



CALL-IN SUB-COMMITTEE (EDUCATION)

**WEDNESDAY 30 JANUARY 2008
7.30 PM**

SUB-COMMITTEE AGENDA (SCRUTINY)

**COUNCIL CHAMBER,
HARROW CIVIC CENTRE**

MEMBERSHIP (Quorum 3)

Chairman: Councillor Anthony Seymour

Councillors:

Mrs Lurline Champagnie	B E Gate
Barry Macleod-Cullinane	Mitzi Green (VC)
Stanley Sheinwald	
Dinesh Solanki	
Mark Versallion	
Jeremy Zeid	

Representatives of Voluntary Aided Sector: Mrs J Rammelt/Reverend P Reece
Representatives of Parent Governors: Mrs Despo Speel/Mr Ramji Chauhan

Reserve Members:

1. Mrs Vina Mithani	1. Jerry Miles
2. Yogesh Teli	2. Graham Henson
3. Ashok Kulkarni	3. Keeki Thammaiah
4. -	4. Mrinal Choudhury
5. Robert Benson	
6. Julia Merison	
7. -	
8. -	
9. -	

**Issued by the Legal Services Section,
Legal and Governance Services Department**

Contact: Miriam Wearing, Senior Democratic Services Officer
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HARROW COUNCIL

CALL-IN SUB-COMMITTEE (EDUCATION)

WEDNESDAY 30 JANUARY 2008

AGENDA - PART I

1. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

To note the attendance at this meeting of any duly appointed Reserve Members.

Reserve Members may attend meetings:-

- (i) to take the place of an ordinary Member for whom they are a reserve;
- (ii) where the ordinary Member will be absent for the whole of the meeting; and
- (iii) the meeting notes at the start of the meeting at the item 'Reserves' that the Reserve Member is or will be attending as a reserve;
- (iv) if a Reserve Member whose intention to attend has been noted arrives after the commencement of the meeting, then that Reserve Member can only act as a Member from the start of the next item of business on the agenda after his/her arrival.

2. **Declarations of Interest:**

To receive declarations of personal or prejudicial interests, arising from business to be transacted at this meeting, from:

- (a) all Members of the Committee, Sub Committee, Panel or Forum;
- (b) all other Members present in any part of the room or chamber.

3. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

To consider whether any of the items listed on the agenda should be considered with the press and public excluded on the grounds that it is thought likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, that there would be disclosure of confidential information in breach of an obligation of confidence or of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

Enc. 4. **Call-in of the decision of the Cabinet Meeting on 17 January 2008: Amalgamation of First and Middle Schools:** (Pages 1 - 22)

The following documents are attached:-

- (a) Notice Invoking the Call-in
- (b) Extract from the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 17 January 2008
- (c) Report submitted to the Cabinet meeting held on 17 January 2008

AGENDA - PART II - Nil

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985: In accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, this meeting is being called with less than 5 clear working days' notice by virtue of the special circumstances and grounds for urgency stated below:-

Special Circumstances/Grounds for Urgency: Under Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 22 a meeting of the Call-in Sub-Committee must be held within 7 clear working days of the receipt of a request for call-in. This meeting therefore had to be arranged at very short notice and it was not possible for the agenda to be published 5 clear working days prior to the meeting.

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Harrow Legal Services
24 JAN 2008
Rec'd

Call-in Notice

Agenda Item 4
Pages 1 to 22

To be completed by Members of the Public, as per the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 22.

Harrow Legal Services
24 JAN 2008
Rec'd 3.50pm

To: The Chief Executive

1. NOTICE OF CALL-IN OF EXECUTIVE DECISION

In accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 22, we, the 150 signatories to this call-in notice (see numbered continuation sheets overleaf), being members of the public registered on the electoral roll of the London Borough of Harrow, hereby give notice that we wish to call-in the Executive decision detailed in section 2 below.

2. DETAILS OF EXECUTIVE DECISION

The details of the Executive decision are as follows:-

Decision: To consult on closure of Middle School West Lodge.

