

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda
Item No.

Corporate Director for People
to
Cabinet

on
6th January 2015

Report prepared by: Jane Theadom,
Head of Learning

The amalgamation of Leigh North Street Junior School and Leigh Infant School
People Scrutiny Committee
Executive Councillor: Councillor Anne Jones
A Part 1 Public Agenda Item

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To inform Cabinet of the outcome of the stakeholder consultation on the proposal to amalgamate Leigh North Street Junior School and Leigh Infant School.
- 1.2. To seek approval to proceed to the publication of statutory notice.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. That the proposal to amalgamate Leigh North Street Junior School and Leigh Infant School is approved.
- 2.2. That should approval be granted, procedure to the publication of statutory notice takes place within a timescale that permits the opening of the proposed new primary school with effect from September 1st 2015.

3. Background

- 3.1. In May 2013, Leigh North Street Junior School was placed in special measures. This judgement led to the appointment of an Executive Headteacher to lead and manage the school's progress and subsequent removal from this Ofsted category. Alongside the appointment of the Executive Headteacher, there was also a change of governance with the appointment of an Interim Executive Board to strengthen challenge and support for school leadership during this process.
- 3.2. The Executive Headteacher was also the substantive headteacher of Leigh Infant School. She was appointed to the role because of her own track record in leading and managing an outstanding school but also because she knew the children well and was therefore well placed to assess potential improvement and oversee the management of pupil progress.
- 3.3. In July 2014, after three terms, Leigh North Street Junior School was removed from special measures and judged to be a good school. During the year, both the IEB of the Junior School and the Governing Body of the Infant School

considered their position re the future of their respective schools. Both bodies were of the view that an amalgamated primary school would be the best outcome for the community served by the schools.

- 3.4. In accordance with the Council's 2012 resolution endorsing the amalgamation of co-located infant and junior schools, both the IEB and the Infant School governing body voted independently to propose that the schools amalgamated and agreed to consult with stakeholders.
- 3.5. Meetings took place on Thursday December 4th in the afternoon and the evening to facilitate attendance and engagement from as many stakeholders as possible. Governors pledged that they would listen to comments and also take on board written comments. Once the consultation closed they would then separately decide on whether or not to continue with this course of action.
- 3.6. Challenge from the meetings included concerns about ensuring that lessons learned from earlier amalgamations were taken on board, that transition arrangements were considered, that the leadership structure was fit for purpose, that staff views were also considered and that issues concerning the budget and governance arrangements were addressed.
- 3.7. Feedback from the consultation responses was overwhelmingly positive. Of forty four written responses, 37 of the written comments were in favour, five against and two decided to record 'no comment'.
- 3.8. Positive comments focused on the benefits for children in terms of education, transition, continuity and the provision of strong leadership. Concerns were based principally on the potential loss of the family feel of a small school and that the individual schools are better placed to meet the specific needs of each phase of education; both of these concerns would be considered as part of the proposed action plan should the amalgamation proceed.
- 3.9. On Thursday December 11th the governing body of the Infant School and the IEB of the Junior School met separately and then jointly to consider the outcome of the stakeholder consultation.
- 3.10. As separate bodies, they took account of all representations made at the meetings and in writing. They discussed the advantages and disadvantages to pupils and the financial and building implications. Governors then unanimously concluded via a voting process that the advantages to pupils outweighed all other considerations.
- 3.11. At the joint meeting, the Chair of the IEB reported that 'the Governors unanimously concluded, via a voting process, that the advantages to pupils outweighed all other considerations.'
- 3.12. At the same joint meeting, the Chair of Governors of the Infant School concluded via a majority vote that the advantages to pupils outweighed all other considerations.
- 3.13. It was therefore resolved that Governors' support for the amalgamation of Leigh Infant School and Leigh North Street Junior School, the two schools, be

recorded and ... 'That the Local Authority be requested to approve the publication of the appropriate notice and subsequent action required to enable the amalgamation to proceed.'

- 3.14. It is recommended that the Local Authority proceeds with the publication of statutory notices to alter the status of the provision from September 2015. Technically, it is the Local Authority that has the responsibility for the publication of the statutory notice to close one school and the Governing Body of the other school has the responsibility of publishing the statutory notice to expand the other school. The Local Authority has agreed with both Governing Bodies that a joint notice would be published to cover both these legal requirements.

4. Corporate Implications

- 4.1. Finance: All factors except for the lump sum remain the same. In the first year of amalgamation the second lump sum is protected at 85%. There could be economies of scale in several areas such as: photocopying, support services, IT provision and energy costs.
- 4.2. Buildings: There will be no increase to the number of students, however there is an identified need for some remodelling of space to accommodate the joint staff facilities. From an educational point of view it is possible to deliver the curriculum.
- 4.3. The only immediate requirement is for a whole school administration and curriculum ICT network to be in place from 1st September 2015.
- 4.4. HR: All existing staff will automatically transfer to the Primary School. There will be no requirement for immediate restructuring at the time of amalgamation. All terms and conditions will be unchanged. The current Headteacher of the Infant School will become the Headteacher of the amalgamated primary school.

5. Background Papers

Council resolution in 2012

6. Appendices

There are no appendices with this report.

