

Scrutiny

Monday, 19 November 2018

Additional Information

Agenda Item No. 6 - Consideration of Decisions of the Cabinet Panel on School Organisation

Minutes of Panel meeting

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NOTICE OF DRAFT DECISIONS OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET PANEL ON SCHOOL ORGANISATION HELD ON WEDNESDAY 14TH NOVEMBER 2018

15. Proposal to lower the age range of Bridlewood Primary School to include nursery provision for 2, 3 and 4 year olds

The Council's Head of Education submitted a joint report seeking the Panel's agreement to lower the age range of Bridlewood Primary School by two years from 4-11 to 2-11.

The report set out the results of the consultation process held in September/October 2018 on the proposal to lower the age range and captures the range of responses received by the St Andrew's community.

It was noted that the report was necessary to enable the Local Authority to notify the Department of Education of change in age range at Bridlewood Primary School.

The report also set out preferred options and timescales with the intention of Bridlewood Primary school opening and running its own maintained nursery provision to include 2, 3 and 4 year olds from September 2019

In reaching its decision, the Cabinet Panel confirmed that it

- has carefully considered the joint report and the representations made at the meeting by Council Officers.
- is satisfied that
 - it has the necessary information in order to make the decision referred to above,
 - the Statutory Notice complied with the statutory requirements,
 - the statutory consultation was carried out properly prior to the publication of the Notice, and
 - the Notice did not relate to any other published proposal.
- has carefully considered the factors to be considered by the decision makers, as set out in the statutory guidance from the Department for Education dated October 2018 (*Guidance for decision-makers: Statutory guidance for decision-makers - making significant changes (prescribed alterations) to maintained schools*).

The Cabinet Panel's decision is to approve the proposals as set out in the statutory notice to:

Lower the age range of Bridlewood Primary School by two years to include 2, 3 and 4 year olds to create maintained nursery provision opening in September 2019.

The reasons for the decision are as follows:

Education standards and diversity of provision

The Cabinet Panel believed that the Local Authority was responding to the

Government's wish to see a dynamic system in which the best schools are able to expand and spread their ethos and success. Bridlewood was graded 'Requires Improvement' by Ofsted in January 2018. However, Early Years Provision and Effectiveness of Leadership and Management was graded as 'Good'.

The Cabinet Panel believed that the introduction of a school nursery will continue to improve the quality of education provided at the school by achieving better outcomes for children who will have access to a qualified teacher from the age of 2. Whilst there is no guarantee that attending the school nursery will mean a place in the school's reception class, those children who are offered a school place within Bridlewood will benefit from a smoother transition having been pupils of the school from an earlier age.

The Cabinet panel believed that Childcare Sufficiency Assessment commissioned by the LA in February 2018 identified a shortfall of 314 places for 3 and 4 year olds and 52 places for 2 year olds within the ward. Swindon Borough Council has a duty to address this shortfall under the Childcare Act 2016 and to ensure demand can be met as a result of the 30 hours free childcare policy.

A school-led system with every school an academy

The Cabinet Panel noted that Bridlewood Primary School is a Local Authority maintained school. Therefore, the decision maker must be aware that the proposal is not consistent with the Government's policy a school-led system with every school an academy. However, the proposal does increase the school-led provision in St Andrew's ward by increasing the breadth of places Bridlewood Primary School could offer.

Demand

The Cabinet Panel noted that Bridlewood Primary School is very popular with parents and is operating close to full capacity. Bridlewood Primary School recognises the important role that parents play in the life of the school, and their preference for their children to attend this school.

The Cabinet Panel noted that the Local Authority is under a specific duty to respond to representations from parents about the provision of new schools, including requests to establish new schools or make changes to existing schools. This provides for greater inclusion and access for pupils within the existing school community.

School size

The Cabinet Panel noted that Bridlewood Primary School has a capacity of 270 places and currently have 234 children on roll.

Proposed admission arrangements (including primary provision)

The Cabinet Panel noted that if the proposals are approved, existing classroom space will be adapted to create nursery provision on site and additional classroom space created. This will further enhance the existing facilities on the school site. £350,000 was approved by Cabinet in February 2017 and is included in the

Education capital programme to fund the works required.
If the proposal is approved the school will develop an admissions policy for the maintained nursery.

National Curriculum

The Cabinet Panel believes that the proposed changes to the age range at Bridlewood Primary School will offer the high quality education provided to children, to more pupils in the area. The school has an excellent record of delivering a broad range of subjects and the students make good progress during their time at the school.

The Panel also has confidence in the capacity of the Senior Leadership Team and the Governing Body to continue to deliver a high standard of education to the pupils and parents it serves.

