

Report to: **Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability**

Date: **21 March 2016**

By: **Director of Children's Services**

Title of report: **Proposed expansion of Cradle Hill Community Primary School**

Purpose of report: **To seek Lead Member approval to publish statutory notices in respect of a proposal to enlarge Cradle Hill Community Primary School for the 2017/18 academic year.**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Lead Member is recommended to:

- 1) Authorise the publication of statutory notices in respect of a proposal to enlarge Cradle Hill Community Primary School by one form of entry per year group (30 places per year group, 210 places overall) for the 2017/18 academic year; and**
 - 2) Delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services to amend the proposals prior to their publication if required.**
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1 Background

1.1 In recent years births in Seaford have risen from 167 in academic year 2006/07 to 214 in 2010/11 and 216 in 2012/13. The emerging Lewes District Local Plan Joint Core Strategy provides for approximately 600 new homes in the town in the period to 2010 to 2030. As a result, a significant ongoing shortfall of school places is forecast in Seaford.

1.2 In response, the Council recently undertook a period of public consultation on a proposal to enlarge Cradle Hill Community Primary School for the 2017/18 academic year to create an additional form of entry per year group (30 places per year group, 210 places overall) in Seaford. It is anticipated that the school would grow year-on-year until it reaches its new capacity (630 places) by 2021/22.

1.3 The report and appendices describe the consultation process in more detail and set out the responses received during the recent consultation.

2 Supporting information

2.1 Proposed changes to the organisation of schools have to follow a prescribed process established by the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 which came into force on 28 January 2014. This process complied with these requirements.

2.2 Public consultation took place over a 4 week period between 22 January and 26 February 2016. Approximately nine hundred and ninety six (996) consultation documents were distributed to interested parties including: parents and carers, pupils, staff, local schools, the district and town councils, the local MP and the local community. The full distribution list can be found in **Appendix 1**. The consultation document was also made available on the County Council's website.

2.3 Of the 996 consultation documents distributed, 116 were returned before the close of the consultation period. This equates to a response rate of 11.6%. In addition, 46 online replies were made, making a total of 162 responses. Of the responses:

- 48 (29.6%) support the proposal
- 20 (12.3%) neither agree nor disagree with the proposal
- 94 (58%) do not support the proposal

2.4 **Appendix 2** provides a detailed analysis of the consultation responses.

2.5 Of the 48 who do support the proposal:

- 18 recognise the need for additional places in Seaford and believe that Cradle Hill is a popular school with a good reputation
- 16 agreed that the school should expand but raised traffic and parking as an issue that would need to be resolved
- 6 agreed as long as the facilities at the school were improved
- 16 offered no reason for agreeing

2.6 Of the 94 who do not support the proposal:

- 69 cited parking and traffic congestion as their main concern
- 35 do not think the school facilities would be able to cope with increased pupil numbers
- 12 are concerned about the impact on teaching and learning
- 14 are concerned about the loss of community cohesion / character of the school.

2.7 In response to each of these concerns:

- Parking and traffic congestion would be addressed through the detailed design and planning process undertaken before approval to enlarge the school was given. As part of this process the Council would work closely with the Highways Authority to ensure any risks are mitigated. The design and statutory planning process would provide people with a further opportunity to raise concerns about traffic and parking
- The school's facilities would be enlarged to accommodate the increased pupil numbers
- The Council would ensure that any design solution for expansion makes best use of the site to create an environment that has a positive impact on teaching and learning
- The school is popular and regularly oversubscribed. The Council believes the proposed expansion would enhance the school's character and enable it to better serve its local community.

2.8 A full list of comments is available for inspection.

2.9 Some respondents indicated that the Council should build a new school in the town with the Newlands site suggested as a suitable location. The Council considered a number of options for providing additional places, including establishing a new school in the town; however, it believes expanding an existing school is a better model for the town than establishing a new one form entry school which might struggle to remain viable in the long term. Having considered that expansion of an existing school was the preferred option, it became clear to the Council that Cradle Hill would be the best option due to its popularity in the town and the capacity of its site (it has the largest site of all the primary schools in the Seaford) to cope with enlargement of its facilities. It is also worth noting that the Newlands site is not in Council ownership and would have had to be purchased by the Council in order to establish a new school there.

2.10 Some people raised concerns about the impact of increasing pupil numbers on Seaford Head School. The Council is currently developing a strategy for delivering secondary school places in the future, although it does not expect any pressure on places at Seaford Head before the end of the decade.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 In conclusion, the majority of respondents to the consultation do not support the proposal to enlarge Cradle Hill Community Primary School, citing parking and traffic congestion as their main area of concern. These are issues that would be addressed through the detailed design and planning process undertaken before approval to enlarge the school was given.

3.2 Despite the concerns raised, the Council has a legal duty to ensure there are sufficient school places in Seaford to meet demand. In light of the pressing need for primary places in the town the Lead Member is recommended to:

- 1) Authorise the publication of statutory notices in respect of a proposal to enlarge Cradle Hill Community Primary School by one form of entry per year group (30 places per year group, 210 places overall) for the 2017/18 academic year; and
- 2) Delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services to amend the proposals prior to their publication if required.
- 3.3 Publication of notices would trigger a further 4 week period of consultation, known as the representation period, when people can again have their say on the proposal. Within two months of the end of the representation period, the Lead Member must make a final decision taking into account the views of all those affected by the proposal or who have an interest in it. It is anticipated that a final decision would be taken in June 2016.

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LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillor Carolyn Lambert

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Consultation distribution list
Appendix 2 – Consultation summary report