

Bath & North East Somerset Council

DECISION MAKER:	Cllr Chris Watt, Cabinet Member for Children's Service		
DECISION DATE:	On or after 25th December 2010	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:	
		E	2211
TITLE:	Determination of the Statutory Notice Published by Oldfield School to Change Gender from Single Sex Girls to Co-educational		
WARD:	All but specifically Bathavon North, Kingsmead, Lansdown, Newbridge, Southdown, Twerton, Westmoreland, Weston wards		
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM			
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1 Oldfield School Statutory Notice			

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 In October 2010 Oldfield School in Bath published a Statutory Notice to change from a single sex girls school to a co-educational school to commence in September 2012 with the admission of boys to Year 7. It is the responsibility of the Authority to determine the notice at the end of the six week Statutory Notice representation period.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet member is asked to agree that:

2.1 The statutory notice is approved so that the school can become co-educational from 1st September 2012.

2.2 A Transitional Exemption Order in relation to the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 is granted for a period of four years from the date of implementation of the proposal to allow for the gradual change from single sex to co-educational to be phased in over this period as set out in the school's published proposals.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The Council has agreed to invest capital of £1.85 million in the school to adapt the buildings so that boys can be accommodated. This will be funded from existing Children's Services capital funding. The first significant capital expenditure will be in the 2011/12 financial year.

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

- 5.1 The plan for Bath secondary schools agreed by Cabinet in 2008 identified the need for more co-educational places to meet parental demand. A consultation exercise carried out by the Authority in May 2010 identified very strong demand from local parents and carers for a co-educational school on this site, particularly from parents and carers of primary age pupils. In July 2010 Cabinet agreed to support Oldfield's plans to become an academy but requested that the school consult on becoming a co-educational school prior to achieving academy status. As a foundation school the governors rather than the Authority are required to undertake the consultation process associated with this change of status.

- 5.2 Following agreement with the school the governing body has completed a public consultation exercise on becoming a co-educational school. In their report 'Co-ed Status - Feedback from Consultation' the school states that amongst the responses in support of becoming co-educational were 600 letters of support from the local community. The report states that there were three responses not in support of the proposal. Following the consultation the governing body, having considered responses received from parents and carers and the wider community, agreed to publish a statutory notice formally proposing that the school become co-educational with boys being admitted into Year 7 from September 2012 onward. The statutory notice period lasts for six weeks from the date of publication and allows for interested parties to make any final representations before a decision is made.

- 5.3 The Cabinet member having considered responses to the statutory notice is now required to determine the notice and formally decide whether Oldfield becomes co-educational.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 The report author and 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 A proportionate equalities impact assessment has been carried out using corporate guidelines.
- 7.2 The proposal will provide more co-educational places in line with the Council's agreed plan for secondary schools in Bath and reflecting parental demand. Choice and diversity will be maintained through the continued provision of single sex places at centrally located schools for both genders and the retention of church schools.

8 RATIONALE

- 8.1 No responses were received during the representation period, indicating that this proposal is not opposed and has the support of stakeholders, as expressed in the consultation exercise.
- 8.2 Parental surveys and recent consultation exercises have identified the need for more co-educational places in the city, particularly in North West Bath. If Oldfield was a co-educational school this would provide equality of access for pupils of both sexes who live in this area of the city, as boys currently have to travel out of the Weston and Newbridge areas to attend other schools in Bath. If boys who live in this area were able to access their local school, travel distances for this group of pupils would be reduced.
- 8.3 The proposal by Oldfield school meets the Cabinet's request that the school become co-educational in line with the plan for Bath.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1 The option of not approving the proposal so that the school remains as a single sex girls school was rejected as this would not meet parental demand and the school as proposer fully supports becoming co-educational.

10 CONSULTATION

- 10.1 Ward Councillor; Cabinet members; Trades Unions; Staff; Other B&NES Services; Service Users; Stakeholders/Partners; Other Public Sector Bodies; Section 151 Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer.
- 10.2 The school has confirmed that it completed a public consultation exercise in relation to the proposal prior to publishing the statutory notice in line with Department for Education school organisation requirements.

11 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

- 11.1 Social Inclusion; Sustainability; Property; Young People: Equality (age, race, disability, religion/belief, gender, sexual orientation).

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
Background papers	Complete Proposal published by Oldfield School http://www.oldfieldschool.com Report 'A Review of Secondary School in Bath' 21 st July 2010 Cabinet meeting.
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	