

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES Cllr Laura Mayes

SERVICE AREA **CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

OFFICER CONTACT **Clare Medland, Head of School Place Commissioning,
Tel: 01225 713966, clare.medland@wiltshire.gov.uk**

REFERENCE: **CS – 04 -16**

Statutory Notice regarding the expansion and relocation of St Michael's Primary School, Figheldean

1. Purpose of Report

To ask the Cabinet Member to approve the statutory proposal published by Salisbury Diocesan Board of Education and the governing body of St Michael's CEVC Primary School on 7 April 2016. The notice seeks to relocate and expand a Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School which will operate as a primary school on a site at The Packway, Larkhill, Wiltshire with effect from 1 September 2018. In September 2018 the published admission number will be 30, providing a total of 210 places. In September 2019 the published admission number will be 60, providing a total of 420 places.

2. Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure effective school organisation and sufficient school places are provided across the Council area.

3. Main Considerations for the Council

A decision needs to be taken no later than 18 May 2016 in order that the necessary arrangements can be put in place before the school converts to become part of the Salisbury Plain Multi Academy Trust.

4. Background

It has been recognised for a number of years by Wiltshire Council that the St Michael's school estate is not adequate for the provision of outstanding education in the 21st Century; but despite this the standard of education delivered continues to be judged as good by Ofsted.

In 2009 Wiltshire Council completed a feasibility/option appraisal for the redevelopment of the school. The purpose of this appraisal was to analyse the school site and look at the possibilities for the potential development of a new four class (120 pupil place) primary school for Figheldean; the site identified as most suitable was an MOD owned site adjacent to Figheldean Village Hall.

In January 2014, due to its close proximity to planned changes across Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire Council formally asked the Governing Body of St Michael's Primary School to

postpone the design phase for the proposed new school development until the outcome of the Army Basing Programme DIO (Defence Infrastructure Organisation) planning phase was complete and the outline plans had been approved by Wiltshire Council. The Governing Body agreed to this request and Wiltshire Council has implemented a series of short term building improvements for the school on its current site as an interim measure.

The Army Basing Programme will involve the relocation of 4,300 troops to the areas around Salisbury Plain, and as part of this some 1,200 additional children will need schools provision. Wiltshire Council has been working closely with the MOD to ensure the provision of appropriate educational facilities in the area which will include additional provision within existing cluster schools at both primary and secondary levels. The planned move of troops within the Army Basing Programme will require the additional provision to be available from quarter three of 2019.

As part of the overall plan, the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) plans for the Army Basing Programme have submitted a planning application for 444 Service Family homes to be built on the land north of the Packway in Larkhill; and it is forecast that when combined with the capacity of existing school and parental preference to choose a school, it is anticipated that a new two form entry school will be required to meet demand for school places in Larkhill and Figheldean.

To accommodate the required primary school the DIO is planning to provide MOD-owned land alongside its service family accommodation (SFA) development at the site north of the Packway. This site is approximately 2.2 miles by road from the existing St Michael's school site.

The high level DIO plans for the Army Basing Programme were approved by Wiltshire Council in July 2014 and the DIO have submitted a request for planning permission to be granted for the building of the housing north of the Packway in Larkhill; this request included outline plans for a new primary school up to two form entry in size (420 places). Intent to grant permission was agreed by strategic planning committee on 13 April 2016.

The landscape of local authority schools is changing as academies are established, new education providers are entering the sector, the curriculum and performance expectations are being reshaped. It is recognised that Church of England schools in rural areas are highly valued by parents for the education they offer as well as the role they fulfil within the local community. However, it is now also recognised that in the current education landscape these schools, many of them quite small, face some tough challenges which are not simple to resolve.

At 120 place capacity St Michael's is classed by the DfE as a small school. Currently less than 20% of the pupils attending St Michael's Primary School are from within the catchment area and not all children living within the catchment area attend the school. The government has recently raised the bar on the performance levels required at primary age. In order to retain their autonomy schools are required to be consistently operating at and be judged as good or outstanding by Ofsted. The Governing Body's vision for education goes well beyond what Ofsted require and it aspires to offer a broad, full and rounded education that enables children to truly flourish. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to offer the breadth of curricular and extra-curricular

opportunities with small cohorts of children when compared to larger schools in the area.

As part of the changes to education, there is an increased focus on governance, leadership and management within schools, and for small schools in particular this has a direct impact on the Headteacher within the school. In small schools, to be economically sustainable, the Headteacher normally has an additional and sometimes substantial teaching commitment in the classroom, and as such, is facing enormous time pressures to ensure additional management activities are completed. It is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit good or outstanding Headteachers to small schools in light of this and because the financial constraints within a small school cannot sustain an appropriate salary for the level of responsibilities now undertaken by Heads.

The following tables show the responses to the initial public consultation .

