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WITH THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER PRIOR TO SEEKING
LEGAL, FINANCIAL, PERFORMANCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT
CLEARANCE

Ref PHD 005/13

REPORT FOR: Portfolio Holder Decision

SUBJECT: Future Organisation of Stanburn First
School and Stanburn Junior School

Responsible Officer: Catherine Doran
Corporate Director Children and Families
Services

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Zarina Khalid, Portfolio Holder for
Children, Schools and Families

Key Decision: No

Urgent/Non Urgent: Non Urgent

**Decision subject to
Call-in:** No

**Power to be
exercised:** Portfolio Holder Responsibilities (Allocation
of Responsibilities) – Paragraph 2 (i) of
Delegated Powers of Portfolio Holders,
Appendix to the Executive Procedure Rules,
Part 4D of the Constitution

Exempt: No

Enclosures:

- Appendix 1 – Letter from the Chair of Stanburn First School Governing Body
- Appendix 2 – Letter from the Chair of Stanburn Junior School Governing Body
- Appendix 3 – Themes from consultation responses

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out the outcome of the statutory consultation about the future organisation of Stanburn First School and Stanburn Junior School, and the recommendations of the two governing bodies.

Recommendations:

The Portfolio Holder is requested to:

1. Consider the outcome of the statutory consultation and the recommendations from the governing bodies, and;
2. Approve the publication of statutory notices to extend the age range and capacity of Stanburn First School (4-7 Years) and discontinue Stanburn Junior School as set out in paragraphs 23 to 26 of this report.

Reason: (For recommendation)

In line with the Council's amalgamation policy, combining the two schools would give the opportunity to further improve educational standards by enabling planning as a coherent whole across the primary phase of the national curriculum and providing greater flexibility across and between key stages. Access to the whole primary curriculum supports and informs whole school planning, assessment, pastoral systems, etc, and provides opportunities for wider staff development and experience across the full primary phase.

Section 2 – Report**Introductory paragraph**

1. Harrow's vision is to provide high achieving schools at the centre of community services, and 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 which incorporated the amalgamation policy. At its meeting on 18 July 2013, Harrow Cabinet is recommended to confirm reviewed and updated amalgamation policy documents.

Background

2. The Council's amalgamation policy requires separate infant/first and junior schools to amalgamate when one or more of the triggering circumstances arise unless there are compelling and over-riding reasons not to, and a headteacher vacancy in either or both schools is one of the triggering circumstances. The Headteacher of Stanburn Junior School will retire at the end of this academic year in August 2013 and one of the amalgamation policy triggers is met. During the Autumn Term 2012, the governing bodies of the two schools commenced the process to amalgamate the two schools in accordance with the Council's amalgamation policy by agreeing to set up a representative joint Steering Group to plan the consultation activity with the school communities.
3. The representative joint Steering Group met twice in January to agree the arrangements for consulting the school communities. The statutory consultation was held from Monday 21 January 2013 until Friday 15 February 2013.

Options considered

4. There are different models of school organisation and governance. This report considers a combined primary school providing Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in accordance with the Council's amalgamation policy.
5. Consultation activity by the governing bodies commenced in the Autumn Term 2012. The Governing Bodies of Stanburn First School and Stanburn Junior School established a representative joint Steering Group, with governing body representatives from both schools, to plan the consultation of the school communities about the amalgamation of the two schools. Two meetings of the Joint Steering Group, held on 7 January 2013 and 15 January 2013, planned the consultation process for a proposed amalgamation of the two schools in September 2013. A proposal evaluation document, a consultation paper, a response form and a cover letter were prepared.
6. The statutory consultation was held from Monday 21 January 2013 until Friday 15 February 2013. The consultation paper was sent to all parents, members of staff and governors on 21 January 2013. Three open consultation meetings for parents, staff and governors of both schools were held, two on 30 January at 9.00 am and 2.15 pm and one on 31 January 2013 at 7.30 pm, to enable discussion. Council officers attended these consultation meetings to present information and answer questions. The proposal evaluation document was made available from the school offices and websites and Harrow Council website, and was available at the open consultation meetings.
7. On 21 January 2013, Harrow Council sent the consultation paper to interested parties in accordance with the Department for Education School Organisation and Competitions Unit guidance, including neighbouring local authorities, diocesan authorities, local MPs and elected members, voluntary and community organisations, and Harrow Youth Council. Information about the amalgamation policy, the consultation paper and proposal evaluation were also made available on the Harrow Council website.

