

NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL**DECISION OF COUNCILLOR JAN BARBER
THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG
PEOPLE'S SERVICES with advice from the
DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES****DECISION NO: P&C01****SUBJECT:**

A proposal to expand Flax Bourton 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 publication of a Statutory Proposal to expand Flax Bourton C of E Primary School from a 105 to a 210-place primary school formally with effect from 1 September 2019.

1. BACKGROUND:

1.1 Council officers have been working with senior staff and governors at Flax Bourton C of E Primary School (Flax Bourton School) to determine whether a permanent increase in the numbers of school places should be progressed. Currently the school physically has the necessary accommodation (5 class bases) to be able to admit up to 150 pupils. This is possible following the provision of a new classroom extension in 2015 that provided extra facilities so the school could take breach classes in the 2015/16 and 2016/17 school years. At the time of writing this report there are 130 pupils on Flax Bourton's school roll.

Whilst every effort will be made to secure extra places by September 2018, it will be requested that any formal increase takes place from September 2019. This is because there needs to be certainty in delivery before school places can be offered at this higher level in perpetuity.

1.2 The Executive Member for Children & Young People's Services gave approval on 14 July 2016 to commence the statutory consultation process to make changes at Flax Bourton C of E Primary School (Flax Bourton School). Stage 1 of the three-stage School Organisation process commenced on Monday 12 September 2016 and ended on Wednesday 12 October 2016.

1.3 All statutory consultees have been consulted. A total of 124 formal responses were received (seven paper, one telephone and 116 electronic (Econsult or Email). Of these, 113 (91%) supported the changes proposed, 10 (8%) were against the proposal and 1 (1%) expressed no view.

Pupils at the school were asked for their thoughts about the proposed expansion. In general the pupils felt that single-aged classes may have advantages, that they could have new classrooms and that there would be opportunities to make more friends. They had concerns that there may not be enough space for dining, worship and play.

22 comments about the proposal were also recorded at two meetings with school stakeholders and neighbours held on the afternoon and evening of 21 September 2016. Whilst those present indicated general support, concerns were raised in respect of traffic and parking around the school site and whether the demand for school places was all from local pupils.

The Headteacher shared the consultation documentation with all staff. All are in favour of the expansion. If the school is to be expanded there should be opportunities for the changes to offer greater opportunities for professional development and career advancement.

This proposal also has the support of the Diocese of Bath & Wells and the Flax Bourton Parish Council.

The comments captured at the above meetings are included in the consultation responses located on the Council's website: <http://consult.n-somerset.gov.uk/consult.ti/Flax/consultationHome>

- 1.4 Since September 2016 officers have been working with local stakeholders to develop plans to physically enhance the school buildings so that extra pupils can be accommodated. Planning permission for changes at the school site should be ready for submission shortly subject to ecological surveys that can only be undertaken in the spring. Provided they show no reasons why works cannot commence, subject to approvals, it is hoped work will commence on site later this year.

The Council was aware that it needed to respond to parking concerns. The following changes are being progressed:

- The school has enhanced its Travel Plan which promotes healthy lifestyles. 37% of parents and children now walk, scoot or cycle to school
- Working with Flax Bourton Parish Council, North Somerset hopes to purchase a parcel of land adjacent to the school that can be used as extra parking for staff (22 new additional parking spaces). The remainder of the new site will be leased to Flax Bourton Parish Council for community use and will be available to the school for extra play space by agreement.
- A traffic infrastructure scheme has been designed and will be delivered, subject to Executive Member approval, as part of next year's Highways Works Programme. This would be ahead of the normal programming for changes that can take up to three years.
- The planning application will need to conform to the Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

- 1.5 A draft design of the new school buildings was shown to stakeholders at an informal pre-planning event on 6 December 2016. Officers have agreed to attend Flax Bourton Parish Council's meeting when the planning submission for changes to the site is discussed formally. They will be available to explain the scheme and answer any questions raised by local stakeholders.
- 1.6 The Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) School Organisation Group, a sub-group of the CYPS Policy and Scrutiny Panel, met on 17 October 2016 to consider the responses to stage 1 of this consultation process. The group were supportive of the publication of a public notice as the next stage of consultation. They shared the concerns of many consultees about any impact of the expansion on the safety of pupils travelling to and from school, noting that travel considerations will form part of any planning submission.

