

Full Proposal Annex A**DECISION PAPER 5**

MEETING : CHILDREN'S SERVICES EXECUTIVE
DATE : 17 FEBRUARY 2009

REPORT OF : THE PRINCIPAL MANAGER – PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
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TRANSFORMING LEARNING COMMUNITIES: REPORT ON THE OPTIONS IDENTIFIED BY THE LOCALITY REVIEW FOR ALSAGER, CONGLETON, SANDBACH AND HOLMES CHAPEL – OUTCOMES OF THE FORMAL CONSULTATIONS

INTRODUCTION

1 The attached Discussion Paper and Appendices were considered by the School Planning Select Panel on 26 January 2009, and were supplemented by an oral report and tabled summary of responses received during the final stages of the formal consultations. All this material is included in the attachments. (Appendices 1-3)

2 For the sake of clarity, a summary of all responses received during the whole consultation period in relation to each of the formal proposals is also appended as follows:

- Annex 1: Church Lawton Primary School – proposed closure
- Annex 2: Offley Primary School – proposed reduction in net capacity
- Annex 3: Sandbach Community Primary School – proposed reduction in net capacity
- Annex 4: Cranberry Primary School – proposed reduction in net capacity
- Annex 5: Daven Primary School – proposed reduction in net capacity

3 The recommendations of the School Planning Select Panel are set out in the attached Appendix (Appendix 4).

4 The recommendation of the Panel in respect of the proposed closure of Church Lawton Primary School was referred to Council on 12 February 2009. The paper received by Council is also attached as an Appendix (Appendix 5). Any comments made by Council in response to the recommendation contained in that paper will be reported to the Children's Services Executive.

5 Also attached is the revised version of the recovery plan submitted by the Governing Body of Church Lawton Primary which was included in the papers received by Council (Appendix 6).

6 If any further revision of the Governors' recovery plan is received it will be forwarded.

7 The following commentary of the Governor's recovery plan is based on the revised version included in the papers for Council:

(i) General

Following the meeting of the School Planning Select Panel, a letter was sent to the Chairman of Governors confirming the oral advice of officers to the Panel that the plan as then submitted:

- gave insufficient evidence of how the plan would achieve its various aims – such as, but not exclusively, achieving the necessary financial position, or increased pupil numbers – and that it contained no detail of the school's current baseline position, or of overall or intermediate improvement targets in relation to the range of issues it seeks to address;
- did not show how if, even if successful, the plan would impact on the broader picture of the provision of school places in the light of projected overall pupil numbers in the Alsager vicinity which was faced by the local authority.

The revised plan forwarded for consideration at the meeting of the County Council has been added to in a number of areas.

These additions do not appear to have provided convincing evidence covering the deficiencies identified in the earlier version. Taking the whole plan in its current form, the following comments are offered:

(ii) Rationale

This section correctly identifies the key issues facing the school, but does not provide convincing answers to them. If the school were to close in summer 2009, year 6 will have transferred to secondary school. Year 5 is the only year-group where alternative placements may prove at all difficult, but the local authority would ensure each child was so placed. The table showing how pupil numbers would be built up to 75 by 2010/11 is aspirational, and shows that this would simply be at the expense of other local schools.

(iii) Leadership and Management

These roles and responsibilities are those that might be expected to be in place in any well managed school.

(iv) Marketing

The detail provided does not indicate the link between the various actions proposed and their anticipated effect.

(v) Use of premises

The various initiatives may increase the alternative uses of the school buildings, although the current audit of extended services for the area does not appear to support the need to do so. In any event, alternative use does not provide a rationale for the retention of the school.

(vi) EIP and Trust Status Initiatives

The school's view of its role with regard to SEN would not be recognised across the EIP partnership, and the effect of any move towards Trust status does not have any clear implications regarding the viability or sustainability of the school.

(vii) Local Authority

The plan does not give sufficient detail regarding the relationship between future pupil numbers, staffing of the school and the school's finances to enable any accurate budgetary scenarios to be drawn up. A significant and sustained increase in pupil numbers is required to bring the budget back into balance.

8 In respect of the proposed closure of Church Lawton Primary School, the critical issue for the Authority remains the significant over-supply of primary school places in the locality. There is no evidence, either from pupil forecasts or from the recovery plan produced by the school Governors, that places are needed at the school. If it remains open, Church Lawton would remain a very small school with attendant sustainability and financial issues. Alternative places are available at good schools in close proximity to Church Lawton.

9 In respect of proposals for other schools, no fundamental concerns have been raised during consultations.

RECOMMENDED: That the Lead Member for Children's Services approve:

- (1) that in relation to the establishment of Children's Centres at the two schools, the relevant parts of the buildings at Daven Primary School and Sandbach Community Primary School be permanently removed from the premises of the school and brought under the direct control of the Local Authority with effect from 1 September 2009 (or such alternative date as may be agreed in consultation with the relevant School Governing Body);**
- (2) that statutory notices be published proposing closure of Church Lawton Primary School in summer 2009;**
- (3) that the net capacity of Sandbach Community Primary School be reduced from 210 to 105, and the net capacity of Offley Primary School be reduced from 420 to 315, both to take effect from September 2010;**
- (4) that the net capacity of Cranberry Primary School be reduced from 315 to 210 from September 2010;**

- (5) that the net capacity of Daven Primary School be reduced from 420 to 210 from September 2009.**

REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

The recommendation will give effect to the advice of the School Planning Select Panel on 26 January 2009 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.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the Checklist for Members Reports and relevant matters have been included.

Local Members	Councillors R Fletcher, R Giltrap, N Price and W Wolstencroft
Background Documents	None
Available for Inspection at	None