8. The outcome of the statutory consultation, next steps considerations and the recommendation of the Corporate Director of Children and Families are set out in the rest of this report.

Consultation outcomes

9. The consultation elicited the highest number of responses from all of the amalgamation consultations carried out under the Council's amalgamation policy. This response rate reflected the high level of concerns, confusion and feelings generated within the school communities during the process. In relation to this it should be noted that Stanburn Junior School Governing body sought opinions from parents by 4 January 2013 on three potential options about the future of Stanburn Junior School: Amalgamation; Federation; Academy status.
10. 473 recordable written responses to the consultation were received from parents and staff and other interested stakeholders. In addition responses were received from Harrow Association of Disabled People and the local Member of Parliament.

	I support combining the two schools	I do not support combining the two schools	I am not sure	Total
First School parent	28	95	12	135
Junior School parent	29	90	4	123
Parent in both schools	28	90	4	122
Member of staff in First School	27	3	12	42
Member of staff in Junior School	3	25	1	29
Other interested stakeholder:	19	2	1	22
Total	134	305	34	473
%	28.3%	64.5%	7.2%	100%

11. The representative joint Steering Group considered the outcome of the consultation at its meeting on 26 February 2014. The group noted that the information received may not give an accurate picture because of possible duplication of forms and concern that signatures were being sought in the playgrounds. To assist the group themes from the consultation responses were prepared with examples of the comments written by those in support and not in support of the proposals. These themes are included for information as Appendix 3.
12. The group reflected on the high level of responses, with almost two thirds of respondents not in support of combining the two schools, and the concern that relationships between the schools may have been damaged by the consultation processes. The group suggested the two Chairs of Governors meet following

discussion with their governing bodies to see if they can reach a mutual agreement or an acceptable alternative to amalgamation.

13. The Governing Body of Stanburn First School met on 28 February 2013 and voted for the two schools to be amalgamated with effect from September 2013. The Governing Body strongly felt that this is an outstanding school, with outstanding facilities, resources, staff and, of course, results. Likewise the Junior School has received an 'Outstanding' rating by OFSTED. The Governing Body could, therefore, see no detriment being caused to either school, or the wider community, by amalgamating the two schools into a new all-through primary school. The Governing Body acknowledged the need for both schools to have a productive working relationship as the schools share not only a site, but a building. This is essential for the good of the social and emotional well being of the staff, students and parents of both schools, and ultimately to continue with the outstanding academic progression for the students. The Governing Body letter dated 6 March 2013 included other contextual comments and is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
14. The Governing Body of Stanburn Junior School met on Wednesday 27 February 2013 and decided it did not support the proposed amalgamation and would work to seek an alternative outcome for the school. The Governing Body of Stanburn Junior School believed that its future was best served by remaining as a separate school. As a result it passed a resolution to seek Academy Status. Comment was made that the consultation results showed that a clear majority opposed the amalgamation and from the parents this view was common across both school communities as well as in the responses from parents who have children in both schools.

Next Steps considerations

15. Following the outcomes of the consultation and the opposing views of the two Governing Bodies, the Council deferred its decision about whether to publish statutory proposals to allow issues to be reconsidered. Officers met with the two Chairs of Governors to consider the next steps for moving forward.
16. The meetings with the Chairs of Governors were constructive and helpful and included discussion about a number of issues including: the consultation process; the consultation responses; leadership and governor changes since the consultation that would happen within the Junior School; the position in September; academy status; and the need to rebuild the relationship between the two schools. The local authority confirmed its amalgamation policy position of a Stanburn combined school.
17. There was in principle agreement around a number of themes including: the need to rebuild the relationship between the two school communities; acknowledgement that the local authority amalgamation policy was unlikely to change and the triggers would apply in future; and the need to secure the future leadership arrangements in the Junior School.
18. In line with the Council's Amalgamation Policy, it was proposed that the two schools combine, in a timescale that allows further work to be undertaken on what a combined Stanburn School would look like, and the journey to achieving this status. The proposed timescale would be for the Amalgamation to be effective from 1 January 2014. To achieve this, it was proposed, subject to the

agreement from both governing bodies, that a Task and Finish Group with representatives from both schools be established to consider what a combined school would be like and the journey to achieving a combined school.