Full details of the consultation were reported to the CYPS Policy & Scrutiny Panel at their meeting on 14 July 2016. A copy of this report can be seen at <http://apps.n-somerset.gov.uk/cairo/docs/doc27487.pdf>.

The aim of the changes at Flax Bourton School are to provide additional school places for the village and surrounding area of Flax Bourton and to enhance the school's learning environment.

- 1.7 If permission is granted to publish a statutory proposal to expand the school, this will enable stakeholders of the school to provide further comments about the changes proposed. Within two months from the end date of the published proposal (if agreed), 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 at that time.
- 1.8 In terms of admissions, it has been agreed with the school, in principle, that any increase in pupil placements will be incremental with a year on year increase as opposed to a wholesale change in capacity (i.e. 30 pupils for each new cohort year of entry to cascade through the school). This is to support the stability of places across other schools in surrounding villages. This could be reviewed subject to demand and the ability of the school to fund whole classes within their revenue allocations.

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.

Decision:

That the Executive Member for Children & Young People's Services approves the publication 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.

Reasons:

To ensure that extra permanent primary school places are made available by the Council to serve the residents of Flax Bourton and its surrounding villages.

Other alternatives considered:

- To do nothing. If the school were to be over-subscribed with local pupils in the future, the children would need to be offered places at other nearby schools with vacancies. This could be some distance from their home address.
- To expand other schools within the cluster. There is limited capacity in this cluster to accept additional pupils. Flax Bourton Primary supports the communities of Flax Bourton, Long Ashton and other nearby hamlets. Flax Bourton Primary best meets the criteria for expansion detailed in the Council's approved Education Provision in North Somerset ~ A Commissioning Strategy 2015 – 2018.

Financial implications:

- 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 classroom extension to be funded. Following a further review of the school site, the physical changes required to enable an expansion of the school will necessitate a 3 classroom extension and new curriculum kitchen, the re-provision of school administrative accommodation, the reuse of classrooms as extra activity spaces and enhanced kitchen and mechanical engineering facilities. This has added to the cost of the changes by £800k. In addition, the land purchase has necessitated a further funding allocation. These additional costs, forward funded from the 2018/19 basic need allocation, were approved at the Council's Executive meeting on 18 October 2016.

Making future-proof changes on a functioning school site is complex. Activity space at a school can be created in one of two ways – within a school hall or as a separate additional space. Whilst there was a preference for the extended hall option, regrettably the budget could not cover the relocation of a 2-classroom demountable building, currently sited where a hall extension would need to be created, to elsewhere on the school site. If approved, once this project is delivered the classrooms in this demountable building will become the school's extra activity spaces. It is hoped that national funding will be available to the school in the future

to replace the demountable building with extra activity space within an extended school hall.

- The decisions as to whether or not to progress the scheme are dependent on two separate approvals. Before a final school place expansion decision is made, agreement to the physical increases of the school buildings will need to be determined as part of the planning approval process. If agreed, a final decision as to whether or not to expand the school will be made by the Council’s Executive. They will consider the benefits and opportunities of the proposal for the whole community when compared with the any risks and any opposition to the scheme.
- The Strategic Schools Forum consulted on their Exceptional Pupil Growth Funding formula to support exceptional growth in schools. Extra revenue resources will be available if the change satisfies the following three 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 2017 and October 2018 headcounts; and
 - c) The school’s notional class bases would need to increase by one

This proposal will, due to increasing pupil numbers, have some 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.

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE YEARS:

As above.

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

Dated:

Confirmation of advice given:

Signed:
Sheila Smith
Director of People and Communities

Dated: