

Item No. 6.	Classification: Open	Date: 23 November 2010	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		Outcome of the final consultation process on the proposed merger of Surrey Square Infant and Junior schools to create Surrey Square Primary School	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		East Walworth	
Cabinet Member:		Councillor Catherine McDonald, Children's Services	

FOREWORD – COUNCILLOR CATHERINE McDONALD, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

1. This report asks the Cabinet to approve the closure of Surrey Square Infant school and the expansion of the age range of Surrey Square Junior School from the current age range of 7 to 11 to age 3 to 11 from January 3 2011.
2. The recommendation has the principal benefit to the local authority and the local community that it will create a new Surrey Square Primary school that will accommodate all the pupils currently at Surrey Square Infant and Junior Schools. In addition there will be financial savings and the merger will simplify the pathways and process from infant to junior.
3. I have looked at the statutory process that has been undertaken and am satisfied that all the education stakeholders have been given the opportunity to comment on the proposed changes.
4. The consultation period finished on 12 October 2010 and the authority needs to make a decision before 12 December 2010, therefore it is important that the Cabinet considers the proposal at its 23 November meeting.
5. The proposal makes good sense for the authority, the schools and the local community and I am therefore asking the Cabinet, after consideration of the officers' report set out from paragraph 7 onwards to approve the recommendation set out below; in the light of the outcome of the consultation process the recommendation to Cabinet is the best action to take.

RECOMMENDATION

6. Cabinet agrees to close Surrey Square Infant school and to expand the age range of Surrey Square Junior School from the current age range of 7 to 11 to age 3 to 11 from January 3 2011.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

7. The governing bodies of Surrey Square Infant and Junior Schools agreed in March 2010 to initial consultation on the proposal to merge the two schools by closing Surrey Square Infant School and expanding the age range of Surrey Square Junior School from January 3 2011.
8. Following the initial informal consultation stage, the schools' governing bodies formally considered the outcome of initial consultation in June 2010 and agreed to the publication of

the required statutory notice.

9. The formal statutory process for the closure of Surrey Square Infant School and extending the age range of Surrey Square Junior School has now been carried out and Cabinet are recommended to agree the proposals to create a merged Surrey Square Primary School.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Policy implications

10. The governing bodies of these two Foundation schools reviewed the implications of merging their two schools and agreed that the proposal will have a huge impact on the quality of provision to the local community through a more cohesive approach to education and the services provided.
11. The positive impacts include, among others, that –
 - As a primary school they would be able to provide a more cohesive and joined up approach to learning for their pupils and they will be better able to ensure that children's progress is continuous, without the need for an additional transition in Year 2;
 - Pupils will benefit from the expertise of the staff across the school and it will be much easier for parents and carers to talk to, and get involved with, the school about their children's learning;
 - A single office and admin area will make it much less confusing for parents and staff alike;
 - The primary school will retain the current admissions criteria of the Infant school, and will remain as a Foundation school within the local authority of Southwark and pupils at the school currently would not need to re-apply for their place;
 - A single head teacher and staffing structure will be more efficient and ensure that the most is made of resources to ensure pupils' achievement.
12. Surrey Square Junior School is an outstanding Junior school. The school was judged to be outstanding during its last Ofsted inspection in November 2009. The expectation is that the new primary school will develop to this standard from the current good level in the Infant school (March 2010).
13. Following the initial consultation process, the school governing bodies had to publish a statutory notice which was displayed on the school gates and published in the local press. The detailed proposals were also sent to the authority and the Department. The outcome of this notice consultation is reported to the Cabinet for its decision.

Consultation

Responses to the initial consultation process

14. In carrying out the initial consultation process on the proposed enlargement letters were sent to education stakeholders. The consultation period was from 11 May 2010 to 22 June 2010.
15. There were 59 responses to the initial consultation process. 45 responses from parents/carers, 8 responses from staff and 6 responses from other stakeholders, all in favour of the merger.

Responses to the statutory notice

16. There have been two responses to the publication of the statutory notice, both from local Headteachers confirming their support for the proposal. This low response rate is probably as a result of the initial consultation and the unanimous support for merging the schools into Surrey Square Primary School.
17. The two schools joint governing body considered the outcome of the statutory consultation stage on 13 October 2010 and confirmed their continuing support for the merger.

Community impact statement

18. The stated aim of the Council is to ensure all parents have a choice of good schools. The merging of these two schools to create the Surrey Square Primary School will have this result.

Resource implications (CS0109)

19. Schools are funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant, a ring-fenced grant that supports schools formula budgets and pupil-related central expenditure. For individual school budgets there are funding implications for schools that reorganise; for example, where a lump sum forms part of a grant or the formula budget; a single school will only receive one lump sum. The impact of this is mitigated through savings made operating as a single school. The staffing restructuring costs as a result of this reorganisation are shared by the school and the Dedicated Schools Grant allocation specified for this purpose.
20. Further, some assistance has been given to the school to carry out minor capital works in order to create a new entrance, as well as some other changes.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Strategic Director of Communities, Law and Governance

21. The Cabinet is being asked to agree to the closure of Surrey Square Infant School and expanding the age range of Surrey Square Junior School from age 7 to 11 to age 3 to 11 to create a merged Surrey Square Primary School from 3 January 2011.

Legislative Background

22. When considering the proposals outlined within the body of the document, the Cabinet should have regard to the Local Authority's general duties under the following legislation and ensure that the proposals are consistent so as to meet those duties, in particular, Section 14 of the Education Act 1996. This states that the council should consider whether it has sufficient schools, in number and character, to secure the education of all children's educational needs in the borough.

Factors to be taken into account by the Cabinet prior to implementation

23. The Cabinet must satisfy itself as to the adequacy of the Consultation. In doing so the Cabinet must be confident that the following issues have been fully considered:
 - (a) Has all the information been provided?
 - (b) Did the published notices comply with the statutory requirements?
 - (c) Are the proposals linked or related to other published proposals?

(d) Were the responses to the proposals fully considered and clear responses provided with reasons?

24. It is clear from the report that there have been extensive consultations which includes putting the proposals to parents, carers and staff of Surrey Square Infant and Junior Schools. These steps are in accordance with the provisions set out in the DfE Decision Makers' Guidance for making changes to schools and is compliant with legislation. All comments received were in favour of the merger.

Finance Director

25. The financial implications are as set out under resource implications.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
DfE Regulations and Guidelines	Tooley Street	Martin Wilcox 020 7525 5018

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Catherine McDonald, Children's Services	
Lead Officer	Romi Bowen, Strategic Director of Children's Services	
Report Author	Martin Wilcox, Education Planning Officer	
Version	Final	
Dated	11 November 2010	
Key Decision?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Strategic Director of Communities, Law and Governance	Yes	Yes
Finance Director	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional/Community Council/Scrutiny Team		11 November 2010