Made by: Cabinet (Christine Bednell)
(Cabinet/relevant Portfolio Holder)

Published On: 17 January 2008
(Date)

3. GROUNDS FOR CALL-IN

(Please specify below the grounds for the call-in, in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 22.5. Please note that, in the event that this call-in is referred to the Call-in Sub-Committee, the considerations of the Sub-Committee will focus on the grounds stated, and the Sub-Committee will seek evidence to support them. Please therefore also set out below details of the evidence to support the grounds for call-in, continuing on a separate sheet if necessary).

Please see attached grounds.

Once completed, please forward this form to Michelle Fernandes in Room 143, Civic Centre or send it by fax to 020 8424 15 1 HIN 5 WORKING DAYS OF THE DATE OF PUBLICATION OF THE DECISION.

Grounds for Call in

We ask for the decision of Cabinet of 17th January 2008 to undertake a consultation on the closure of West Lodge Middle School to be called in and give our reasons below.

The Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules state that (para 22.5):

A notice by Members, or voting co-opted Members or the Members of the public to invoke the call-in procedure must state at least one of the following grounds in support of the request for a call-in of the decision:

- (a) inadequate consultation with stakeholders prior to the decision;
- (b) the absence of adequate evidence on which to base a decision;
- (c) the decision is contrary to the policy framework, or contrary to, or not wholly in accordance with the budget framework;
- (d) the action is not proportionate to the desired outcome;
- (e) a potential human rights challenge;
- (f) insufficient consideration of legal and financial advice.

We believe that conditions (a) and (f) have been met.

Inadequate consultation.

Middle School Governing Body is unarguably a stakeholder in this matter. However, it has not been consulted over the form or content of the proposal made by officers and endorsed by Cabinet – to undertake a consultation process in a manner prescribed. Had the detail of this proposal been made public, the Governing Body would have been able to make representations.

Our understanding is that a new steering group is to be established in the week commencing the 21st January, consisting of two members of our Governing Body and a parent from our school. A feasibility report is to be completed and sent to parents some two weeks later.

However, none of this detail was made public. The purpose of any consultation is to allow the decision maker to receive the views of those affected by their proposal, so as the final decision can be qualitatively better than one taken without the benefit of those representations. Given that the Governing Body is an expert in relation to its procedures, and in relation to the ways in which parental involvement can be sought and obtained, it is unsurprising that the decision, taken without seeking the views of that body, has resulted in a process that is fundamentally flawed, not least because it betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of the functions and constitution of a Governing Body of a Maintained School:

(a) The timetable for establishing the steering group in the week commencing 21st January with a feasibility report written, completed, agreed and sent to parents in the two weeks following is wholly unrealistic. There is simply insufficient time to delegate authority to individual governors, (who as individuals have no powers to act on behalf of the Governing Body unless authorised to do so by the Body as a whole). There is no power for the Governing Body to make such decisions in any other way but to hold a meeting. Governing Bodies are made up of lay members who cannot simply drop all their commitments at the drop of a hat, save in emergencies.

(b) No time has been allowed for the identification of the parent to take part or for an election (or other process) should more than one parent come forward. Some mechanism needs to be established and agreed.

(c) No detail has been given as to what arrangements would be made should individual members of the steering group not comply with the deadline, refuse to sign off the report, or how any disagreements will be dealt with. We have received no notification of who the independent chair will be or how any objections would be dealt with.

(d) The completed feasibility study is then to be put to parents and other stakeholders as the basis upon which a consultation on the possible closure of Middle School is to take place. It is therefore vital that the document contains sufficient information for stakeholders to consider and give their views. There is simply not enough time for this to be adequately done.

(e) the period of consultation is inadequate and takes place (partly) over the holiday period. Secretary of State's guidance on consultation recommends that holiday periods should be avoided.

(f) The Council itself commits itself to periods of consultation lasting 13 weeks unless there are compelling reasons to truncate this period. No such reasons exist. This is a matter of crucial importance to all involved with West Lodge Schools is obvious, and it can be in nobody's interests, (not least the children of West Lodge Middle School) to commence and conclude a process with what appears to be indecent haste.

Insufficient consideration of legal and financial advice.

The LA is required to have regard to the statutory guidance on closure of schools. The proposed consultation does not appear to comply with the guidance, see stage 1 of the Statutory Guidance on closure of a maintained school (a copy is attached).

