

Meeting:	Cabinet Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	11 October 2007 20 November 2007
Subject:	Strategic Approach to School Organisation
Key Decision:	Yes
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 – High Achieving Schools at the Centre of Community Services Annexe B – Amalgamation Policy Annexe C – Stakeholder Reference Group Terms of Reference

SECTION 1 – SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report outlines the reasons for considering a strategic approach to school organisation at this time and proposes a framework for seeking stakeholder support for a way forward.

RECOMMENDATIONS: (for Cabinet)

Cabinet is requested to:

- i. affirm commitment to implementing a change in the age of transfer from 12 to 11 years;
- ii. establish a stakeholder reference group;
- iii. agree to the submission of a revised Building Schools for the Future (BSF) bid in accordance with Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) guidance;
- iv. agree an amended amalgamation policy.

Recommendation: (for Overview and Scrutiny Committee)

To note the report.

SECTION 2 – REPORT

Performance Issues

1. 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 KPIs on achievement at all key stages, 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.

Background

2. Harrow schools are popular and successful and perform consistently in line with or above National Averages at all Key Stages. There are good partnerships between schools, the local authority and other organisations and as a result many schools provide a range of opportunities for the local community. The Council's commitment to this agenda is confirmed in its Vision Statements and associated Corporate Priorities. The Vision Statement to provide high achieving schools at the centre of community services translates to a Corporate Priority to continue improvement in schools and make education in Harrow even better.
3. Whilst this level of achievement has been maintained, demographic data indicates that the profile of Harrow is changing. Therefore, the challenge for Harrow is to secure the most effective school organisation for the 21st Century that supports the best outcomes for all schools and local communities and maximises the use of resources.
4. The organisation of schools in Harrow has been the subject of debates and surveys with stakeholders. The School Organisation Debate in 2002 confirmed a consensus amongst stakeholders to increase post-16 opportunities, increase provision for early years and change the age of transfer to 11. The Harrow Sixth Form Collegiate has increased choice and opportunities for post-16 education, including provision on school sites, and Early Years provision has been developed with the Early Years Partnership.
5. As part of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme, in 2003 Harrow submitted a bid for capital to change the age of transfer and provide post-16 provision on school sites. However, Harrow was placed in Tranche E (waves 13-15) for BSF funding, which means that it is not expected that Harrow will receive capital funding for high schools until at least 2011-2013.

Recent Developments relating to School Organisation

6. There are a range of local and national factors relating to school organisation that together create a context in which it would be appropriate to undertake preliminary work to support a change in the age of transfer. The factors are outlined as follows:
7. There will be a DCSF consultation in the Autumn Term 2007 regarding the BSF programme and it is hoped that there will be the opportunity to re-submit the Harrow BSF bid and secure earlier funding.
8. Since the BSF Programme announcement, the DCSF has brought forward some of the funding for One-School Pathfinder Projects. Whitmore High School will be re-developed under the Pathfinder project, and there is a requirement to create capacity for Year 7 pupils on completion in Autumn 2009.
9. The DCSF Primary Capital Programme funding will be available from 2009. In readiness for this funding for primary schools, each school is preparing a school development plan to inform capital investment. These plans address individual school needs as informed by the Asset Management Plan (AMP) within the context of the school covering the full primary age range. This is a real opportunity for first and middle school that will secure considerable investment in their school buildings.
10. As part of the preparation for the BSF programme and the implementation of the Sixth Form Collegiate with LSC capital funding School Development Plans for high schools have been prepared. From these initial reviews and a consideration of the pupil roll numbers and projections, it would appear that with an increase in the planned admission number of each high school, it would be possible to accommodate Year 7 pupils without the need for a new additional high school. The requirement for an additional high school has been a major challenge in considering the change in age of transfer as there is no immediate site availability within Harrow. This is a positive development.
11. A review of the pupil roll numbers and projection data for primary pupils indicates that the supply of school places matches the expected demand. Therefore no further changes to the number of places within the primary sector are envisaged.
12. Since Cabinet agreed the Amalgamation Policy in 2005, six schools have amalgamated to establish 3 combined first and middle schools. From September 2007 there will be 32 separate first and middle schools. The combined schools are more aligned with National Curriculum Key Stages and there will be less impact with the change in the age of transfer. A continuation of this policy will secure a good foundation for the implementation of a change in the age of transfer.
13. Within the context of both National and Local developments, a position paper has been prepared that outlines the context for the change in the age of transfer and a supporting rationale for the proposed change. This paper Strategic Approach to School Organisation is in Annexe A. In addition, there is a range of background papers providing supporting

