

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Proposal to change the age range of Blatchington Mill School to remove sixth form provision</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>15 January 2018</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Executive Director of Families, Children and Learning</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Richard barker</b>	<b>Tel: 01273 290732</b>
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<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 It is proposed to change the age Range of Blatchington Mill Secondary school from 11 to 18 as it is at present to 11 to 16 from September 2019.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to report on the outcome of consultation on this proposal and to seek approval to proceed to the next stage of the statutory process, which is the publication of Statutory Notices.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 To note the responses to the consultation undertaken regarding the proposal in 1.1 above.
- 2.2 To agree to the publication of the required Statutory Notices to progress this proposal.
- 2.3 That following the statutory notice period the matter is referred back to the meeting of the Children and Young People and Skills Committee on 6 March 2018 for a final decision.

**3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 There has been a focus in recent years on the state of financial resourcing for post-16 provision where funding has declined. Within Brighton and Hove the average size of the sixth form colleges is around 2500 students, while the average size of school sixth forms is approximately 200. The benchmark figures given for a financially viable Post-16 provision differ, but are generally considered to be in the range of 200-250 students as a minimum.
- 3.2 The Department for Education recognises that sixth forms with less than 250 students are at risk of not being financially viable. Blatch six has always had the capacity to take 250 students but only twice in the past decade have numbers been any higher than 180, with recent figures being much lower than this.

- 3.3 During both the Sussex Area Review and the Local Area Review, concerns were expressed about the viability of post 16 provision where numbers of students are below 200 students across the 6<sup>th</sup> form.
- 3.4 In March 2016, guidance was issued by the Department of Education which states: “The Area Review encourages school sixth forms to collaborate to a greater extent to help drive efficiencies. Similar provision in sixth forms is often duplicated in relatively small geographical areas, when it could be delivered in a more joined up way. This may be particularly the case where sixth forms are very small, as some evidence raises concerns about costs, breadth of offer and outcomes for these providers”.
- 3.5 Blatch six provision, with numbers as they currently stand, is not considered to be sustainable financially. The school needs to consider the consequences on the whole institution as well as on sixth form students when group sizes are not at the optimum for learning.
- 3.6 Changing the age range of the school from 11-18 to 11 to 16, will allow resources to be focused on improving further the outcomes and opportunities for Years 7 to 11

#### **4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 4.1 The alternative option would be for the school to continue as an 11 to 18 school with a sixth form. This is not considered to be financially sustainable and will not provide the best outcomes for students.

#### **5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 A consultation document was prepared (attached at Appendix 1) and distributed to all pupils, staff and parents / guardians at the school on 6 November 2017.
- 5.2 The consultation document was also hosted on the councils consultation portal for a period of 6 weeks from 6 November 2017.
- 5.3 As part of the public consultation process a public meeting was held at Blatchington Mill School on Monday 13 November 2017. This meeting was noted and a copy of the notes is included at Appendix 2.
- 5.4 This initial stage of the consultation ended on 18 December 2017. The responses to this consultation exercise have been collated and analysed and are shown at Appendix 3 to this report.
- 5.5 In summary 30 responses were received to this consultation of which 16 were in favour, 13 were against the proposal and one respondent was unsure.
- 5.6 Those in support of the proposal said they understood the rationale for the efficient use of resources and the size of the school sixth form has meant that it cannot deliver the vibrant atmosphere required for a successful sixth form.

- 5.7 Those who did not support the proposal raised concerns about the impact on those young people in need of support at points of transition, continuity for young people who wish to feel secure when studying and the impact on teachers who specialise in sixth form teaching.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 The senior leadership team and governors of the school proposed the change and therefore believe that changing the age range to remove the sixth form is in the best interest of the school and its students.
- 6.2 Public consultation on the proposal to change the age range of Blatchington Mill School has shown that of those who responded to the consultation there is marginally more support for the change than to remain with the current position.
- 6.3 It is therefore recommended to move to the next stage of the consultation process and publish the statutory notice.

## **7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

### Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The school has a current licensed deficit agreement for 2017/18 for three years and to balance its budget in 2019/20. The closure of the sixth form will result in a reduction in funding for the school of approximately £500,000 in a full financial year; however this should be offset by a reduction in costs in staffing. Given the pupil numbers in the sixth form have been reducing in recent years, the costs of the sixth form have been supported by the main school budget. The closure of the sixth form should leave the school in a better financial position in the longer term.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Andy Moore*

*Date: 07/12/17*

### Legal Implications:

- 7.2 If it is agreed to proceed with the proposed change in age range it will be necessary for the Council to publish statutory notices in accordance with section 19 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and associated regulations. Following publication there will then follow a period of 4 weeks during which any person can comment or object to the proposal.
- 7.3 A final decision on the proposed change in age range will need to be taken within 2 months of the end of the representation period.

*Lawyer Consulted: Serena Kynaston Date: 11/12/2017*

### Equalities Implications:

- 7.4 There are no equalities implications arising from this proposal.

Sustainability Implications:

7.5 There are no sustainability implications arising from this proposal

Any Other Significant Implications:

7.6 None

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

**Appendices:**

1. Consultation document
2. Notes from public meeting held on 13 November 2017
3. Analysis of responses to the consultation
4. Draft Statutory Notice
5. Full proposal information

**Documents in Members' Rooms**

1. All responses to the consultation

**Background Documents**

None