Local Authorities are required to comply with statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State, unless there are compelling reasons not to.

There are no compelling reasons to depart from the guidance in this case.

REPORT OF CABINET

MEETING HELD ON 17 JANUARY 2008

Chairman: * Councillor Chris Mote

<p>Councillors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * David Ashton * Marilyn Ashton * Mrs Camilla Bath * Miss Christine Bednell * Susan Hall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Janet Mote * Paul Osborn * Mrs Anjana Patel * Eric Silver
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* Denotes Member present

352. **Amalgamation of First and Middle Schools:**

Prior to the consideration of the report, the Leader of the Council/Chairman clarified that Cabinet was not being asked to take a decision on the amalgamation of the schools, as had been incorrectly reported in the local press. He referred to the communications received from parents, teachers and governors of the schools, particularly in relation to West Lodge First and West Lodge Middle schools, details of which had been made available to all Members of Cabinet. Additionally, a letter from the West Lodge Middle School Governing Body, sent to all Members of Cabinet by the Chair of Governors, had also been circulated at the meeting to Members of Cabinet.

The Director of Schools and Children's Development introduced the report, which outlined the processes undertaken by the Governing Bodies of West Lodge First and West Lodge Middle Schools and Belmont First and Belmont Middle Schools' Governing Bodies to investigate and consult with parents on amalgamation and the outcome of the Governing Bodies' decisions. She drew attention to the recommendations set out in the report and outlined the reasons for making those recommendations to Cabinet.

The Portfolio Holder for Schools and Children's Development stated that the education and the welfare of the children in the schools referred to in the report was of paramount importance. She was confident that all those present at the meeting would agree with her, and that, in taking the decision, this point should be at the forefront of everyone's mind.

The Portfolio Holder added that Members were aware of the dissatisfaction and the differing views in relation to West Lodge First and Middle Schools. The number of letters received in relation to these schools was unprecedented. She took this opportunity to respond to public questions by way of a summary response rather than respond to individual questions because of the similarity in the questions and to avoid delay in dealing with the questions individually. She stressed that everyone's concerns ought to be taken seriously.

The following summary response was read out by the Portfolio Holder for Schools and Children's Development in relation to the public questions received:-

1. "A number of issues have been raised through questions and I propose to respond to these collectively.

The Local Authority is the authority vested in this Cabinet and in this Council and the Local Authority has been asked what support it would provide for the amalgamation process. If the amalgamation were to proceed the Local Authority and the schools would establish a working group that would address key issues to move from two separate schools to a combined school. These areas include:-

- School Finance - establishing a single school budget.
- School Workforce - developing a staffing structure based on the needs of the combined school and a process to make appointments in good time and this is the whole workforce, not just teaching staff.
- Teaching and Learning – they would identify and address school management issues including curriculum and pastoral needs of pupils.

- Site Issues – the working group would review and develop proposals to address the site issues, identifying and prioritising areas for capital investment within available resources.

The level of support would be determined through discussion with the Governing Bodies and Headteachers, in particular the substantive Headteacher.

2. The Local Authority has sought advice from the DCSF about how they or parents can act when they believe that governors are not acting in the best interests of the school community and their advice is that the Local Authority cannot intervene unless governors act outside the law. Parents can only bring about change by making their views known to governors or by becoming members of the governing body themselves.
5. We have been asked two questions relating to the issue of why we have chosen not to honour our commitment to allow Governing Bodies to make the decision. It is the Council's policy to delegate the responsibility to make a decision to governors and this remains our policy. However, the duty of the Council is to ensure that this process has been done in a fair and transparent way according to its policy and further to ensure that the views of parents and stakeholders have been taken into account. As set out in the Cabinet papers, we do not believe this is the case in this instance.

The Council have not undertaken this intervention lightly. If there is a strong weight of opinion against amalgamation then Cabinet will take due consideration of that, and I might point out that another school mentioned in the papers, namely Belmont First and Belmont Middle Schools decided against amalgamation and that has been accepted.