19. Agreement was reached with the schools for a Task and Finish Group of 5 representatives from each governing body to meet and report on its work to the governing bodies. The Task and Finish Group met for the first time on 11 July and had open discussions following context setting by officers. Questions were raised by the representative governors that officers responded to, and a range of points were discussed. These included clarification of the governance and leadership arrangements of the combined school and communications with parents. The group decided it will continue to work together next term to facilitate processes towards amalgamation and to work with both Governing Bodies.
20. Stanburn Junior School Governing Body held an extraordinary meeting on 15 July and discussed feedback from the Task and Finish Group meeting. The Governing Body decided to support the move to amalgamation and has agreed to fully engage in the process. The general feeling of the governors at the meeting was that they were faced with no real alternative, as Harrow Council's Policy offered the Governing Body no viable options. The Governing Body having evaluated Academy Status, as an alternative, had to reject this as unsustainable due to the financial requirements. Also, having researched becoming a Federated School, the general consensus was that this would only delay the inevitable, resulting in further instability and disquiet. The letter from the Chair of Governors of Stanburn Junior School Governing Body is attached as Appendix 2.
21. Following the Task and Finish Group meeting on 11 July, Stanburn First School Governing Body has written to Harrow Council affirming its support for the amalgamation of the two schools. The letters dated 6 March 2013 and 17 July 2013 from the Chair of Governors of Stanburn First School Governing Body are attached as Appendix 1.
22. A letter is being drafted by the Task and Finish Group to the schools' community to keep them up-to-date with the proposed amalgamation and to clarify some of the points raised in the consultation. The Task and Finish Group will meet again in September.

Recommendation

23. The Corporate Director of Children and Families recommends that Harrow Council publish statutory proposals that, if approved, would combine the two schools on 1 January 2014.
24. It is acknowledged that the clear majority of views expressed by parents and staff during the statutory consultation did not support combining the two schools. Although the example in the Council's Amalgamation Policy that a compelling and over-riding reason not to proceed with the amalgamation could be a clear majority view of parents of children at the schools that is opposed to amalgamation, it is considered that other factors should be also taken into account:

- The high level of concerns, confusion and feelings that were generated within the school communities during the consultation process and that the consultation is not a vote.
 - The Governing Bodies had opposing views, with the First School supporting amalgamation and the Junior School not supporting and resolving to seek academy status.
 - Since this decision by the Junior School, the research into academy status has been completed and the Governors concluded that it was not a viable option as a separate school.
 - The discussions with the Chairs of Governors, their agreement to establish a Task and Finish Group and the subsequent decision of the Junior School Governing Body in support of amalgamation.
25. It is recommended that statutory proposals should be published and that Cabinet should make the final decision. The Amalgamation Policy approved by Cabinet sets out that Cabinet or the Portfolio Holder as decision maker will consider the outcome of consultation and recommendations from the Governing Bodies and decide whether to publish statutory proposals. The range of views expressed during the representation period and consultation and the recommendations of the two Governing Bodies would be reported to Harrow Cabinet to consider when making the key decision to determine the statutory proposals.
26. The statutory proposals would be published on 5 September 2013 as follows:
- A prescribed alteration to extend the age range of Stanburn First School (4-7 Years) to establish a primary school with an age range of 4 years (Reception) to 11 years (Year 6) from 1 January 2014;
 - A prescribed alteration to expand the capacity of Stanburn First School (4-7 Years) from 1 January 2014;
 - A notice to discontinue Stanburn Junior School on 31 December 2013.

Legal Implications

27. If Harrow Council decides to publish statutory notices, the decision should be made taking into account the view expressed during consultation. Regard should be given to the Secretary of State's guidance in this decision making.
28. If Harrow Council decides to publish statutory proposals, there would be a 6 week statutory period during which representations could be made. Cabinet would need to determine the proposals within two months from the end of the representation period, giving due regard to the representations received during the representation period. Cabinet's decision is subject to appeal to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator and / or judicial review. In the event Cabinet does not make a decision within two months of this period, the decision must be referred to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator, whose decision is also subject to judicial review.

Financial Implications

29. The governing body and leadership team of a combined school would have to plan strategically in a cost effective manner in the best interests of the children in order to achieve positive outcomes for the children in the long term.

30. The Government has introduced significant changes to school funding and is moving towards a national funding formula. Under the Government's new funding formula the combining of two schools would result in the loss of one element of 'lump sum' funding allocated to schools. In 2013/14 the lump sum amount is £142,230. The Government has recently announced that the formula for 2014/15 is changing and that if two schools merge they are now allowed to keep 85% of the 2 lump sums for the first year of the merger. If lump sum funding is retained by the Government, one lump sum would be lost after the first year of the merger for each year going forward. Though this is a significant issue it may be considered that it would only put the combined school in the same position as existing all-through primary schools. There would be reductions in expenditure through having one headteacher post and the governing body of the combined school could make decisions that would achieve efficiencies. No other elements of the school budgets would change.

