

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Cabinet	
MEETING DATE:	21 July 2010	AGENDA ITEM NUMBER 13
TITLE:	A Review of Secondary Schools in Keynsham	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE: E 2153
WARD:	Farmborough, Saltford, Keynsham East, Keynsham South, Keynsham North, Publow & Whitchurch	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1 – Summary of consultation responses		

1. THE ISSUE

- 1.1. In March 2008 full Council approved a strategy for the future of secondary schools in Bath & North East Somerset. In May 2008 Cabinet agreed to consult on proposed changes to Keynsham schools, specifically the closure of Broadlands Community School and the expansion of Wellsway Community School to create a single secondary school for Keynsham.
- 1.2. A public consultation exercise on this proposal was undertaken between March and May 2010 and this report sets out the results of the consultation.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to:

- 2.1. Note the results of consultation on proposed changes to Keynsham secondary schools.
- 2.2. Agree that there are no changes to Keynsham secondary schools and to inform the governing bodies of Broadlands and Wellsway schools that the Council has no plans to undertake further reviews in the foreseeable future.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. The impact of any decision will depend on the specific details of the decision and the resultant number of pupils attending Bath & North East Somerset schools.
- 3.2. Revenue funds are provided to the LA based on the number of pupils attending schools within the LA. The allocation known as the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is a ring-fenced grant that has to be spent on schools or services supporting schools under regulations laid down in the Education Act 2003.
- 3.3. The current DSG allocation per pupil (2010-11) is £4,203 per pupil. Funding allocations to schools average approximately £3,850 leaving £350 per pupil used on services supporting schools.
- 3.4. The principles of school funding are that if a school is closed then funding would follow the pupils to whichever school they attend. So if the pupil numbers attending Bath & North East Somerset schools were to reduce then there would be a subsequent reduction in DSG.
- 3.5. If Broadlands school were to be closed and Wellsway school expanded then it is anticipated there would be a reduction in pupils attending Bath & North East Somerset schools. It is anticipated that pupil numbers attending Bath & North East Somerset schools would decrease as set out in the table below.
- 3.6. The schedule below sets out the possible impact of the pupil reductions on the gross DSG income

Year	Broadlands and Wellsway Estimated Pupil numbers	Difference From current	DSG Budget reductions £000s	Cumulative reductions £000s
Jan 2009	2065			
2010-11	1944	121	42	
2011-12	1831	113	40	82
2012-13	1677	154	54	136
2013-14	1531	146	51	187
2014-15	1434	97	34	221
2015-16	1390	44	15	236
2016-17	1350	40	14	250
Cumulative		715	250	

- 3.7. This reduction in pupils would result in a reduction in resources available to support schools and pupils of approximately £250,000 if the school closed completely. The transition period would result in a staged reduction in resources.
- 3.8 If Broadlands were not closed it is possible that the pupil numbers might expand or contract as parental choice will impact on pupil numbers.
- 3.9 There would be ongoing capital maintenance costs of keeping two schools open, which would limit any possible improvements at schools as resources are restricted in coming years.
- 3.10 The capital resource implications are linked to the site sale of Broadlands should the school be closed. Any receipt from the sale of the site would under current council policy be ring-fenced for investment in the school estate. It is estimated that the Broadlands site could release approximately £6m-£8m. However a conservative approach to any building projects funded from this resource would be followed.
- 3.11 Building projects at Wellsway would be necessary to ensure that the pupils displaced from Broadlands could be accommodated on the Wellsway site. It would be necessary to carry out these projects prior to the sale of the Broadlands site, and the project planning will accommodate the anticipated borrowing requirement that would be required.

4. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- *Improving life chances of disadvantaged teenagers and young people*
- *Improving school buildings*
- *Sustainable growth*
- *Addressing the causes and effects of Climate Change*

5. THE REPORT

Background

- 5.1. In Jan 2007 the Children and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Panel completed a review of all our secondary schools. The Panel visited each school to see the facilities available to young people and staff in each school. They also held open public contributor sessions where the views of head teachers, governors, local councillors and the local community were heard.
- 5.2. The purpose of the review was *'to ensure that the current high standards in our secondary schools are maintained and improved; that all our resources are used effectively; that wherever possible, good facilities are available to all users of school buildings; that the natural choice of parents and pupils will be their local school; that travel to schools by private car should be reduced where possible'*.
- 5.3. Following consideration of the findings of the Panel, full Council and Cabinet in 2008 agreed a strategy for secondary schools in Bath & North East Somerset and officers were authorised to consult on changes to secondary schools in Keynsham: specifically the closure of Broadlands Community School and the expansion of Wellsway Community School to create a single secondary school for Keynsham. Officers were also asked if possible to gain early access to Building Schools for the Future (BSF) funding to enable major capital investment to renew and remodel secondary schools in line with any proposed changes.

- 5.4. In 2009 it became apparent that Bath & North East Somerset was unlikely to gain early access to BSF funding due to the economic downturn leading to uncertainty about the future of the programme. However, as capital investment is possible from sale of surplus school sites if it was agreed that schools should close, it was decided to proceed with a public consultation.
- 5.5. The public consultation was launched on 28 March and ran for two months. Approximately 5300 copies of a consultation document setting out the issues and key challenges in Keynsham were distributed to parents at Broadlands, Wellsway and all Keynsham primary schools. Copies were also sent to neighbouring local authorities and other stakeholders such as the Catholic and Anglican dioceses, Keynsham Town Council, parish councils and community groups and organisations using Broadlands and Wellsway schools. A copy of the consultation document can be found on the Council website (http://consultations.bathnes.gov.uk/consult.ti/keynsham_review/consultationHome). People were invited to respond using the detachable pro forma in the document, by email and letter or on line through the Council website.
- 5.6. Public consultation meetings were held at both schools with an additional meeting at St Keyna Primary School. Every attempt was made to ensure that the meetings could accommodate those wishing to attend including the provision of overflow areas with both an audio and visual link so that people could see and hear the presentations by officers and the schools. The meetings were well attended; in particular the Broadlands meeting where unfortunately despite the overflow area some people had to be turned away as capacity could not be breached due to fire regulations. These people were directed to the St Keyna meeting a few days later. A summary record of the public meetings has been provided to Cabinet and made available at public libraries. In total 683 people attended the public meetings.

Key challenges in Keynsham

- 5.7. As set out in the consultation document, although standards at Broadlands and Wellsway are good overall there are a number of challenges in Keynsham and the proposal for a single school in Keynsham seeks to address these. In summary the challenges are:
- 5.8. Together these two schools have a total of 2,135 (January 2009) places available for pupils aged 11-16. However, only about 1,100 pupils aged 11-16 attending the schools are from Bath & North East Somerset. Approximately 1,000 pupils aged 11-16 attend Broadlands and Wellsway schools from Bristol and South Gloucestershire, the majority of these at Broadlands.
- 5.9. Where pupils live in areas some distance away from their school community it can make it difficult for young people to access support and after school extended services.
- 5.10. The majority of Broadlands school pupils return to Bristol schools and colleges at age 16 resulting in a very small sixth form at Broadlands school. A single school in Keynsham with an appropriately sized sixth form would be able to better meet the needs of all pupils.
- 5.11. Pupils from Bristol and South Gloucestershire may not continue to attend Keynsham schools in the future leading to surplus places.

5.12. Both Wellsway and Broadlands schools have some buildings which are in poor condition and need improvement. Maintaining a smaller number of schools and places will mean that resources for repairs and maintenance can be used as efficiently as possible.

5.13. Even with increased numbers of pupils from new housing, projections show that a single school in Keynsham would meet current and future pupil numbers.

