

REPORT FOR: **CABINET**

Date of Meeting:	19 July 2012
Subject:	Future Organisation of Roxbourne Infant School and Roxbourne Junior School
Key Decision:	Yes
Responsible Officer:	Catherine Doran Corporate Director Children and Families
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Brian Gate Portfolio Holder for Children, Schools and Families
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	Yes
Enclosures:	Annexe A – Decision Makers Guidance

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

Statutory Proposals were published in May 2012 that could effect the amalgamation of Roxbourne Infant School and Roxbourne Junior School. No objections have been received during the representation period. Cabinet approval is sought to enable the two schools to combine in January 2013.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to determine the statutory proposals in relation to Roxbourne Infant School and Roxbourne Junior School to enable the amalgamation of the two schools in January 2013, namely to:

- Extend the age range of Roxbourne Infant School to establish a primary school with an age range of 4 years (Reception) to 11 years (Year 6) with attached nursery class from 1 January 2013;
- Expand the capacity of Roxbourne Infant School from 1 January 2013;
- Discontinue Roxbourne Junior School on 31 December 2012.

Reason: (For recommendation)

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.

Cabinet agreed the publication of statutory proposals and is under a statutory duty to determine the proposals within two months from the end of the representation period, which ended on 2 July 2012, or the matter is referred to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator for determination.

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 included an amended amalgamation policy.

Options considered

2. Cabinet have the following options when considering these proposals:
 - a. Reject the proposals;
 - b. Approve the proposals;
 - c. Approve the proposals with modification e.g. in relation to the implementation date;
 - d. Approve the proposals subject to meeting a separate condition.
3. There are separate proposals for the two schools, however these are linked and the proposals should be considered together.

Background

4. The Headteacher of Roxbourne Junior School left during the Autumn Term 2011. During the Spring Term 2012, the governing bodies commenced the process to amalgamate the two schools in accordance with the Council's October 2007 amalgamation policy. The October 2007 amalgamation policy requires separate infant 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 statutory consultation was held from Monday 16 April 2012 until Friday 11 May 2012. This consultation met the requirements of the Department for Education School Organisation and Competitions Unit guidance on closing, expanding and making changes to schools.

5. The governors of the two schools are very mindful of the need to secure permanent headteacher arrangements as soon as possible to ensure continuity of leadership to enhance education standards for the children in the longer term. In order to enable final decision about the future organisation of the schools to be made by the end of the Summer Term 2012, a Portfolio Holder decision was made on 17 May 2012 to publish statutory proposals. In making this decision, the Portfolio Holder considered the outcome of the statutory consultation and the recommendations of the governing bodies that the two schools amalgamate.
6. The statutory proposals that were published were to extend the age range and capacity of the infant school and to discontinue the junior school. In accordance with usual practice in implementing the policy, the junior school is proposed to be legally discontinued because there is no substantive headteacher in post at that school.

Statutory proposals

7. Linked statutory proposals were published on 21 May 2012 with a statutory representation period of 6 weeks that if approved would effect the amalgamation of Roxbourne Infant School and Roxbourne Junior School to provide an all through primary school:
 - a. A prescribed alteration to extend the age range of Roxbourne Infant School to establish a primary school with an age range of 4 years (Reception) to 11 years (Year 6) with attached nursery class from 1 September 2013;
 - b. A prescribed alteration to expand the capacity of Roxbourne Infant School from 1 September 2013;
 - c. A notice to discontinue Roxbourne Junior School on 31 December 2012.
8. The local authority received no representations or comments during the representation period, other than a request from the two governing bodies that the date of implementation of the amalgamation be modified to 1 January 2013. Governors consider the earlier date for implementation would bring a level of stability and certainty to school leadership. The staff and children should be more settled as a headteacher should be in place by then and they would not have to cope with a drawn out process.

Determination of statutory proposals

9. In its role as the Decision Maker, Cabinet must have regard to the statutory and non-statutory guidance, provided by the Department for Education, when determining statutory proposals. The guidance on expanding a maintained school by enlargement, making changes to a maintained mainstream school, closing a maintained mainstream school and giving children and young people a say have been provided to all Cabinet Members, and are available as background papers. Annexe A provides Cabinet with commentary on the salient points contained in the Decision Makers' Guidance.

Recommendation

10. The Corporate Director of Children and Families Services recommends that Cabinet approve the proposals, with modification in relation to the published implementation date, to effect the amalgamation of the two schools with effect from 1 January 2013.
11. 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.

Legal comments

12. 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 on 21 May 2012 following the decision made by the Portfolio Holder. Cabinet must determine the proposals within two months of the representation period, which ended on 2 July 2012, or the matter is referred to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator for determination. Cabinet must have regard to the Secretary of State's guidance when reaching its decision, and should consider the representations received during the course of the publication period when making their decision.
13. The Decision Makers Guidance states that whilst each case should be considered on its merits, there is a presumption in favour of approval for infant/junior school amalgamations.

Financial Implications

14. Previous experience suggests that amalgamating schools can generate savings in revenue spend of approximately £40k for the combined school. This is a result of having one headteacher instead of two and efficiency savings from sharing back office functions and Service Level Agreement (SLA) charges.
15. A long-term strategy for the development of the school site as a combined school would be required. There may be minor changes to the premises that would enhance the workings of the school as a combined school as funding becomes available. Funding for such works would have to be considered as a call on the schools' capital programme.

Performance Issues

16. 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. Most primary schools and all secondary schools are judged good or outstanding.
17. 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 is changing significantly and will reduce from its current level. However, the Local Authority will maintain 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 exact nature of the respective roles and responsibilities is still emerging and is being discussed with the schools.
18. Although the national indicator set has been abolished by the Department for Communities and Local Government, all of the key education indicators remain in place and continue to be reported to the Department for Education (DfE). This

situation remains under review and the DfE is yet to provide clear guidance on if and how educational performance will be judged at a borough level.

19. There are implications for the provision of performance and management information to other services within Children's Services where schools' data is not transferred to and held by the Council. This includes data from academies and other schools not taking up some interdependent SLAs.

Environmental Impact

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

Risk Management Implications

21. A summary of high level risks is provided in the table below.

High Level Risks	Consequences	Mitigating/Control Actions
Challenge to Cabinet decision making.	Delay.	Cabinet 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

22. The equality impact assessment indicates that the equalities impact of Cabinet's decision will be effectively neutral. No children would be displaced if the schools amalgamate or if they stay separate.

Corporate Priorities

23. The proposed amalgamation of the two Roxbourne schools will support the Council's Corporate Priorities for 2011-2012:

- 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

Name:	Emma Stabler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date:	21 June 2012		

Name:	Sarah Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date:	20 June 2012		

Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

Name:	David Harrington	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Divisional Director Partnership, Development and Performance
Date:	21 June 2012		

Section 5 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance

Name:	Andrew Baker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Divisional Director (Environmental Services)
Date:	20 June 2012		

Section 6 - Contact Details and Background Papers

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

Background Papers:

Portfolio Holder decision report 17 May 2012 - Future Organisation of Roxbourne Infant School and Roxbourne Junior School

Equality Impact Assessment.

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

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

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

NOT APPLICABLE

[Call-in applies]