

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

10 AUGUST 2006

**REPORT OF
CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Children and Young People – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Cunningham

PROPOSED AMALGAMATION OF ROSEBERRY INFANT SCHOOL WITH ROSEBERRY JUNIOR SCHOOL

1. Summary

Cabinet agreed on 18 May to consultation on the possibility of amalgamating Roseberry Infant School with Roseberry Junior School to form a single primary school with nursery.

A consultation paper was widely circulated and meetings were held for parents and for school staff. The idea of amalgamation was also discussed at meetings of the governing bodies of the two schools, and in a joint meeting of governors and staff from both schools.

That joint meeting acknowledged a need to improve collaboration between the schools, which had declined during a period of temporary leadership at Roseberry Junior School. The principal concern expressed was that an amalgamation would need careful planning and preparation to avoid any adverse impact on standards of education and behaviour. Impending changes in leadership at Roseberry Infant School would make the timing of any amalgamation an important issue. There were also practical issues related to the use of separate buildings some distance apart. A small number present opposed the principle of amalgamation, and it is likely that other staff members who were not present will take a similar view, but the consensus in the joint meeting was that amalgamation in September next year would allow sufficient time to prepare, agree and implement an action plan for the future of these schools as a single primary school.

Among the small number of parents who responded there was general support for the idea of amalgamation.

2. Recommendation

Members are asked to agree that a Statutory Notice be published inviting comment on a proposal to:

cease to maintain Roseberry Infant School and Roseberry Junior School with effect from 31 August 2007;
and to establish in the same premises a Community Primary School, with nursery, on 1 September 2007.

A draft Notice is attached as **Appendix 1** to this report.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

Sections 28 to 31 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (modified in some details by the Education Act 2002) lay down a statutory procedure governing major changes to school organisation. Taking account of all views expressed during consultation with interested parties, the Authority may publish a formal proposal by means of a Statutory Notice inviting comment from any person.

This would be followed by six weeks in which any person may comment in writing. After the expiry of that six-week period, the Authority could determine to implement the amalgamation only if no written objections had been received. If there were objections, the proposal would normally be determined by the School Organisation Committee, taking account of all written comments (and the Authority's observations on them) and having regard to statutory guidance issued to decision-makers by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills. Any decision of the School Organisation Committee would be final. Should the Committee fail to agree, the proposal would be referred to an independent Adjudicator for decision.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (paragraph 8) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgment of the public interest (paragraph 10 of the code of conduct).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting is being held, whilst the matter is being considered; not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (paragraph 12 of the Code).

Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc.; whether or not they are a member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting, and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room during consideration of the relevant item.

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

10 AUGUST 2006

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

**PROPOSED AMALGAMATION OF ROSEBERRY INFANT SCHOOL WITH ROSEBERRY
JUNIOR SCHOOL**

SUMMARY

Cabinet agreed on 18 May to undertake consultation on the possibility of amalgamating Roseberry Infant School with Roseberry Junior School to form a single primary school with nursery.

A consultation paper was widely circulated and meetings were held for parents and for school staff. The idea of amalgamation was also discussed at meetings of the governing bodies of the two schools, and in a joint meeting of governors and staff from both schools.

That joint meeting acknowledged a need to improve collaboration between the schools, which had declined during a period of temporary leadership at Roseberry Junior School. The principal concern expressed was that an amalgamation would need careful planning and preparation to avoid any adverse impact on standards of education and behaviour. Impending changes in leadership at Roseberry Infant School would make the timing of any amalgamation an important issue. There were also practical issues related to the use of separate buildings some distance apart. A small number present opposed the principle of amalgamation, and it is likely that other staff members who were not present will take a similar view, but the consensus in the joint meeting was that amalgamation in September next year would allow sufficient time to prepare, agree and implement an action plan for the future of these schools as a single primary school.

Among the small number of parents who responded there was general support for the idea of amalgamation.