Key issues arising from consultation

5.14. In total 5259 copies of the consultation document were issued with 1114 (20%) responses received. Appendix 1 provides analysis of the responses to the consultation questions and the relationship of respondents to the schools. This shows that an overwhelming majority of respondents (92%) are opposed to the closure of Broadlands and the expansion of Wellsway as the single school for Keynsham. There are 2325 pupils on roll at the schools and in total 236 responses were received from parents of pupils at Broadlands and Wellsway split almost equally between the schools. The views of parents at both schools who did respond were similar with 97% of Broadlands parents and 83% of Wellsway parents who responded opposed to the proposal. Responses from parents of pupils at primary and other schools were at a similar low relatively low level (112 in total) but again show a significant majority (76%) oppose the proposal.

5.15. Despite the large number of pupils from outside the Keynsham area attending Broadlands, analysis of respondents post codes show that the majority of those opposing the proposal (57%) are Keynsham residents.

5.16. Parents, pupils and staff associated with Broadlands argue that Broadlands is a good school with good standards which are continuing to improve, and that closure cannot be justified on educational grounds.

5.17. A number of parents from both within and outside Keynsham choosing Broadlands argue that they have made a positive decision to send their children to Broadlands school and that the closure of the school would remove this choice.

5.18. The consultation revealed that the size of the school is also an issue, with concern that the proposed expansion of Wellsway to a planned admission number of 270 (1350 11-16 pupils) is too large and that some pupils would not thrive in this environment.

5.19. A possible increase in traffic congestion if Wellsway was expanded was raised by a number of people concerned that there is already considerable traffic congestion in Chandag Road at the start and end of the school day.

5.20. Concern has also been expressed that the uncertainty over the future of Broadlands over the last two years has had a negative effect on staff and pupils. It is argued that closure would mean additional disruption to the education of a whole cohort of pupils, particularly those taking GCSEs during the period of closure and transition from two schools to a single school, possibly impacting on standards.

5.21. A small but significant number of respondents, including young people themselves expressed concern that Broadlands' specialism in Engineering would be lost if the school closed.

- 5.22. A number of respondents highlighted that without the Building Schools for the Future funding the reduced scope for capital investment in Wellsway would mean that only a limited amount of new building would be possible and that this is not in line with the agreed previously strategy which was to rebuild Wellsway to provide a single 'new school' for Keynsham.
- 5.23. The issue of the impact on Broadlands staff was also raised with understandable concerns about loss of jobs if there were to be a single school, including management posts where for example only one head of mathematics would be required.
- 5.24. The future of the Broadlands special resource base for pupils with a visual impairment was also a cause for concern for some respondents. The unit would however transfer to Wellsway school if Broadlands were to close (see section 7.2).

Key factors to consider

- 5.25. There are a number of key factors for Members to consider when deciding whether to proceed with changes to secondary schools in Keynsham.

a) The extent to which proposed changes can contribute to improving educational standards

- 5.26. As previously stated, standards at Wellsway are good and Broadlands are satisfactory. Wellsway has higher standards of attainment achieving 75% 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent including English and Maths in 2009, compared to 46% for Broadlands. Measurement of progress made by pupils based on comparing their end of primary school tests (aged 11) with their achievement GCSE (aged 16), known as Value Added, are broadly similar in both Wellsway and Broadlands schools.
- 5.27. A number of parents expressed the view that a school with a planned admission number of 270 (1350 11-16 pupils) is too big and a school of this size may not suit all pupils with a negative impact on their learning. There was also a concern that those with special educational needs (SEN) may not get the support they need and be affected disproportionately by being in a larger school. Whilst these concerns are understandable there are many examples of schools, some in neighbouring authorities, with a planned admission number of 270 which are rated as outstanding in all categories by Ofsted, including for SEN. There is no reason to think that an expanded Wellsway would not provide a very good education to a larger number of pupils including those with SEN.
- 5.28. Standards at Broadlands have improved in each of the last three years. Despite this progress the school feel strongly that the threat of closure since 2008 has had a negative impact on staff and pupils and the removal of this threat would enable the school to continue this progress and further improve standards. Should a decision be taken to close Broadlands and expand Wellsway it is possible that the disruption could lead to a drop in standards at both schools during the transition period.
- 5.29. Members will need to weigh the potential for a larger single school to achieve higher standards for all pupils from Keynsham and Saltford, offering more opportunities for curriculum development especially at Post 16, against the possible negative impact on standards that the disruption caused by transition and

building works may have, particularly when there has been an overwhelmingly negative response from both school communities to the proposal.