6. Cabinet will decide whether to undertake a consultation in response to parental representations in favour of amalgamation, and report the outcomes to April Cabinet. Should the outcome of the consultation favour amalgamation, the approach being considered for West Lodge First and Middle Schools is to publish statutory notices to close the Middle School and to extend the age range of the First School. This is in order to achieve a speedy resolution to the issues for the schools.

An important consideration in taking forward this approach will be to achieve a newly constituted governing body for the school. This is under active consideration, and will require the cooperation of governors to ensure appropriate representation is established on the governing body. The existing governing body is not required to resign in part or in full or to reconstitute, but the Local Authority would encourage a measured approach to creating a new governing body as a way of facilitating the amalgamation process. In this case there would be an opportunity for parents of the combined school to stand for election. Open and transparent processes and opportunities for elections will be sought.

7. Another question was will the local authority carry out a full ballot of all stakeholders?

Depending on the decision of Cabinet this evening we will begin a consultation that will allow every parent and all other stakeholders including staff and governors to express their views.

9. If the amalgamation were to be implemented the working group would be tasked to consider, within the context of the Schools Asset Management Plan, what the priority site and accommodation investments are to support the successful organisation and identity of a combined school. For example, the focus on the entrance to the newly amalgamated school.

The funding available for investment will come from a range of sources including the (DCSF) Primary Capital Strategy, which commences with effect from April 2009 and one of the priorities that the local authority will seek to address are temporary classrooms. Other sources of funding are the Schools Devolved Formula Capital and Modernisation Funds from the Council's Capital programme. At this stage it is not possible to quantify the level of capital investment, as the priorities for the possible new combined schools have not been assessed or agreed.

10. Harrow's Amalgamation Policy says:

In preparation for a change in the age of transfer, Harrow has an amalgamation policy. This will establish combined schools. Combined First and Middle schools are more aligned with National Curriculum Key Stages and the impact of the change in age of transfer will be reduced. It also enables the processes to be undertaken within current school development planning and funding opportunities.

At the point of implementation of a change in the age of transfer to High School, any schools that are still separate First and Middle schools will become separate infant schools (that would be Reception to Year 2) and junior schools (Year 3 to Year 6).

This policy, that is the Council's amalgamation policy, sets out how the change towards more combined First and Middle Schools in Harrow is to be implemented.

Thus it is intended to align the schools to the majority of local authorities nationally and in particular with our neighbouring authorities, to National Curriculum Key Stages, to minimise the impact of the Change of Age of Transfer and reduce the points of transition.

11. What are the implications of the change of age of transfer on staffing?

The implications are that there will be one year group or three classes fewer in the first school. This will mean reduced funding for the school since the Age Weighted Pupil Unit pays for the cost of teachers, teaching assistants, resources plus school running costs. This will impact on the school's budget and will need to be managed through reductions in staffing and other costs.

Wherever possible we will support the redeployment of staff from first schools to middle schools and from middle to secondary schools but clearly this will be very challenging.

12. If a vacancy in either Headship occurs in the future, the new amalgamation policy would come into force."

In relation to Belmont First and Middle Schools, the Portfolio Holder stated that the Council had accepted the decision against the amalgamation. The Belmont First School was now in the process of appointing a Headteacher and that process was required to be completed by April 2008.

With regard to West Lodge First and West Lodge Middle Schools, the conclusion drawn from the large number of communications received was that not all stakeholders had accepted the decision/consultation process. She added that should Cabinet approve the recommendations set out in the report, the consultation would be taken forward in an open and transparent manner and a Steering Group would be established. This Group would be made up of representatives from both Schools and independent members who had no links to the Schools. The Steering Group would be expected to examine the original feasibility study, examine the scope and decide if further information was required. The Group would then consult all stakeholders, examine the responses received and submit its proposal to Cabinet in April 2008. It was essential that all those consulted responded, as the decision would affect children who attended the schools now and in the future.

Prior to responding to any public questions that remained unanswered and any supplemental questions relating to the summary response provided, the Portfolio Holder thanked all stakeholders for their submissions on the proposals in relation to the Schools. She stated that, in relation to West Lodge First and Middle Schools, it was for the stakeholders to make the decision and for that decision to be made in a clear and transparent manner. The Portfolio Holder for Schools and Children's Services and, where appropriate, the Director of Schools and Children's Services provided responses to supplemental questions from public questioners 1, 2, 5, 8, 11 and 12 (Minute 346 refers).

