

**NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL****DECISION OF COUNCILLOR JAN BARBER  
THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG  
PEOPLE'S SERVICES with advice from the  
DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES****DECISION NO: P&C18****SUBJECT:**

The possible expansion of Flax Bouton C of E Primary School from a 105 to a 210-place primary school formally with effect from 1 September 2018.

**DECISION:**

That the Executive Member for Children and Young People's Services approves the commencement of the statutory process and the publication, if appropriate, of a Statutory Notice to expand the provision at Flax Bourton C of E Primary School from a 105 to a 210-place primary school formally with effect from 1 September 2018.

**1. BACKGROUND:**

- 1.1 There is a projected growth in demand for primary school places in and around the village of Flax Bourton. This was confirmed with the demand for places in September 2016 that exceeded supply across this part of the district.

This request seeks approval to commence consultations with a view to permanently increasing the capacity of Flax Bourton C of E Primary School (Flax Bourton School) to meet the projected growth in demand in school places formally from September 2018. If a physical expansion could be in place earlier, the school may accept additional pupils into its reception year group from September 2017 at the very earliest. This increase in provision is to support the extra demand from the village of Flax Bourton and other nearby villages/hamlets in this part of the Backwell cluster.

- 1.2 The Council reviews its pupil projections on an annual basis. On the whole, local authorities are good at forecasting their pupil growth. Locally our accuracy for predicting primary school places in 2015 was 99.72%.

The latest published projections for new reception-aged places in the Backwell A Cluster (Long Ashton and Flax Bourton) is as below:

	2016 provisional PAN	2016 projected demand	2016 diff to PAN	2017 provisional PAN	2017 projected demand	2017 diff to PAN	2018 provisional PAN	2018 projected demand	2018 diff to PAN	2019 provisional PAN	2019 projected demand	2019 diff to PAN
Projected Reception pupil numbers 2016-2019 excluding pupils from new housing.												
<b>Backwell</b>												
<b>Backwell A (Long Ashton &amp; Flax Bourton)</b>												
Birdwell Primary	60	59	1	60	60	0	60	56	4	60	58	2
Flax Bourton CE Primary School	15	16	-1	15	17	-2	15	14	1	15	16	-1
Northleaze VC Primary School	30	29	1	30	31	-1	30	28	2	30	30	0
<b>Backwell A total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>-3</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>1</b>

Flax Bourton is a very popular school, and this has been reflected in the actual numbers of first preferences for this cluster for September 2016 admissions as shown below:

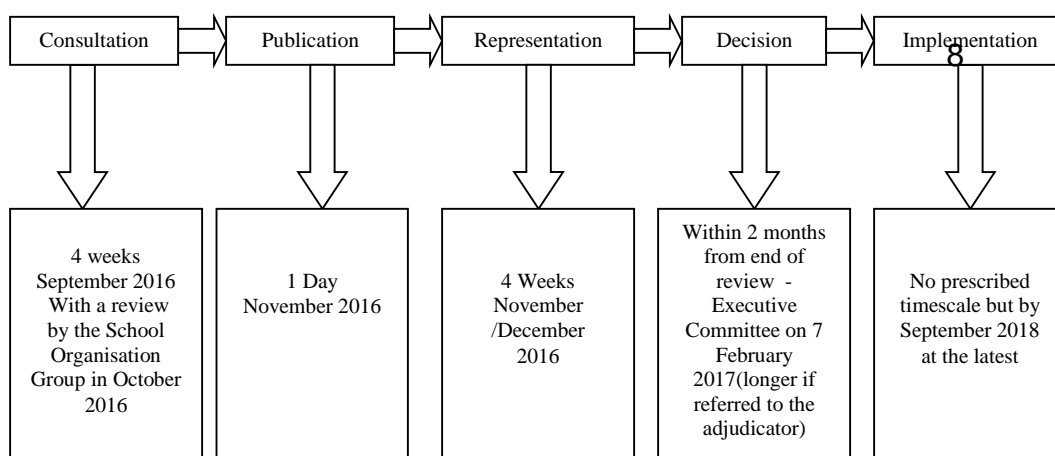
	Admission Level	No of 1 <sup>st</sup> preferences	
		2016	
		1 <sup>st</sup> preferences	+/-
<b>Birdwell Primary</b>	60	54	6
<b>Flax Bourton C of E Primary</b>	15	29	-14
<b>Northleaze C of E Primary</b>	30	38	-8
<b>Totals</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>-16</b>

- 1.3 To resolve the need for extra demand in 2015/16 and 2016/17, Flax Bourton C of E Primary School (Flax Bourton School) agreed to accommodate additional pupils in 'breach' reception year classes. Whilst the school normally admits up to 15 pupils per cohort, up to 30 places were and are to be available for reception aged pupils from September 2015 and 2016. Schools and Councils are permitted to do this in exceptional circumstances.
- 1.4 At the time of submitting this report Flax Bourton School has 117 pupils on roll for their 105 places. In 2016 it is expected that 30 new reception aged pupils will enter the school, resulting in an increase to 134 pupils on roll. It is anticipated that demand for new reception classes (YR intake) between 2017 – 2019 will continue to exceed the school's current admission level.
- 1.5 The Council has been working with senior staff and governors at Flax Bourton School to determine whether a permanent increase in provision should be made. The Council's Education Provision in North Somerset ~ [A Commissioning Strategy 2015](#)

– 2018 promotes the aim of local children being able to access a school place at their nearest school. The Council funded and delivered an extra permanent classroom and an expansion to the school’s staff room in the 2015/16 school year to enable the school to accommodate the additional pupils currently and to be on roll from September 2016. This additional accommodation brings the school’s classroom capacity up to 5. Plans about how to physically expand the school to accommodate an additional 2 class bases, relocate the reception and staff office and expand the school’s hall and kitchen is currently being discussed.

