

Meeting: Council

Portfolio Area: Community

Date: 29th September 2004

REVIEW OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN STEVENAGE

(Department of Community Services)

NON-KEY DECISION

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1 PURPOSE

To consider a review of primary education in Stevenage currently being undertaken by Hertfordshire County Council.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the Borough Council's response to the County Council's consultation on a review of primary education in Stevenage.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1. Hertfordshire County Council is currently undertaking a review of primary education in Stevenage. A consultation paper drafted by the County Council is attached – Appendices 'A', 'B' and 'C'.
- 3.2. A series of public meetings were held in Stevenage in late June and early July. The consultation period ends on 31st August 2004. The timetable for decision is as follows: -

- Cabinet Panel* to consider the outcome of the public consultation September 2004
- County Council Cabinet* to consider the outcome of the public consultation and to decide on whether to proceed to Statutory Notices 11th October 2004
- Publication of Statutory Notices (for a six week period) October 2004
- School Organisation Committee* to consider any formal objections received during the statutory notice period and to take a decision on the proposal Early January 2005

* These are public meetings

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1. The County Council state in their consultation document that the current need for primary school places in Stevenage is less than the capacity available.
- 4.2. It is proposed to remove a total of 735 places, which can also be described as 3.5 forms of entry. A form of entry is 210 pupils, that is 30 pupils in each of the seven primary year groups (30 x 7 = 210).
- 4.3. The County Council is proposing two options to remove 315 places (1.5 f.e.) from the centre of Stevenage: -

Option 1 (the County Council's favoured option)

- **To close Pin Green Primary School on 31st August 2005; or**

Option 2

- **To close Bedwell Primary School on 31st August 2005**

- 4.4. The site and buildings of whichever school closed would no longer be required for educational purposes and it is likely that they would be sold.
- 4.5. Other alternatives have been considered and discounted, namely closing Moss Bury School or 'amalgamating' Bedwell School with Broom Barns School.
- 4.6. The County Council is proposing one option to remove 420 places (2 f.e.) from the south of Stevenage: -
 - **Close Shephall Green Infant School, Burydale School and Longmeadow Infant and Longmeadow Junior Schools on 31st August 2005**
 - **Create a new 3 f.e. primary school on the joint sites of the Longmeadow and Burydale Schools from 1st September 2005**
- 4.7. The site of Shephall Green Infant School would no longer be required and it likely that the site approximating the school buildings would be sold and the remainder added to the adjacent Barnwell School.
- 4.8. The Burydale Junior buildings would be kept for a minimum of two years and may then be re-used for other educational/County Council use or sold.
- 4.9. There would be a major programme of investment in the current Longmeadow Infant and Longmeadow Junior School buildings.
- 4.10. Other options that the County Council looked at and discounted were: -
 - Basing the new school within the Burydale School buildings as well as the Longmeadow school buildings;
 - Creating more evenly sized schools in the area south of the A602 by making Roebuck School and the new school both 2 f.e. schools;
 - Amalgamating Featherstone Wood with Ashtree School;

- Reducing provision even further by closing either Roebuck or Featherstone Wood;
 - Reducing the size of the Roebuck and Featherstone Wood school buildings.
- 4.9. County Council officers attended meetings of the Partnership and Community Panel and the Scrutiny Overview Committee during July and the Executive considered a report on the issues on 21st July 2004.
- 4.10. A Borough Council response has been submitted to the County Council. A copy is attached at Appendix 'D'. The response states that the Borough Council does not feel that the preferred options set out in the County Council's consultation document are in the best interests of the Stevenage children and their families.
- 4.11. The Borough Council's response concludes by saying the Council believes that more time is needed for alternative proposals to emerge and calls upon the County Council to defer a decision on these matters when it meets on 11th October 2004.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications to the Borough Council.

5.2 Legal Implications

Hertfordshire County Council is required to undertake "reasonable consultation" and is under no specific duty to consult district councils. The County Council has a statutory duty to publish a Statutory Notice of its decision. This is a formal, published notice, published in a local newspaper, which sets out the change to school organisation that is being proposed. This will last for a six-week period following the meeting of the County Council's Cabinet on 11th October 2004.

5.3 Policy Implications

The proposals have major implications for the education of Stevenage children. The County Council consultation document states that "one part of the County Council's strategy for raising achievement is to secure the appropriate number and distribution of primary school places." The Stevenage Partnership has identified 'educational achievement' as a key priority to be followed up in 2004/05 as part of the Community Strategy.

5.4 Planning Implications

There are no planning implications to the Borough Council.

5.5 Environmental Implications

Some or all of the school buildings and sites no longer required for educational purposes may be sold.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- Consultation Document – Raising achievement on Stevenage – Reducing the number of surplus primary places

APPENDICES

- Consultation Document – Raising achievement on Stevenage – Reducing the number of surplus primary places