Table 1: Attendance at public meetings

Attendance at Public Meetings	
8th December 2014	12 Parents
8th January 2015	9 Parents
8th January 2015	48 Community

Table 2: Written Responses at January 2015

	Do you agree or disagree that children should be able to attend an outstanding school near to their home		Do you agree or disagree that St Michael's School should be moved to the site of the new service family accommodation		Letters received with reference to the move to the site of the new service family accommodation		Duplicated responses
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	
Community	23	1	10	15	2	3	1
Pre-school parents	1	0	0	1			
Governors	4	0	4	0			
Parents Reception to Yr 3	17	4	0	21		4	
Parents Yr 4 onwards	9	2	0	9		2	2
Staff	8	0	0	8			
Total	62	7	14	54	2	9	

Table 3: Petition Received

Petition Signatories	
To retain the school in the village	129
To build a new school outside the village	34

The Governing Body analysed all responses received during the consultation process and considered the merits of all the options presented. This work included an in-depth review of the sustainability of a small school in the current education landscape where the funding arrangements have changed significantly, reducing the level of block funding to schools and moving to a model where the greater part of the revenue is based on the number of pupils. It also noted that a substantial number of responses to the consultation, were from people who were not parents at the school. This review identified that a school in Figheldean with even 120 pupils would not be financially stable in the medium to long term and confirmed with Wiltshire Council that there would no opportunity to expand the size of the school beyond that figure at the Village Hall site.

Further Consultation

Since the early phase of consultation, sentiment has altered. Two further public meetings were held on 25 January 2016. Both meetings were attended by about 25 parents and members of the community. Attendees were provided with more detailed information about the proposed relocation and were supportive of the concept designs presented at the meeting for the relocated school.

On this basis following all of the consultation events, a Statutory Notice was published on 7th April 2016 proposing to relocate and expand St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School which will operate as a 2 form entry primary school on a site at The Packway, Larkhill, Wiltshire.

In line with Department for Education (DfE) guidance the Statutory Notice provided a period of 4 weeks for receipt of any comment on the proposal. The 4 week period ended on 5 May 2016. A copy of the Statutory Notice is available at Appendix A.

No responses have been received during the statutory notice period.

5. Overview & Scrutiny Engagement

Not applicable

6. Safeguarding Implications

There are no safeguarding implications of implementing the change proposed – the services offered to children will continue under one head teacher and governing body.

7. Public Health Implications

The impact of the Army's Basing programme and the introduction of additional families into the area results in the need to provide sufficient, sustainable educational facilities. The proposals therefore present an opportunity to influence long term health and wellbeing through the provision of effective locally based education. Travel to school represents a key opportunity to build physical activity into our daily lives. Currently 68% of pupils attending St. Michael's School report travelling to school by car. The proposed move to a new site provides an opportunity to consider the infrastructure for cycling and walking (shared use paths, storage for cycles and scooters, segregated pedestrian and vehicular access and egress) as part of the design process allowing opportunities for active travel for all or part of children's journeys to school to be maximised.

8. Procurement Implications

The proposals being pursued have been subject to rigorous VFM processes through the option appraisal process. The tenders for the construction of the new school buildings will be sought in accordance with the Contract Procedure Rules and the Council's Corporate Property Team will evaluate them to establish the most economically advantageous tender to the Council.

9. Equalities Impact of the Proposal

Equality of opportunity will be improved when the school relocates to its new building in 2018, as the new building will be fully accessible.

10. Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

There are no environmental implications of implementing the proposed decision. The new building to be constructed will meet or exceed all of the energy and thermal standards required by current Building Regulations.

Current data for the school suggests relatively few children in the village itself attending the school but many from out of catchment – Larkhill, Durrington, Bulford and Amesbury. Therefore the impact on car travel of the move and expansion will not be as great as it might have been, although with an increase in numbers this could still be significant. Currently 68% of pupils travel to the school by car, few travel by bus and those in the village, and in Ablington, walk. There is no cycling as parents do not feel it is a safe mode of travel given the nature of the roads. The school has been proactive in updating its travel plan and encouraging walking and park-and-stride.

Clearly if in its new location the school offers a better infrastructure for cycling and walking (shared use paths, storage for cycles and scooters, segregated pedestrian and vehicular access and egress) we can look to increase these modes of travel. However those who currently walk will no longer be able to do so, transport will be offered based on Wiltshire Council's school transport policy.

11. Risk Assessment

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is not taken

- a. If a decision on this matter is not taken by the 31 May 2016 the school will be an Academy and no longer be a Local Authority school, the matter will be automatically transferred to the Schools Adjudicator for decision.
- b. A delay in implementing the expansion and relocation could jeopardise an effective transition for Army Basing and would create a continuing period of uncertainty for service families, staff and pupils.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

- c. It will be recognised that pupil projections may either under or over-estimate future numbers and become less accurate the further into the future they go. Projections are kept under review as new data becomes available, including the head counts from the MOD/010, termly pupil censuses and live births.
- d. Identified risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken:

Risk	Action to mitigate the risk
1. Financial envelope does not enable delivery of proposals	Project steering group to drive specifications and work with strategic asset management and design team to ensure proposals are deliverable
2. Delays in project delivery	Management of project to an agreed timeline
3. Academy orders / transfers	The LA will work with the Academy Trust to ensure that the commissioned school places can proceed. This requirement will be secured by a commercial undertakings agreement.