b) The extent to which the schools are meeting local need

5.30. Members will need to weigh the potential for a larger single school to achieve higher standards for all pupils from Keynsham and Saltford, offering more opportunities for curriculum development especially at Post 16, against the possible negative impact on standards that the disruption caused by transition and building works may have, particularly when there has been an overwhelmingly negative response from both school communities to the proposal.

5.31. Admission figures for 2009 show that the large majority of pupils attending Broadlands do not come from Keynsham. Approximately 71% of Year 7 (Age 11) entering the school in 2009 were from outside Bath & North East Somerset (mostly from Bristol) and that approximately 28% were from within the Broadlands 'catchment' area. Further analysis shows that in 2009 approximately 35% of pupils resident within the Broadlands 'catchment' area entered Broadlands with 44% entering Wellsway. The remaining 21% made other choices.

5.32. Of the total number of first preferences expressed by parents of Bath & North East Somerset resident pupils for a place at Broadlands and Wellsway in 2010 approximately 18% were for Broadlands and 82% were for Wellsway.

5.33. As the majority of Keynsham parents choose Wellsway it cannot be argued that Broadlands school primarily serves its local community in terms of meeting the educational needs of Bath & North East Somerset children. However, there can be no doubt that parents and pupils from both Keynsham and Bristol choosing Broadlands have made a positive decision to attend the school and value the choice that two schools provides. A number of parents from the Bristol area made the point that they made efforts to ensure their children play a full part in community activities in Keynsham enabling them to socialise with friends living in Keynsham and attending school and community events with benefits to the local economy. It must also be recognised that outside school hours Broadlands does serve the local community by providing facilities for a range of activities.

c) Whether proposals will lead to a more efficient and effective use of resources

5.34. When considering the efficient and effective use of resources it is necessary to consider both revenue and capital funding.

5.35. Revenue - As set out in Section 3 above, a reduction in pupils attending Broadlands from outside Bath & North East Somerset will have an impact on both the revenue budgets for schools as a whole and the Children's Service budget. Closure of Broadlands would result in a reduction of £250,000 in revenue funding available for services managed by the LA for all schools such as the Behaviour Support Service although this impact would be felt over a five year period as pupils from outside Bath & North East Somerset schools currently at Broadlands and Wellsway would continue at the schools until completing their education at the end of Year 11 or 13. Allocations to schools for fixed cost element of their funding e.g. Headteacher, caretaking and office facilities (photocopier and licences etc) would be reduced therefore releasing resources for priorities in all other schools. The savings from these fixed cost elements of the school funding formula are approximately £150,000.

