

**FINAL DIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM**

**Function/Policy:** Proposed closure of Northview Primary School and expansion of Westrop Primary School

**1.1 Setting up responsibilities**

|  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| <b>a) Which Directorate is responsible for the function policy?</b>  | Children Services |
| <b>b) Names and contact details of officers carrying out the assessment</b>  |                   |
| Ian Bickerton<br>Tel: 465724<br>Email: ibickerton@swindon.gov.uk   |                   |
| <b>c) Function/policy being assessed</b>   |                   |
| Is this function/policy new/proposed? N/A<br><br>When was the function/policy introduced? N/A<br><br>Date of last Impact Assessment? N/A |                   |
| <b>d) Please identify which equality group(s) you are focusing this assessment on.</b>   |                   |
| Age, disability, gender, race, religion & belief and sexual orientation  |                   |

**1.2 Function/Policy Description****a) Please provide a brief description of the function/ policy that is being assessed, including its aims and objectives.**

1. It is proposed to close Northview Primary School in Highworth and expand Westrop Primary School nearby. The basic reason for this is the reducing pupil numbers in Northview Primary School and in Highworth as a whole. This trend is forecast to continue for the foreseeable future. This approach fits with the Council's overall policy on school organisation and addressing increasing numbers of surplus places, as set out in the School Organisation Plan, Primary Capital Strategy and elsewhere.
2. The main stakeholders are children, parents, staff, the school community and the local community as a whole.
3. The majority of pupils at both Northview and Westrop Primary Schools are of white, British origin and, at 90.7% and 91.5%, the numbers are higher than the Swindon average. Northview Primary School has 17.6% eligibility for free school meals, which is higher than the Swindon average of 10.6%, whilst Westrop Primary School has a lower figure of 6.87%. The indices of multiple deprivation scores calculated using individual postcode data taken from the 2009 Schools Census show both Schools are below average for deprivation. Northview and Westrop Primary Schools are ranked in 42<sup>nd</sup> and 43<sup>rd</sup> (out of 60) places respectively across Swindon schools.
4. As indicated, the overall aim of the policy is to address falling pupil numbers. Although this proposal would include the closure of a primary school, it would also involve the expansion of another, which would aim to benefit the local community with increased resources and capacity. However, parents and others associated with Northview Primary School are strongly opposed to its closure.
5. As indicated in the report to Cabinet in May 2009, the proposal is as a result of a significant and increasing level of surplus places in the Highworth area. This proposal has not been driven by school standards, as the levels of pupil achievement at both Westrop and Northview Primary Schools are not in question. However, as indicated in the May report, there is a concern that the level of surplus capacity at Northview Primary School is likely to adversely affect school standards, school organisation and financial viability in the longer-term. There is also confidence that expanding Westrop Primary School would help to build capacity to raise standards further.

**b) What opportunities does this function/policy offer to promote equal opportunities?**

This proposal is not expected to have a detrimental effect on equal opportunities. As described later in this Assessment, the expansion of Westrop Primary School may help to promote equal opportunities particularly through the development of the Children's Centre and other activities being undertaken on that site.

In relation to the opportunity to comment on the proposals, during the pre-statutory consultation, which took place in Summer 2009, there was full consultation undertaken with all key stakeholders, including the wider local community. Everyone had the opportunity, therefore, to put forward comments and views about the proposal. There was also the opportunity for parents and others to express their opinions at the October 2009 meeting of Cabinet, at which the results of the pre-statutory consultation were reported. Having heard these views, Cabinet decided that they wished to pursue the proposal to the statutory consultation stage. This stage offers the opportunity for anyone to put their views in writing on the proposal over a six-week period. There is a further opportunity for people to make their views known at the meeting of the Cabinet Panel on 3 February 2010, when the final decision will be made.

There has, therefore, been considerable opportunity from the beginning of July 2009 for all the key stakeholders, including the wider community, to express their opinions at the consultation meetings, at Cabinet meeting and in writing. As far as at all possible, every opportunity has been provided for all key stakeholders within the local Highworth community – in particular, those associated with Westrop and Northview Schools – to put forward their opinions and obtain further information about the proposal.

**c) What issues may prevent this function/policy from promoting equal opportunities?**

The aim of the "pre-statutory" consultation was to seek views as inclusively as possible from the School community, the wider community and other individuals/groups who may have had an interest in the proposals. The aim was to ensure that the consultation reached as many groups and organisations as possible, including any specific equality groups operating within the Highworth area or who would have a remit for that area.

