

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Proposed Amalgamation of Davigdor Infant and Somerhill Junior Schools to an all through Primary School from September 2015: responses to the statutory notice</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>1 June 2015</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Executive Director of Children's Services</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Michael Nix</b>	<b>Tel: 29-0732</b>
	<b>Email:</b>	<b>Michael.nix@brighton-hove.gov.uk</b>	
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>Goldsmid Ward</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of the responses to the statutory notice of the proposal to amalgamate Davigdor Infant and Somerhill Junior Schools to become a four form entry, all through primary school, and to seek approval of the proposal. These changes are to be achieved through the closure of Davigdor Infant School and expanding the age range of Somerhill Junior School from 7 – 11 to 4 – 11 from 1 September 2015

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That the Children and Young People Committee approves the proposal contained in the statutory notice to amalgamate Davigdor Infant and Somerhill Junior Schools to become a four form entry, all through primary school, through the closure of Davigdor Infant School and expanding the age range of Somerhill Junior School from 7 – 11 to 4 – 11 from 1 September 2015.

**3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Brighton & Hove City Council has had a policy, as set out in its Protocol for the Creation of an All-through Primary School, of supporting the amalgamation of infant and junior schools where appropriate since 2000. This policy was reaffirmed in the new School Organisation Plan 2013 – 2017 adopted by the Council at its meeting on 27 March 2014. The Protocol states that the Council will consider merging linked infant and junior schools when the Head Teacher of one of the schools leaves.
- 3.2 At its meeting on 9 March 2015 the Children and Young People Committee agreed to publish the statutory notice required to progress the proposal to amalgamate Davigdor Infant and Somerhill Junior Schools to become an all through primary school with a single admissions process.

- 3.3 Both schools have positive Ofsted judgements. Somerhill Junior School was graded 'good' with 'outstanding' leadership and management and 'outstanding' behaviour and safety of pupils in December 2014. Davigdor Infant School was graded 'outstanding' in July 2008 and as a result of desk top monitoring Ofsted has not found it necessary to re-inspect the school since that time.
- 3.4 Although the technical process of achieving an amalgamation involves the closure of one school and expanding the age range of the other, the proposal is not a takeover of one school by the other: both schools would work together as equal partners in bringing about the amalgamation. The Head Teacher of the junior school would continue as the Head Teacher of the primary school because the infant school Head Teacher is retiring.

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

- 4.1 The report to the Committee at its 9 March 2015 meeting set out alternative options, including retaining separate infant and junior schools. The report set out the reasons why this was not the preferred option, based on the council's policy in favour of all through primary schools and the general support for the proposal which had been demonstrated through the consultation and through dialogue with the senior teams and governing bodies.

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

- 5.1 Consultation with staff, governors, parents and the wider community on the proposed amalgamation of Davigdor Infant and Somerhill Junior Schools was carried out during February and March 2015 and the outcomes of this consultation were reported to the Committee on 9 March 2015.
- 5.2 At this meeting the Children and Young People Committee authorised the Executive Director of Children's Services to proceed to publish the required statutory notice for the amalgamation of Davigdor Infant and Somerhill Junior Schools into an all through primary school. The subsequent representation period of four weeks was the final opportunity for interested people and organisations to express their views on the proposals.
- 5.3 Statutory notices were published in the Argus newspaper on 11 March 2015. In addition notices were displayed at the entrances to the schools and at other places used by the community, including local post offices and Hove Library (details of locations are in the full proposal information in the Members' Rooms.) The statutory notice stated how the full information on the proposal could be obtained.
- 5.4 The statutory notice forms part of the full proposal. Copies of the full proposal were sent to the governing body of both schools, the Anglican and Catholic dioceses, local ward members, the Children and Young People Committee, the Member of Parliament for Hove and the Department for Education (DfE). Copies of the complete proposal would have been made available to anyone who requested a copy during the publication period. A copy of the full proposal information is in the Members' Rooms.
- 5.5 The closing date for receipt of representations or objections was 8<sup>th</sup> April 2015.

- 5.6 During the statutory notice period there were no requests received for the full proposal information.
- 5.7 During the statutory notice period there were no comments or objections received about the proposal.
- 5.8 At the end of the notice period both schools were asked for their final comments on the proposals. The chair of governors of Somerhill Junior School confirmed 'Somerhill Governors remain committed to the proposed amalgamation and are excited about the possibilities for the future education of the children in East Hove through the proposed primary school with one head teacher. We are looking forward to working with representation from the Davigdor Governing Body to forward plan as we move towards a potential new Governing Body from September.'
- 5.9 The chair of governors at Davigdor Infant School confirmed 'The Governors of Davigdor fully support the proposed amalgamation. We openly embrace the new opportunities which will be made available to the children, families and staff through the proposed primary school with Mr Collins as its head teacher. We welcome the full support of the council during a period of change which will result in, as a four form entry school, it being one of the largest primary schools in the City. We are also looking forward to working closely with the Somerhill Governing Body to achieve this outcome ensuring all the needs of our school community are met.'

## **6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 The Council has a statutory duty to secure a school place for any child in its area that wants one. The amalgamation of the two schools will mean there is no need to apply to the Brighton & Hove City Council's Admissions Team at the point of transfer between infant and junior school.
- 6.2 The initial public consultation in respect of this proposal showed that the great majority of respondents welcomed the proposal. This outcome has been confirmed by the lack of responses to the Statutory Notice.
- 6.3 The proposed all through primary school is in accordance with the council's policy and will build on the high standards and outstanding leadership provided by the two current schools. For these reasons, it is recommended that the Committee approves the proposal.

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

### Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The school is funded through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and will continue to be funded mainly based on pupil numbers, which would remain unchanged; however there would be a change to the lump sum payable to the primary school (one element of £150k) rather than two lump sums payable to both the Infant and Junior schools (£300k in total). This is protected to 85% of the total

lump sum in the first year (£255k). The school would also have staff savings e.g. by only employing one Headteacher rather than two, which would offset the reduction in budget.

Finance Officer Consulted: Andy Moore

Date: 21/04/15

#### Legal Implications:

- 7.2 The Education and Inspections Act 2006, as amended, provides that the Local Authority is the decision maker on any proposals to close a school and to alter the lower age limit of a school. The Children and Young Persons Committee will act as the decision maker for the Local Authority on these proposals. The decision must be made within two months of the end of the representation period. The exact process by which a decision maker carries out their decision making process is not prescribed however it must have regard to the statutory 'Decision-makers Guidance' published by the DfE in January 2014. A full copy of this Guidance is available in the Member's Room.

The Guidance states that the decision-maker will need to be satisfied that the appropriate representation period has been carried out and that the proposer has had regard to the responses received. The decision maker must consider all the views submitted, including all support for, objections to, and comments on the proposals.

In issuing a decision the decision-maker can;

- reject the proposal
- approve the proposal without modification
- approve the proposal with modifications, having consulted the governing body
- approve the proposal-with or without modification- subject to certain prescribed conditions being met

Lawyer Consulted: Serena Kynaston

Date: 19/05/2015

#### Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 There are no equalities implications arising from this proposal. The great majority of children already transfer from the infant school to the junior school and this will continue in the new primary school without the need for a 7+ admissions exercise.

#### Sustainability Implications:

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

#### Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.5 None

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

1. Statutory Notice for the proposed amalgamation of Davigdor Infant School and Somerhill Junior School from September 2015.

### **Documents in Members' Rooms**

1. Decision Maker's Guidance, Department for Education, January 2014

### **Background Documents**

1. Full proposal information for the proposed amalgamation of Davigdor Infant School and Somerhill Junior School from September 2015

