

Committee:	Education Consultative Forum
Date:	29 June 2009
Subject:	INFORMATION REPORT – School Reorganisation
Responsible Officer:	Director Schools and Children’s Development, Heather Clements.
Portfolio Holder:	Portfolio Holder for Schools and Children’s Development, Councillor Anjana Patel.
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Cabinet Reports 23 April 2009 Annexe A • Proposals for School Reorganisation in Harrow and Annexes 1 & 2 Annexe B • Proposals to change the age range of four voluntary aided schools and Annexes 1 - 5

Section 1 – Summary

The Forum asked to be kept updated on the progress of the school reorganisation project. The April Cabinet reports on Proposals for School Reorganisation in Harrow and Proposals to Change the Age Range of Four Voluntary Aided Schools are attached for the Forum for information.

FOR INFORMATION

Section 2 – Report

1. In January 2009, Cabinet considered the outcome of the statutory consultation on proposals for school reorganisation in Harrow and decided to publish statutory proposals that, if approved, would have the effect of establishing infant, junior, primary and secondary community schools in Harrow in September 2010
2. Statutory proposals were published on 9 and 23 February 2009 in relation to 52 community schools. Also on 9 February 2009, the governing bodies of four voluntary aided primary schools published separate proposals to lower the upper age limits of their schools.
3. On 23 April 2009, Cabinet approved all the statutory proposals as published, and there is now a legal duty to implement the changes from September 2010.

Section 3 – Further Information

4. A framework is already in place to progress the implementation work, including officer resources and a stakeholder reference group. Workstreams have been established, many of which have representative sub-groups. This has ensured the engagement of key stakeholders and promoted a collaborative and shared approach to resolving the issues that arise in a project of this scale. There has been progress in the work of all the workstreams, and two key areas of activity to date have been workforce strategy and school finances.

Workforce

5. Support to all school staff through the changes is a priority, and the aim is to avoid the need for any redundancies. Tools to assist workforce planning have been distributed to schools, and a simple survey format has been developed to enable termly monitoring of progress with workforce planning. An initiative called 'Springboard' has been developed to facilitate the matching of staff interests with career development opportunities arising in schools. Human Resources staff are available to support schools, and are planning workshops for school staff in the autumn held at four locations across the borough to facilitate attendance.

School Finance

6. Schools have received their indicative 2010/11 and 2011/12 budgets, including an indication of the transitional protection funding they will receive. The indicative budgets use assumed pupil numbers following the change to the ages of transfer. However further refinement to the budgets is required in respect of premises and pupil specific funding. The Schools Forum has agreed to review the proposals for revising the premises costs as determined by changes to schools' floor space. An updated 2010/11 indicative budget will be issued to all schools in December 2009.

7. Schools are undertaking their budget planning for 2010/11 and 2011/12 based on the indicative budgets. Guidance on budget planning and the financial rules has been distributed to all schools. This includes a four step approach to set the budget and options to manage any arising deficits. The Schools Financial Support Team is available to support schools, and planning for the change in ages of transfer is the focus of their meetings with schools in June. Workshops for schools are proposed to be held in the autumn term to further assist schools to develop their plans.

Headteacher Seminars

8. A series of Headteacher Seminars have been arranged to support schools and to promote the sharing of issues and potential solutions. The seminar in March focussed on Workforce Planning, the seminar in May on Finance Guidance and Workforce Planning, and the seminar in June will focus on Capital and Site Development. Further dates for seminars will be scheduled for each half term in the next academic year, and the views of headteachers will be sought to identify the most relevant focus for each seminar.
9. Other workstreams are also continuing. The admissions workstream is focussing on communications for admissions in September 2010. Curriculum development planning will be progressed through the next year, together with a continuing staff training programme.
10. Officers are working with schools on proposals about the refurbishment of existing space, and the volume of temporary accommodation that will be needed, to enable Year 7 pupils to be accommodated in the high schools. Discussions are being held to agree the level of work needed so that proposals can be costed.

Communications

11. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) formats are being used to keep staff informed. The first FAQ focussed on workforce planning, and the next FAQ will focus on site development issues. These documents, and the relevant guidance documents that have been issued to headteachers and chairs of governors, are published in the public area of the LGfL Harrow portal so that they are readily accessible to all schools.
12. Work is in hand to prepare a milestone chart for the implementation period to assist headteachers and governors to plan ahead, and it is proposed that key action summaries will be issued every half term to highlight the key activities in the coming weeks.

Governors

13. Presentations have been made to Chairs of Governors and Clerks meetings, and a training session has been held for governors with a focus on workforce and finance issues. Information is included in the Governors Bulletin, and further sessions to assist governors will be arranged as may be necessary.

School Specific Issues

14. The impact of the school reorganisation is different for all schools as their individual circumstances vary. Officers are supporting all schools to manage the process in accordance with the needs of the schools. There is an established school organisation officer group that will ensure that there is a coordinated approach to supporting schools.

Section 4 – Financial Implications

15. The main impact of the school reorganisation is on the primary school sector driven by the movement of pupils out of this sector. There is no additional funding available and the change has to be managed from within the current School Budget Share. The Finance Working Group developed proposals that were agreed by the Schools Forum in January 2009 to support the implementation of school reorganisation. These proposals include transitional support for a period of two financial years where schools' budgets are significantly affected and where balances at 31 March 2008 were below the Audit Commission's recommended level of 8%. Headteachers are now working on their indicative budgets with support from officers.

16. The funding for the temporary accommodation is available from DCSF Targeted Capital Grant, part of Modernisation Funding, and was agreed by Cabinet in February 2009 as part of the Children's Service's Capital Programme.

17. The Council has submitted an Expression of Interest to the DCSF for funding through the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) initiative. BSF will provide funding for the site development of the high schools, including permanent building to replace the temporary accommodation provided to enable Year 7 pupils to be accommodated. The successful assessment of a Readiness to Deliver submission is part of the gateway entry to the BSF programme. No timescale has been provided for Harrow to submit its document.

Name:	Emma Stabler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date:	15 June 2009		

Section 5 - Contact Details and Background Papers

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Background Papers:

School Reorganisation Cabinet Reports 19 June 2008 and 15 January 2009.