



# Report to Cabinet Member for Achievement and Learning

Cabinet Member Report AL15.07

**The Cabinet Member for Achievement and Learning will take the following decision on 11 October 2007.**

This decision will be taken under **Special Urgency** procedures as outlined in the County Council's constitution under 'Access to Information Standing Orders', Paragraph 16. The decision has not appeared on the County Council's Forward Plan and five clear days notice cannot be given before the decision is taken. Permission has been sought from the Leader of the Council and the Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services. The decision has been taken under the Special Urgency Rule because of a change in legislation (Section 29 of the Education and Inspection Act 2006) and the abolition of the School Organisation Committee. Under these circumstances the five clear days notice cannot be given, and it is expected that the Cabinet Member will sign the decision on Thursday 11 October 2007.

**Title:** Report on the outcome of the consultation by the federated governing body of Dinton CE School and Cuddington CE School on their proposal to combine from September 2008 and to create a KSII school at Dinton CE School.

**Date:** 11 October 2007

**Author:** Chris Munday Divisional Director (Commissioning and Business Achievement)

**Contact Officer:** Andrew Tusting, Operations Manager, Local Delivery (01296 387743)

**Electoral Divisions Affected:** Haddenham, Grendon Underwood, Icknield and Bledlow and Bernwood

**Relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee:** Children's Services

## Summary

The governing bodies of the federated schools undertook a consultation and then published a statutory notice on a proposal that they should become a combined school from September 2008. Cuddington would be the KSI School and Dinton the KSII School. 120 replies were received to the consultation, 71 (59%) were in favour and 49 (41%) opposed the proposal.

## Recommendation

**The Cabinet Member is recommended to agree to the proposal from the federated governing body that the two schools become a combined school from September 2008 and that Cuddington CE School becomes a KSI school (age range 4-7) and Dinton CE School a KSII school (age range 8-11).**

### A. Narrative setting out the reasons for the decision

1. From March to April 2006 there was a consultation and a public meeting with the parents and communities at Dinton and Cuddington on a proposed reorganisation of the two schools. This followed the inability of the governing body at Dinton CE School to appoint a new headteacher after their existing headteacher was promoted
2. As a result of the consultation no further action was taken on the proposal and the governing body again tried to recruit a headteacher, which they were unable to do
3. After their inability to recruit a headteacher the governing body at Dinton CE School agreed to the creation of a federation between the schools and the federation formally came into effect on 1 April 2007
4. In April – May 2007 a second consultation took place with parents and residents on a proposal that from September 2008, Cuddington CE School should become a KSI school and Dinton CE School a KSII school, by the two schools becoming a combined school
5. Both of the schools are voluntary aided infant schools and have served their local communities since the 1870s. Both schools have recently received outstanding Ofsted reports
6. A statutory notice was published by the school on 24 May but had to be republished on 18 July because of errors in the original notice. This was caused by the original notice being originally published during the time when new regulations had come into force. The new regulations brought in by the then DFES resulted in the disbandment of the School Organisation Committee and responsibility for the type of decisions it had been formed to make, being passed to Local Authorities. The notice was re-published in the light of these new regulations
7. A total of 120 responses were received to the consultation in April/May 2007 and to the statutory notices
8. The majority of those who replied 71 or (59%) were in favour of the proposal while 49 (41%) of those who responded were opposed
9. Appendix B provides details of the total responses received  
Appendix C details the issues raised by those opposed to the proposal,  
Appendix D reflects the reasons given from those supporting the proposal

10. Apart from the issues centered around the teaching at the school, premises issues and the merits of a small village KSII school the main objections were:

10:1 impact on Haddenham Junior School if the proposal went ahead

10:2 the reduction in the number of infant school places in the area

10:3 the possible creation of surplus school places at Haddenham Junior

10:1. It is true that the proposal will have an impact on Haddenham Junior's roll. Currently based on the numbers of pupils projected to go to Haddenham Junior there is likely to be a reduction in their admissions of between 20 and 30 pupils if the proposal went ahead.

In the four years since September 2003, Haddenham Junior has taken in 87 children from Cuddington and Dinton but only 22 of these were from Haddenham Junior's catchment area. The balance come from areas other than Haddenham Junior's catchment area-there is no guarantee that this situation would continue in the future and Haddenham Junior School could face a fall in pupil roll without the proposed change at Cuddington and Dinton.