The Primary schools in Highworth are designated as "rural" schools by the DCSF and, as such, there are particular issues that must be addressed before any decisions are taken. One of these is "impact on the local community". It is, therefore, essential that when the Cabinet Panel meets on 3 February 2010 the impact on the local community and community cohesion is addressed as far as possible. Normally with school organisation proposals, it is primarily the school community that is consulted. However, in this particular case, the pre-statutory consultation was also aimed at the wider local community, so that local residents and others had the opportunity to put forward their views. This was particularly in the form of two drop-in sessions held in September 2009 specifically aimed at the wider local community.

### **1.3 Consider the existing evidence**

#### **Is there any evidence of different levels of take-up, outcomes or satisfaction levels for any of the equalities groups and, if so, what?**

The local school community of Northview Primary School, in particular, is very concerned about the possible closure of the School and these views have been expressed in discussions held to date and in the responses reported to Cabinet in October 2009. The Governing Body of Westrop Primary School and other Head Teachers in the area have generally been supportive of what is proposed.

If this proposal is eventually agreed, it is not expected that there will be specific issues for any particular equality group. However, it remains possible that there could be some indirect implications for a specific group or sub-group. Of more direct relevance is the impact that the proposal could have on the local community around Northview Primary School with the potential loss of a focal point within that community. If this proposal were to proceed, every effort would be made to address issues that arose and two particular strategies would help in this respect, as follows:

~ Developing Westrop Primary School as a focal point within the wider local community, particularly with the current development of a Children's Centre and relocated pre-school playgroup. Westrop Primary School will be able to provide an opportunity to develop links with the wider community and specifically with a broader range of extended school opportunities. The Children's Centre is able to offer the following services:

- > Jobs and Benefits advice and childminding training
- > Family and parenting support
- > Child and family health services
- > Early Years education provided by the voluntary sector in partnership with the School

~ The potential use of Northview Primary School for a community facility (yet to be decided), which would have a positive impact on the local community and community cohesion in the longer-term.

#### **1.4 Assessment of impact**

##### **Is there an adverse impact on any of the equality groups?**

- It has not so far been identified that there will be a direct or indirect adverse impact specifically on the equality groups listed. However, as demonstrated in this assessment, there would be an impact on the overall community, including the local school communities of Westrop Primary and, in particular, Northview Primary. This will particularly impact on parents and children, together with staff at Northview Primary School.
- However, the position will be closely monitored throughout to identify whether there is any noticeable impact on any of the equality groups identified.
- As indicated elsewhere, it is not considered that this proposal would have an adverse effect on school standards or the quality of education provided. It is considered that the proposal could help to strengthen the Every Child Matters outcomes, particularly by developing Westrop Primary School as a focal point within the wider local community, including the continued development of the Children's Centre and the Playgroup. This is described in more detail in paragraph 1.3 above.

**1.5 Corrective action**

**Are you able to put in place any corrective action(s), ie, changes or practical measures that would help overcome the adverse outcomes identified above?**

The consultation and communication approaches to this proposal are being continually reviewed. The consultation process is largely set down by DCSF regulations, as there needs to be a “pre-statutory” consultation for at least six weeks, followed by (if agreed) a statutory consultation for a further six weeks. At the end of this process, a final decision will need to be made by a Panel of Cabinet. There have been, therefore, numerous opportunities for key stakeholders and the local community generally to put forward their views, both directly and indirectly. Unlike most other school reorganisation proposals, there has been a specific consultation event for the wider local community, involving two days of drop-in sessions in early/mid-September 2009. In addition, the communications methods being used and the quality of material have been kept under regular review and close links have been established, for example, with Corporate Communications for their input.

**1.6 Completing the Initial Diversity Impact Assessment**  
**Summary of corrective actions to be taken**

| <b>Action</b>  | <b>Completed</b>               |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Ensure that all residents and those associated with the two Schools in Highworth are aware of the Cabinet Panel meeting on 3 February 2010.                          | December 2009/<br>January 2010 |
| Ensure that all relevant papers are made available to the Cabinet Panel for 3 February 2010, including the responses received to the statutory consultation process. | January 2010                   |

## **SECTION 8**

If Cabinet does agree that the reorganisation proposal should proceed, there will need to be a series of actions in preparation for implementation in September 2010 and beyond, including:

- establishing Task Group to support both Westrop and Northview Primary Schools;
- continuing to work closely with the local community to help mitigate the impact of school closure in the Northview area;
- involvement of HR in providing support to staff of both Schools;
- work to determine the future use of the Northview School building, if it is not to be used as part of a split-site school for the short/medium-term;
- working generally with all key stakeholders in the area to support parents and the local community in a range of different areas, including travel to school.

February 2010  
onwards