

Open Report on behalf of Debbie Barnes, Executive Director of Children's Services

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| Report to: | Councillor Mrs P A Bradwell, Executive Councillor for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning |
| Date: | 14 December 2012 |
| Subject: | Proposed relocation and expansion of Crowland South View Community Primary School (decision to go to Statutory Notice) |
| Decision Reference: | 02113 |
| Key decision? | No |

Summary:

The proposal under consideration is to expand Crowland South View Community Primary School to ensure that there are enough primary school places in Crowland to accommodate the increasing pupil numbers in the area. This expansion will involve the relocation of the primary school into refurbished accommodation on the site formerly used for secondary education on Postland Road by the St Guthlac School which has now closed and is part of the University Academy, Holbeach. The proposed implementation date is 1 September 2014.

It is the Local Authority's (LA) statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places to accommodate all pupils of statutory school age in Lincolnshire. The LA believes that this proposal is the best available option to address the increasing pressure on primary school places in Crowland.

The LA is co-ordinating the process following statutory guidelines (see the Department for Education (DfE) guide "Expanding a Maintained Mainstream School by Enlargement or Adding a Sixth Form" in Appendix A) in accordance with the terms of the Education and Inspections Act (EIA) 2006 as updated by the Education Act 2011. Consultation commenced on 15 October 2012 with a five week period of consultation which closed on 19 November 2012 and is further referred to later in this report in the Consultation section. A summary of written responses received is also attached as Appendix B.

This report advises the Executive Councillor on making a decision regarding proceeding to the next stage of the process with the publication of a Statutory Notice, as required by law, to propose the relocation and expansion of Crowland South View Community Primary School. If the Executive Councillor gives approval there will follow a further four weeks Representation Period giving another opportunity for people and organisations to express their views and ensure that they are taken into account when the final decision is taken by the Executive Councillor in March next year.

Recommendation(s):

Following the completion of the consultation period, the first phase of the statutory process, the Executive Councillor is recommended to take the next step of publishing a Statutory Notice. This notice will confirm the proposal to relocate and expand the capacity at Crowland South View Community Primary School with effect from 1 September 2014 and will enable the continuation of the statutory process to the next stage.

Alternatives Considered:

1. That the Statutory Notice is not published and the consultation process is stopped. This would mean that the school would continue as it is currently and there would be no further consultation on expansion at Crowland South View Community Primary School.

However, the above alternative would have the following disadvantages:

There would be insufficient available primary school places in Crowland and the LA would be unable to comply with its statutory duty within Crowland to ensure that there are sufficient school places for children of a statutory school age.

It would place increasing pressure on the primary school in Crowland and in addition at many of the primary schools in the surrounding area, where the numbers on roll are already at capacity, leading to concerns over the consequent impact on the quality of education provided.

It would lead to either further overcrowding or additional mobile classrooms (subject to planning approval) with insufficient infrastructure for the number of pupils being accommodated on an already undersized site.

It would likely lead to children being offered places at villages outside of Crowland, with increasing transport costs and potential increased car usage and also concerns over the impact of this additional travelling time on the children concerned.

2. That the Statutory Notice is not published, the consultation process is stopped and Crowland South View Community Primary School remains as it currently is with no further expansion but the LA looks to increase capacity at other primary schools in the surrounding area.

Other options in this area have been explored and all primary schools have been considered for potential expansion but none have been found to be as suitable due to reasons such as undersized sites, distance that pupils would have to travel, parental preference, impact on standards and the fact that other schools are of suitable sizes for the areas they serve. Crowland South View Community Primary School is the most appropriate primary school in the area for expansion.

Reasons for Recommendation:

To enable the LA to meet its statutory obligation to ensure that there are sufficient school places in Crowland for all children of statutory school age.

To ensure that the provision of school places is planned so as to promote high educational standards, enable fair access to educational opportunity for every child and promote the fulfilment of each child's potential. This proposal will both enhance the quality of provision and sustain local provision.

The proposal will assist in meeting parental preference. The Government have made it clear that the wishes of parents should be taken into account in planning and managing school estates. DfE guidance states that places should be allocated where parents want them and that successful and popular schools be allowed to grow.

