

Report to Paul Wagstaff, Assistant Director Education and Skills

July 2023

Review of primary age pupil provision across the Worthing & Durrington area - Determination of Statutory Proposals relating to Lyndhurst Infant and Chesswood Junior Schools

Report by Graham Olway, Head of Organisation and Planning

Electoral divisions: Worthing East

Summary

Pupil projections for the Worthing and Durrington locality of schools show there is a significant surplus provision of places at primary schools in the borough. The local authority was asked by schools to lead a review across the locality due to declining pupil numbers and some uncertainty among schools on how this would impact them in the future. As a result, a public consultation was held to seek views on proposals to reduce these surplus places ([decision LS08 \(22/23\)](#) refers).

A review of the feedback from the public consultation indicated support was evident for proceeding with a number of the solutions to reduce the surplus places. Therefore the Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills approved progression of these proposals, using procedures in accordance with [Department for Education guidance](#) where appropriate (decision [LS14 \(22/23\)](#) refers).

As part of the decision, approval was given for the publication of formal statutory proposals for the closure of Lyndhurst Infant School and the significant change in character of Chesswood Junior School to allow the opening of an all-through primary school at the current Chesswood Junior School site. The proposals were published for a period of 4 weeks and provided the opportunity for the public to submit new comments regarding the suggested changes; a summary of the representation received is set out in section 4. Following analysis of the representation, which indicated no new comment or issue was raised, approval is now sought to implement the proposals as published.

Recommendations

The Assistant Director (Education and Skills) is asked to:

- 1) Approve the amalgamation of Lyndhurst Infant and Chesswood Junior Schools onto one site to create a new all-through primary school for 60 Published Admission Number (PAN) Key Stage 1 pupils and 120 PAN Key Stage 2 pupils, together with a 21 place Special Support Centre with effect from 1 September 2024.

- 2) Agree to discontinue the use of Lyndhurst Infant School with effect from 31 August 2024.

Proposal

1 Background and context

- 1.1 Local Authorities are legally responsible for making sure there are enough places for all children to attend good schools. The need for school places can change in response to population movements and birth rate variations. Increases in demand can lead to the creation of a new school or the expansion of existing schools by adding permanent or temporary accommodation. Conversely too many surplus places can negatively impact on the financial sustainability of schools also the ability to plan for a consistently robust curriculum progression as the organisation of schools with significant surplus provision can change frequently. Therefore, this leads to the need for the removal of surplus places which can be achieved through reduced admission arrangements or the rationalisation of school provision.
- 1.2 Following a steady decline in pupil numbers over several years across the Worthing and Durrington planning area, schools approached the local authority for help in resolving the surplus provision. Officers from the Education and Skills directorate worked closely with the headteachers and chairs of governing boards of all the primary schools and academy trusts from the area between December 2021 and autumn 2022 to explore how best to reduce surplus provision. Proposals to reduce published admission numbers (PAN) were co-designed with headteachers and chairs of governors through individual school visits. The proposals included the removal of 953 surplus places through reduction in PANs, removal of surplus temporary accommodation on a phased basis between 2024-2027 along with the reorganisation of three schools - Chesswood Junior, Springfield Infants and Lyndhurst Infant schools.
- 1.3 The process to make proposed changes to reduce the surplus places needs to be undertaken in accordance with the [Department for Education's statutory guidance for making prescribed alterations to maintained schools](#). This is a staged process, the first stage of which is to undertake a public consultation process. In November 2022 the Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills approved the launch of the public consultation to seek views on the entire range of proposals (decision [LS08 \(22/23\)](#) refers).
- 1.4 Following assessment of the outcome of this consultation support was evident for proceeding with a number of proposed changes including the amalgamation of Lyndhurst Infant and Chesswood Junior schools onto one site to create an all-through primary school. It was not proposed to include Springfield Infant school as part of the proposed amalgamation, reflecting the majority of the feedback which indicated support to retain this as a standalone infant school.
- 1.5 In March 2023 the Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills approved progression of these proposals, using procedures in accordance with [Department for Education](#) guidance where appropriate (decision [LS14 \(22/23\)](#) refers).
- 1.6 For the proposals relating to the amalgamation of Lyndhurst Infant and Chesswood Junior schools on one site to create an all-through primary and the subsequent discontinuance of Lyndhurst Infant School, progression of the

changes required the publication of statutory proposals, as set out in the DfE guidance. The proposals were published for a four-week period and provided the opportunity for any additional representations to be submitted.

- 1.7 As part of decision LS14(22/23) the Cabinet Member also approved the delegation of authority to the Assistant Director (Education and Skills) to determine whether the changes should proceed following conclusion of the statutory notice period and consideration of any representations received.