RESOLVED: That (1) the outcome of the decisions of the Governing Bodies of West Lodge First and West Lodge Middle Schools be noted;

(2) in relation to West Lodge First and West Lodge Middle Schools, the Local Authority, in response to parental representations, undertake a consultation and report the outcomes to Cabinet;

(3) the outcome of the decisions of the Governing Bodies of Belmont First and Belmont Middle Schools in respect of amalgamation be noted;

(4) if a substantive Headteacher to Belmont First School was not appointed by April 2008, the Governing Body be requested to apply the Amalgamation Policy October 2007.

Reason for Decision: To decide on/confirm the decisions of Governing Bodies, as required by the revised Amalgamation Policy agreed by Cabinet in October 2007 to contribute to raising standards of achievement in Harrow and to establish a foundation for the implementation of a change in the age of transfer.

(See also Minutes 345(1) and 346).

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	17 January 2008
Subject:	Amalgamation of First and Middle Schools
Key Decision:	No
Responsible Officer:	Heather Clements, Director of Schools and Children's Development
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Christine Bednell Schools and Children's Development
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Annexe A Letter from West Lodge Middle School Governing Body - 19 November 2007 Annexe B Letter from West Lodge First School Governing Body 12 December 2007 Annexe C Letter from Belmont Middle School Governing Body 4 December 2007

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report outlines processes undertaken by the Governing Bodies of West Lodge First and West Lodge Middle Schools and Belmont First and Belmont Middle School Governing Bodies to investigate and consult with parents on amalgamation and the outcome of the Governing Bodies' decisions.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet is requested to:

- 1 Note the outcome of the decisions of the Governing Bodies of West Lodge First and West Lodge Middle Schools.
- 2 Agree that the Local Authority in response to parental representations should undertake a consultation and report the outcomes to Cabinet.
- 3 Note the outcome of the decisions of the Governing Bodies of Belmont First and Belmont Middle Schools in respect of amalgamation.

- 4 Agree that if a substantive Headteacher to Belmont First School is not appointed by April 2008, the Governing Body will be requested to apply the Amalgamation Policy October 2007.

Reason: (For recommendation)

Cabinet agreed a revised Amalgamation Policy in October 2007 to contribute to raising standards of achievement in Harrow and to establish a foundation for the implementation of a change in the age of transfer. This Policy requires Cabinet to confirm the decisions of Governing Bodies.

Section 2 – Report

Introduction

Harrow's vision is to provide high achieving schools at the centre of community services, and a corporate priority is to continue improvement in schools to make education in Harrow even better. In order to further this vision, in October 2007 Cabinet agreed its strategic approach to school organisation.

Background

Cabinet agreed the Amalgamation Policy originally in February 2005. The Policy was then reviewed by the Shaping Schools for the Future Group and amended in the light of experiences in applying the policy. This amended version was published in November 2005. Since then six schools have amalgamated to establish three combined first and middle schools. The combined school is more aligned with the National Curriculum Key Stages and there will be less impact on the school when the age of transfer is implemented. The continuation and strengthening of the policy will secure a good foundation for the implementation of a change in the age of transfer.

The Cabinet considered a report at their October 2007 meeting on the Strategic Approach to School Organisation. The Cabinet agreed the recommendations and the amended Amalgamation Policy.

In accordance with the original Amalgamation Policy, four schools, Belmont First and Belmont Middle Schools and West Lodge First and West Lodge Middle Schools, commenced the process to consider amalgamation when a Headteacher resigned in the Summer Term. The Governors have confirmed their decisions and supporting reasons to the Director of Schools and Children's Development. The details of which are included in this report.

West Lodge First and Middle Schools

- The Governing Bodies of West Lodge First and West Lodge Middle Schools commenced the process to consider amalgamating the two separate schools in April 2007 on the resignation of the Middle School Headteacher.
- The Steering Group was established in June 2007 to prepare the feasibility study for the Governing Bodies to consider.
- The relationship between the Steering Group, First School Governing Body and Middle School Governing Body deteriorated irretrievably and the study was not completed to the satisfaction of all members of the Steering Group.