- 5.36. The savings from running fewer schools would be ring-fenced to the Direct Schools Grant (DSG) and the Schools Forum would decide on the use of any savings. With previous reviews (primary schools) the forum has agreed to utilise the savings from school closures to support the redundancy costs associated with any closures and then to utilise the savings to support prudential borrowing to raise additional capital to invest in school buildings. Given the likely future pressure on school budgets in future years it is possible that the Forum may not feel able to support the continuation of this practice.
- 5.37. Capital - The Government has recently announced it is halting the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme which removes prospects of building new schools in Bath & North East Somerset. Future levels of other capital funding from government are also almost certain to be significantly less than previous years. Children's Services in line with all Council departments will also face revenue budget reductions impacting on the capacity to borrow to fund capital. In these circumstances the already considerable backlog of schools planned maintenance e.g. roofs, windows, and boilers is likely to increase with only highest priority essential work being done. This will mean that necessary but less essential maintenance will not be possible with consequent deterioration in those areas of the buildings with a risk that some parts of buildings become unfit for purpose. Retaining two schools will in time increase the overall level of essential maintenance required at a time when funding is reducing.
- 5.38. If it were decided to close Broadlands school, building work would be necessary at Wellsway to increase capacity before Broadlands could close. It would be necessary to fund borrowing to finance these works before the Broadlands site is sold. What borrowing that would be required would be built into the department's medium term financial plan. To reduce the risk of works costing more than the eventual release of funding from the sale of a site valued at £6-8m, only essential works required to provide the additional accommodation at Wellsway would be funded initially to a maximum of two thirds of the predicted level of the receipt. It would also be necessary to undertake adaptations to make Wellsway more accessible for disabled people as Broadlands is the designated accessible school for Keynsham and has high level of accessibility including a resource base for visually impaired pupils. Traditionally this would have been funded from Department for Education Schools Access Initiative funding. However it is not certain this funding stream will survive the reduction in government capital allocations to local authorities and therefore these works would be a call on the capital receipt, although they could be phased over a number of years.
- 5.39. The likely level of investment possible from the expected capital receipt is sufficient to provide accommodation to meet increased pupil numbers but may not be sufficient to make a significant difference to the quality of accommodation at Wellsway and will not provide the 'new' school for Keynsham that was previously envisaged to be delivered through Building Schools for the Future.
- 5.40. Members will need to consider the negative impact on revenue funding of reduced pupil numbers attending school in Keynsham as set out in Section 3, against reduced capital expenditure in the long term through a reduction in planned maintenance if Broadlands school were to be closed.

d) Will a single school for Keynsham be sufficient to cope with increased pupils numbers including projected housing developments in the medium to long term

5.41. As set out in the consultation document in response to the need for new housing, the Council is considering options that mean planning for and delivering 1,350 to 1,600 new dwellings for Keynsham by 2026. Based on previous developments this might generate approximately 200 to 250 pupils aged 11-16 by 2026, which is roughly an extra 40 to 50 children in each year group. Approximately 10-20 pupils each year from the Whitchurch area attend Broadlands school. If the Whitchurch area was re-designated as an area for pupils to attend Chew Valley school rather than Broadlands school, then the remaining pupils from the Broadlands school "catchment area" could be catered for at an expanded Wellsway with a Planned Admission Number of 270.

5.42. Long term pupil place planning is necessarily speculative as it is based on current known proposed levels of housing development. The implications of the recent announcement by the Government that they will abolish Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) and transfer control to councils are currently being considered. However, it is unlikely that additional housing over and above that set out in the options above will be directed towards Keynsham. The decision to retain the two schools in Keynsham as at present means that the pupils generated from this planned new housing can be accommodated in both schools in the future, particularly at Broadlands.

e) The level of public support for the proposal

5.43. The overwhelming majority of those people responding to the consultation are opposed to the proposal to close Broadlands school and expand Wellsway school. This has been evident at both the public meetings and through the written responses received, with 92% opposing the proposal. Opposition is not only from those outside Bath & North East Somerset but also within Keynsham and from those associated with both schools. It could be argued that a relatively small number of parents from Broadlands and Wellsway responded to the consultation - 236 from a pupil population of approximately 2300, nevertheless it is clear there is overwhelming opposition to the proposal.

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.

7. EQUALITIES

7.1. An equalities impact assessment has been carried out and reviewed by the Lead Cabinet Member.

7.2. If the decision were to be taken to close Broadlands school then it would be necessary to ensure that the resource base for Visually Impaired pupils is provided at Wellsway. Currently there are five young people at the unit. In addition as Broadlands is the designated the accessible school for Keynsham it has a high level of accessibility for disabled people. It would be necessary to undertake adaptations at Wellsway to ensure a similar level of accessibility. These works would be a call on the capital available from the sale of Broadlands site or could be funded from DfE Schools Access Initiative funding if this funding continues.

