

## CABINET – 19 APRIL 2011

### PROPOSAL TO EXPAND 931-2573 CHARLTON PRIMARY SCHOOL, WANTAGE

#### Report by Children, Young People & Families

#### Introduction

1. In recent years the Wantage, Charlton and Grove area has experienced a significant and sustained rise in primary pupil numbers, due to both a rising birth rate and recent/current housing developments in Wantage. Numbers are expected to rise further over the next few years. To date the additional numbers have been accommodated by the primary schools within Wantage and the surrounding villages but we have reached a position where these schools are close to, or operating at, full capacity and we need to increase basic pupil place provision.
2. The proposal to expand Charlton Primary School is one part of the County Council's strategy to meet the need for primary school places in this area of Oxfordshire. The school has agreed to take more than its admission number in September 2011, accepting up to 60 children into the Reception (F1) class. A decision is now needed on whether to permanently expand the school to 2 forms of entry (with an admission number of 60) and to enlarge the physical capacity of the school.
3. Charlton Primary School is a primary school for 4-11 year-olds on the eastern edge of Wantage, serving Charlton village and close surrounds. For September 2010 the school had a published admission number of 40, and 42 parents chose the school as their first preference. For September 2011 an admission number of 45 was published, but the school has now agreed to take up to 60 children to respond to local need. The current number of children (January 2011 pupil census) in Years 1-6 is 265, and in Years F1-6 is 310, as shown below:

Reception F1	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
45	43	44	44	40	44	50

4. There are five statutory stages for a proposal to expand a school:
  - i. consultation;
  - ii. publication of a statutory notice;
  - iii. representation;

- iv. decision;
- v. implementation.

This proposal has completed the first consultation stage, and a decision is now sought as to whether to proceed to publication of a statutory notice and representation.

## The Proposal

- 5. The proposal is to increase the formal published admission number from 45 to 60 children on a permanent basis from September 2012. This will eventually increase the school's total capacity from its current 270 places in Years 1-6 to a maximum of 360.
- 6. To accommodate this growth in pupil numbers, there will be some extension of the school's buildings plus a new Foundation Stage unit, and a feasibility study is underway as to how this can best be provided.
- 7. The school's governing body supports this proposal, and have been actively engaged in planning for the building extension.

## Representations

- 8. During the informal consultation phase (17 January 2011 – 7 March 2011) a meeting was held at the school for parents to discuss their concerns with a county council officer and a consultation document (Annex 1) was sent to parents of children at Charlton Primary School, as well as to local Councillors, other schools and early years providers in the area; it was also available on the OCC website. A total of 25 responses were received. 7 [28%] respondents were in favour of the proposal (3 unconditionally) or supported it in principal (with some concerns); 18 [72%] respondents either were against the proposal or raised only concerns without expressing support. A breakdown of their comments are as follows:
  - 9. Reasons given for supporting the proposal specifically acknowledged that:
    - The expansion will provide school places for local children (1)
    - Charlton is a good school (1)
    - Local MOD families will have more choice of school (1).
  - 9. The following concerns were raised by respondents:
    - Road traffic congestion at the start and finish of the school day, and the need for additional on-site parking. (20 comments).  
*See paragraph 10 below.*
    - Concern about sufficient permanent accommodation (core and small group activity) being guaranteed (12 comments).  
*See paragraph 11 below.*
    - Concern that the school would lose the "small school" ethos and caring atmosphere. (14 comments).

*2 form entry is one of the preferred models of school organisation within Oxfordshire*

- Concern over the loss of the school swimming pool. (6 comments)  
*See paragraph 12 below.*
- Concern about the disruption of building works and safety of children. (3 comments).
- That there is no detrimental effect on Catholic schools in the area. (1 comment)

*This proposal is not expected to have an impact on Catholic schools in the area.*

10. With respect to significant concerns about traffic management the draft scheme seeks to improve the school's car park and the County Council Development Control team are being consulted on highway matters as part of the feasibility study. The school will also be required to update its travel plan to reflect the increased pupil numbers and will seek to further encourage children and their families to walk to school if they live in appropriate proximity to the school.
11. With respect to the accommodation, the feasibility study will identify how the required additional spaces can be provided to best meet the statutory Building Bulletin 99 requirements for a 2 form entry school. The brief for this feasibility study has been agreed by the school's governors, and includes additional Foundation and Key Stage 1 and 2 classrooms, an additional small hall and potential space for the desired eventual provision of a school kitchen.