- The Local Authority urged both Governing Bodies to re-start the process or begin the process again. Reconciliation was not possible.
- Without the Steering Group's completed feasibility study, the Middle School Governing Body considered amalgamation at their meeting on 17 November 2007 and decided against amalgamation. This letter is in Annexe A.
- With the evidence available and also without a completed feasibility study, the First School Governing Body also considered amalgamation. The Governors were in support of amalgamation and a copy of the letter is in Annexe B.
- The Local Authority considers that the Amalgamation Policy process has not been followed correctly.
- In accordance with the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the Local Authority has a duty to respond to parental representations.
- In the light of representations received from parents coupled with the incomplete process undertaken, it is proposed that Cabinet consider whether the Local Authority should undertake a consultation on the future organisation of West Lodge First School and West Lodge Middle School with all interested parties.

Should a consultation be undertaken the process will be as follows:

- Cabinet decision to undertake consultation January 2008.
- Local Authority undertake consultation with all stakeholders
- A report summarising the outcome of the consultation and making recommendations to Cabinet is prepared
- Cabinet determines whether to publish statutory notices at their meeting in April 2008.

Belmont First and Belmont Middle Schools

- The Governing Bodies of Belmont First and Middle Schools commenced the process to consider amalgamating the two separate schools in May 2007 when the Headteacher of the First School announced her retirement.
- A Steering Group with representatives from both schools was selected to undertake a feasibility study and present the study to the Governing Bodies separately for them to consider amalgamation.
- The Chair of Governors of the Middle School confirmed the Governors decision at their extraordinary meeting on 20 November 2007. The Governing Bodies voted separately. The First School Governors voted in favour of amalgamation. The Middle School Governors voted against.
- On the basis of these votes the schools will remain separate in accordance with the original amalgamation policy. The reasons presented by the Governing Body of the Middle School for not amalgamating are included in the letter dated 4 December 2007 in Annexe C.
- In considering the letter from the Governing Bodies confirming the details of their decisions and the process undertaken to prepare the feasibility

study for the Governing Bodies, it appears that the process has been undertaken in accordance with the Amalgamation Policy of November 2005.

- It is proposed that Cabinet notes the outcome of the Governing Bodies decisions and that the First School should initiate the process to appoint a substantive Headteacher. If, however, this appointment is not secured by April 2008, the Governing Bodies will be requested to undertake a further consultation on amalgamation in accordance with the October 2007 Amalgamation Policy.

Other Considerations

The officer support provided to schools considering the amalgamation is met from within existing budgets.

A combined school will retain the existing pupils and therefore will require the same staffing levels. As part of the combined school's development plan a new staffing structure will be developed to reflect the new organisation of the school. Appointments will be made to this structure over time.

Legal Comments

Parental Representations

The Local Authority has a duty under Section 14A of the Education Act 1996 to consider parental representations in respect of the provision of education. The guidance is issued under Section 3 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The Local Authority is under a duty to respond to parental demands and is "expected to provide dedicated consultancy support to help parents develop concrete proposals".

The Local Authority is compliant with the duty by asking the Governing Bodies and Steering Group to re-start the amalgamation process. Failure by the Governing Bodies to consider the overwhelming parental representations could result in referral to the Secretary of State. If the Governing Bodies can not establish a representative Steering Group then the Local Authority may have to initiate similar intervention. Throughout the process Governing Bodies must be reminded of their overriding duty towards the school and its pupils.

Changes to Schools

The Education and Inspection Act 2006 provides a framework for consultation, publication and determination of statutory notices in respect of proposals for schools, including the establishment of combined first and middle schools. The legislation has provision to amalgamate separate first and middle schools and create a combined school through two routes. Both routes retain all existing pupils and staff. The options are to close both schools and open a new school or close one school and extend the age range of the other school. However, under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 Local Authorities are required to apply to the Secretary of State for consent to establish new schools without a competition. Therefore to avoid any risk to the continuation of these successful schools it is proposed that one school is closed and the age range of the other is extended.

