

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL  
CSF RESOURCES PANEL  
WEDNESDAY, 20<sup>th</sup> MARCH, 2002 at 2PM  
IN COMMITTEE ROOM B**

<b>Agenda Item No</b>
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**PROPOSED AMALGAMATION OF ST. PAUL'S INFANTS' AND HASLEWOOD JUNIOR SCHOOLS, HODDESDON**

*Report of the Director of Children, Schools and Families*

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Executive Member: Robert Gordon

Local Members John Morton and Alan Searing

**1. Purpose**

To consider proposals, currently the subject of consultation, to amalgamate these two schools to form a new 5 – 11 age range Church of England VC primary school, with a reduced standard number of 45.

**2. Summary**

2.1 Consultations are currently taking place on a proposal to amalgamate these two schools. The following particular issues are unique to these proposals:

- One of the schools is in 'special measures'
- Unusual consequential issues are involved relating to Church of England denominational provision and school categories
- There is an opportunity to remove some primary surplus places from the area served.

2.2 The report invites the Panel's views; sets out the issues involved and presents a copy of the consultation document that has been issued, together with a summary of the points raised at the consultation meeting. Consultation closes on 8<sup>th</sup> March and the Cabinet will be asked to consider next steps at its meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2002.

**3. Conclusion**

The Panel's views on this proposal are invited and would be reported to the Cabinet on 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2002, alongside the consultation outcomes. At that stage the Cabinet will be asked to consider whether, or not, to proceed with the proposal.

The report to Cabinet will include details of the consultation outcomes and will be circulated to Panel and Local Members when it is available.

#### **4. Background**

- 4.1 This pair of schools share a site in the town centre of Hoddesdon. The map shows their location in relation to the other primary schools in the town.
- 4.2 Although they are linked, St Paul's is a Church of England Voluntary Controlled School and Haslewood a Community School.
- 4.3 Following inspection in June, 2001, OFSTED have placed the Junior School into Special Measures. The Headteacher has retired and temporary arrangements are in place to secure the management of the school. There is currently an acting headteacher on temporary loan from another school.
- 4.4 Whilst the usual considerations regarding amalgamations apply, there is an added issue in this case relating to the Church's involvement with St Paul's.
- 4.5 There are surplus primary school places in the area and there is a need to take steps, if possible, to reduce them.
- 4.6 Consultation on a proposal to amalgamate to form a new Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School with a standard number of 45 was authorised on 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2002. A consultation document (attached) has been produced and circulated and a consultation meeting was held on 5<sup>th</sup> February, 2002. The issues that arose are referred to in section 8, below.

#### **5. Amalgamation Policy**

The School Organisation Plan (SOP) states that:

*Amalgamation of such schools [infant and junior pairs] when they are on shared sites are routinely considered and the County Council has funding mechanisms in place to support schools during the first three years following an amalgamation.*

#### **6. Implications arising from current and future pupil numbers**

##### **6.1 AT THE SCHOOLS**

The current numbers, by year group, in the two schools are shown in the following chart. Both schools are 2FE capacity, with standard numbers of 60. St Paul's does not have a nursery class; pupils come from Rye Park Nursery School or voluntary sector provision (including a private play group and day nursery located on the schools' site itself).

	Year Group	No's on roll - Autumn 2001
St Paul's I	R	35 (includes January intake)
	1	31
	2	42
Haslewood J	3	46
	4	45
	5	44
	6	30

## 6.2 HODDESDON AREA

The forecast pupil numbers for the primary planning area are shown below. The greyed boxes are intended to demonstrate the effect of removing 15 places.

### 6.2.1 Reception only (numbers in brackets are conversion into Forms of Entry)

Reception		2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/5	Long-term average ÷ 7
Current	450(15)	<b>350</b> (11.7)	<b>368</b> (12.3)	<b>371</b> (12.3)	<b>386</b> (12.9)	<b>381</b> (12.7)	<b>415</b> (13.8)
Surplus		<b>100</b> (3.33)	<b>82</b> (2.7)	<b>79</b> (2.6)	<b>64</b> (2.1)	<b>69</b> (2.3)	<b>35</b> (1.2)
-15 Places		<b>85</b> (2.8)	<b>67</b> (2.2)	<b>64</b> (2.1)	<b>49</b> (1.6)	54 (1.8)	<b>15</b> (0.5)

### 6.2.2 All years (not nursery)

Capacity		2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	Long-term average
Current	3150	2780	2822	2799	2761	2730	2910*
Surplus		370	328	351	389	420	240
-105 Places		265	223	246	284	315	135

\*This figure has been inflated to allow for housing in the period up to 2011 based on proposed allocations in the Deposit version of the Broxbourne Local Plan Second review.

## 6.3 LOCAL DEMAND CHARACTERISTICS

6.3.1 The pressure for school places in Hoddesdon principally affects the group of schools to the north of the town (Cranbourne, Forres and Roselands in particular). Planning obligations discussions have been opened with housing developers about the potential for some expansion of a local primary school in the north of the town for this reason.