2 Proposal details

- 2.1 The County Council propose the amalgamation of Lyndhurst Infant School and Chesswood Junior School to create a new all-through primary school on the Chesswood Road site for 60 Published Admission Number (PAN) Key Stage 1 pupils and 120 PAN Key Stage 2 pupils, together with a 21 place Special Support Centre with effect from 1 September 2024. As a result of the amalgamation, it is necessary for the County Council to formalise the closure of Lyndhurst Infant School. Therefore it is also proposed to discontinue the use of Lyndhurst Infant School with effect from 31 August 2024.
- 2.2 In April 2023 the statutory proposals were published for a four-week period. During this period the public could make further representations by letter or email about the proposed changes. However, it should be noted that these representations could not be a repeat of the evidence already provided during the initial consultation but offered the opportunity to highlight new information to the decision maker.
- 2.3 Following conclusion of the four-week period one representation was received (as set out in section 4). As the representation did not provide any new evidence, the Assistant Director is asked to approve the amalgamation of Lyndhurst Infant and Chesswood Junior Schools onto one site to create an all-through primary school with effect from 1 September 2024 and to discontinue the use of Lyndhurst Infant School with effect from 31 August 2024.
- 2.4 Whilst the proposal will result in a vacant building and site currently occupied by Lyndhurst Infant School, no surplus declaration is being made whilst the County Council reviews options for future use.

3 Other options considered

- 3.1 Other options considered are set out in decision [LS14\(22/23\)](#). The option of Do Nothing was considered but discounted as the schools had initiated the request to review provision and doing nothing would not address the challenges of reducing pupil numbers.

4 Consultation, engagement and advice

- 4.1 The statutory proposals setting out the change were published on the [County Council website](#) and notices were published in the press (The Worthing Herald in paper format and online in the 20 April edition). The four-week period ran from 20 April 2023 to 18 May 2023.
- 4.2 One representation was received in response and this did not provide any new evidence beyond the comments received at the consultation stage.

5 Finance

Revenue consequences

- 5.1 The proposals for reorganisation across Lyndhurst Infant and Chesswood Junior Schools are expected to require consideration about staff redeployment. For example, only one headteacher may be required and a similar assumption would be made for other key staff.
- 5.2 Therefore, there may be some revenue costs of potential redundancies. These will be estimated when there is further clarity from the governing board about the proposed staffing structure of the all-through primary school. Schools are expected to use their school balances to pay for redundancy costs, however this is not always possible, and therefore an annual budget of £0.4m is also currently held centrally within the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) in order to pay for school redundancy costs where schools are re-structuring and are unable to pay for these themselves.

Capital consequences

- 5.3 There will be associated capital costs with the proposals set out in this report. In April 2023 funds were approved for a full detailed feasibility study to identify the capital funds required to implement the accommodation changes. As a result of this review, capital works have been estimated at £1.5m but this is subject to a detailed feasibility. Final details will be presented to the Capital and Assets Board (the Council's internal governance process for capital projects) and funded through the Basic Need Grant. If costs cannot be contained within the grant, there will be a requirement to use funds from the Capital Improvements Line. There are no capital works expected at Lyndhurst Infant School in connection with this proposal but there is potential for a capital receipt or repurposing of the site. Should repurposing of the site require capital works this would be the subject of a separate business case and decision.
- 5.4 The effect of the proposal:

(a) **How the cost represents good value**

Capital investment to create all-through primary provision on one site with access to a greater range of educational provision ensures pupils and staff can benefit from a more targeted investment of public funds.

(b) **Future savings/efficiencies being delivered**

The discontinuance of Lyndhurst Infant School will reduce the level of ongoing maintenance and capital investment needed by both schools and the County Council to keep the accommodation useable.

(c) **Human Resources, IT and Assets Impact**

HR Issues - A temporary governing board for the all-through primary school will be established if the proposal goes forward. The temporary governing board will be responsible for designing a new structure and understanding the workforce changes that may be required. There is the potential for some duplication of roles as a result of consolidation into one school. Such changes could lead to some risk of redundancy. However, collaboratively the aim is to ensure that changes that affect staff are

managed fairly and sensitively and full consultation with trade unions takes place. All governing boards in the wider area will be asked to adopt our "Protocol for Managing School Reorganisations in West Sussex". This is designed to ensure both the efficient management of change for all staff, whilst maintaining a high-quality education for the pupils, and for setting out the procedures to be followed in order to support the redeployment of staff wherever possible. The Protocol has been previously developed following consultation with teacher associations and UNISON and has been used successfully in many other school reorganisations within the County. We will ensure that the appropriate support and guidance is available to all staff throughout the reorganisation process.

6 Risk implications and mitigations

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
Insufficient capital funding to implement changes under consideration	Most of the capital works can be phased over time. Some capital receipts may be achieved. All capital proposals will require separate business case submission and consideration against priorities and value for money.
Insufficient staff resources within the County Council to deliver the physical changes required and the delivery of a Capital Project	This project will need to be weighed against others in the capital programme and suitably prioritised at the cost of others to ensure delivery in accordance with requirements.

7 Policy alignment and compliance

7.1 Our Council Plan

Investment in educational provision to ensure children and young people achieve their potential and get the best start in life is a key strand of the [Council's plan](#) for its residents.

7.2 Legal Implications

No significant implications.

7.3 Equality Duty and Human Rights Assessment

There are positive implications of the proposed changes with respect of supporting more specialist places to meet the needs of some pupils within their community which currently are not being met.

Climate Change

The contribution of some changes will support the Council's policy on carbon reduction. Any capital investment in education provision will be made in consideration of how to best meet the [Council's Climate Change Strategy](#) and will meet current building control requirements as part of the planning process.

7.4 Crime and Disorder

No significant implications.

7.5 Public Health

No significant implications. Opportunities for children to walk or cycle to local school provision will be encouraged.

7.6 Social Value

No significant implications.

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Background papers - None