

**Full Proposal Annex A****APPENDIX 1**

**MEETING : SCHOOL PLANNING SELECT PANEL**  
**DATE : 26 JANUARY 2009**

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**TRANSFORMING LEARNING COMMUNITIES (TLC) REPORT OF THE OPTIONS IDENTIFIED BY THE LOCALITY REVIEW FOR ALSAGER, CONGLETON, SANDBACH AND HOLMES CHAPEL**

**INTRODUCTION**

1 This Discussion Paper sets out the outcomes of the formal public consultations held on the options identified by the Locality Review of this area and makes recommendations for further actions.

**BACKGROUND**

2 At its meeting on 1 September 2008, the Panel received a Discussion Paper on the outcomes of informal consultations. It made recommendations to the Children's Services Executive that it authorise public consultations on a number of options.

3 These recommendations were accepted by the Children's Services Executive on 13 October 2008, with expanded wording of the recommendations relating to:

- Offley Primary School;
- the undertaking of a review of the operation of catchment areas in Congleton;
- actions required of officers on some of the original recommendations.

The full list of decisions of the Children's Services Executive on 13 October is set out in the attached **Appendix 1**.

4 The decision relating to the possible closure of Church Lawton Primary School was subsequently called in for consideration by the Children's Services Scrutiny Select Committee on 24 November 2008. The Committee made the following decision.

"That the Lead Member for Children's Services be advised to defer a decision on Church Lawton Primary School and the school be given a period of two years in which to turn itself around before a decision is made on its future".

5 This advice was considered by the Children's Services Executive on 27 November, when the original decision made at the meeting on 13 October was confirmed.

6 As a result, formal consultations on proposals relating to the closure of Church Lawton Primary School have been held between 1 December 2008 and 23 January 2009, with a "drop in" session for governors, parents and staff being held at the school on 9 December 2008. A consultation document was issued.

7 Formal consultations on proposals relating to

- (i) Offley Primary School
- (ii) Sandbach Community Primary School
- (iii) Daven Primary School
- (iv) Cranberry Primary School

have been held during the same period, with "drop-in" sessions held for Offley/ Sandbach on 13 January 2009 and for Cranberry Primary School on 20 January 2009. Consultation documents were issued in each case.

8 A report on the possibility of establishing a centre to support 14 -19 education at the Offley Primary School site was received by the Panel on 1 December 2008. Its recommendation that this possibility be no longer pursued was accepted by the Children's Services Executive on 15 December 2008.

9 **Appendix 2** provides a summary of the feed-back obtained through the informal "drop-in" sessions for Church Lawton Primary and for Sandbach Community & Offley Primaries, through meetings with staff and Governors for Church Lawton Primary, and also summarises the issues raised in response forms, Emails and letters for all the consultations which had been received up to 14 January 2009. All the response forms, Emails and letters received up to the end of the consultation period will be available for inspection by members in each of the Members' Group Rooms from 12 noon onwards prior to this meeting of the Panel, and will also be available for reference during the course of this Panel meeting. An oral summary of the feedback received after 14 January will be provided at the meeting of the Panel.

10 Members are encouraged to read the feed-back documentation to gain an overview of the range of perspectives expressed and the nature of the concerns raised.

11 The Panel is invited to make recommendations:

- a) to the Council on 12 February 2008 as to whether it should support, and to the Children's Services Executive on 17 February as to whether it should authorise, the publication of statutory notices proposing the closure of Church Lawton Primary School in September 2009, and
- b) to the Children's Services Executive on 17 February as to whether it should agree the proposed changes at Offley, Sandbach Community, Daven and Cranberry Primary Schools.

- 12 This paper is being made available to the Cheshire East Shadow Cabinet, which meets on 3 February. Any advice from that body will be reported to the Council and Children's Services Executive.

## DISCUSSION

### A. Church Lawton Primary School

13 Reports of the meeting with staff and Governors of Church Lawton Primary School are included in Appendix 2, but since these meetings were not public, the reports will not be included in the publicly available documents which will subsequently be presented to Council and to Children's Services Executive.

14 The views expressed at the parents' drop-in session, in the response forms, Emails and letters were overwhelmingly opposed to the proposed closure, and the most frequently made points were:

- that the Local Authority has not responded as it should to the Action Committee's alternative proposals;
- that the school should be retained because of its importance to the community;
- that the consultation process was flawed in some way, or its outcome pre-determined;
- that Church Lawton Primary School is a good school, providing well for the children there;
- that there will be difficulty in finding alternative schools for the children;
- that alternatives to closure should have been pursued.