12. Financial Implications

Funding for running schools (paying staff, energy costs etc) is allocated by a formula set by central government, with the biggest part of any school's funding being based on the number of pupils. In the growth period the school will benefit from the new class allowance as agreed by Schools Forum. The finance team are working with the school regarding the growth of the PAN and also the move to the new site for the school. The funding formula will ensure that the school receives funding for the pupils at the expanded school

The project was approved as part of the schools capital programme (see cabinet report 13 October 2015). Wiltshire Council will make available funding through a section 106 agreement with MOD/DIO to allow the new school to be constructed, a capital budget will be allocated in the financial year 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19.

Some pupils who currently walk will no longer be able to do so, transport will be offered based on Wiltshire Council's school transport policy. Wiltshire Council would therefore have to bear the cost of transport entitlement.

13. Legal Implications

Alterations to Maintained schools, such as St Michael's Primary are governed by The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 ("Prescribed Alterations Regulations") and The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 ("Establishment and Discontinuance Regulations"). When exercising functions under these regulations regard must be had to guidance published by the Department for Education (DfE), including School Organisation Maintained Schools: Guidance for proposers and decision-makers, which sets out the process to be followed. The process as set out in the report follows that of the guidance.

1. The Cabinet member, as decision maker will need to have regard to a list of factors included in further guidance, namely School Organisation Maintained Schools Annex B Guidance for Decision Makers, particularly paragraphs 10 to 78 (A copy has been placed in the Cabinet Room). The DfE does not prescribe the decision making process, commenting that the factors listed in the guidance "are not exhaustive and the importance of each will vary depending on the type and circumstances of the proposal. All proposals must be considered on their individual merits."
2. Consideration has been given to whether or not there are any ethical or governance issues or any Human Rights implications, and none have been identified.

14. Options Considered

Three options were considered by the Governing Body.

Option 1:

To move St Michael's Primary School from its existing site to the site of the new service families accommodation and expand the school from 120 places to up to 420 places, depending on the number of accommodation units proposed by the DIO.

Option 2:

To move St Michael's Primary School, if viable, from its existing site to the site secured by Wiltshire Council next to the Village Hall in Figheledean and maintain the current capacity of 120 places. (It was not possible to expand the school to accommodate more than 120 pupils on this site). However, Wiltshire Council would progress the requirement to provide the additional primary school places required by commissioning of a new school in the vicinity of the service families accommodation just over 2 miles from St Michael's.

Option 3:

To leave St Michael's Primary School on its existing site with its existing buildings. Wiltshire Council would progress the requirement to provide the additional primary school places required by commissioning of a new school in the vicinity of the service families accommodation just over 2 miles from St Michael's.

15. Reason for Proposal

The Governing Body have made the decision to support the proposal for the relocation and expansion of the school (option 1). The Governing Body believe that without expanding the school it will not be possible to maintain a school that is judged to be good or outstanding because of the impact of the funding changes on the financial viability of the school in the medium term. The Governors also believe that it will become increasingly difficult to deliver our vision for education within the school with smaller cohorts when the education provision in the area offers that broader experience. They believe that the ethos of the school and the success of the school can be continued in a larger building with appropriate designs to support the delivery of education and the layout of the estate. In considering the options the following benefits have been explored.

Benefits	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Sustainable facilities that can support the forecast pupil demand from the local area	√		
Developing and providing sustainable and energy efficient buildings	√	√	
Maintaining a standard that will be judged as outstanding by Ofsted	√		
Allowing children to attend their local school	√	√	
Building the infrastructure for outstanding schools fit for the 21 st Century	√	√	
More effective and efficient class organisation.	√	--	
Opportunities to retain and strengthen our high quality teaching and support team	√		
Providing facilities and opportunities that are expected by families when they are selecting schools and the education provision for their children	√		
Retaining a school within the village boundaries		√	√
Retaining a school within a 2 mile radius	√	√	√
Our ability to continue to support the children in our school and to extend the specialist work we do for the service families in our community	√		
To be able to better adapt to the changes in education requirements	√	√	
Secure opportunities to access greater financial resources and be more financially sustainable	√		

16. Proposal

That the relocation and expansion of St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School should proceed which will operate from a site at The Packway, Larkhill, Wiltshire with effect from 1 September 2018. In September 2018 the published admission number will be 30, providing a total of 210 places. In September 2019 the published admission number will be 60, providing a total of 420 places.

The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report:

- Consultation document circulated to parents, staff, governing bodies and others from December 2014 – January 2016.
- Prescribed information prepared for the Statutory Notice published on 7 April 2016

