

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**CABINET MEMBER FOR SCHOOLS, SKILLS AND
EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT****DATE: 11 JUNE 2015****LEAD OFFICER: JULIE FISHER, ACTING STRATEGIC DIRECTOR FOR
CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES****SUBJECT: THE PROPOSED AMALGAMATION OF WEYBOURNE INFANT
SCHOOL AND WILLIAM COBBETT JUNIOR SCHOOL****SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

Surrey County Council (SCC) has consulted on a proposal to amalgamate Weybourne Infant School and William Cobbett Junior School.

The education consultation period was from 26 February 2015 to 19 April 2015. There were also two public meetings held at Weybourne Infant School and William Cobbett Junior School on 5 March and 10 March 2015, respectively.

On 27 April 2015, Statutory Notices were published at the school, in the local newspaper and on the Surrey Says website, stating the intention to amalgamate the schools. This is in accordance with the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained School) Regulations 2013.

The Cabinet Member is asked to review the comments received during the consultation and representation period, and determine the Statutory Notice.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the Statutory Notice stating the local authority's intention to amalgamate Weybourne Infant School and William Cobbett Junior School is determined. This will mean that Weybourne Infant School will close on 31 August 2015 and the age range at William Cobbett Junior School will be extended on 1 September 2015 to form a new primary school.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

Both schools serve the Weybourne area of northern Farnham and both offer good education for all of their students. The two schools are on adjacent sites and the vast majority of students who attend Weybourne Infant School naturally transfer to William Cobbett Junior School. In such situations it is SCC's policy to consider amalgamation as it is felt that this secures the best future for all children.

DETAILS:**Business Case**

1. There are specific advantages of primary organisation over separate infant and junior schools including:

- a seamless transition from Key Stage 1 (Infants) to Key Stage 2 (Juniors)
 - greater ability to track pupil progress between key stages
 - greater opportunities for curriculum development
 - greater opportunities for staff development
 - greater flexibility with a larger budget to deploy staff and curriculum resources effectively
 - greater opportunities for staff recruitment
2. In addition, the Headteacher at William Cobbett Junior School is retiring at the end of this academic year which offers an ideal opportunity to recruit a new headteacher to take forward an amalgamated primary school. It is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit headteachers, particularly in small schools, and the range of teaching and leadership opportunities in a larger primary school represents a greater challenge for headteachers in post as well as aspiring headteachers.
 3. The Published Admissions Number (PAN) of the new primary school at Reception will remain at 40 places. The PAN for junior entry at the new primary school will be reduced to 50 places from the current 90 places. However, these 50 places will join the 40 places in the new primary school's Year 2 cohort, providing 90 places in each junior year group. The overall capacity of the school will not change, providing 120 places in Reception to Year 2 and 360 places in Years 3 to 6.

Building

4. There will be no building requirements for this project. Both of the current adjoining school sites will be retained, and the new primary school will operate in the existing school buildings over both sites.

<u>CONSULTATION:</u>

5. A consultation was undertaken with relevant stakeholders and consultation documentation was issued. Two public meetings were held at the schools during the consultation period. On Monday 27 April 2015, Statutory Notices were issued for a period of four weeks, inviting any further representations.

Consultation responses

6. In total, the public meetings were attended by over 20 parents, residents and other interested parties. Overall, eight responses were received to the consultation, all via the Surrey Says website. The responses included six from parents.
7. There was a consensus of general agreement with the proposal through the consultation responses and the public meetings that were held.
8. Of the eight responses, all agreed with the proposal.
9. Concern about the proposal can be themed in two areas, these will be summarised and responded to in the following sections.

Availability of junior places

10. One respondent questioned the impact that an amalgamation would have on the availability of junior places for children from other local infant schools.
11. Historically, William Cobbett Junior School has provided 90 places per junior year group. This number will not change in the new primary school.
12. The current admissions arrangements for entry to William Cobbett at Year 3 give priority to children attending a named partner school - these being Badshot Lea Village, Folly Hill and Weybourne Infant School. In the event of over-subscription in this criterion, applications are sub-ranked by straight line home to school distance with priority being given to those living closest to the junior school.
13. Due to the locations of the infant schools, typically the majority of pupils attending Weybourne Infant School have been offered a junior place at William Cobbett because they live nearer the school than those attending the other two partner schools.
14. It is not anticipated that the current pattern of provision will be affected by this proposal as there will be the same number of overall places available.