15 Statutory Guidance sets out the factors to be considered by decision makers when they take a decision on proposals to close a school. Formal impact assessments will therefore be presented when any statutory notices are determined. For Church Lawton, these formal assessments will need to cover:

- standards and school improvement
- special educational needs (SEN) provision

16 In addition, although the provision in the Guidance relating to schools designated as "rural" do not apply to Church Lawton, some of the factors which must be considered in such cases are relevant to it – in particular considerations concerning community impact, and alternatives to closure. These are therefore included in the following overview of the range of relevant factors for consideration in the case of Church Lawton.

Standards: Standards at the school are considered satisfactory, and the grading of the most recent Ofsted inspection was also 'satisfactory.' There is however an ongoing educational challenge associated with a very small primary school - currently children are taught in three classes, one of which covers four year groups. Of the seven schools within two miles and therefore most likely to receive children from Church Lawton, should closure go ahead, four are considered 'outstanding' by Ofsted, and two 'good with outstanding features.' One is newly amalgamated and has not yet been inspected.

Special Educational Needs: The school is not exceptional, either in the incidence of special educational needs (although this was judged 'above average' in the 2006 Ofsted inspection), or in its expertise in meeting the needs of these pupils. All children with special needs would have these fully met at any of the likely receiving schools, should closure go ahead.

Community impact: This factor is considered of great importance to many respondents to the consultation. No permanent arrangements for community use in the form of leases to outside agencies are in existence. However the school is used for a range of activities such as the meeting place for senior citizens, for the village fete committee and for 5 a-side football competitions. One other venue for public use – Lawton Memorial Hall – exists in Church Lawton, but is considered significantly inferior to the school.

The school has also developed a range of extended services and it is considered highly likely that these would be available on a comparable basis at alternative schools.

No race equality, sex or disability discrimination issues are believed to arise from these proposals.

Alternatives to closure: The possibility of examining federation with another school/schools has not been broached formally in discussions with the school Governors, however informal responses have indicated a strong aversion to such a notion.

The Need for Places: There are seven schools within a two mile radius of Church Lawton Primary School. These currently have significant levels of surplus places (287 in January 2008), and this position remains the case for the period for which future numbers can be projected. Assuming all the other proposed changes resulting from the TLC review have taken place, current projections show 149 spare places at these schools by 2013 – when Church Lawton is projected to have 58 on roll if it remains open. There is, therefore, a considerable amount of capacity which could accommodate the pupils currently at Church Lawton Primary, or expected to attend there in the future, were it to close. It should be noted that of the pupils currently attending Church Lawton, 29.4% live in the County of Staffordshire, who have stated that they would expect to be able to offer alternative places in the event of closure. Although Church Lawton has its own maintained Nursery Unit, this had 7 pupils registered in October 2008 – and 45 vacancies. Alternative provision for these pre school pupils is also readily available locally.

## B Offley Primary School/Sandbach Community Primary School

17 The views expressed at the parents' drop-in session, in response forms Emails and letters are summarised below:

- have all housing projects been taken into account?
- there was a strong level of support for both parts of the proposal;
- others expressed concern that 315 was too small for Offley Primary and stated that Sandbach Community Primary should close;

- there was strong opposition to the idea of a 14 -19 centre, and a strong desire to have it confirmed that this idea had been dropped;
- some concern was expressed about the sustainability of Sandbach Community Primary with 105 children;
- parents of children at Offley Primary were keen to what would now happen to the released accommodation;
- all eighteen response forms from parents of children at Sandbach Community Primary School expressed support for the proposals relating to that school.

#### C Cranberry Primary School

18 The views expressed at the parents' drop-in session, in response forms, Emails and letters will be summarised orally at the meeting of the Panel.

#### D Daven Primary School

19 The views expressed, in response forms, Emails and letters will be summarised orally at the meeting of the Panel.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

#### A Church Lawton Primary School

20 Most of the school's budget is based on its pupil numbers which, in turn, define the number of staff and the resources available to the school. Because the Fair Funding formula provides additional support for small schools, the budget per pupil at Church Lawton Primary School is £4,642 – which is 52% more than the Cheshire average. Based on the current funding formula and 2008/9 values, if the school were to close there would be a saving of approximately £99,000 in a full year, which would be distributed within the Dedicated Schools Budget. The first year saving would be proportionately less, and offset by any additional costs arising from redundancy or early retirement.

21 If closure goes ahead, it may be possible to follow previous Cheshire practice in offering a place for each child at one named alternative local school. Failing this, consideration should be given to Year 5 pupils, who have one further year of primary education starting in September 2009. The current Year 5 at Church Lawton numbers 11 pupils. If the school closes, it may be possible to explore an arrangement to keep this group (or as many whose parents wished this) together in a local school for their final primary year, alongside any younger siblings. The cost of doing either of these things would further reduce the first year savings.

22 The school site is in the ownership of the County Council, and consideration would need to be given to the use of the site in the event of closure.

23 If the school closes, an individual assessment will be needed to determine whether or not children will need to have transport provided to their alternative school.

