

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET MEMBER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

11 September 2017

Report of the Strategic Director for Children’s Services

EXTENSION OF AGE RANGE AT HARPUR HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL

1. Purpose of Report

To report the outcome of the statutory consultation on a proposal to extend the age range of the school from 4-11 years to 3-11 years so that it can offer nursery provision.

2. Information and Analysis

At a meeting on 9 June, Cabinet agreed to a statutory consultation on a proposal to change the age range at Harpur Hill Primary School. The proposal was a response to a need to provide additional early years places as a consequence of 30 hours’ funded provision from September 2017. The school had carried out a pre-publication consultation earlier in 2017 and no responses were received. The statutory consultation took place over the period 14 June –15 July 2017 and there were 18 responses.

The proposal was based on a collaboration between the school and a private sector provider currently operating within the Children’s Centre on the school site. The school and the current private provider met with the Council separately to discuss the proposal and there was concern about offering the 30 hours through the partnership, that being the basis on which this proposal was published. As a consequence it is considered that the school is not in a position to implement the proposal it consulted on.

The responses raised a number of issues which have been addressed below. Comments of a similar nature have been grouped together.

Consultee Comment – a number of respondents expressed concern about the fact that the process had taken a long time and would not be completed by the beginning of the autumn term.

Authority Response - Under the DfE guidance Making 'prescribed alterations' to Maintained Schools dated April 2016, for a school to change its age range, it is required to follow a statutory process which includes both an informal pre-circulation consultation and a statutory consultation. That process normally takes 6-8 months as the outcome of each consultation has to be reported to the Council. Harpur Hill Primary School first indicated that it wished to consult on changing its age range in October 2016 and carried out the pre-circulation consultation in January/February 2017. The outcome of that consultation was due to be reported to Cabinet in May, however due to the local elections, it was not felt appropriate to proceed at that time.

Consultee Comment – Some parents expressed a concern that the proposal did not offer flexibility and did not meet parental needs.

Authority Response – The original proposal envisaged that the school and a private provider to work in partnership to allow the full range of early years services to be provided. Similar collaborations are common across the county.

Consultee Comment – A number of respondents expressed the desire to have the full 30-hour early years provision with a single provider and expressed concern about the fact that the 30-hour provision would be split between the school nursery and a private provider.

Authority Response - There are already circumstances where children take their 15 hours in a school nursery or pre-school setting and parents then pay for additional hours elsewhere in another setting. The Government encourages schools and PVI providers to work together to offer the 30 hours' entitlement which will enable working parents to replace their fee-paid place with a funded place. In many locations, children are collected and may have to travel from one setting to another to enjoy full-day care. The proposal at Harpur Hill is that the provision is located in the same building, which makes the transition from one provider to another seamless.

Consultee Comment – There was a query as to why the school would be offering the universal element rather than the private provider.

Authority Response - It has been the practice for a number of years to commission providers on school sites to offer complementary services to the school.

Consultee Comment – A respondent was concerned about how the partnership would work when there was obvious tension between the school and the private provider.

Authority Response - The Authority is aware that collaborations such as the one proposed are common and the split of responsibilities between school and private provider can be advantageous to both. As indicated above the responses to this consultation have established that the proposed partnership is less secure than was originally envisaged.

Consultee Comment – There was support for the fact that the school provision would be supported by a qualified teacher.

Authority Response – Both schools and PVI providers have the option to operate with a qualified teacher as long as they meet the ratio requirement within the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Consultee Comment – Two respondents expressed concern about the school creating a nursery when its Ofsted category was ‘requires improvement’.

Authority Response – Harpur Hill Primary School received a ‘Good’ Ofsted judgement for early years at its last inspection although the overall judgement was requiring improvement

Consultee Comment – There was a query about why the school was offering a 6.5 hour day when the funding was only for 6 hours and how this would impact on the private provider.

Authority Response - Although the funding is for 6 hours x 5 days, the school recognises that this needs to fit in with the school day and does not wish to inconvenience parents by insisting on early pick-ups. The school is, therefore, willing to meet the normal school day. The school is effectively offering an extra 30 minutes of provision each day using the 30 hours’ funding in order to offer a convenient service for parents.

Consultee Comment – There were positive comments about the fact that the school nursery could assist with a child’s transition to school.

Authority Response - As the early years’ provision is on the school site, this will lead to a smoother transition for the children whether offered by the school or the private provider

Consultee Comment – There was a query about catering and uniforms and how much they would cost.

Authority Response - The DfE has been clear in the Early Years Entitlements Operational Guidance (July 2017) that the Government funding is intended to deliver the 15 or 30 hours of high-quality flexible childcare. It is not intended to cover the costs of meals, other consumables etc. Parents can therefore expect to pay for any meals offered by a provider. However, providers must offer alternative options for parents such as allowing parents to bring in a packed lunch.

Parents must be given the option to purchase school uniform as this cannot be mandatory.

Consultee Comment – One respondent was unhappy about the proposal to increase the pre-school rent as part of the re-organisation.

Authority Response - The pre-school is housed in a Sure Start Children's Centre. The majority of funding was provided by the DfE and under the terms of the initial grant, an Authority could not profit from activities that took place in the building. As a result, the initial licence was based on overheads only. As the Children's Centre has closed, it is appropriate to address rental costs. The rent has been assessed on an open market basis and is comparable with others in the Buxton area.

Consultee Comment – One respondent raised the issue of parking and the impact of additional nursery provision on the car park and local road.

Authority Response - When the Children's Centre was built, additional parking was provided for the staff and parents attending the services. Now that the centre has closed, that additional capacity is available to meet the extra demands of the early years provision. In addition, where parents take up the option for 30 hours per week rather than 15, this will generate less movement in the middle of the day.

The statutory process requires the outcome of the consultation to be reported to the Council within 2 months of the end of the consultation period. The school was concerned that this would prevent them from offering places to children at the start of the September 2017 term. It is understood that the school is investigating a governor-led nursery, the partnership proposal on which the consultation took place does not therefore now appear to be viable.

3. Financial Considerations

It is proposed to locate the nursery within the former Children's Centre building which is housed on the same site as the school, and capital funding of £24,019 for the remodelling of the accommodation was approved at the 14 March 2017 Cabinet Member For Children's Services meeting. The school will receive revenue funding for all early years pupils

who have reached the age of 3 at specific census points throughout the year (January, May and October).

4. Human Resources Considerations

The school already has Early Years-trained staff on its teaching and non-teaching personnel. If the school was to extend its age range to provide a nursery, the school would need to recruit one additional qualified teacher and two non-teaching staff in order to comply with current ratios set out by the DfE. The staffing cost will be met from the revenue funding mentioned in the Financial Considerations (above).

5. Legal Considerations

The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 and the relevant DfE statutory guidance 'Making Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools – statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers' (April 2016) set out the procedure for changing the age range in schools. The 2013 Regulations and statutory guidance have been complied with in the proposal to extend the age limit at Harpur Hill Primary School

6. Social Value Considerations

Research has shown that Early Years education can deliver educational, developmental and social benefits, particularly where there is continuity in the educational environment.

7. Other Considerations

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: - prevention of crime and disorder, equality of opportunity, and environmental, health, property and transport considerations.

8. Background Papers

A file is available within the Children's Services' Development Section.

9. Officer's Recommendation

That the proposal to extend the age range at Harpur Hill Primary School be refused on the basis that the consultation and associated discussion indicates that the proposed collaboration is not considered viable

Jane Parfremment, Strategic Director for Children's Services