Financial Implications

Amalgamating schools have had a positive albeit small revenue effect, in previous cases this has resulted in net savings of approximately £40k. The principal saving results from having one head teacher instead of two. Schools will also benefit from having fewer SLA charges for some services, for instance, at

present first and middle schools are charged separately for the Schools Finance SLA. This will change to only one charge after amalgamation.

Capital expenditure, where necessary, will be financed through existing capital resources including for example Schools Devolved Formula, and other DCSF resources as they come on stream for example, the Primary Capital Programme from April 2009.

Performance Issues

Delivering School Re-organisation so that Harrow Schools are in line with the national agenda is Council Improvement Plan project IP7D and contributes to a range of performance indicators including Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) on achievement at all key stages, Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets including those for reducing NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training), and Average Points Score at 16 (GCSE Results) and the Every Child Matters Score Card. Whilst Harrow's performance is currently above national and statistical neighbours at all Key Stages, Harrow's targets, which are set annually by the DCSF, are highly challenging. Harrow has not made as much improvement in these KPIs over recent years as statistical neighbours. This is an indication of the pressures on these targets due to a changing demography. Harrow needs to act to maintain performance, meet the challenging targets it has been set and achieve the most positive outcomes for every Harrow child

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Bharat Jashapara	<input type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Chief Financial Officer
Date: 21 December 2007		
Name: Helen White	<input type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Monitoring Officer
Date: 3 January 2008	—	

Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

Name: Mike Howes	<input type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Divisional Director (Strategy and Improvement)
Date: 8 January 2008		

Section 5 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Author Contact: Johanna Morgan, Service Manager, Partnership and Well-Being, Adults and Housing Department, 020 8736 6841

Background Papers:

Report to Cabinet 17 October 2007 – Strategic Approach to School Organisation

If appropriate, does the report include the following considerations?

1.	Consultation	YES / NO
2.	Corporate Priorities	YES / NO

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West Lodge Middle School Governing Body



19th November 2007

Heather Clements Director – Schools and Children’s Development Group
London Borough of Harrow
Civic Centre
PO Box 22
Civic Centre
Harrow
HA1 2UW

Dear Heather

Re Amalgamation of West Lodge First and Middle Schools

As you are aware West Lodge Middle School Governing Body has been considering whether it would be in the best interests of the children of West Lodge to amalgamate the two schools.

At its meeting of 13th November 2007 a decision was taken by the Middle School Governing Body that it is not in the best interests of the children of West Lodge to amalgamate at this time. Our decision is primarily based on educational matters but we have also had regard to the impact of such a change on the staffing of the Schools. We have considered and discussed the findings of the Steering Group’s feasibility study and have taken its findings into account. We have also weighed up the views of all stakeholders. Whilst the response to meetings and the questionnaire from parents was good, the majority of parents did not express an opinion at all, and some parents expressed concerns about the size of an amalgamated school. Pupils were consulted and there was no overwhelming support expressed by the pupils either for or against amalgamation.

I set out our reasons briefly below but obviously we will be happy to meet with you and/or Paul Clarke to discuss further.

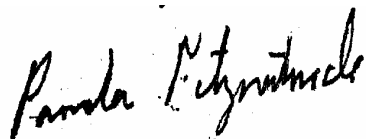
Summary of reasons

- Governors were not convinced that there were educational benefits if amalgamation took place sufficient to warrant major organisational change.
- Both schools are high achieving – much of the evidence about the benefits of amalgamation is based on schools with dissimilar i.e. lower standards of achievement.
- A much larger school may mean a loss of the currently highly individualised culture in the Schools e.g. the Headteacher of a larger school being familiar with few of the pupils
- Curriculum continuity between years 3 to 4, which already produces a high level of pupil learning and achievement, can also be further enhanced by greater liaison without the need for amalgamation.
- There are strong concerns that valuable Middle School staff may be lost or suffer a loss of morale as a result of amalgamation. This would be detrimental to the children and their education. Overall the staff group does not support amalgamation.
- Perceived benefits to school site would not be forthcoming due to expense – larger hall, dining room, new entrance and offices.
- Continuing building work – disruptive to education of children.
- No firm commitment from the LA of where money for site improvements would come from.
- The Governing Body was not convinced that the LA would provide sufficient support during any amalgamation either financially or otherwise. This is based on our experience of the support offered during the period of consideration of amalgamation and our experience at the time that the school flooded.
- Many of the stated benefits such as wider age range assemblies can be obtained through better communication between the schools – amalgamation is not necessary to achieve this.
- Harrow plans for the year 7 transfer to secondary schools remain unclear but as three form entry schools we are already amongst the largest in the borough.
- The issue of amalgamation had been considered three years ago but the First School staff at that time was very much against amalgamation. Middle School Governing Body had respected their wishes and agreed not to take the matter further.