RECOMMENDATION

Members are asked to agree that a Statutory Notice be published inviting comment on a proposal to:

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DETAIL

Method of consultation

1. A detailed consultation paper was circulated to:
 - a. parents of children attending Roseberry Infant School (including the nursery), and Roseberry Junior School;
 - b. all teaching and other staff of both schools;
 - c. representatives of staff unions and professional associations;
 - d. the Headteachers and Chairs of Governors at neighbouring primary schools;
 - e. the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle;
 - f. Hartlepool Borough Council;
 - g. Ward Councillors for the Billingham North, East, West and Central wards;
 - h. The Member of Parliament for Stockton North.
2. Meetings were held for parents of children attending Roseberry Infant School on 22 June and Roseberry Junior School on 20 June 2006. Only two parents attended each meeting. The statutory procedure leading to amalgamation was explained, including the role and membership of the School Organisation Committee, and the requirement that all views expressed during consultation be taken into account.
3. Meetings were also held for members of staff at the schools on 20 and 21 June. Officers of the Council's Human Resources section were present. Fourteen staff members attended each meeting. Representatives of unions and professional associations had been invited but none were present. The decision-making procedure was explained, and the effect of amalgamation on school budgets was illustrated. An officer described the timetable for decisions on staffing an amalgamated school, the functions of the temporary governing body and the options open to them. She confirmed that the Authority would advise governors to ring-fence all new posts for existing staff in the first instance, and to attempt to match individuals to posts in the new structure as far as possible.
4. Possible amalgamation was discussed at meetings of the two governing bodies on 21 June (Roseberry Junior) and 27 June (Roseberry Infant). An informal joint meeting took place on 12 July. The outcome is reported in paragraphs 11 to 15 below.

Views expressed by parents

5. One parent described amalgamation as a sensible move, and wondered why it had not been proposed before.
6. A parent asked how one headteacher could manage a school across two sites. It was pointed out that many primary schools in the Borough (and almost all secondary schools) have more than one building. The headteacher is supported by a management team, which in a primary school might be larger school than in the separate schools. Removing duplication would reduce the overall administrative burden of a single school in comparison with that of two separate schools.
7. One written message was received from a parent expressing complete support for amalgamation.

Views expressed at the meetings for school staff

8. Staff were assured that amalgamation would not in itself cause any reduction in establishment other than the loss of one headteacher post: future staffing requirements would be largely dependent on pupil numbers, which are projected to remain relatively stable for some years. There is a prospect of further housing development on a site within the schools' shared admission zone.
9. In response to a question on the impact of amalgamation on staff, it was confirmed that although new contracts would be necessary (in the name of the new primary school) conditions of service would be unchanged. Individuals would remain in continuous service with the Authority.
10. No other general concerns were expressed. All staff members were given contact details so that individual issues might be discussed privately with HR officers.

Views expressed at the joint meeting of governors and staff members

11. A printed statement signed by thirty members of staff at the infant school had been circulated before the meeting. It set out a number of grounds for their belief that an amalgamation in April 2007 (as suggested in the Authority's consultation paper) or in September 2007 would risk a fall in standards of education and behaviour. These included:
 - a. the distance separating the infant and junior buildings
 - b. successful Ofsted reports and Beacon status for the infant school
 - c. a desire to avoid successive changes in leadership (retirement of the present headteacher, an acting head for a time, and then a new head for the primary school)
 - d. the relative inexperience in their roles of the present junior school headteacher and the infant deputy head
 - e. the preference of many of the infant staff to work only with infants.

The statement pointed out some advantages in retaining separate infant and junior schools:

- f. smaller schools may be less intimidating for young or timid children
- g. teaching can be better fitted to the needs of children in each age group, with specialist teaching for each key stage
- h. each school has a unique ethos and management style.

The statement confirmed that staff were not opposed to amalgamation but stressed the need for sufficient time to plan any change in a way that would minimise disruption to children and staff. The infant school would be without its deputy headteacher, at least for the autumn term 2006, due to maternity leave. She would not return to duty before the date of the headteacher's retirement in December. This lack of continuity would make preparation for an April amalgamation difficult.

12. The need to improve liaison and co-operation between the schools was acknowledged, and some considered that setting a date for amalgamation would create an impetus for this.
13. Members of staff at the junior school described the impact on the school after a headteacher left for another post. Governors had not been able to appoint a permanent successor from the available candidates, and two temporary appointments were made before a permanent replacement was appointed last year. That period of uncertainty

and instability was unsettling for children and staff. An early decision on amalgamation might reduce the impact of change when the infant school headteacher retires.

14. One individual expressed firm opposition to the idea of amalgamation at any time.
15. After some discussion of alternatives to amalgamation, including the possibility of a federation of governing bodies, a consensus emerged in favour of a proposal to amalgamate in September 2007.

