

Cabinet
9 June 2014**9. PROPOSAL TO MERGE EVESHAM HIGH AND SIMON DE MONTFORT MIDDLE SCHOOLS INTO A SINGLE SCHOOL****Relevant Cabinet Member**

Mrs E A Eyre

Relevant Officer

Director of Children's Services

Local Member

Mr R W Banks

Recommendation

- 1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families recommends that:**
 - (a) the results of the consultation held between 28 February 2014 and 11 April 2014 be noted;**
 - (b) Public Notices be issued proposing the closure of Simon de Montfort Middle School on the 31 August 2014 and the expansion of Evesham High by three year groups on the 1 September 2014, thereby revising the school age range of Evesham High to a school providing for children aged 10 to 18 (National Curriculum Years 6 to 13); and**
 - (c)
 - (i) the Director of Children's Services be authorised to approve the proposals in respect of which no objections to the Public Notices are received; or**
 - (ii) the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families be authorised to decide the proposals in respect of which objections to the Public Notices are received.****

Background Information

2. Evesham High School and Simon de Montfort Middle School have been in a formal federation since 2010. During this period the schools have successfully operated with one governing body, one leadership team and single strategic/financial management.

Statutory Process

3. On 28 January 2014 the schools' governors requested support from the County Council, as the local authority (LA) responsible for maintained schools, to legally merge the two existing schools into one single school with a single Department for Education (DfE) number.
4. As a federated school the school has operated with one governing body and one leadership team for the last 4 years. However, because the schools have separate DfE numbers, the federation has had the extra administration of two separate audit trails, two accounting processes and two Ofsted processes. Formal merger would consolidate the relationship that continues to be seen as of long-term benefit to the children, families of both schools and the local community.
5. Following this request an officer executive decision was finalised on 6 February 2014 permitting the consultation process to start.
6. School organisational changes are covered by the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulation 2013 and (Establishment and Discontinuance of School) Regulations 2013 that came into force on 28 January 2014.
7. The Regulations offer two options to 'merge' or 'amalgamate' maintained schools:
 - Option 1 - The LA can publish a proposal to close the two schools and publish a proposal to open an academy
 - Option 2 - The LA can publish a proposal to close one school and enlarge/change the age range of the other school to accommodate the displaced pupils. The remaining school would retain its original school number, as it is not a new school.
8. Either option is valid but the governors of the federation expressed a preference for option 2 because they do not want to move to academy status at this time. The change can be achieved by September 2014 and it provides the certainty for the existing school staff and learners.
9. The consultation ran from 28 February to 11 April 2014. The consultation followed the relevant guidance from the DfE and met all the statutory requirements. Consultation documents were made available online with hard copies available on request. Letters, advertising the consultation, were sent out to parents, schools within the pyramid and

Consultation Process

Key Issues raised in the Consultation and the Response from the Schools Governors

Published Admission Numbers for single institution

other interested parties.

10. A public consultation meeting was held at Evesham High School on the 19 March 2014. Notes of the comments and questions raised at this meeting are available in the Member Support area.

11. An analysis of responses to the consultation is attached as an Appendix. Copies of all the responses are available in the Member Support area.

12. The consultation received 3 formal responses all in favour of the merger.

13. The consultation meeting attendance broke down as:

Parents	Staff	Partner School	Governors	Local Authority
12	6	1	4	2

14. The following questions and answers were raised at the meeting:

- Q. Will uniform costs be kept to a minimum for parents?
- A. Any uniform changes will be kept to a minimum and will be phased, to tie in with natural uniform replacement times.
- Q. Will the middle and high school phases keep a separate sense of community?
- A. Yes the middle school aged children will still be taught at the Simon de Montfort lower school site, with the older children at the Evesham High site.
- Q. Will the admission number at year 9 be high enough to ensure Blackminster students can attend?
- A. Yes
- Q. To whom do the parents apply for admission for the academic year 2015-16?
- A. Parents will apply in the normal manner to the single institution.

15. Based on the positive response to the consultation, with no major objections, the governors wish to proceed with the proposal.

16. The published admission numbers (PAN) for the single institution would be:

Year PAN	Current	Proposed
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Legal, Financial, HR and Equality Implications

Year 6	150	150
Year 9	224	100*
Year 12 (sixth form)	10	10

*The proposed PAN for Year 9 is just for the new pupils entering the school, not those already attending. This means the total cohort from this year could be as high as 250.

17. As previously explained, new Regulations governing school organisation were introduced in January 2014. The changes brought in by these new Regulations have been taken into account when undertaking the consultation on this issue.

18. No HR implications have been identified for this proposed change. The County Council is the employer and as the schools have already formally federated, all staff currently employed at Simon de Montfort Middle School will now be placed on the staffing roll at Evesham High School

19. The school budgets will remain as allocated for the 2014/15 financial year. If this proposal is approved, the budget will be adjusted from 2015/16 to reflect the fact this is now one school. For this year the school will receive 85% of the combined total of the lump sums totalling £71,400 equating to a loss of £12,600 on the previous year. In 2016-17 the school would only receive one lump sum of £42,000. This means the school would lose £42,000 compared to the current year.

20. An Equality Impact screening exercise has determined that there are no equality implications relating to these proposals.

21. Subject to Cabinet approval the proposed timeline for these changes is:

- Publish Public Notice – 18 June 2014
- Representation Period – 18 June - 15 July 2014
- Decision Period – 16 July - 18 July 2014
- Schools notify parents – 21 July
- Close Simon de Montfort Middle – 31 August 2014 (subject to approval)
- Expand Evesham High age range by three years – 1 September 2014. This will revise the age range from 10 to 18 (subject to approval).

Recommendation

22. The Council has a policy in place supporting

collaborative working between schools including federations. There have been occasions in the last ten years when proposals have been published by the Council to merge or amalgamate schools where this is seen to be in the best interests of the pupils. Taking into account the comments received and the support for the proposals of the governing body of the federation, it is recommended that the Cabinet supports this change and gives approval to the publishing of a Public Notice to:

- to close Simon de Montfort Middle School from 31 August 2014, and
- expand the age range of Evesham High School by three year groups, making the school age range from 10 to 18 (National Curriculum Years 6 to 13) from 1 September 2014.

23. It is further recommended that, in line with the Cabinet decision in April 2014, if there are no objections to the Public Notices that the Director of Children's Services be authorised to approve the changes. However, if there are objections, these will be presented to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families for a final decision.

Supporting Information

- Appendix – Summary of responses to the consultation
- Copies of all responses and notes from consultation meeting are available in Member Support area.

Contact Points

County Council Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Children's Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:-

Officer Executive Decision ref 2/2014

Consultation Document ref: Consultation on Federation
Merger to one school 2014

Worcestershire County Council policy on collaborations and
federations

Equality Impact Relevance Screening

Agenda and background papers for the meeting of the
Cabinet held on 10 April 2014