8. RATIONALE

8.1. The strategy for secondary schools agreed by Council states that the future structure of secondary provision in Bath & North East Somerset should reflect the

numbers of children from within the Authority. The high number of pupils coming into Keynsham, chiefly from Bristol, distorts the real level of need. The strategy also states that the local school should be the natural choice for parents. In Keynsham the majority of parents in both the Wellsway and Broadlands 'catchment' areas, choose Wellsway as their local school. Wellsway which is centrally located in the Keynsham and Saltford area occupies a large site with scope for expansion. On this basis there is a supportable case for a single school for Keynsham on the Wellsway site.

- 8.2. The principles behind the proposal and on which consultation was undertaken remain sound. A single school for Keynsham could meet local need within Bath & North East Somerset and has the potential to deliver improved educational standards through increased curriculum opportunities and a larger post-16 provision. A single school for all Keynsham and Saltford children would also improve social cohesion. There are also financial benefits through the generation of a capital receipt to invest in Wellsway to improve facilities and a reduction in planned maintenance through the closure of poor condition buildings.
- 8.3. Set against these potential benefits there are potential educational and financial risks associated with the proposal. The potential for improved educational standards could be affected by the disruption to pupils and staff at both schools caused by the transition from two schools to one. Although staff and governors at both schools would try to ensure standards were maintained this may be more difficult to achieve when the consultation has clearly established that both school communities are strongly opposed to the proposal.
- 8.4. The cancellation of the Building Schools for the Future programme means that the aspiration of building a 'new' expanded Wellsway school serving the whole of Keynsham will not be achieved, although some improvements to buildings could be made. The abandonment of the Regional Spatial Strategy makes it unlikely significant extra housing will be directed towards Keynsham, enabling pupils generated from planned new housing to be accommodated in both schools in the future, particularly at Broadlands..
- 8.5. Whilst there are financial benefits through a reduction in planned maintenance and the generation of a capital receipt, there will be a significant loss of revenue through a reduction in overall pupil numbers impacting on both the overall schools and Children's Services budgets. Perhaps most importantly the public consultation has shown that people are overwhelmingly opposed to the proposal and that this view has been expressed by parents of pupils at both schools and also parents of pupils at Keynsham primary schools.
- 8.6. Whenever changes to schools are proposed some people will oppose these and Members must weigh this against the potential advantages of the changes. On balance it is felt that given the level of opposition to the proposals for Keynsham and the risks associated with it as set out above, there should be no change to the organisation of Keynsham secondary schools.

9. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1. The option of closing both schools and opening a new school serving Keynsham and Saltford on the Frys site has been suggested by some respondents. The closure of both Keynsham secondary schools could not be justified as Wellsway is a popular school with high standards serving pupils within Bath & North East

Somerset. The Frys site does not provide a realistic option for a new school as it is not owned by the Council and is not centrally located for Keynsham and Saltford. The land required for a secondary school which would be a significant proportion of the Frys site earmarked for development and would have to be purchased. Even with the disposal of both present school sites there would be insufficient funding to buy the land needed on the Frys site and then build a new school likely to cost in the region of £25m.

10. CONSULTATION

10.1. *Ward Councillor; Cabinet members; Parish Council; Town Council; Trades Unions; Overview & Scrutiny Panel; Staff; Other B&NES Services; Service Users; Local Residents; Community Interest Groups; Youth Council; Stakeholders/Partners; Other Public Sector Bodies; Section 151 Finance Officer; Chief Executive; Monitoring Officer.*

10.2. Extensive and wide reaching consultation on the school re-organisation proposals for Keynsham were undertaken between March and May 2010. This included a consultation document circulated to a range of statutory consultees to include pupils, parents and carers, school staff - both teaching and non-teaching, ward councillors, local MPs, Catholic and Anglican dioceses, trade unions and neighbouring authorities. Local public consultation meetings were held at each school with an additional meeting organised for those unable to attend the school meetings.

11. ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

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

12. ADVICE SOUGHT

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

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Sponsoring Cabinet Member	Councillor Chris Watt
Background papers	Consultation document – ‘A Review of Secondary Schools in Keynsham’
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	