

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**CABINET MEMBER FOR SCHOOLS AND LEARNING****DATE: 14 MAY 2014****LEAD OFFICER: NICK WILSON, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES****SUBJECT: TO DETERMINE A PROPOSAL TO REORGANISE RIVERBRIDGE PRIMARY SCHOOL ONTO TWO SITES AND CLOSE THE STANWELL NEW ROAD SITE****SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

At the request of the Governing Body of Riverbridge Primary School in Staines it is proposed that one of the three sites is closed and the school re-organises on its two remaining sites. Surrey County Council is responding to the preferences of families and improving the learning environment for pupils at Riverbridge Primary School in making this proposal.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

In order to respond to parental and governing body preference, it is proposed that:

- Riverbridge Primary School's Stanwell New Road Base permanently closes at the end of term July 2014.
- In September 2014 Riverbridge Primary School re-opens for the new academic year 2014/15 on its two remaining bases with the same number of pupils on roll. The admissions policy will not be affected.
- An associated building programme goes ahead, in a single phase, to provide appropriate new classrooms at the Park Avenue base to accommodate all the Reception and Year 1 pupils.
- The Stanwell New Road site is retained for future educational use. The intention is to convert it to a Pupil referral unit supporting Spelthorne students and secondary schools. Permission is therefore also sought to commence a statutory consultation on the proposed change of use of the site.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

There is evidence to indicate that families are less likely to prefer places at Stanwell New Road Base than at Park Avenue. This is because of where people live in relation to this school. Many parents have put their children's names on a waiting list to transfer to the Park Avenue base in order to avoid having to deliver and collect siblings to and from two different sites each day. These sites are significantly far apart and require a car journey to be made.

DETAILS:**Business Case**

1. The current Riverbridge Primary School was formed in 2011 by amalgamating three Staines schools: Knowle Green Infant School, Shortwood Infant School and Kingscroft Junior School. Early Years and Key Stage 1 (KS1) pupils are now based at both the Knowle Green site and the old Shortwood Infant site at Stanwell New Road; Key Stage 2 (KS2) pupils are based at the old Kingscroft Junior School site in Park Avenue.
2. The Knowle Green and Park Avenue sites are situated in close proximity to each other. All pupils from both Early Years/KS1 sites move on to KS2 at the Park Avenue site. However the Stanwell New Road site is a small Victorian school building, has limited space, and is situated more than a mile away from the Knowle Green site on the other side of the A30. Many families would prefer their children to start their schooling at the Knowle Green site.
3. The proposal would base Early Years and Y1 children at Knowle Green; Y2 and KS2 children would be based at Park Avenue. Three new classrooms would be built at Park Avenue and additional playground space created.
4. The broad benefits to this scheme are that operations would be consolidated on the two adjacent sites, rather than based over three sites which currently include a journey to Stanwell New Road via the Crooked Billet junction on the outskirts of Staines. There are a number of efficiencies in resources to be gained: building maintenance would be less costly; heating and running costs would be reduced; office staff and facilities such as photocopiers could be used more efficiently. The new classrooms would be light, modern and more energy efficient. Early Years and Year 1 pupils would have their own playground space, separate from the older children.
5. Leadership staff would spend less time travelling between sites, and teaching staff would be able to work together for lesson planning more easily. The staff and governing body would be running a school on two sites instead of three, which would be simpler, more efficient and effective.
6. An additional benefit is that the freeing up of this site enables Surrey County Council to open a Spelthorne Pupil Referral Unit on the Stanwell New Road site, thus delivering one of its strategic priorities.

CONSULTATION:

7. An informal consultation on the relocation of Riverbridge was carried out with both parents and the public between 27 January and 26 February 2014. A consultation document setting out the facts and the proposal was produced and circulated to all stakeholders and interested parties. In addition, two meetings were held at the Riverbridge Primary School on 3 and 6 February; these were attended by approximately 60 parents and residents. The consultation document was also published on the school's website and the local borough and county councillors were sent copies of this.
8. In addition to comments made at the meeting run by the school the council received sixty- nine written consultation responses which were reported to the Cabinet Member at her meeting in March. In summary the governing body plus forty-nine respondents were in agreement with the proposal. Four people stated that they undecided about the proposal to close the Stanwell new Road Base, or they submitted a qualified view. Sixteen respondents were against the proposal, including the Governing Body of a neighbouring catholic primary school, Our Lady of The Rosary.
9. The main concerns raised by respondents opposed to this proposal were the volume of additional traffic that the consolidation of the school onto the two

adjacent sites would generate. There was also concern expressed about the impact of an additional building on site in relation to drainage and the capacity of the local ground water collection system to cope. These concerns have been discussed with officers in the Education Project Management and Transport teams and will be taken into consideration as part of the planning application.