Conclusions from the consultation process

16. Around 400 children attend these two schools and the nursery at Roseberry, but only four people attended the parents' meetings. One other parent sent an email message of support for the idea of amalgamation. No parent expressed outright opposition to the idea of amalgamation, and it is reasonable to believe that any who were strongly against amalgamation would have made an effort to say so.
17. The joint meeting of governors and staff was well attended, and produced a clear consensus, but not every governor or member of staff was able to attend. One person present was firmly opposed to amalgamation, and it is likely that others in the school community will take a similar view. Publication of a Statutory Notice would give all parents, governors and staff members a second opportunity to comment, as well as opening consultation to the general public.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial

18. Any capital costs arising from amalgamation (e.g. a footpath between the buildings, cabling to support a single ICT network system) will be met from existing budgets.
19. There are no implications for the overall education revenue budget. Under the Authority's Fair Funding formula, the amalgamated school would receive an annual delegated budget estimated at £1,167,472 (at 2006-07 prices) compared with the current aggregate for the two schools of £1,170,729. The difference, £3,257, would remain part of the overall schools' budget and would be allocated across all schools maintained by the Authority.

Legal

20. This proposal falls under Sections 28 and 29 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, and Schedule 6 to that Act, both as modified by the Education Act 2002. The School Organisation Unit in the DfES has confirmed that the draft Statutory Notice appended to this report complies with statutory requirements.

RISK ASSESSMENT

21. A risk assessment has been carried out. The proposal is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

22. Education and Lifelong Learning

The proposal has been put forward with the aim of supporting improved delivery of the curriculum and pastoral care for pupils, and increased efficiency in the management of the schools.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

23. Consultation is described in the body of the report.

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Background Papers

School Organisation Plan 2006-09 available on the Council website.

Cabinet report dated 18 May 2006.

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Billingham North: Coun. Mrs J L Apedaile, Coun. K Dewison, Coun. C Leckonby.

Billingham East: Coun. A Cunningham, Coun. M N Stoker.

Billingham Central: Coun. N Teasdale, Coun. B Woodhouse.

Property

An amalgamated school would continue to occupy the buildings currently used by the two separate schools.

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

In respect of

Roseberry Infant School, Billingham and Roseberry Junior School, Billingham

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN in accordance with Section 28(1) and Section 29 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 that Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council intends to:

- I. cease to maintain from 31 August 2007 Roseberry Infant School and Roseberry Junior School, Billingham, Stockton-on-Tees;
- II. establish on 1 September 2007 in the same premises a Community Primary School for 420 boys and girls between the ages of 3 to 11.

The new school will occupy the premises of the existing Roseberry Infant and Junior Schools at The Causeway and Marsh House Avenue, Billingham. Every pupil on roll at the two schools on 31st August 2007 will be offered a place at the new school.

The Admission Authority of the proposed school will be Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Local Authority. The number of boys and girls to be admitted to the reception class of the main school at age 4½ in September 2007 and subsequent years will be up to 60. Up to 78 boys and girls aged 3 years and above will be admitted to the nursery. It is intended that the school will have a capacity of 420 full-time places plus 78 part-time nursery places (equivalent to 39 full-time nursery places).

Transport arrangements to the new school will remain as for the two existing schools. Points of entrance to the site for vehicles and pedestrians will be determined in consultation with governing bodies and transport engineers.

It is intended that the curriculum of the new school will promote citizenship and a positive appreciation of cultural and religious diversity, adopting a race equality policy as required by the 2001 amendment to the Race Relations Act 1976. The school will be expected to work in co-operation with statutory, voluntary and community groups in accordance with the Children and Young People's Plan for Stockton-on-Tees.

Within six weeks after the date of publication of these proposals, any person may make representations (either for or against the proposals) by sending them in writing to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, Children, Education, and Social Care (Ref: JH), PO Box 228, Municipal Buildings, Church Road, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 1XE. If any objections to the proposal are received (and not withdrawn in writing) within the representation period, the Local Authority will send to the School Organisation Committee for the area copies of all comments received, together with the Authority's observations on them.

Ann Baxter, Corporate Director for Children, Education and Social Care
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

1 September 2006

Explanatory Notes

1. The purposes of this proposal are to support higher standards in teaching and learning by improving continuity and consistency in teaching and learning, increasing flexibility in staffing and management, and promoting cost-effectiveness.
2. Parents of children attending the schools have been notified of and consulted on the proposal by letter and at public meetings held on 20 and 22 June 2006.