Equal opportunity issues

The Cabinet Panel Believes that there will not be any sex, race or disability discrimination issues that arise from the changes being proposed. A diversity impact assessment has been carried out which has not identified any issues

Community cohesion

The Cabinet Panel believed that in Swindon Community Cohesion is borne out of all stakeholders working together to facilitate high aspiration, create equity in terms of life opportunities and achievements, increase awareness/appreciation of difference and diversity, challenge discrimination, develop resilience to manage change, promote connections between different communities and encourage positive citizenship. All schools are called to meet this aspiration.

The Cabinet Panel noted that the proposal aims to create a range of provision and support that can respond to the needs of pupils and parents preferences.

The Cabinet panel noted that early years provision is good as rated by Ofsted in January 2018. Bridlewood Primary School's Staff have high expectations of children, who achieve well as a result of the good teaching. By lowering the age range by two years to create a maintained nursery the school would continue to provide a supportive environment for children from an earlier age to ensure they continue to develop the skills and knowledge required to successfully move into secondary school education.

Travel and accessibility

The Cabinet Panel noted that the proposals would not have the effect of unreasonably extending journey times or increasing transport costs, or result in too many children being prevented from sustainable travel due to unsuitable routes e.g. for walking, cycling etc.

The Cabinet Panel also noted that Swindon Borough Councils vision is that all Children will be able to access their school as safely and sustainably as possible and develop skills and desire to maintain lifelong sustainable travel habits. To this

end each school has developed a school travel strategy.

Funding

The Cabinet Panel noted that if approved, Cabinet agreed to allocate £350,000 in the Education capital programme to fund the works required to establish a nursery on site at Bridlewood Primary School.

The Cabinet Panel noted that funding for the early years places proposed to be created will be funded through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Early Years DSG funding is calculated based on the take up of places in the January census. New places created in September will be funded from the current year's DSG. The actual funding for the new pupils will be included in the final allocation for the current year which is released in July of the next financial year. The school have produced a business plan that balances the income for the proposed new nursery and has set aside an allocation for set up and equipment costs.

School premises and playing fields

The Cabinet panel noted that the proposal includes conversion of existing classroom space into a nursery and creation of new classroom accommodation to ensure there is no effect on the total primary places available. Work will include enhancements to the outdoor space, but will not reduce the space available on the site for outdoor pitches and games courts. The proposal will enable the school to continue to provide suitable outdoor space for physical education in accordance with the school curriculum.

Views of Interested Parties

The cabinet panel noted that the consultation process had been followed and that there were 34 individual responses to the survey of which 32 were in favour and 2 objected. The vast majority of the responses received were in favour of the proposals due to the need for flexible places in the area and the benefits of maintained provision for the children who go on to attend the provision if approved.

16. Proposal to lower the age range of Nythe Primary School to include nursery provision for 2, 3 and 4 year olds

The Council's Head of Education submitted a report seeking the Panel's agreement to lower the age range of Nythe Primary School.

The report set out the results of the consultation process held in September/October 2018 on the proposal to lower the age range and captures the range of responses received by the Nythe community.

It was noted that the report was necessary to enable the Local Authority to notify the Department of Education of change in age range at Nythe Primary School.

The report also set out preferred options and timescales with the intention of Nythe Primary School opening and running its own maintained nursery provision to include 2, 3 and 4 year olds from September 2019.

In reaching its decision, the Cabinet Panel confirmed that it:

- has carefully considered the joint report and the representations made at the meeting by Council Officers and by Mrs Sally Clarke, Headteacher, Nythe Primary School.
- is satisfied that
 - it has the necessary information in order to make the decision referred to above,
 - the Statutory Notice complied with the statutory requirements,
 - the statutory consultation was carried out properly prior to the publication of the Notice, and
 - the Notice did not relate to any other published proposal.
- has carefully considered the factors to be considered by the decision makers, as set out in the statutory guidance from the Department for Education in October 2018, Guidance for decision-makers: Statutory guidance for decision-makers - making significant changes (prescribed alterations) to maintained schools.

The Cabinet Panel's decision is to approve the proposals as set out in the statutory notice to:

Lower the age range of Nythe Primary School by two years to include 2, 3 and 4 year olds to create maintained nursery provision opening in September 2019.

The reasons for the decision are as follows:

Education standards and diversity of provision

The Cabinet Panel believed that the Local Authority is responding to the Government's wish to see a dynamic system in which the best schools are able to expand and spread their ethos and success. Nythe Primary School was graded as 'Good' by Ofsted in September 2016.

The Cabinet Panel noted that Nythe Preschool is situated on the school site with a lease until summer term 2019. If the proposal is approved the school would establish its own maintained nursery in the space from September 2019, with plans to improve the facilities to create a space for wrap around provision.

The Cabinet Panel also noted that proposal to lower the age range at Nythe Primary School has been developed to respond to the Childcare Act 2016, which places a duty on LAs to secure 30 hours of free childcare for working families with 3 and 4 year olds from September 2017.