information. These include school roll projection data referred to in paragraphs 10 and 11.

Moving Forward

14. Changing the age of transfer is a challenging and complex project and will impact on all schools in Harrow. It involves delivering teaching and learning within the context of the removal of approximately 2,000 Year 7 places from the first and middle school sector and their relocation into high schools.
15. In order to maximise the advantage of being able to re-submit a bid to the DCSF as part of the BSF programme it is essential that preparatory work is completed. At this stage this work will include: project planning and timelines; establishing the representative stakeholder group to assist with planning and implementation; briefing and engaging key stakeholders; developing the communication and consultation strategy; developing HR strategies and financial models to support the change programme; and undertaking feasibility studies to assess school capacity for increased high school rolls etc. If the BSF bid is successful there will be wide consultation including details for all schools. This will be followed by the publication of statutory notices, their determination and implementation.
16. There is also real potential to secure exciting and quality outcomes for all Harrow's communities. Engaging stakeholders at the outset in the development of a school organisation strategy and retaining their commitment throughout the strategy's implementation is critical. The timescale needs to be challenging but realistic to ensure that the full benefits are experienced by those children, young people and communities now as well as in the future. A representative Stakeholder Reference Group will be established in accordance with the Terms of Reference in Annexe B. It is planned that the Group will commence their work in January 2008 when there is greater clarity in respect of the BSF consultation outcomes.
17. In preparation for a change in the age of transfer, there will be the continued implementation of the Amalgamation Policy. This is provided in Annexe C. This has been amended from the agreed policy to reflect the up-dated context of school re-organisation and the requirement for any separate first and middle schools to become separate infant schools (Reception to Year 2) and junior schools (Year 3 to Year 6) when the age of transfer is implemented. The process also includes reference to the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and associated regulations introduced in May 2007 regarding competitions for new schools.
18. Finally a response to the DCSF Building Schools for the Future consultation in the Autumn Term will be prepared and, if we are allowed to under the revised DCSF guidance, the bid will be re-submitted to the DCSF Building Schools for the Future programme.

Legal Comments

19. Making changes to the age range of schools is subject to the Education and Inspections Act 2006. This legislation provides a framework for

consultation, publication and determination of statutory notices in respect of proposals for schools.

Resource Implications

20. The School Re-Organisation project will be dependent on capital funding for the high schools available through the DCSF Building Schools for the Future programme. The DCSF Primary Capital Programme will provide capital for the first and middle schools from 2009.

21. This project will be contained within existing revenue budgets, including some capitalisation of salaries where appropriate. Through the Service Planning process, Services across the Council will need to take into consideration specific contributions from their areas.

SECTION 3 - STATUTORY OFFICER CLEARANCE

Chief Finance Officer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Name: Bharat Jashapara
		Date: 28 September 2007
Monitoring Officer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Name: Helen White
		Date: 26 September 2007
Performance Officer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Name: Mike Howes
		Date: 28 September 2007

SECTION 4 - CONTACT DETAILS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

Contact:

Johanna Morgan
Service Manager, Partnerships and Well-Being
Adults and Housing Directorate
020 8736 6841

Background Papers: None

IF APPROPRIATE, does the report include the following considerations?

1.	Consultation	Yes
2.	Corporate Priorities	Yes
3.	Manifesto Pledge Reference Number	N/A