Over the coming years there are going to be built in Aylesbury Vale, near to Aylesbury Town, approximately 21,500 houses. One of the consequences of this is that there will be an increase in the need for primary school places. However until the planning decisions are made we do not know for certain where the houses are going to be built. It might be that one of the outcomes of the additional build is that more primary school places are needed at Haddenham Junior but at this stage it is not possible to be certain about this.

10:2 The issue of a reduction in infant school places has been mentioned by a number of those opposing the proposal. If it went ahead the combined school will have an admission number of 20, which is 26 less than the two schools have now. Currently Dinton and Cuddington Schools have approximate intakes of 6 catchment children per school per year, and the balance is made up of out-area children. There are surplus infant school places in the area and the proposal would remove some of these surplus school places.

In the longer term because of the planned additional housing there will be a need for more infant school places in Aylesbury Vale, but the need will be for significantly more places than those that would be taken out of the system by the proposal.

10:3 It is difficult to say that Haddenham Junior will definitely have to make staff redundant as with a school the size of Haddenham Junior there will always be a turnover of staff and it might well be that any reduction in the size of the school's staff if it was necessary, could be managed by natural wastage.

11. In the Decision Makers' guidance for Local Authorities published by the DCSF in June 2007 (appendix E page 4 onwards) it states when making decisions that the following factors should be taken into account by the Decision Maker:
- Effect on standards and school improvement- "the best schools are able to expand and spread their ethos and success"...the government wishes to encourage changes to local school provision where it will boost standards and opportunities....whilst matching school place supply as closely as possible to pupils' and parents needs and wishes"
  - Diversity- "a vital part of the government's vision is to create a more diverse school system offering excellence and choice.....decision makers should consider how proposals will contribute to local diversity. They should consider the range of schools in the relevant area of the LA and whether the expansion of the school will meet the aspirations of parents..."
  - Every Child Matters-"the decision maker should consider how proposals will help every child....achieve their potential in accordance with Every Child Matters principles....."
  - Provision for displaced pupils-"where proposals will remove provision the decision maker should be satisfied that there is sufficient capacity to accommodate displaced pupils in the area, taking into account the overall supply and likely future demand for places"
  - Creating additional places-"where proposals will increase provision, the Decision Maker (DM) should consider supporting evidence presented for the increase. The DM should take into account the existence of spare capacity in neighbouring schools, but also the quality and popularity with parents of the schools in which spare capacity exists and evidence of parents. aspirations for places in particular schools. The existence of surplus capacity in neighbouring less popular or successful schools should not in itself prevent the addition of new places."
  - Travel and accessibility for all- In deciding statutory proposals the DM should bear in mind that proposals should not have the effect of unreasonably extending journey times....or result in too many children being prevented from travelling sustainably....."
  - Funding and land-the DM should be satisfied that any capital required to implement the proposals will be available...."
  - School playing fields-the DM will need to be satisfied that either the premises meet the minimum requirements....or the proposers have secured the Secretary of States agreement in principle to grant a relaxation"
  - Views of interested parties-"the DM should consider the views of all those affected by the proposals or who have an interest in them....."
12. The proposal as outlined by the governing body matches many of the criteria set out by the DCSF in that it:
- supports high achievement at Dinton and Cuddington Schools
  - both schools have had outstanding Ofsted reports
  - increases diversity of provision by creating additional Church of England Junior school places in the area

- removes surplus infant school places in the area
- potentially creates surplus places at Haddenham Junior: however the guidance is clear that the creation of surplus places should not be seen by the DM as a barrier to a proposal. On balance the benefits of the proposal outweighs the disadvantages. The guidance states “ where proposals will add to surplus capacity but there is a strong case for approval on parental preference and standards grounds, the presumption should be for approval”
- both Dinton and Cuddington schools are very popular with parents
- the proposal if agreed should see no change in travel times and costs as children will not have to travel to Haddenham and that journey will be replaced by travel between Cuddington and Dinton.
- the premises will meet the minimum requirements of the Education (School Premises) regulations 1999
- the governing body have detailed plans in place for covering the cost of any necessary building works and adaptations
- the proposal sees the continuation of education in Dinton which otherwise would be at risk
- there is clearly both supporting and opposing views in relation to the proposed change and through the publication of a statutory notice and through holding a consultation these views were sought.

