

Appendix 6

Ninfield CE Primary School

The Lead Member will be aware that the consultation for 2019-20 listed a Published Admission Number (PAN) of 20 for Ninfield CE Primary School. This reflects the accommodation at the school which currently comprises four classes in the main building and two temporary classrooms on an adjacent piece of land owned by Ninfield Parish Council, and leased by the County Council.

The Council has been working with Ninfield CE Primary School to progress a significant build project to re-provide two temporary classrooms with permanent accommodation, undertake internal remodelling works to the hall and classroom spaces and create additional external hard play spaces in the form of a MUGA for school and wider community use. The project was agreed and a budget allocated in the Council's capital programme to fund it.

The Council has been involved in protracted negotiations with Ninfield Parish Council to secure a long term lease for a small additional piece of land required to provide the requisite space for the new building and external play areas. The lengthy nature of these negotiations has led to a significant escalation in the cost of the project over and above the budget agreed for the project. The Council only receives capital funding to meet our statutory needs of providing additional school places where they are required to meet rising pupil numbers. The replacement of mobile classrooms with permanent accommodation does not form part of the Council's statutory duty. The increase in cost to this project means that the project is no longer affordable to the Council. Consequently, the Council has had to take the difficult decision to halt the project, and this was agreed at a meeting on 24 January 2018.

As a result, the temporary classrooms will need to be removed from site at the earliest opportunity as the Council cannot secure further planning permission for them. The school will therefore be left with only four classrooms in the main building. The implication of this is that the school will, over time, be required to reduce in size so that all children can be accommodated in the four classrooms.

The Lead Member is advised that although the school is popular and fills up to its current PAN of 20 almost every year, the number of children living in the community area currently on roll at the school is 91, which indicates that a reduction in PAN would not lead to a shortage of school places for local children. A PAN of 15 would give 105 places at the school, which is sufficient to meet local demand. Approximately 65 of the children currently on roll in the school travel in from neighbouring towns and villages which have schools of their own (45 from Bexhill and the remainder from surrounding villages). Although a reduction in the PAN will result in fewer places being available at the school, our pupil forecasts show that there should continue to be sufficient capacity at the school to serve children living in the Ninfield community area.

For this reason it is proposed to reduce the PAN of the school to 15, and a consultation process will be undertaken in respect of this in line with the School Admissions Code 2014. Unfortunately, because of the timing of the decision, this has not been able to be undertaken in advance of the deadline for determining admission arrangements for 2019-20 (28 February 2018). However, the urgency of the situation means that it is not possible to delay this decision until 2020, as the current temporary accommodation will need to be removed from the site at the earliest opportunity.

For this reason the Lead Member was asked for permission to launch the required consultation on 7 February 2018 for six weeks, to end on 21 March 2018. The decision in respect of the PAN for Ninfield can then be taken at the Lead Member meeting on 29 March 2018. Unfortunately this will also miss the deadline for publication of the admission

arrangements (15 March 2018), but if the decision is published on 30 March 2018 this will still give time for objections to be made to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator by the deadline of 15 May 2018. Advice has been sought from the DfE who have advised that it is for the County Council to decide how to proceed in this situation but that this approach is sensible and pragmatic given the unfortunate timing of the decision regarding the building project.

The Lead Member is advised that should this reduction in PAN be agreed, the school will be in a position to organise on the basis of its four class permanent accommodation by the summer of 2022 based on existing numbers in the school, enabling the temporary classrooms to be removed from the site as required.