

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Executive
Date: 19 August 2019
Report for: Decision
Report of: Executive Member for Children's Social Care

Report Title

Approval to Consult on a Proposal to Discontinue Stamford Park Infant School and Stamford Park Junior School and to establish a New Primary School on the existing school grounds.

Summary

This report proposes that the LA initiate consultation on the proposal to amalgamate the two schools into a single primary school with a single leadership team. This would be achieved by the discontinuation of Stamford Park Infant School and Stamford Park Junior School and the establishment of a new Primary School on the existing grounds. The LA intends to publish a related proposal to build a new three form entry primary school on the playing field and then demolish the existing Infant and Junior Schools' buildings to create a new playing field and school car park.

Recommendation(s)

The Executive is asked to agree to consult on the proposal to discontinue Stamford Park Infant School and Stamford Park Junior School and to establish a new Primary School on the existing school grounds.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Sarah Butters, Head of Early Years, School Places and Access
Extension: 3233

Background Papers: None

Relationship to Corporate Priorities	Ensuring a fair start for all children and young people.
Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework	Children starting school ready to learn.
Financial	The capital cost of building a new 3-form entry (FE) primary school would be met from Basic Need Grant.
Legal Implications:	The proposal to discontinue the two community schools would be made in accordance with section 15(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and a proposal to establish a new community primary school would be a Section 11 proposal, made in accordance with section 11(A3) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, as amended by the Education Act 2011.
Equality/Diversity Implications	Schools are required to meet current appropriate Equality and Diversity Legislation however there are no direct implications from this proposal.
Sustainability Implications	There are no sustainability implications from this proposal.
Resource Implications e.g. Staffing / ICT / Assets	There are no e-government or asset management implications from this proposal. The proposal to build a new 3FE primary school will increase the number of places at the school by 20 per year group. Additional staff will be required as the number of pupils increase. The appointment of staff and school organisation will be a matter for the Governing Body of the new school.
Risk Management Implications	There are no specific strategic or operational risks to this proposal.
Health & Wellbeing Implications	None.
Health & Safety Implications	Schools are subject to current health and safety legislation but there are no direct impacts from this proposal.

1. Background

- 1.1 Trafford Council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient places in schools and early years settings and a duty to meet the needs of children and young people with special education needs and disabilities (SEND).
- 1.2 To support the achievement of this duty, and to meet any risks in relation to school conditions and access, the Council has received Basic Need capital funding (for expansion of pupil places)
- 1.3 In order to meet the need for additional places in the Altrincham/Hale Barnes area, both at the normal year of entry and in upper year groups, the LA proposed, in early 2019, that Stamford Park Infant School and Stamford Park Junior School, which together provide 70 places in each year group, be discontinued and replaced with a 3 form entry primary school so creating 20 additional places per year group in a central Altrincham location.

- 1.4 The current Stamford Park schools were built in the early 1900's and the condition of the existing buildings is deteriorating. The buildings are currently undersized based on the government's Building Bulletin 103 guidance and the existing school site is too tight for expansion. Infant classes are currently vertically grouped, that means that mixed age classes are employed. The need for mixed age classes would be removed by the expansion to 3 straight forms of entry. This proposal was subject to informal consultation during June and July 2019. This report sets out the results of that consultation and proposes further consultation on establishing a three form entry primary school to serve the Stamford Park and wider Altrincham community
- 1.5 Statutory Guidance issued by the Department for Education *Opening and closing maintained schools Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers* published in November 2018 provides the process for the amalgamation of two (or more) schools.
- 1.6 The process is to discontinue both Stamford Park Infant and Stamford Park Junior Schools and open a new Primary school. This will be on the site of the existing grounds.
- 1.7 The new 3 form entry (FE) primary school would be built on the existing school playing field. Once built the existing buildings would be demolished to make way for a new playing field and car parking for the School. There isn't any car parking available at the Schools so parents, staff, and visitors have to park on the adjacent streets. All the current land and space occupied by the two Schools would be used to build the new School and provide car parking, playing field and play space.
- 1.8 The two Schools both have a Pupil Admission Number (PAN) of 70. If the proposal to build a new school is approved then the new Primary School would have a PAN of 90. The LA is keen to expand the number of school places in the Altrincham area as there is a shortfall of places across all primary year groups. Year on year Stamford Park Infant School is over subscribed for admission to Reception as demand from parents for places is high. Stamford Park Infant and Junior Schools are in a central location within the Altrincham planning area which will provide places within reasonable distance for anyone residing in the area, including those living on the furthest edges.
- 1.9 Initial discussions have taken place with the Governing Bodies of Stamford Park Infant and Junior Schools and details are set out in the Consultation Section below.

