

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Cabinet	
MEETING DATE:	10 August 2011	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 2294
TITLE:	Determination of the Statutory Notice to Alter the Lower Age Limit at St. Mary's Church of England Primary School (Writhlington)	
WARD:	All but specifically Radstock.	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1 Equalities Impact Assessment Appendix 2 Consultation Document Appendix 3 Complete Proposal Appendix 4 Statutory Notice		

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 The Governing Body of St. Mary's C of E Primary school (Writhlington) has consulted on and published a proposal to alter the lower age limit of the school from age 4 to age 3 by the addition of Early Years provision that would be run by the school. At the end of the six week statutory notice representation period (26 July 2011) a decision is required to determine the proposal.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet agrees that:

2.1 The lower age limit of St. Mary's C of E Primary school should be altered from age 4 to age 3 by the addition of Early Years provision to commence on 1 September 2011.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The school Governing Body has a carry-forward sum of £9,000 to invest in re-furbishing the Early Years accommodation at the school. The revenue implications for staff will be paid from the Dedicated Schools Grant. There are no financial implications for the Council.

4 CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- Building communities where people feel safe and secure
- Improving life chances of disadvantaged teenagers and young people

5 THE REPORT

- 5.1 Writhlington Pre-School is currently managed by the Writhlington Pre –School Committee who lease a temporary building on the St. Mary’s C of E primary school site. The committee has decided it will cease to operate from the end of term in July 2011.
- 5.2 In order to ensure that the provision can continue, the governing body of St. Mary’s Church of England primary propose to incorporate the pre-school into the school with the aim of ensuring quality pre-school provision for the Writhlington community.
- 5.3 The Governing Body aim to build on the successful ethos of St. Mary’s (recently graded as “Good” by Ofsted), and continue to raise achievement for all in the Writhlington community: Under the St. Mary’s “umbrella”, the school will be able to ensure children have access to a broad, balanced curriculum within a learning environment in which children can be healthy and stay safe. Children would be taught by appropriately trained staff, with specialist advice, leadership and administrative support.
- 5.4 St. Mary’s Class 1 is a dedicated Reception class (judged by Ofsted to be “Outstanding”) operating under the leadership of a specialist teacher. They follow the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework. The inclusion of the pre-school as a nursery class will improve opportunities for children to access wider educational opportunities, make appropriate progress and achieve their potential. One whole phase of transition will be eliminated as children will enter the school at pre-school age.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 The report author and Lead Cabinet member have fully reviewed the risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.
- 6.2 If the proposal is not approved, the provision will have to close and valuable Early Years places in Radstock ward will be lost. Radstock is identified as an area of childcare insufficiency, meaning that there is already insufficient childcare to meet demand. The provision is well used and is needed in the area.

7 EQUALITIES

- 7.1 A proportionate equalities impact assessment has been carried out using corporate guidelines.
- 7.2 This proposal is not expected to have an impact on the equality areas of gender, transgender, race, sexual orientation or rural communities.
- 7.3 The proposal is expected to have a positive impact on the equality areas of:
- Age - the provision will ensure that good quality provision for Early Years age children is continued on this site.
 - Disability - the provision will be fully inclusive and children with disabilities and SEN will be able to access the provision.

- Religion - the Early Years provision will be at a Christian school. The school is Voluntary Controlled not Voluntary Aided and the Christian ethos is not a factor or a requirement for entry into the Early Years provision which will admit children of all religions and beliefs and those with no religious beliefs.
- Socio-economic disadvantaged – there is evidence of a higher than average level of socio-economic disadvantage in this area of the Authority. Access to good quality Early Years provision is likely to lead to enhanced life chances and improved educational outcomes for children who are socio-economically disadvantaged.

7.4 The proposal is not expected to have a negative impact on any of the above equality areas.

8 RATIONALE

8.1 The proposal is for the school to take over running an existing pre-school provision currently run on a voluntary basis by a management committee. Therefore capacity and sustainability in the local area should not be an issue as no new places are being created that might have a negative effect on the viability of other provision locally.

8.2 It is anticipated that the proposal will ensure that this age group of children have access to high quality education, and a seamless transition into school.

8.3 St. Mary's C of E Primary school benefits from excellent liaison and links with the Local Authority, a host of outside agencies and support, as well as strong links with a wide range of educational networks

8.4 Other than a response from the NUT who had no objections to the proposal, no responses were received during the six week representation period following publication of the statutory notice. No objections to the proposal were raised during the consultation period and there was one response from the local MP offering his assistance if required.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 The school and the Early Years team did consider whether a replacement voluntary management committee could be identified to continue to run the provision but there has been no interest from the local community. Also the inclusion of the pre-school as part of the school is expected to improve educational outcomes for children and allow one whole phase of transition – from pre-school into school - to be eliminated.

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 Ward Councillors; Parish Council; Trades Unions; Staff; Other B&NES Services; Service Users; Local Residents; Community Interest Groups; Stakeholders/Partners; Section 151 Finance Officer; Chief Executive; Monitoring Officer.

10.2 The school circulated the consultation document to all staff and governors at the school, the pre-school staff and management committee, families of pupils at the school the Church of England Diocese, the local MP, the local parish council, other local schools in Radstock ward, the Local Authority, unions representing all

staff at the school – teaching and non-teaching, the local library, the local GP surgery, local shops, Radstock Children’s Centre and the local community Stay and Play group. The document contained details of how people could respond to the consultation.

10.3 The statutory notice was published in a local newspaper serving the area, posted in a local shop and outside the school gates, outlining the proposal and explaining how interested parties could comment on the proposal.

11 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

11.1 Social Inclusion; Customer Focus; Human Resources; Property; Young People; Corporate; Impact on Staff; Other Legal Considerations.

12 ADVICE SOUGHT

12.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer (Divisional Director – Legal and Democratic Services) and Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

Contact person	Helen Hoynes 01225 395169
Sponsoring Cabinet Member	Councillor Nathan Hartley
Background papers	None
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	