- 10. Those people in support of the proposal, including the governing body, recognised the educational and other benefits that operating on two adjacent sites would bring. They also acknowledged that the proposal would remove the necessity for parental and staff journeys between Knowle Green and Stanwell Road .
- 11. Having given due consideration to all consultation responses the Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning agreed to the publication of a Statutory Notice and a further four weeks of formal consultation. This concluded on 14 April 2014. During this period the County Council received no further responses.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

- 12. The key risk to this proposal is the completion of the building work at Riverview Primary in time for September 2014 and perceived traffic management issues. The proposal also relies on approval being given to develop a Pupil Referral Unit on the Stanwell New Road site. This will be subject to a separate consultation process.
- 13. If permission to consolidate the school on two sites is denied then some parents living in relatively close proximity to Knowle Park will have to travel further to obtain a Reception place for their child and they will have to continue to travel between sites if they have other children at the school.
- 14. This school is currently trying hard to quickly drive up standards and the task will be made very much easier if the Head and staff can cut down on their travel between sites. Consistency of teaching and learning are paramount in this endeavour and leadership of this enterprise will be facilitated if all the pupils and staff were co-located on the adjoining sites.

Financial and Value for Money Implications

- 15. There is a business requirement to merge the school onto two sites, which is considered to be of benefit to the educational needs of the children at Riverbridge and it allows the vacant site to be converted into a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). This is needed in the Spelthorne area and is recognised in the current capital programme. Funding for a PRU in Spelthorne is included in the Medium Term Financial Plan 2014/19.
- 16. It is important to note that the merger of the school onto two sites is completely dependent on the development of the Pupil Referral Unit at the vacated site, as there are no additional basic need placement requirements in this area. The detailed costings for this combined scheme will be developed within the business case and the value for money aspects will be considered by the Investment Panel.

Section 151 Commentary

17. Funding for a Pupil Referral Unit in Spelthorne is included within the Medium Term Financial Plan 2014/19. It is expected that this combined scheme will be met from within the approved funding level and is subject to the Pupil Referral Unit being developed on the vacated site.

Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer

18. The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2007 contain the regulations that apply to prescribed alterations. The Department for Education (DfE) has published two pieces of Guidance relating to prescribed alterations: Expanding a Maintained Mainstream School or Adding a Sixth Form and Making Changes to a Maintained Mainstream School (Other than Expansion). These contain both statutory guidance (i.e. guidance to which proposers and decision makers have a statutory duty to have regard) and non-statutory guidance on the process for making changes to school provision. The Guidance regarding making a change to a school, other than expansion, has been followed by the School Commissioning Officer in the development of this proposal.
19. Section 13 of the Education Act 1996 places a general duty on local education authorities to secure that efficient primary education is available to meet the needs of the population of their area. Section 5 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 places a duty to promote high standards. Therefore, there is a duty to provide effective education and utilise resources efficiently.

Equalities and Diversity

20. There are no direct equalities implications arising out of the proposal. The re-organised provision will be open to all applicants irrespective of race, gender, faith, ethnicity or ability. The Admissions arrangements will continue to give the highest priority to Looked After Children and pupils on the Special Educational Needs (SEN) register and/or those who would benefit from a statement of educational need, thus supporting provision for our most vulnerable children. Children with siblings will receive the next priority, followed by those children living closest to the school. There is no proposal to amend the Admissions criteria.

Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults implications

21. The school has a robust Safeguarding Policy which is monitored by the designated Child Protection Lead Officer, is regularly reviewed by the governing body and is subject to OFSTED inspection. Site access and security, both during the proposed building programme and afterwards, have been considered and addressed in the planning and design of this building project.

Climate change/carbon emissions implications

22. The County Council attaches great importance to being environmentally aware and wishes to show leadership in cutting carbon emissions and tackling climate change. A safe walking route to the school will be identified as part of the School Travel Plan for use by children and families. Facilities are already provided on campus for children cycling or using scooters to come to school.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

- Subject to Cabinet Member approval a planning application will be submitted and, if successful, a building programme will commence during the summer holidays 2014. The design for the additional accommodation is of a modular construction and therefore the timeframe to achieve this build is realistic.
 - A public consultation will commence on the proposed change of use of the Stanwell New Road site. After which a report will be made seeking the permission of the Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning to develop a Pupil Referral Unit there.
 - The outcome of this decision will be published on the Surrey County Council website and parents of pupils at the school will be notified by letter from the Governing Body.
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Contact Officer:

Melanie Harris

School Commissioning Officer NE Surrey tel. 020 8541 9556

Consulted:

Parents of pupils and prospective pupils of Riverbridge Primary School

Local Councillors

Local residents via the consultation document delivered by hand

Annexes: None

Sources/background papers:

School Organisation Consultation Proposal

Consultation responses

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