The LA considers the proposal to be the best available solution to the expected shortage of primary school places in Crowland.

To enable the process to continue to the next stage and allow a further opportunity for people and organisations to express their views about the proposal and ensure that they will be taken into account by the Executive Councillor prior to a final decision being taken in March 2013.

1. Background

National birth rates, mostly concentrated in more urban areas, have been steadily rising in recent years. This increased birth rate, combined in some areas with inward migration and housing development, is impacting on demand for primary school places putting significant pressure on primary schools across the country, such as South View. The former St Guthlac site and buildings offer an excellent opportunity to address the shortage of space at the current South View Primary School.

The school have admitted above their intake of 46 to provide 60 Reception places for local children for September 2012 by making maximum use of all available accommodation as they have done in previous years. Population data shows that there is expected to be a long term requirement for more than 46 places per year group. A permanent sustainable solution is needed to accommodate additional children to avoid further overcrowding and/or transporting 4 year old children to alternative schools outside of their local community. The South View site already has 3 temporary classrooms, an undersized playground, a shortfall of general accommodation and operates on a split site with a playing field having no facilities which is more than 250 metres away across a busy road. There are no development opportunities on the current school site and with pupil numbers expected to remain above 46 there will be a shortage of classroom space from September 2014. Any additional accommodation added to the current site would further reduce the already limited outdoor play area. Moving to a larger site with better facilities will

address many of these issues and provide accommodation that is fit for purpose with the potential to provide additional facilities such as extended provision. In addition, the LA and Crowland South View Community Primary School are committed to working with Crowland Parish Council and the residents of Crowland to continue to provide community facilities.

The table below is based on NHS GP registration data and shows the number currently on roll (October census 2012) for year groups Reception to Year 6, and also shows the potential Reception intake numbers for September 2013 and 2014 based on 2012 projections.

| | 2014 | 2013 | Rec | Y1 | Y2 | Y3 | Y4 | Y5 | Y6 | Total |
|----------------|------|------|-----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-------|
| Number on Roll | 52 | 57 | 61 | 47 | 42 | 58 | 56 | 44 | 37 | 345 |

The published admissions number per year group is currently 46 and the permanent capacity is 322. The proposal is to permanently expand the capacity of the school with effect from September 2014 to be able to take up to a PAN of 60 in all year groups with a total capacity of 420.

Having additional classes and more children on roll at the school will also have financial benefits for the school. This may potentially provide the opportunity to enhance teaching provision and career opportunities for staff which in turn will benefit the learning experience of the children.

Following statutory consultation, if the expansion proposal is approved, it is proposed that work will be carried out to refurbish the former St Guthlac buildings during the academic year 2012/13 (subject to planning permission being granted) with the aim of having the new facilities completed in readiness for the start of term in September 2014.

The planning application process is dealt with and consulted on separately and there will be an opportunity for those that are interested to be involved throughout the planning process.

2. Conclusion

The LA believes this proposal to be in the best interests of local children and local parents as well as educational provision in the area and it supports the council's aim of ensuring that as many children as possible can reach their full potential. It also enables the LA to fulfil its statutory duty of ensuring that there are sufficient places to accommodate all pupils of statutory school age in Lincolnshire.

It is recommended that the proposal is implemented to ensure the best educational opportunities for the children of Crowland. The advantages of implementing this proposal are detailed earlier in this report in the "Reasons for Recommendations" section.

A decision is required at this stage from the Executive Councillor as to whether to proceed to the publication of a Statutory Notice. The factors to consider in making this decision are within this report and all valid written responses received during consultation must be considered (summarised in Appendix B).

3. Legal Comments:

The legal issues to be taken into account in the making of this decision, which is within the remit of the Executive Councillor, are fully set out in the report.

4. Resource Comments:

There are no significant or immediate financial implications arising from the recommendation in this report, i.e. to publish a statutory notice. Should a decision be made at the end of this process to relocate Crowland South View Community Primary school, then the refurbishment costs would be met from Children's Services capital programme, with on-going revenue costs funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant.