6.3.2 St Paul's and Haslewood serve a more settled area of the town. The District Plan review allocates some new housing in the vicinity but it is a small amount and unlikely to make much impact on the surplus places. Neither school now has the

accommodation for 2FE due to early years provision on the site and rooms being used for SEN, ICT and libraries

### 6.3.3 Conclusion on future demand

As shown in the charts above, it would be appropriate to reduce by 15 places per year (0.5FE) but not beyond that.

## **7. Type of new school to be formed – denominational issue**

7.1 Unusually, this amalgamation proposal raises a question about the type of school that might be established. Normally, this is not an issue because the two closing schools are usually the same type (i.e. Community, Aided, Controlled, Foundation). Where a Church school is involved the situation raises issues for that trustee body about its stake in provision in that area.

7.2 The policies section of the SOP states that

*The LEA works closely with Diocesan and other Aided School bodies regarding the future provision of denominational school provision and, in partnership with them, seeks to provide an acceptable balance of denominational places.*

7.3 Four different types of school could be formed as a result of this amalgamation proposal:

- Community (as Haslewood)
- Foundation
- Voluntary Aided
- Voluntary Controlled (as St Paul's)

7.4 Preserving denominational emphasis would make considering a Community school inappropriate. Considering either Foundation or Controlled status would require the governors of the new school to have access to capital funding to support their role in maintaining and developing the school premises. Pursuing Voluntary Aided status would require a longer timescale because the future trustees would need to bid to DFEE for funds to enable them to purchase part of the site and premises, as there is only a single annual opportunity to bid. This would delay resolving the issues that face the Junior School in particular.

7.5 It is for this reason that establishing a VC School has been selected for consultation purposes.

## **8. School performance and popularity**

8.1 Discussions with the two governing bodies and heads raise the issue of parental preferences and varied perceptions about the two schools. There is a view that both schools under-recruit because of negative perceptions of the junior school. It is this school that is now in special measures.

- 8.2 It is suggested that the school would be better-placed as a 5-11 school and could promote itself more effectively as a Church of England Primary School serving an area wider than its current catchment.
- 8.3 Following the amalgamation, the School Improvement and Advisory Service will be providing significant continued support to secure the effectiveness of the new school.

## **9. Consultation meeting**

- 9.1 At the meeting officers presented the information set out in the consultation document and facilitated a discussion about the issues involved. A note of the principal points raised at the consultation meeting is attached.
- 9.2 Immediately following the consultation meeting the two governing bodies are maintaining their support for the amalgamation proposal as a VC school. The proposal to reduce the standard number is eliciting little response at present. At the end of the consultation period governors will be asked to confirm their position(s) again, and this will be reported to the Cabinet. Governors are scheduled to meet on 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2002.

## **10. Financial implications**

- 10.1 The revenue budget would see savings in the third financial year onwards, should amalgamation take place. Details are on pages 9 and 10 of the consultation document which is attached.
- 10.2 Capital expenditure requirements would be limited as the two buildings are physically close to each other on the site. Proposals would be discussed with the temporary governing body. There is an annual provisions budget to support capital works for amalgamations.

## **11. Timescale**

The following timescale is being pursued:

Authorisation	7 <sup>th</sup> January, 2002
Commence consultations	21 <sup>st</sup> January, 2002
Conclude consultations	8 <sup>th</sup> March, 2002
Panel consideration	20 <sup>th</sup> March, 2002
Cabinet	22 <sup>nd</sup> March, 2002
Publish notices	28 <sup>th</sup> March, 2002
Notices run until	28 <sup>th</sup> May, 2002
School Organisation Committee	Early June, 2002
New school opens	1 <sup>st</sup> January, 2003

## **12. Summary**

- In the medium/longer term it would be possible to justify the removal of some primary school places from Southern Hoddesdon

- Amalgamation provides an opportunity to re-present primary education on this site to the local population and through that seek to raise performance
- The Diocese of At Albans would be reluctant to see a Community Primary formed on this site, at the expense of CE current involvement with St Paul's
- Both governing bodies support the formation of a CE school
- Amalgamation to form a CE voluntary controlled school is possible against the usual timescale (and the governors could investigate Aided status subsequently if thought to be appropriate)
- There would be an advantage to the LEA's surplus place position if the standard number of the new school were reduced to 45 per year (but demand kept under review)
- The closed school would cease to be in Special Measures (although it is likely that the new school would be monitored by HMI in its early days).

### **13. Conclusion**

The Panel's views on this proposal are invited and would be reported to the Cabinet on 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2002, alongside the consultation outcomes. At that stage the Cabinet will be asked to consider whether, or not, to proceed with the proposal.

The report to Cabinet will include details of the consultation outcomes and will be circulated to Panel and Local Members when it is available.