on parental preference. Any remaining spaces will be available to support in-year transfer requests however and therefore it is likely that the year group would become fully subscribed during the course of an academic year. | Chief Education Officer |
| That there may be reduced demand for other local schools in the short-term | L | L | The school place projections indicate that demand for places in the area is likely to rise over the next five years. In addition, applying the increase on an incremental basis should go some way to protecting against any long-term detrimental effect | Chief Education Officer |

* Taking account of proposed mitigation measures

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Council Improvement Plan

Education Service Plan

Options Available

Option 1: To retain the current published admission number of 30, albeit with two bubble classes of 45 for the Reception year groups of 2016 and 2017

Option 2: To increase the capacity of the school from 210 to 315, resulting in an increased published admission number of 45, applied immediately across all year groups.

Option 3: To increase the capacity of the school from 210 to 315, resulting in an increased published admission number of 45, applied incrementally solely for admission to the Reception year group at the start of each academic year.

Preferred Option and Why

The preferred option is Option 3. This will result in the revised published admission number being fully operational across all year groups by September 2022, would not have a detrimental effect on other schools and can be effectively managed and planned by the Headteacher and governing body.

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

There are no financial implications of moving to formal consultation.

At the present time the school is being funded for the additional numbers already within the school, and will continue to be funded for the growth in additional numbers each year through the ISB, whether the value of the ISB grows or not. The school will receive additional funding through the funding formula, and the level of additional funding provided to the school to cater for the additional numbers is wholly dependent upon any additional funding being passed into the ISB as part of the budget setting process, and any other factors affecting schools from that process.

The additional pupil number growth within the Primary sector is included along with the financial consequences in the Council's medium term financial plan (MTFP) for consideration by the Council each year. The increased numbers within the school are captured as part of the pupil counts undertaken each year to support funding etc.

Further reports will be brought to the Cabinet Member as the process continues.

Comments of Monitoring Officer

Local authorities must ensure that there are sufficient schools providing primary and secondary education for their area and when considering increases there must be evidence of current or future demand for additional places. The Code on School Reorganisation (006/2013) which was made under Sections 38 and 39 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 sets out the requirements and contains statutory guidance in relation to school reorganisation proposals. Proposals have to be published but prior to this there must be consultation which must contain sufficient reasons and information for the particular proposal to enable intelligent consideration and response and local authorities must ensure that the product of consultation is conscientiously taken into account when the ultimate decision is taken. The proposal to consult is in accordance with the Code and is within the Council's statutory powers in relation to school reorganisation.

Comments of Head of People and Business Change

As required this proposal has considered all five aspects of the sustainable development principle of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. In addition a Fairness and Equality Impact Assessments (FEIA) has been completed. This assessment will need to be reviewed and updated in light of the responses from the formal consultation process and at each stage of the decision making process.

From a HR perspective, there will be a requirement to recruit additional employees incrementally over a seven-year period, as a result of this proposal. There may also be a requirement for the Governing Body to review the pay ranges of members of the school leadership team, in line with policies and procedures.

Local issues

Councillr J Cleverly, on behalf of Newport Independent Members for Bettws Ward:

The plan to expand Millbrook School is supported by us as there is a big demand and increase in the coming years, due to new housing estates being built in Bettws, and Bettws Councillor's believe in the philosophy of Local Schools for Local Children.

Councillor J Watkins, on behalf of the Conservative Group:

This proposal if implemented is a far cry from Best Practice. Children on entry to school at Reception level need a great deal of support and nurturing. Their abilities at that stage are far from clear and their time in Reception is when they can be properly monitored and assessed with a view to development. Pushing some into the year 1 setting before they are ready is as stated not best practice and can result in stress for the children already sometimes very vulnerable on entering school. Teaching mixed age classes also may impact on the teaching and learning from both the Teacher and Pupils perspective resulting in underachievement and rising stress. I would ask what is the capacity at Monnow School? Increasing form entry numbers there would provide for a much better solution.

Response from Cabinet Member for Education & Skills:

The proposal to move to 1.5 form entry means that the school would increase from the current 7 class arrangement to an 11 class arrangement. Traditionally where this model is employed, schools operate two small Reception classes of 22/23 pupils, with mixed-age arrangements starting in Year 1 / Year 2. This ensures that the very youngest pupils are given appropriate support when first starting mainstream school. Mixed age classes are currently operated successfully across a number of Newport schools, the majority of which have been categorised as either Green or Yellow schools. Monnow Primary School currently has capacity for 364 pupils of statutory school age, equivalent to a PAN of 52 across all year groups. The school capacity was recently re-assessed as part of a City-wide exercise undertaken by Newport Norse. This identified some additional capacity due to a change in use of rooms, and this higher figure of 420 (equivalent to a PAN of 60) will be applied across all year groups from September 2017. The increased capacity at both schools will assist in meeting the primary place challenge across Newport.

Scrutiny Committees

None

Equalities Impact Assessment

The Equality Act 2010 contains a Public Sector Equality Duty which came into force on 06 April 2011. The Act identifies a number of 'protected characteristics', namely age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation; marriage and civil partnership. The new single duty aims to integrate consideration of equality and good relations into the regular business of public authorities. Compliance with the duty is a legal obligation and is intended to result in better informed decision-making and policy development and services that are more effective for users. In exercising its functions, the Council must have due regard to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act; advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. The Act is not overly prescriptive about the approach a public authority should take to ensure due regard, although it does set out that due regard to advancing equality involves: removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics; taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these differ from the need of other people; and encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

A Fairness & Equality Impact Assessment (FEIA) has been developed to support the decision making of this stage of the proposal. If the proposal is taken forward the FEIA will be updated at each decision stage and published on the web site.

Children and Families (Wales) Measure

Children and Young People will be consulted as part of the statutory consultation process.

Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Report writers need to indicate how they have considered the five things public bodies need to think about to show they have applied the sustainable development principle put into place by the Act. You will need to demonstrate you have considered the following:

- Long term: the importance of balancing short- term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long – term needs **by ensuring the long-term sufficiency of school places in an area of high parental demand.**
- Prevention: How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help us meet our objectives **increasing the number of primary school places available supports the Council's vision for "the right school in the right place" and the philosophy of "local schools for local children".**
- Integration: Consider how the proposals will impact on our wellbeing objectives, our wellbeing goals, other objectives or those of other public bodies **a formal statutory consultation will be carried out and supported at each stage by a FEIA to consider impact. This proposal supports the "A prosperous Wales", "A more equal Wales" and "A Wales of cohesive communities" Well-being Goals and has no adverse effect on any of the other Well-being Goals. In addition this proposal supports the Newport City Council Well-being Objective "To improve skills, educational outcomes and employment opportunities".**
- Collaboration: have you considered how acting in collaboration with any other person or any other part of our organisation could help meet our wellbeing objectives **a formal statutory consultation will be carried out with the opportunity for engagement with all stakeholders and supported at each stage by a FEIA to consider impact.**
- Involvement: The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the wellbeing goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the City we serve **a formal statutory consultation will be carried out with the opportunity for engagement with all stakeholders and supported at each stage by a FEIA to consider impact.**

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

Section 17(1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 imposes a duty on the Local Authority to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area.

Consultation

None at this stage but this will be facilitated with key stakeholders as part of the school reorganisation proposal.

Background Papers

None

Dated: 29 June 2017