5. Consultation

In order for the school to relocate and expand the LA must follow the necessary statutory legal processes as required by the Secretary of State in accordance with the EIA 2006, the Education Act 2011 and the guidance of the DfE regarding expansion (Appendix A)

Under these guidelines the LA must ensure that sufficient time and information are provided for people to understand and form a view on the proposal and make a response. The consultation documentation must set out the problem that is being addressed and invite comment on one or more solutions. The LA must explain the decision making process and take all reasonable steps to draw the consultation to the attention of all those who might be interested and take into account their views.

The Education Act 2002 states the requirement for current pupils to be consulted and this was further extended by subsequent legislation to also include all pre-school children over the age of 3. The Headteacher has consulted with the children currently attending the school through the school council. This has produced a very positive response and the children are generally looking forward to the relocation and expansion of the school. A summary of the consultation undertaken by the school council is attached as Appendix C. The EIA 2006 specifically includes as interested parties the registered parents of registered pupils at the school and also the appropriate District and Parish Councils for the area. The list of interested parties was compiled according to statutory guidelines comprising as wide a range of consultees as practicable and including parents, the Chief Executive of the District Council, the Parish Clerk of Crowland Parish Council as well as individual councillors as appropriate.

A letter, (Appendix D) incorporating relevant information and reasons for the proposal, was sent out to interested parties (listed in Appendix E) on 15 October 2012 to commence a five week period of consultation. Individual meetings were offered to anyone interested to meet with representatives of the LA at the school to ask questions and raise any concerns and one appointment was taken up. This

was a parent who supported the proposal but raised concerns regarding the busy road of the relocated site and the suitability of stairs in a primary school. The LA officer reassured the parent that should the proposal go ahead all traffic issues would be considered in the planning application process and any upstairs classrooms would only be used for Key Stage 2 pupils and not any younger children. There was the opportunity to provide a response to the consultation by letter, email or by returning the response form (Appendix F) attached to the consultation document by 19 November 2012. Copies of the letter commencing consultation and the response form were also published on the County Council website under the webpage Current Consultations on www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/provisionplanning

The written responses received during consultation have been provided to the Executive Councillor for consideration and further details are confirmed in this report in Appendix B. To briefly summarise, however, there were 29 valid responses in total with 20 supporting the proposal, 3 against and 6 expressing a view neither in favour nor against the proposal. Out of the total responses received 18 were from parents with 14 in favour, 1 against and 3 neither for nor against.

If the Executive Councillor decides to proceed to Statutory Notice, this would initiate a 4 week Representation Period giving a further opportunity for people and organisations to express their views and ensure that they are taken into account when the final decision is taken by the Executive Councillor in March 2013. Under current legislation the LA is the decision maker for the proposal and is co-ordinating the statutory process before making a decision at the end of the process. The LA, as decision maker, must be able to show that all relevant issues raised are taken into consideration in the decision making process. Points raised can be considered unpersuasive but must not be ignored altogether.

a) Has Local Member Been Consulted?

Yes the local member has been made aware of the proposal to relocate and expand Crowland South View Community Primary School.

b) Has Executive Councillor Been Consulted?

Yes the Executive Councillor has been involved in the discussions regarding the proposal to relocate and expand Crowland South View Community Primary School.

c) Scrutiny Comments

This has not been considered by a scrutiny committee.

d) Policy Proofing Actions Required

An Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached as Appendix G. In summary the analysis indicates that there will be no significant impact, positive or negative, arising out of the Executive Councillor's decision. This report deals only

with the question of whether to publish a Statutory Notice and no decision is being made at this time with regard to the relocation or expansion of the capacity at the school. The publication of the Statutory Notice enables the statutory process to continue and gives a further opportunity for people and organisations to express their views and ensure that they are taken into account when the final decision is taken by the Executive Councillor.

6. Appendices

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| These are listed below and attached at the back of the report | |
| Appendix A | DfE guide "Expanding a Maintained Mainstream School by Enlargement or Adding a Sixth Form" |
| Appendix B | Summary of written responses in Consultation Period |
| Appendix C | Summary of responses of current pupils |
| Appendix D | Letter to commence consultation |
| Appendix E | List of Interested Parties |
| Appendix F | Consultation Response Form |
| Appendix G | Impact Assessment |

7. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Matt Clayton, who can be contacted on 01522 553535 or matthew.clayton@lincolnshire.gov.uk .