#### B Offley Primary School/Sandbach Community Primary School, Cranberry Primary School and Daven Primary School

24 In the case of each of the schools, there are two potential cost elements – the capital cost of adaptations to the buildings, and any ongoing revenue implications of having schools which have lower maximum pupil numbers than currently operating in a different set of physical premises.

25 Capital costs will be calculated in the light of the feasibility studies underway for each school, and approval will be sought from Cheshire East Council for these to be met from the Primary Capital Programme (PCP) allocation for 2009 – 11.

26 Because Cheshire's Fair Funding formula provides additional support for smaller schools, costs per pupil will generally rise as schools become smaller. This will be offset by savings resulting from more efficient usage of buildings than if the schools continued to shrink in size while using all their current accommodation.

## PREMISES ISSUES

27 In order to ensure the long-term availability of the accommodation housing the Children's Centre already operating at Daven Primary School and that proposed at Sandbach Community Primary School, it is

## RECOMMENDED;

**That the Panel recommends to the Children's Services Executive on 17 February that the relevant parts of the buildings at Daven Primary School and at Sandbach Community Primary School be permanently removed from the premises of the school and brought under the direct control of the Local Authority.**

## CONCLUSION

### A Church Lawton Primary School

28 Church Lawton Primary School was built to accommodate 210 pupils, has a current capacity of 105 and had 46 pupils on roll in September, together with 6 part time Nursery pupils. Numbers are expected to continue to fall. The school currently operates with three mixed age classes, with the Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils taught in the same class. Standards are currently satisfactory. A very low proportion of children from its own catchment area attend the school and a significant proportion of children who do attend the school live outside Cheshire.

29 The cost per pupil is very high. There are alternative places at the seven schools which are within a two mile radius.

30 The school is well regarded by parents whose children attend it, and is seen as a caring environment. 21% of children on roll in January 2008 were on the SEN register, but this is not exceptional and the school is not regarded by the Local Authority as having a particular expertise in special education. Only one child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs and one pupil receives Individual Pupil Funding. All of the children at the school on the special needs register would have their needs fully met at alternative local schools.

31 Community groups do use the school. However, there is alternative local accommodation, albeit not considered ideal.

32 Retention or closure requires a judgement to be made as to whether the arguments put forward for retention justify the high costs that would be involved to retain a very small school that will inevitably face significant educational challenges, in a situation where there is a surplus of school places available within two miles of Church Lawton Primary School.

#### **RECOMMENDED:**

**That the Panel decides whether to recommend to Council on 12 February, and the Children's Services Executive on 17 February to authorise, the publication of statutory notices proposing closure of Church Lawton Primary School in Summer 2009.**

#### **B     Sandbach Community Primary School/Offley Primary School**

33 The proposed reduction in net capacities of the two schools from September 2010 provides the required number of primary school places for Sandbach, and gives each school a net capacity closely following projected future pupil numbers. Care has been taken to take into account the future effect of all known housing developments in the town.

34 The proposals for the alternative use of released accommodation would allow for the establishment of Sandbach's Children's Centre in the buildings at Sandbach Community Primary, the continued use of most of the former Infant school building at a remodelled Offley Primary School, and the possibility of the development of additional services for children within those premises. The alternative use of buildings at Offley will not prejudice their future use to provide school places, should this be needed.

#### **RECOMMENDED**

**That the Panel recommends that the Children's Services Executive on 17 February authorise the changes proposed in the net capacities of Sandbach Community Primary School (from 210 to 105) and of Offley Primary School (from 420 to 315) from September 2010.**

#### **C     Cranberry Primary School**

35 The proposed reduction in the net capacity of Cranberry Primary School provides, in association with other proposed changes, for an appropriate reduction in pupil places in the Alsager area, and gives the school a net capacity in line with projected future pupil numbers.

36 The proposals for the alternative use of the accommodation at Cranberry will allow a cost effective use of existing facilities within a remodelled Cranberry Primary School, and for the location of integrated Children's Services within the released accommodation. The alternative use of buildings at Cranberry will not prejudice their future use to provide school places, should this be needed.

**RECOMMENDED:**

**That the Panel recommends that the Children's Services Executive on 17 February authorise the change proposed in the net capacity of Cranberry Primary School (from 315 to 210) from September 2010.**

**D      Daven Primary School**

37      The proposed reduction in the net capacity of Daven Primary School provides, in association with other proposed changes, for an appropriate reduction in pupil places in the Congleton area, and gives the school a net capacity in line with projected future pupil numbers.