The practicalities of amalgamation

15. At the public meetings, concerns were raised about the practicalities that amalgamating the schools would entail, such as school uniform and how staffing provision would be arranged.
16. However, these are a matter for the new headteacher and reformed governing body to decide in due course, and are not considered as part of this decision making process. Parents have been advised to make representations of this nature to the current schools' governing bodies or to the Area Education Officer for consideration once this proposal has been determined.

Statutory Notice

17. The published Statutory Notice was open for representations for a four week period. No further representations were received during this time.

<u>RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:</u>

18. There are minimal risks associated with this proposal. In the event that the proposed amalgamation does not take place, the schools will continue to operate in their current arrangement providing a good standard of education for children in the local area.
19. The recruitment process for a new headteacher has been carried out in such a way to protect both schools in the event that an amalgamation is not approved. As such, if this proposal is approved, the newly appointed headteacher will be the substantive headteacher of the new primary school. If the proposed amalgamation does not go ahead, the newly appointed

headteacher will be the substantive executive headteacher of the individual infant and junior schools.

Financial and Value for Money Implications

20. There is no capital cost involved with this proposal as no building work is required. Both the Weybourne Infant School and William Cobbett Junior School sites will be retained, and the new primary school will operate over these two adjoining school sites and existing buildings.
21. In terms of the schools' ongoing revenue, primary provision offers a number of cost saving benefits and is considered to be more sustainable in financial terms. The schools have been supported with financial modelling by Babcock to enable them to consider budgetary options for the future.

Section 151 Officer

22. The proposed amalgamation into a primary school will enable cost savings on the schools revenue budget through efficiencies and economies of scale. The Property team have confirmed that no building works will need to take place, so capital investment is not required.

Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer

23. Section 13 of the Education Act 1996 places a general duty on Local Education Authorities to ensure that efficient primary education is available to meet the needs of the population of their area. Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on Local Education Authorities to ensure that sufficient schools for providing primary education are available in their area. Section 5 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 places a duty to promote high standards. There is a duty to provide efficient education and sufficient schools to do so.
24. The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 and (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 that came into force on 28 January 2014 provide statutory and non statutory guidance on the process for making prescribed alterations to schools, including the amalgamations of existing schools. The Regulations have been complied with.

Equalities and Diversity

25. A full equalities impact assessment (EIA) has been undertaken on this proposal (see Annex 1).
26. The EIA found that any negative impacts associated with this proposal are outweighed by the positive impacts.
27. It is intended that the school will promote cohesion of the local communities in the area served by the school through extended services to enhance the well-being and future opportunities of those children in the area.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

28. Subject to Cabinet Member approval of the Statutory Notice, the proposal will be implemented. The implementation process would be:
- Weybourne Infant School would close on 31 August 2015
 - William Cobbett Junior School would expand its age-range on 1 September 2015 to become a primary school operating on the adjoining two sites of the existing infant and junior schools
 - All the children on the rolls of the existing schools would automatically be placed on roll at the new amalgamated primary school
 - Any children offered places for September 2015 in Reception at Weybourne Infant or in Year 3 at William Cobbett Junior School will be placed on roll at the new amalgamated primary school.
 - A reconstitution of the governing body will be required from 1 September 2015.

Contact Officer:

Sarah Jeffery, Assistant School Commissioning Officer, Tel: 020 8541 7409

Consulted:

Local MP
SCC County Councillors for the local area
Waverley Borough Councillors for the local area
All local schools
Guildford and Arundel & Brighton Dioceses
SCC officers
Officers of neighbouring local authorities
Babcock
Parents of children at the school

Sources/background papers:

- Weybourne Infant and William Cobbett Junior School amalgamation consultation document.
- All responses to the consultation

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