We will be notifying parents by letter of our decision and calling a meeting to address any queries by parents.

I emailed you on 14th November asking for a meeting with you and Paul Clarke; I have not heard back from you and would be grateful if such a meeting could be set up as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pamela Fitzpatrick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P'.

Pamela Fitzpatrick
Chair of Governors
West Lodge Middle School

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**From the Governors of
WEST LODGE FIRST SCHOOL**
West End Lane, Pinner, Middlesex HA5 1AF
Tel: 0208 866 9836

Paul Clark
Corporate Director Children's Services
Harrow Council
PO Box 22
Civic Centre
Harrow HA1 2UW

12 December 2007

Dear Paul

I am writing in response to your letter of 7 December regarding the amalgamation process at the West Lodge schools.

The First School Governing Body met on 10 December in a desire to conclude our own process.

Based on the evidence before us and the strong views of parents, but in the absence of a completed Feasibility Study, we feel that amalgamation would be in the best interests of the schools. The voting was; 8 for; 0 against; 2 abstentions.

If you would like to discuss this further or need any more information, please feel free to contact me.

Kind regards

Andy Lane
Chair of Governors
West Lodge First School

Cc Heather Clements

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BELMONT MIDDLE SCHOOL

Hibbert Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA3 7JT
Telephone: 020 8427 0903
Facsimile: 020 8427 4738
Email: office@belmontmiddle.harrow.sch.uk



Headteacher:
Mrs H M Harris
Deputy Head:
Ms L Browning

→ HC
reply -

4th December 2007.

Dear Mr Clark

The Future Structure of Belmont First and Middle Schools

At the extraordinary governors meeting on Tuesday 20th November the governors of both First and Middle School discussed the future structure of the schools.

The governing bodies voted separately. First School governors voted in favour of the schools amalgamating.

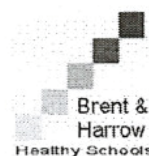
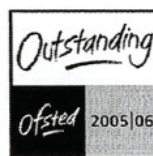
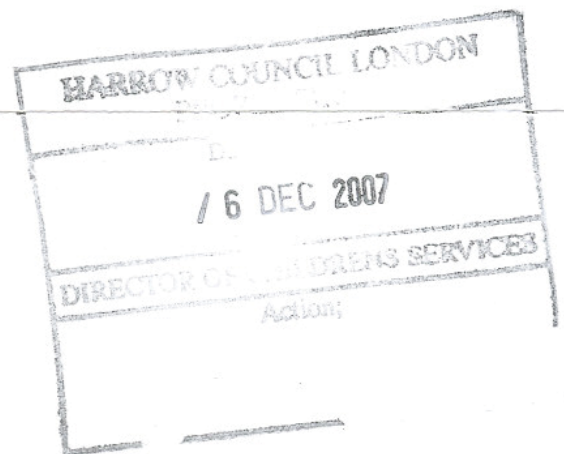
Middle School governors voted against the schools amalgamating for the following reasons:

- The outstanding Middle School Ofsted report would not be valid for an amalgamated school. Prospective parents and staff would have no benchmark to judge the school.
- Year 7 will go to high schools beginning with one high school in 2009 – this would cause further challenges for an amalgamated school.
- 88% of the responses to the formal consultation were against amalgamation.
- All five externally verified awards (plus 2 pending) would be lost and would have to be reapplied for thus increasing workload.

The schools will remain as separate First and Middle Schools.

Yours sincerely

K Rafiq
Chair, Middle School Governing Body



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