Performance Issues

31. Harrow is a high performing Local Authority and the large majority of local services are judged to be good or better by Ofsted. Schools in Harrow perform well in comparison to national and statistically similar local authorities. The vast majority of primary schools and secondary schools are judged good or outstanding. Stanburn First School (4-7 Years) achieved an "outstanding" judgement at its Ofsted inspection in October 2009. Stanburn Junior School achieved a "good" judgement at its Ofsted inspection in April 2013.

32. The Schools White Paper and Education Act 2011 maintain a focus on driving up standards in schools, and place more of the responsibility with the schools directly for their improvement. The role of the Local Authority in measuring performance and driving improvement has changed significantly and is reduced from its previous level. However, the Local Authority maintains a strategic oversight and enabling role in local education, and is likely to retain some role in monitoring educational achievement and key measures such as exclusions and absence. The Local Authority is also statutorily responsible for supporting and improving underperforming schools.

33. The Local Authority continues to monitor key education indicators. The indicators are used locally to monitor, improve and support education at both school and local authority level; they are also used within information provided to the DfE. The indicators fall within the following areas:

- Attendance and exclusions - remain a statutory duty for the Local Authority to monitor and improve;
- Narrowing the Gap - is a fundamental part of Ofsted's school inspection process, and accordingly the Local Authority monitors the attainment of identified groups of pupils in its schools, for example SEN children;
- Underperforming schools – schools are assessed at Key Stage 2 & Key Stage 4 against defined floor standards.

Environmental Impact

34. There is no significant environmental impact arising from these proposals.

Risk Management Implications

35. A summary of high level risks is provided below.

High Level Risks	Consequences	Mitigating/Control Actions
Challenge to decision making.	Delay.	The decision maker must have due regard to the Secretary of State's guidance for decision makers in reaching its decisions on school reorganisation proposals.
Clarification of the Council's Amalgamation Policy.	Confusion for stakeholders.	In response to issues raised by the DCSF in regard to the amalgamation policy, and a corporate complaint investigation relating to a school involved in a school reorganisation process, Cabinet agreed a clarified policy at its October 2008 meeting. This clarification does not change the policy requirements.

Equalities implications

36. An equality impact assessment will be undertaken if it is decided to publish statutory proposals before Cabinet makes its key decision. It is envisaged that the equalities impact of Harrow Council's decision whether to combine the schools will be effectively neutral. No children would be displaced if the schools amalgamate or if they stay separate.

Corporate Priorities

37. The proposed amalgamation of the two Stanburn schools will support the Council's Corporate Priorities:

- United and involved communities: A Council that listens and leads;
- Supporting and protecting people who are most in need;

by providing opportunities to enhance educational standards and to further promote positive community outcomes by ensuring the most effective and coordinated extended services support to families and children, and the use of school facilities.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Signature:

Name: Patricia Harvey

on behalf of the
Chief Financial Officer

Date: 22 July 2013

Signature:

Name: Linda Cohen

on behalf of the
Monitoring Officer

Date: 24 July 2013

Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

Signature:

Name: David Harrington

on behalf of the
Divisional Director
Strategic
Commissioning

Date: 22 July 2013

Section 5 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance

Signature:

Name: Andrew Baker

on behalf of the
Corporate Director
(Environment &
Enterprise)

Date: 18 July 2013

Section 6 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Chris Melly, Senior Professional, Education Strategy and School Organisation 020 8420 9270 chris.melly@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers:

Consultation paper on the Future Organisation of Stanburn First School (4-7 Years) and Stanburn Junior School.

Department for Education School Organisation and Competitions Unit guidance for decision makers

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/schoolorganisation>

Signature:

Position Corporate Director Children and Families

Name (print) Catherine Doran

Date:

For Portfolio Holder

* I do agree to the decision proposed

* I do not agree to the decision proposed

** Please delete as appropriate*

Notification of disclosable non-pecuniary and pecuniary interests, any conflict of interest or dispensation granted by the Head of Paid Service(if any):

[Should you have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, you should not take this decision.]

Additional comments made by and/or options considered by the Portfolio Holder

Signature:

Portfolio Holder

Date:

**Call-In Waived by the
Chairman of Overview
and Scrutiny
Committee**

YES/ NO / NOT APPLICABLE*

*(for completion by Democratic
Services staff only)*

** Delete as appropriate
If No, set out why the decision is
urgent with reference to 4b - Rule
47 of the Constitution.*