2. Benefits of a New Primary School

- 2.1 Whilst separate phase schools are often committed to working together and making transitional links, a single primary school can more readily provide:
 - A clear vision which is shared and understood by all stakeholders;
 - A seamless curriculum, which is broad, balanced and demonstrates clear continuity and progression in learning;
 - An environment where children can work and play together, whilst developing a greater understanding and appreciation of each other's strengths, skills and personalities;
 - A seamless educational journey with fewer transitions in learning;
 - Continuity in provision, particularly for the most vulnerable children and those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND);

- A strong partnership between school and parents with a shared understanding of aspirations and expectations for teaching and learning;
- Opportunities for staff development and enhanced expertise which can be shared across one establishment;
- Reduction in staff workload through an increased workforce;
- Oversight by one governing body to drive the school's strategic planning, ensure robust accountability and monitor whole school development;
- More effective and efficient deployment of resources and use of accommodation.
- A streamlined and stronger administrative infrastructure, thereby avoiding duplication of resources; and
- Opportunities for further curriculum enrichment and extra-curricular activities.

2.2 Due to the limitations of the site and the condition of the pre-war buildings it is not possible to extend the existing buildings to accommodate an additional 20 pupils per year group. The proposal to build a new 3 FE primary school will provide fit for purpose, modern accommodation.

2.3 The current school building is 2,355m² and the minimum new school building would be 3,081m² in line with the DfE Building Bulletin 103 guidance giving 766m² additional accommodation. The Governing Body of the new Primary School would be involved in the design of the new building although the LA as client would have final sign off.

2.4 Disruption to pupils and staff would be kept to a minimum as the new school would be constructed on a separate site. Pupils and staff would only move to the new facilities once the school was ready for occupation.

3 Financial Implications

3.1 The capital cost for building a new 3 FE Primary School would be met from Basic Need Grant, as detailed in the *Education and Early Years Basic Need and SEND Capital Report* which was approved by the Executive in June 2019.

3.2 The LA would commission the design phase of the project through Amey and this would run alongside the informal consultation to produce a detailed project plan. This will incur pre-planning costs to the LA of around £400-£500k, also met by Basic Need Grant.

4 Other Options

4.1 Do nothing. The Schools will remain as separate entities and the local authority will proceed with the alternative option to create an additional 15 places at The Willows Primary School. This will not create as many additional places and may not meet the needs of as many families, due to a less central location not providing places within reasonable distance for anyone residing in the furthest edges of the planning area.

5 Consultation

5.1 Informal discussions have taken place with Governing Bodies of Stamford Park Infant and Junior Schools and information provided in response to questions about timescales, school organisation, governance, finance and the design and building of a new school.

5.2 Local Ward Members were briefed on the proposal on 6 February 2019.

- 5.3 The Governing Body of Stamford Park Infant School has expressed their support of the LA's proposals. However, the Governing Body of Stamford Park Junior School has rejected the LA's proposal.
- 5.4 Following the approval of the *Education and Early Years Basic Need and SEND Capital Report*, parents requested the opportunity to share their views about the LA's proposal for Stamford Park Infant and Junior Schools. As a result, the LA hosted an informal survey on their website.
- 5.5 A total of 1,011 informal survey responses were received. Of these, 397 respondents provided their name and contact details and/or reasons why they agreed or disagreed with the proposal, referred to as verified responses. The remaining 614 respondents did not provide any name, contact details or reasons why they agreed or disagreed with the proposal, referred to as minimal responses.

5.6 Tables 1 to 3 are based on the 397 verified responses.

Table 1: Summary of responses by category of respondent:

Category	Agree		Disagree		No Preference		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Parent	149	82%	31	17%	2	1%	182	100%
Local resident	43	29%	104	70%	2	1%	149	100%
School staff	15	56%	12	44%		0%	27	100%
Other stakeholder	12	31%	26	67%	1	3%	39	100%
Total	219	55%	173	44%	5	1%	397	100%

Table 2: 196 of the respondents who agreed with the proposal provided reasons, summarised as follows:

Reason for agreeing with proposal to amalgamate in new building	No.	%
Improved facilities that a new build school would provide	120	61%
Improved learning experience and/or pupil journey	103	53%
Improved financial position achieved through economies of scale	36	18%
Centralised leadership team - common ethos and consistent approach	32	16%
Current buildings not fit for purpose and/or in poor state of repair	31	16%
Against academisation	15	8%
More school places on offer in the area to meet increasing demand	13	7%
Reduced class sizes and/or no requirement to vertically group classes	7	4%
Improved SEND provision and transition for SEND pupils	5	3%
Better communication between the two schools	4	2%
More off street parking created to alleviate current parking issues	2	1%

Table 3: 119 of the respondents who disagreed with the proposal provided reasons, summarised as follows:

Reason for disagreeing with proposal to amalgamate in new building	No.	%
Want to preserve the existing heritage buildings	53	45%
Impact on parking due to increased pupil and staff numbers	37	31%
Impact on traffic due to increased pupil and staff numbers	29	24%
Design and size of the new building, views from residential properties	20	17%
Prefer the current separate education offer including small school ethos	18	15%
Want to preserve the current playing field for environmental reasons	15	13%
Playing field site not big enough to fit a 3 form entry school	7	6%
Negative impact on education provision during building works	6	5%
Don't want disruptions for residents caused by building works	6	5%
Negative impact on house prices in the area	5	4%
Support academisation of the Junior School	5	4%
Don't want any of the existing school staff to lose their job	4	3%
Safeguarding risk of field site for new build as only one entrance	4	3%
Object to consultation approach - focus on amalgamation not build	4	3%
Fear of sale of land for new housing development	3	3%
Trust the Junior School governing body decision	3	3%
Little room left to play within proposed new school	3	3%
Fear the caretaker will lose his house	2	2%
Should use the money for something else, such as pot hole repair	1	1%
Don't want sports facility on current school site	1	1%

5.7 Table 4 is based on 614 minimal responses.

Table 4: Summary of minimal responses by category of respondent.

Category	Agree		Disagree		No Preference		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Parent	8	5%	148	94%	2	1%	158	100%
Local resident	5	1%	344	99%		0%	349	100%
School staff	2	13%	13	87%		0%	15	100%
Other stakeholder	3	3%	89	97%		0%	92	100%
Total	18	3%	594	97%	2	0%	614	100%

5.8 There were two key spikes in these minimal responses where duplicate anonymous forms with no reasons specified were submitted in quick succession for sustained periods of time at a rate of up to four duplicate submissions per minute. It is highly likely that a person or persons have tried to influence the outcome of the informal survey by submitting duplicate blank surveys.

6 Next Steps – Further informal consultation and potential formal proposals

6.1 In light of the recent consultation and the pressing need for additional school places in the area it is recommended that further consultation on proposals to establish a three form entry primary school to replace the existing Stamford Park Infant and Junior schools be taken forward

6.2 Additional precautionary measures would be taken in the proposed next informal consultation period to verify responses. It would only be possible to submit a response by providing name, address and contact details in addition to comments on the proposal.

6.2 The period of informal consultation needs to allow adequate time for all parties to express their views and to allow that these views can be properly considered. Although not prescribed, good practice would allow at least six weeks from the date of the publication. Consultees will include:

- the governing bodies of both schools;
- families of pupils, teachers and other staff at the school;
- any other LA likely to be affected by the proposals, in particular neighbouring authorities where there may be significant cross-border movement of pupils;
- the governing bodies, teachers and other staff of any other school that may be affected;
- families of any pupils at any other school who may be affected by the proposals;
- any trade unions who represent staff at the school; and representatives of any trade union of any other staff at schools who may be affected by the proposals;
- MPs whose constituencies include the schools that are the subject of the proposals or whose constituents are likely to be affected by the proposals;
- any other interested party; and
- such other persons as appear to the proposers to be appropriate.

6.3 At the end of the six week period the Executive Member considers the feedback and decides whether or not to proceed with the publication of statutory notices, which provides all interested parties a period of four weeks to submit representation to the proposal. At the end of this stage the Executive will then determine the outcome.

6.4 If a decision is taken to proceed with publication of statutory notices, the following notional timetable sets out the next stages in the process:

Action	Date
<p>1. Informal Consultation</p> <p>Announcement of informal consultation to relevant parties and publication on school and Trafford websites.</p>	September 2019
<p>2. Publication of statutory notices</p> <p>4 weeks for representations to be made to the Local Authority ends</p>	<p>January 2020</p> <p>February 2020</p>
<p>3. Determination by the Executive</p> <p>Executive/Executive Member approves application to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) for determination</p> <p>Application to the OSA for approval</p>	<p>March 2020</p> <p>April 2020</p>
<p>4. Implementation</p> <p>Recruitment process for Head of new school starts</p> <p>New school opens</p>	<p>September 2020</p> <p>September 2021</p>

7 Reasons for Recommendation

- 7.1 To support Trafford’s corporate priority to ensure a fair start for all children and young people and the vision that all pupils are able to thrive and achieve their educational outcomes through fit for purpose and high quality learning environments.
- 7.2 To ensure compliance with the Council’s statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for all children resident in its area.

Key Decision No
If Key Decision, has 28-day notice been given? N/A

Finance Officer ClearanceHZ.....
 Legal Officer ClearancePD.....



CORPORATE DIRECTOR’S SIGNATURE

