

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	18 December 2008
Subject:	Future Organisation of Belmont First School and Belmont Middle School
Key Decision:	Yes
Responsible Officer:	Heather Clements Director of Schools and Children's Development
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Anjana Patel Portfolio Holder for Schools and Children's Development
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Annex A - Decision Makers Guidance

## Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

Statutory Proposals were published in October 2008 that could effect the amalgamation of Belmont First School and Belmont Middle School. No objections have been received during the representation period. Cabinet approval is sought to enable the two schools to combine in September 2009.

### **Recommendations:**

Cabinet is asked to determine the statutory proposals to enable Belmont First School and Belmont Middle School to combine in September 2009.

### **Reason: (For recommendation)**

Cabinet must determine the statutory proposals within two months from the end of the representation period, and with regard to the statutory and non-statutory guidance provided by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF).

## **Section 2 – Report**

### **Introduction**

1. 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.

### **Options considered**

2. The Headteacher of Belmont First School retired, and in May 2007 the governing bodies commenced the process to consider amalgamating the two schools in accordance with the Council's amalgamation policy agreed in February 2005. At the conclusion of the process, the Belmont First School Governing Body voted in favour of amalgamation, and the Belmont Middle School Governing Body voted against. At its meeting on 17 January 2008 Cabinet noted the decisions of the Governing Bodies of Belmont First and Belmont Middle Schools in respect of amalgamation, and resolved that if a substantive Headteacher to Belmont First School was not appointed by April 2008, the Governing Bodies be requested to reconsider.
3. A substantive Headteacher to Belmont First School was not appointed by April 2008, and the governing bodies commenced the process to amalgamate the two schools in accordance with the Council's amalgamation policy. The October 2007 amalgamation policy requires separate first and middle schools to amalgamate when one or more of the triggering circumstances arise unless there are compelling and over-riding reasons not to. The governing bodies formed a representative steering group to plan the consultation process and agree a consultation document to send to all stakeholders. A consultation was conducted from 9 June 2008 until 27 June 2008. This consultation met the requirements of the DCSF School Organisation Unit guidance on closing and making changes to schools.
4. At their meeting on 18 September 2008, Cabinet considered the outcome of the consultation and the recommendation of the governing bodies that the two schools should amalgamate from September 2009. Cabinet agreed to publish statutory proposals that could effect the amalgamation of the two separate schools. In accordance with practice under the October 2007 amalgamation policy, the statutory proposals that were published were to discontinue the school where the headteacher vacancy has arisen, and to extend the age range and expand the capacity of the other school.

### **Statutory Notices**

5. Three linked statutory proposals were published that could effect the amalgamation of Belmont First School and Belmont Middle School to provide an all through primary school. The following two statutory proposals were published on 6 October 2008 with a statutory representation period of 6 weeks.
  - A prescribed alteration to extend the age range of Belmont Middle School to establish a school with an age range of 4 (Reception) to 12 (Year 7) with attached nursery class from 1 September 2009.
  - A notice to discontinue Belmont First School on 31 August 2009.

6. The third statutory proposal was published on 20 October 2008 with a statutory representation period of 4 weeks:
  - A prescribed alteration to expand the capacity of Belmont Middle School from 360 to 639 from 1 September 2009.
7. This staged approach to publication ensured that all three proposals had the same closing date for the representation periods. The local authority received no representations or comments during the representation period.

### **Determination of statutory proposals**

8. In its role as the Decision Maker, Cabinet must have regard to the statutory and non-statutory guidance provided by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, when determining statutory proposals. The guidance has been provided to all Cabinet Members, and is available as background papers. Annex A provides Cabinet with commentary on the salient points contained in the Decision Makers' Guidance

### **Legal comments**

9. The Local Authority has a statutory entitlement under ss.15 and 19 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, to issue statutory proposals in respect of school reorganisation. The statutory proposals were published following Cabinet on 18 September 2008. The proposals must be determined by Cabinet within two months of the representation period which ended on 17 November 2008. Cabinet must have regard to the Secretary of State's guidance when reaching its decision.

### **Financial Implications**

10. Amalgamating schools has a positive albeit small revenue effect, and in previous cases this has resulted in improved efficiencies of approximately £40k. The principal efficiencies result from having one headteacher instead of two. Schools would also benefit from having fewer Service Level Agreement (SLA) charges for some services, for instance, at present first and middle schools are charged separately for the Schools Finance SLA. This would change to only one charge after amalgamation.
11. Capital expenditure, where necessary, would 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.

### **Performance Issues**

12. Delivering School Reorganisation 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, in particular the following from the new National Indicator Set. NI 72 – 109 'Enjoy and Achieve' indicators covering Key Stage achievement and progression, narrowing the gap for lower performing and vulnerable groups, attendance, behaviour, special educational needs.
13. Whilst Harrow's performance is currently above national and statistical neighbours averages at all Key Stages, Harrow's targets, which are set annually for the DCSF, are highly challenging. The table below presents Harrow's performance against its targets and the national averages.

### Harrow's 2006-07 Results

<b>KS1</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>National</b>
Reading L2+	84.7%	Not set	84%
Writing L2+	81.0%	Not set	80%
Maths L2+	90.5%	Not set	90%
Science L2+	88.2%	Not set	89%
<b>KS2</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>National</b>
English L4+	82%	85%	80%
Maths L4+	79%	85%	77%
Science L4+	88%	Not set	88%
<b>KS3</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>National</b>
English L5+	79%	82%	74%
Maths L5+	79%	80%	76%
Science L5+	75%	78%	73%
<b>GCSE</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>National</b>
% 5+ A*-C	68.0%	67.5%	62.0%
% 5+ A*-C incl E&M	56.1%	Not set	46.8%

### **Risk Management Implications**

14. Risk included on Directorate risk register? No  
 Separate risk register in place? No

15. A summary of high level risks is provided.

<b>High Level Risks</b>	<b>Consequences</b>	<b>Mitigating/Control Actions</b>
Challenge to Cabinet decision making.	Delay.	Cabinet must have regard to the Secretary of State's guidance for decision makers in reaching its decisions.
Statutory consultation about school reorganisation during the autumn.	Confusion for stakeholders.	Cabinet is being asked to determine the statutory proposals to amalgamate the Belmont schools, before any statutory proposals are published about school reorganisation. The school reorganisation consultation papers explain the position.
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, Cabinet agreed a clarified policy in October 2008. This clarification does not change the policy requirements.

### **Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance**

Name:	John Stansfield	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date:	20 November 2008		

Name:	Helen White	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date:	25 November 2008		

## Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

Name:	David Harrington	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Divisional Director (Strategy and Improvement)
Date:	20 November 2008		

## Section 5 - Contact Details and Background Papers

**Contact:** Chris Melly, Senior Professional, Transforming Learning Team  
020 8420 9270 [chris.melly@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:chris.melly@harrow.gov.uk)

### Background Papers:

Papers of Cabinet 17 January 2008 - Amalgamation of First and Middle Schools

Papers of Cabinet 18 September 2008 - Future Organisation of Belmont First School and Belmont Middle School

DCSF School Organisation Unit guidance for decision makers  
[www.dcsf.gov.uk/schoolorg](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/schoolorg)