**RECOMMENDED:**

**That the Panel recommends that the Children's Services Executive on 17 February authorise the change proposed in the net capacity of Daven Primary School (from 420 to 210) from September 2009.**

This report has been prepared in accordance with the Checklist for Members Reports and relevant matters have been included.
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Local Members	<i>Cllr M Asquith, Cllr R Fletcher, Cllr S Wilkinson, Cllr K Oliver, Cllr P Mason, Cllr W Wolstencroft, Cllr D Brickhill, Cllr N Price, Cllr R Giltrap</i>
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**ALSAGER, CONGLETON, SANDBACH & HOLMES CHAPEL TRANSFORMING LEARNING COMMUNITIES (TLC) REVIEW**

**DECISION OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES EXECUTIVE ON 13 OCTOBER 2008**

On 13 October the Children's Services Executive considered the outcome of the informal consultations held in June - August on the emerging options for the Alsager, Congleton, Sandbach & Holmes Chapel Transforming Learning Communities Review, and approved the following recommendations:

- (1) statutory public consultation be authorised on the possible closure of Church Lawton Primary School with effect from September 2009;
  - (2) a) consultation be authorised on the reduction in the net capacity of Offley Primary School to 315 places located in a single building;  
  
b) officers be authorised to investigate the possibility of using the premises of the former Offley Primary School as a centre for delivering 14-19 education for the locality, and to report to a future meeting of the School Planning Select Panel covering
    - (i) the potential use of such a facility
    - (ii) the appropriateness of its location adjacent to Offley Primary School
    - (iii) the physical arrangements that would be appropriate for such a facility including access and transport arrangements
    - (iv) in the event of the recommendation of officers being that the establishment of a 14-19 Centre should not proceed, alternative uses for the former Infant School building
  - c) authorise consultation on the reduction in the net capacity of Sandbach Primary School to 105 places with the Children's Centre for Sandbach and co-located Children's Services to be based in the released accommodation.
- Note: the above proposals would not require the publication of public notices but could be decided by a future meeting of the Children's Services Executive in the New Year; and that any consequential changes in Admission Arrangements (PANs) would need to be consulted upon as part of the statutory consultation on changes to admission arrangements for September 2010.
- (3) consultation be authorised on the reduction in the published admission number for Daven Primary School from 60 to 30 to give a capacity of 210 with effect from September 2009, with the released accommodation becoming available as a centre to support multi-agency working in the Congleton locality;

Note: the above proposal would not require the publication of public notices but could be decided by a future meeting of the Children's Services Executive in the New Year; and that any consequential changes in Admission Arrangements (PANs) would need to be consulted upon as part of the statutory consultation on changes to admission arrangements for September 2010.

- (4) Officers be asked to undertake a review of the operation of primary school catchment areas in and around Congleton;
- (5) Officers be authorised to invite the Chester Diocesan Board of Education and the Governors of Chelford CE Primary School to develop proposals for the revision of the school's net capacity to 60 by re-designation of the use of one classroom in such a way that future potential use of the building for an expanded Chelford CE Primary School, should this become warranted, is not compromised;
- (6) Officers be authorised to submit to the Cheshire East Shadow Council information relating to primary pupil numbers in the Holmes Chapel area for future review and possible proposals;
- (7) Officers be asked to develop proposals, in conjunction with Governing Bodies, in respect of the group of schools identified below for potential Federations:  
  
Chelford CE VC, Peover Superior Endowed, Lower Peover CE VA, Marton and District CE VA, Brereton CE VA, Smallwood CEVC, Astbury ST Mary CE VA, Scholar Green, Woodcocks Well CE VC and Goostrey Community;
- (8) statutory consultation be authorised as part of the admission arrangements for September 2010 in respect of changes in Published Admission Numbers:

School	Current Net Capacity	Proposed Net Capacity	Current PAN	Proposed PAN
Haslington Primary	329	280	50	40
Brereton CE	150	147	30	21
Sandbach Heath				
St Johns	150	180	30	25
Marlfields Primary	180	210	30	30
Buglawton Primary	178	210	30	30
Astbury St Mary CE	112	126	16	18
Scholar Green	210	180	30	25
Alsager Highfields	233	263	40	37
Smallwood CE	112	126	16	18
Woodcocks' Well CE	103	89	15	12
Black Firs Primary	240	270	40	38
TOTAL	1997	2051	327	294

- (9) consultation be authorised as part of the admission arrangements for September 2010 on reduction in the published admission number for Cranberry Primary School from 45 to 30; and

- (10) Officers be asked to develop proposals for the use of the released former Cranberry Infant School building which retains it for use as a nursery and which enable the development of co-located Children's Services in such a way that future potential use of the building for an expanded Cranberry Primary School, should this become warranted, is not compromised.

**Reasons for Decision:** The recommendation will give effect to the advice of the School Planning Select Panel on 1 September 2008 in relation to each of the schools described in the recommendations, in line with the Council's approach of reviewing school provision on a locality basis through the Transforming Learning Communities process.