The school has successfully trialled, in line with approved OCC IT policy, the use of wirelessly networked laptops/tablets within its classrooms and in common with other schools has found these arrangements to be a successful alternative to the retention of a formal IT suite.

The existing temporary classroom will be removed on completion of the first phase of the building works as the school will then have appropriate space for the existing cohort of students and its removal will allow work to commence of the new build Foundation Stage unit.

12. The closure of the swimming pool leaves a 'footprint' which enables the appropriate location of the new Foundation Stage unit. The removal of the school's swimming pool is a sensitive local issue but the school and Governors have confirmed that the facility is close to failing with significant refurbishment and maintenance required to provide a safe functional environment. The school has identified that capital and on-going costs could be better spent on alternative curriculum enrichment, and would have planned to close the pool facility even without this extension proposal.
13. As concerns in relation to the proposal have been raised, the decision on whether to publish a formal statutory proposal is referred to the Cabinet rather than the Cabinet Member for Schools Improvement.

### **Making a Decision**

13. Sections 18 to 24 of the Education & Inspections Act 2006 and The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools)(England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) ["the Prescribed Alterations Regulations"] establish the procedures that must be followed when enlarging school premises. Local authorities also have a duty to have regard to statutory guidance, in this particular case 'Expanding a Maintained Mainstream School by Enlargement or Adding a Sixth Form: A Guide for Local Authorities and Governing Bodies ("the Guidance")'.
14. The Prescribed Alterations Regulations require proposers to consult interested parties and the Guidance lists these at paragraph 1.3. The Cabinet must be satisfied that the statutory consultation has been properly carried out prior to the publication of the notice. Annex 2 provides details of the County Council's consultation with interested parties that are required to be consulted with under the Prescribed Alterations Regulations. The period of consultation is not prescribed by legislation, although the Guidance recommends a minimum of 4 weeks. The consultation period was in line with the Guidance having run from 17<sup>th</sup> January 2011 to 7<sup>th</sup> March 2011, thereby meeting the four week minimum requirement. The consultation was therefore carried out in accordance with the Prescribed Alterations Regulations.
15. A decision is now required as to whether to publish formal proposals for this expansion. If approved, a statutory notice would be published, followed by a formal representation (Stage 3) period of four weeks. The decision-making power in terms of determining the notice will lie with the Cabinet, and a report will be put to the Cabinet Member for Schools Improvement if no representations are received, or to Cabinet if representations are received, for a final decision in due course.

### **Equality and Inclusion Implications**

16. There are not considered to be any equality and inclusion implications arising from this proposal.

### **Financial and Staff Implications**

17. The direct financial implication of this report is the cost of the statutory process recommended, which is planned for and met within the normal CYP&F budget provision. There are no significant financial implications or risks at this stage.
18. If the proposal proceeds, following the 4 week statutory representation period, there would be another report to Cabinet in due course seeking a final decision on whether to expand the school. The longer term financial implications of the current report are linked to the capital works that will be carried out should the proposals be approved, and these will be the subject of a separate detailed project approval. There will also be on-costs for the school for additional staff and increased maintenance requirements.

19. The decision to proceed with the statutory process to expand the school is normally done prior to detailed project and funding appraisal, particularly where there is a demonstrable need as with this school. Capital funding forward plans include funds to assist with demographic issues on school places. A further paper for decision will follow the statutory process as normal where capital works are required, and subject to the capital policies and processes laid down.
20. Publication of a statutory proposal to expand the school requires confirmation from the local authority that funds will be made available for the necessary capital costs.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to approve the publication of a statutory notice for the expansion of Charlton Primary School.**

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