



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

COUNCIL CABINET
13 MAY 2003

Report of the Director of Education

Schools PFI – Wilmorton Community Primary and Southgate Infant Schools

RECOMMENDATION

1. To approve the publication of a statutory notice proposing the closure of Southgate Infant and Nursery School and the transfer of the pupils to the roll of Wilmorton Primary School from 1 April 2004.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The proposal replaces the two existing schools with one all through primary school in readiness for the move to a new site, possibly in September 2005, as part of the Council's Grouped Schools Private Finance Initiative (PFI) project.
- 2.2 The governing bodies of both schools support the proposal.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Council's Grouped Schools PFI project includes a proposal to build a new 402 place primary school for the children who currently attend Southgate Infant and Nursery School and Wilmorton Primary School, and who would do so in the future.
- 3.2 The proposal for a single new school has already been the subject of extensive consultation with governors, staff, parents and members of the wider community. There is widespread and enthusiastic support from all who have been involved in these consultations.
- 3.3 In readiness for the move to the new school building, the Council needs to bring together the existing infant and primary schools to establish a single primary school under the leadership of one head teacher and governing body.
- 3.4 Under the regulations governing the reorganisation of schools, the options available for this are:
 - the closure of both schools and the establishment of one new school
 - the closure of one school with the transfer of its pupils to the roll of the other school
 - the closure of one school and, where necessary, the extension of the age range of the other school.
- 3.5 Discussions on these options took place with the governing bodies of both schools throughout February and March 2003.

- 3.6 The governing bodies agreed that the Council should formally consult on the single option that Southgate Infant and Nursery School should close on 31 March 2004. The responsibility for the education of the pupils and the management of the staff and building would transfer to the head teacher and governing body of Wilmorton Primary School on 1 April 2004. They would be responsible for preparations for the new school building, and the work of the school in the future.
- 3.7 Initially no children would move as a result of this transfer of responsibility. Pupils currently attending Southgate would continue to be taught on that site, although transfer to the appropriate primary or junior school at the end of Key Stage 1 will take place as usual in September 2003.
- 3.8 The governing body of Southgate Infants has agreed that the head teacher of Wilmorton Primary should manage both schools between 1 September 2003 and the formal transfer on 1 April 2004. This arrangement would provide more stability at Southgate. It would also enable the two governing bodies to work closely to establish the new school with a head teacher who is well known to pupils, parents and staff, and who has played an active part in the PFI developments from the outset.
- 3.9 It is expected that membership the governing body of the school will vary where possible to ensure it is drawn from the existing governing bodies. When the move to the new site takes place, it is also likely that the name of the school will change, to reflect the fact that this is a 'joining' of the two schools.
- 3.10 The Education Service produced the consultation document outlining the agreed option, as attached as Appendix 2. Alternative proposals were also welcomed as part of the response sheet. Consultation ran from 7 April to 9 May 2003.
- 3.11 The consultation document was circulated widely. The circulation list is attached as Appendix 3.
- 3.12 Responses to the consultation are summarised in the following table:

Support for the proposal	
Against the proposal	
Alternative proposal	0
Total responses	

- 3.13 In the light of strong support for the proposal it is concluded that approval should be given to publish a formal public notice to close Southgate Infant and Nursery School and to transfer the pupils to the roll of Wilmorton Primary School from 1 April 2004. The school will remain on two sites until the move to the new buildings, expected to be in September 2005. The Headteacher of Wilmorton Community Primary School will assume the day to day management responsibilities for the pupils, staff and buildings at Southgate between 1 September 2003 and the

formal closure of the school on 31 March 2004. There are no plans to make any changes to the admissions arrangements at this stage.

- 3.14 In accordance with statutory requirements, a public notice would need to be published for a two month period, inviting comments and objections on the proposal. The public notice would be posted at the school, in the locality and published in the local press. At the end of the statutory period a report on the outcome would be presented to Cabinet for consideration.
- 3.15 The report is likely to be presented to Cabinet in August 2003. Proposals from this meeting would then be presented to the School Organisation Committee (SOC) on 2 October 2003. The SOC is responsible for determining the final outcome.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4. None.

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Background papers:	None
List of appendices:	Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 – Consultation document Appendix 3 – Consultation document circulation list

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

- 1.1 As the single primary school becomes operational at the start of the 2004/05 financial year, the governing body will manage the two sites from one budget. The formula budget of an amalgamated school would be at least £50,000 lower than that of the two schools combined, mainly because of there being only one flat-rate allowance and the elimination of small school curriculum protection. There could also be a reduction in the allocation for infant class size funding, as both schools are currently funded on the basis of an intake of 35, and two classes at each site, but this depends on when changes to the admission limit are implemented. Reductions to formula allocations resulting from amalgamations are phased in over two years. There should be compensating savings as the schools would only need to employ one head teacher rather than two, for example.
- 1.2 There would also be a reduction of £9,000 in the School Standards Grant funded directly by the DfES and a lower devolved formula capital allocation, because this is partly allocated as a flat rate amount per school. However, the imminence of the PFI scheme means that capital funding is less critical than it would otherwise be.
- 1.3 The school would be operating as a split-site primary school from April 2004 until the completion of the PFI scheme. Our funding formula has an allocation for split-site secondary schools in recognition of their extra costs, but there is at present no factor for split-site primary schools. If it was considered that such a factor was necessary, this would need to form part of the formula consultation in autumn 2003.
- 1.4 There would be further changes to the school's formula budget following the changes to pupil numbers and floor area once the new school is built.

Legal

- 2.1 The Local Authority (LA) will be required to publish formal statutory notices in accordance with the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. Public notices would be followed by a two month consultation period, during which objections to the proposal could be made to the LA.
- 2.2 At the end of the two month period, a further report would be presented to Council Cabinet in August 2003. Proposals from this meeting would then be presented to the School Organisation Committee on 2 October 2003. This committee will be responsible for determining the final outcome, and the intended implementation date of April 2004.

Personnel

- 3.1 The Council expects that the budget for the new school will be sufficient to maintain the current levels of staffing. Nevertheless, within the powers of individual governing bodies, we would do everything possible to ensure employment at other schools or elsewhere within the Council if this became necessary. This would involve full consultation with trade union representatives.
- 3.2 It is the responsibility of the governing body to determine a staffing structure for the new school and the allocation of staff to posts within that structure.

Corporate Themes and Priorities

- 4.1 The proposal accords with the Council's key theme of **success through learning**.
- 4.2 A new school built as part of the Schools PFI project accords with the Council's key theme of a **sustainable environment**. It also satisfies the Council's priorities of **improving children's and young people's prospects, improving life chances for disadvantaged people and communities** and **improving the physical environment of our city and streets**.