- 1.6 The ‘Making Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools ~ Statutory Guidance for Proposers and Decision Makers – April 2016’ requires Councils to consult interested parties when developing proposals prior to the formal publication of any proposals. For a significant change such as the one being recommended, this would include holding consultations and public meetings during term time.

For the Council to progress any change at Flax Bourton School, the following consultation process would be followed:



Approval is requested to commence the statutory process necessary to formally expand the school. A separate planning consultation and application will run alongside this request.

- 4.4 If the Council continues to recommend the expansion of Flax Bourton School, the Council’s Executive will make the final decision as to whether the school should be expanded. The local Diocesan Bodies, School Trustees and the school’s Governing Body are the only organisations that have the right to appeal to the School’s Adjudicator against the Council’s decision.
- 4.4 Consultees will be: Stakeholders of the school i.e. families of children of the school; pupils of the school; any other school affected by the change; the governing body/staff of the school and other schools affected by the change; trade unions; the local MP; Flax Bourton Parish Council; the Diocese of Bath & Wells; Diocese of Clifton; Early Years Stakeholders; neighbours of the school and other members of the general public.

- 1.9 The CYPS School Organisation Group, a sub-group of the CYPS Policy and Scrutiny Panel, met on 20 April 2016 to consider the proposal to commence consultations to formally increase the capacity of Flax Bourton School. They were first advised of this possibility on 8 February 2016. This group supported the progression of consultations and this view was further endorsed by the CYPS Policy & Scrutiny Panel when they met on 14 July 2016.

## **2. REASONS:**

- 2.1 Local Authorities are under a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places in their area, promote high educational standards, ensure fair access to educational opportunity and promote the fulfilment of every child's educational potential.

## **3. OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:**

- 3.1 To make no changes and enable the status quo at Flax Bourton School to be retained. This runs the risk that some children living in the cluster of schools serving this area (Backwell A) may need to be offered school places at schools some distance from their homes. Such allocations could lead to an increase in the Council's home-to-school transport budget as there could be no local school available for these pupils.
- 3.2 Options for changes at other schools were also considered across the cluster. Two expansions of Birdwell Academy have been progressed recently and this school has increased from a 210 to a 420-place school. A site assessment of Northleaze C of E Primary School found that it is not possible to expand this school to take additional children.

## **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

- 4.1 Additional funding is available to schools that have a significant pupil growth during the financial year. Exceptional Pupil Growth Funding would be available in this case if the school were to satisfy the three following criteria:
- a) The increase has been made at the request of the LA
  - b) There will be an increase in pupil numbers of 2% or more between the October in the preceding year and the October headcount in the year of entry with the higher admission figures – it is hard to predict exact numbers for 2017 or 2018 at the stage
  - c) The school's notional class bases would need to increase by one or more between the October in the preceding year and the October headcount in the year of entry with the higher admission figures – i.e. based on data as at today, the school would need to trigger the need for 6+ notional classes of 30
- 4.2 This proposal will, due to increasing pupil numbers, have an impact on the individual schools' revenue budgets (as detailed in above) and the overall schools budget,

funded by the dedicated schools grant through the strategic schools forum. There are no revenue implications for the Council.

- 4.3 Any recommendations for an increase in the numbers of pupils to attend the school will be subject to appropriate capital funding being made available to support the physical changes needed. Approval was requested and given at the Executive meeting on 2 February 2016 for £500,000 in the 2016/17 financial year and a further £500,000 in the 2017/18 financial year to be made available to enable a 2-class extension, reception relocation and hall expansion to be funded.

Following a further review of the school site, it is likely that the physical changes to enable an expansion of the school buildings to be possible will necessitate the relocation of the school’s demountable buildings or the re-provision of these 2 class bases in new accommodation. This will add to the cost of the changes by around £500 – 800k, although detailed costings have yet to be completed.

It would be preferable for pre-planning discussions to take places with the local community showing the possible plans for the physical expansion of the school alongside this school organisational change.

The Council would expect any developer contributions from new housing in this area to contribute to this scheme.

- 4.4 Representatives of the Governing Body and officers are working together to further advance any building plans in time for implementation by September 2018 at the latest, although the governing body are open to an earlier implementation if possible.

**5. IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE YEARS:**

As above.

Signed: .....  
Councillor Jan Barber  
Executive Member for Children and Young People’s Services

Dated: .....

**Reviewed:** .....  
Sue Ivermee  
Assistant Director, Learning & Achievement

Dated: .....

**Confirmation of advice given:**

Signed: .....  
Sheila Smith  
Director of People & Communities

Dated: .....