## **B. Other options available, and their pros and cons**

1. One option is that the proposal by the federated governing body is rejected. The risk associated with this option is that the future of Dinton CE School again becomes very uncertain. It has already tried twice to appoint a headteacher and been unsuccessful. There is also a possibility that the federated governing body will decide that as their long-term vision for the two schools had been rejected that they will end the federation and the head will return to being head of Cuddington CE School leaving Dinton CE School's future very uncertain, with the possibility that education at Dinton CE School would end

2. Rejecting the proposal of the governing body will not reduce the number of infant school places in the area and will take an element of uncertainty out of the situation for Haddenham Junior School. However as the cabinet member report highlights, a significant number of children already go to Haddenham Junior who are out of their catchment area. There is no guarantee that this situation will continue. Currently Cuddington CE School and Dinton CE School average an intake of only 6 catchment children each so that there are already surplus infant school places in the proposed catchment area

3. Another alternative would be to delay agreeing to the proposal but that would suit neither the federated governing body or Haddenham Junior so has been rejected as a possible option

## **C. Resource implications**

There are no resource implications for the County Council arising from the proposal. The governing body will fund any work from its school budget share

or devolved formula capital grant allocation and the County Council does not have to put its own resources towards the project. There are no additional transport costs that will be incurred by the County Council arising from the proposal

#### **D. Value for Money (VFM) Self Assessment**

Effectiveness: C this outcome would meet the decision makers guidance produced by the DCSF for school reorganisations

Efficiency: C there will be a reduction in surplus infant school places in the area although a likely increase in surplus junior school places

Economy: E work needs to be done to assess the impact of the proposal on service economy

#### **E. Legal implications**

Advice has been sought from Legal and Democratic Services as well as from the Resources team. They raised no objections to the proposal as outlined in the report.

#### **F. Property implications**

There are no property implications arising from the report for Buckinghamshire County Council as the governing body will be funding the necessary work through recognised means.

#### **G. Other implications/issues**

The report highlights a number of the possible impacts both of agreeing the proposal and not agreeing to the proposal.

The County Council is aware that there could be a negative impact on Haddenham Junior of the proposal and it obviously keen to support the school. As well as providing financial support through the School Finance Management Team the school's School Improvement Partner will continue to offer support and advice as necessary

#### **H. Feedback from consultation and Local Member views**

Appendices B, C and D give background to the responses to the consultation and the statutory notices. Local members have been made aware of the proposal. The member for Haddenham who is the chairman of governors of Haddenham Junior School has expressed her opposition to the proposal whilst the member for Bernwood has expressed his support for the proposal.

## **I. Communication issues**

All those who responded to the consultation will be notified of the Cabinet Member's decision. There has also been local media interest in the outcome of the proposal and the local media will be notified.

## **J. Progress Monitoring**

The Northern Area Office of the Achievement and Learning Service and in particular the schools SIP (School Improvement Partner) will be responsible for monitoring the standards of achievement and learning at the school.

## **K. Review**

The Northern Area Office will review the progress of the proposal when implemented as will the Local Delivery team in the Commissioning and Business Improvement Division, as part of their responsibility for school place planning issues.

---

## **Background Papers**

Appendix A: Copy of April 2007 consultation paper

Appendix B: Issues raised by those opposed to the proposal

Appendix C: Reasons given by those in favour of the proposal

Appendix D: Copy of July 2007 statutory notice

Appendix E: Decision maker's guidance DCSF

---

## ***Your questions and views***

*If you have any questions about the matters contained in this paper please get in touch with the Contact Officer whose telephone number is given at the head of the paper.*

**CABINET MEMBER REPORT NO.**

**DECISION TAKEN:**

I have taken into account any representations received concerning the contents of this report.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

---

**DECISION NOT TAKEN:**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**For Reference**

**(Officers should sign below once the report has been finalised for printing and return to Democratic Services, Room 124, Old County Offices)**

Professional advice supporting the decision was provided by the following Officers

Name	Signed	Date
Chris Munday -----	-----	-----
Andrew Tusting -----	-----	-----
-----	-----	-----