The Cabinet Panel also noted that it is recognised by Ofsted that educational outcomes are improved by having a qualified early year's teacher in the provision.

The Cabinet panel believed that the proposal would offer families in the Nythe community the opportunity to attend a maintained early years setting, open with flexible hours.

A school-led system with every school an academy

The Cabinet panel noted that Nythe Primary School is a local authority maintained school. Therefore, the decision maker must be aware that the proposal is not consistent with the Government's policy a school-led system with every school an academy. However, the proposal does increase the school-led provision in the Nythe community by increasing the breadth of places Nythe Primary School can offer.

Demand v Need

The Cabinet Panel recognised that Nythe Primary School is very popular with parents and is operating close to full capacity. Nythe Primary School, itself, recognises the important role that parents play in the life of the school, and their preference for their children to attend this school.

The Panel noted that the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment commissioned by the LA in February 2018 identified a shortfall of 148 places for 3 and 4 year olds within the ward and that Swindon Borough Council has a duty to address this shortfall under the Childcare Act 2016 and to ensure demand can be met as a result of the 30 hours free childcare policy.

The Panel also noted that, with housing developments planned for the local area, Nythe Primary School would like to be in a position to better meet the needs of their local community, many of whom are working parents. The establishment of a maintained nursery class will allow the school to extend their hours to accommodate full wrap around provision offering greater flexibility to parents and an overall increase in the number of places available.

It was noted that the Local Authority is under a specific duty to respond to representations from parents about the provision of new schools, including requests to establish new schools or make changes to existing schools. This provides for greater inclusion and access for pupils within the existing school community.

School size

The Cabinet panel noted that Nythe Primary School has a capacity of 210 places and currently have 175 pupils on roll as at the October 2016 School Census.

Proposed admission arrangements (including primary provision)

The Cabinet Panel noted that it is anticipated that the proposed maintained nursery will be incorporated into the space currently occupied by Nythe Preschool whose lease expires July 2019. Therefore, no further expansion of the premises is required. If the proposal is approved the school will develop an admissions policy for the maintained nursery.

National Curriculum

The Cabinet Panel believes that the proposed changes to the age range at Nythe Primary School will offer the high quality education provided to children, to more pupils in the area. The school has an excellent record of delivering a broad range of

subjects and the students make good progress during their time at the school.

The Panel also has confidence in the capacity of the Senior Leadership Team and the Governing Body to continue to deliver a high standard of education to the pupils and parents it serves

Equal opportunity issues

The Cabinet Panel believed that there would not be any adverse sex, race, or disability discrimination issues that arise from the changes being proposed. A diversity impact assessment has been carried out which has not identified any issues.

Community cohesion

The Cabinet noted that it is not envisaged that there will be any sex, race or disability discrimination issues that arise from the changes being proposed. A diversity impact assessment has been carried out which has not identified any issues.

Travel and accessibility

The Cabinet Panel noted that the proposals would not unreasonably extending journey times or increase transport costs, or result in too many children being prevented from sustainable travel due to unsuitable routes e.g. for walking, cycling etc. Panel Members were made aware that there is surplus capacity on existing school transport, if required.

Swindon Borough Councils vision is that all Children will be able to access their school as safely and sustainably as possible and develop skills and desire to maintain lifelong sustainable travel habits. To this end each school has developed a school travel strategy.

Funding

The Cabinet Panel noted that if approved there is no Capital funding required for the proposal to lower the age range of Nythe Primary School by two years. Funding for the early years places proposed to be created will be funded through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Early Years DSG funding is calculated based on the take up of places in the January census. New places created in September will be funded from the current year's DSG. The actual funding for the new pupils will be included in the final allocation for the current year which is released in July of the next financial year.

The Cabinet panel noted that the school have produced a business plan that balances the income for the proposed new nursery and has set aside an allocation for set up and equipment costs.

School premises and playing fields

The Cabinet Panel noted that the proposal will not include any conversion of existing accommodation. It will not reduce the space available on the site for

outdoor pitches and games courts. The proposal will enable the school to continue to provide suitable outdoor space for physical education in accordance with the school curriculum.

Views of Interested Parties

The Panel noted that the consultation process had been followed and that there were 70 individual responses to the survey of which 42 were in favour and 38 objected.

The Cabinet Panel felt that the proposals should be approved in order to create additional capacity in accordance with the Childcare Act 2016, which places a duty on LAs to secure 30 hours of free childcare for working families with 3 and 4 year olds from September 2017. The Cabinet Panel also felt that the proposals should be approved as it is recognised by Ofsted that educational outcomes are improved by having a qualified early year's teacher in the provision. The Cabinet panel believed that the proposal would offer families in the Nythe community the opportunity to attend a maintained early years setting, open with flexible hours.

Date of Publication of Draft Decisions: 15th November 2018

Issued to Members of the Scrutiny Committee: 16th November 2018