

Note of SO58 urgent decision teleconference with Chief Executive - Proposal to amalgamate Wimborne Infant and Wimborne Junior Schools - outcome of pre-statutory consultation - Wednesday 25 March 2020

**Purpose:** David Williams, Chief Executive, asked that a telephone conference facility be used for him to consult on the urgent decision required on the proposed amalgamation of Wimborne Infant and Junior Schools.

**Reason for urgency:** this item was identified as needing decision from the cancelled Education Cabinet of 25<sup>th</sup> March 2020, for which papers had been published, due to the Coronavirus measures meaning public meetings were suspended.

**Teleconference Attendees:**

Cllrs - Gerald Vernon-Jackson CBE (Leader of the Council), Suzy Horton (Cabinet Member for Education), and Opposition spokesperson - Terry Norton.

Officers - David Williams (Chief Executive), Peter Baulf (City Solicitor), Chris Williams, (Pupil Place Planning & Capital Strategy Officer) Mike Stoneman (Deputy Director of Children and Families - Education) and Angel Mann (Finance Manager)

The SO58 referral and paper had been circulated to all the required consultees.

The Chief Executive asked Chris Williams to present his report. