

REPORT TO CABINET

Title: **OLDFIELD SCHOOL**

Date: 27 August 2009

Member Reporting: Councillor Mrs Quick

Contact Officer(s): Angela Wellings (3529)

Wards Affected: Oldfield

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides information to Cabinet on a proposal to utilise funding under the Primary Strategy for Change (PSfC) programme to undertake building works that would increase the size of the popular Oldfield School.
- 1.2 At this stage, it is proposed that the Council undertake a feasibility study on a proposal to retain the infant school in the existing Oldfield site and build a new junior school on another site.

2. RECOMMENDATION: That:

- (i) **The proposal to increase primary school provision at Oldfield be noted and supported;**
- (ii) **The commissioning of a feasibility study at a total cost of approximately £80,000 be approved.**

What will be different for residents as a result of this decision?
The proposal is in line with the Council's commitment to expand its most popular schools, and would be of benefit to residents, in that more places would be available at the school of their choice.

3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

- 3.1 The key aim of the Primary Strategy for Change (PSfC) programme is to rebuild, remodel or refurbish half of all schools nationally, the intention being that it will enable local authorities to move towards a more strategic approach, equipping schools as learning environments for the 21st Century and as hubs of their local communities.
- 3.2 To this end, the government have made available ring-fenced funding of £650m in 2009/10 and £1.1 billion in 2010/11. Thereafter the funding level is expected to

revert to £650m per annum for the subsequent 11 years, subject to future government funding streams although this is by no means certain.

3.3 The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead has been allocated the floor amount of £3m for 2009/10 and £5.4m for 2010/11. Subsequent amounts are expected to be £3m per annum. All this funding is grant, rather than supported borrowing.

3.4 The Borough's PSfC is based on a number of key principles:

- **Sufficiency**, which relates to the match between demand for and availability of primary school places; and to whether there is sufficient classroom space in the school, based on the number of children on roll.
- **Condition**, which refers to the state of repair of school buildings.
- **Suitability**, which refers to how well the school premises meet the needs of the pupils, teachers and other users, and contribute to raising standards.

3.5 Over the past three years, applications for admission to Oldfield School have consistently exceeded the 30 places available.

2006/07 78

2007/08 90

2008/09 97

2009/10 99

Of these 35 have, to date, gone through the statutory school admissions appeals process.

3.6 Numbers in the east Maidenhead primary schools (Ellington, Oldfield, St Luke's and St Mary's) have been rising steadily in recent years, so that there are over a hundred more children on roll now in year groups 1 to 6 than there were in 2001. The 2008 forecasts suggested that numbers could continue to rise. The combined admission number for the four schools will be 145 (once an increase of five places per year group is made in September 2010 at St Mary's Catholic Primary School). The forecasts suggest that the numbers will be at or above this number each year between 2009 and 2013. In order to maintain a surplus of around 5% in the intakes (as is Borough policy – to balance the efficient use of resources with the operation of parental preference), there could be a need for around 150-155 places per year group in the east of Maidenhead.

3.7 Due to the increase in the number of applications to Oldfield and its continuing popularity, a number of options were explored, which included expanding the school on its existing site, rebuilding it completely on an alternative site, or retaining the existing site and re-providing part of the school via a new build in a nearby location. Initial advice was sought from the Borough's Planning Department. Whichever option is taken (either a rebuild or an extension), there will be significant issues, particularly in relation to flooding. It has been decided that the best option would be to explore the possibility of a rebuild, with the favoured option being to retain the

infant department on the existing school site and build a new junior school nearby. The attached map (Appendix A) shows the location of the existing school (the 2.8 acre site at the top right of the map) and the proposed site for the building project (the 5.8 acre site to the lower right of the map).

3.8 A feasibility study is to be commissioned from Hampshire County Council, who will provide the following reports, at a total cost of approximately £80,000.

- Stage A Inception – defining and confirming the brief in detail, including room areas. Plan for future design stages and actions.
- Stage B Feasibility – appraisal and recommendation as to whether the brief can be achieved in the location, at what cost, and in what timeframe. This would involve surveys, investigations and specialist advice.

3.9 On conclusion of the feasibility study, Cabinet will receive a further report and recommendations on whether the project should proceed.

4. OPTIONS AVAILABLE AND RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 Options

	Option	Comments	Financial Implications
1.	That the proposal to initiate a feasibility study be approved	The outcome of the feasibility work would inform future plans to expand Oldfield Primary School	£80,000, funded from Primary Strategy for Change monies
2.	Do not undertake feasibility study	Increasing numbers of dissatisfied residents who do not get their first choice of school	None

4.2 Risk assessment

4.2.1 There are no risks inherent in this report.

5. CONSULTATIONS CARRIED OUT

5.1 None specifically in relation to this feasibility study, although the Headteacher has of course been involved in discussions of options.

6. COMMENTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

The Panel endorsed the report subject to the inclusion of the following comments.

The Panel suggested that it should be clarified to Cabinet that the combined cost of the two feasibility studies referred to in paragraph 3.8 of the report is £80,000. The Panel also advised that the terms of reference for the feasibility studies should be clearly focused to ensure best value is delivered, and that consideration should be given to setting a target number of school places.

7. IMPLICATIONS

The following implications have been addressed where indicated below.

Financial	Legal	Human Rights Act	Planning	Sustainable Development	Diversity & Equality
✓	N/A	N/A	✓	✓	N/A

Background Papers: None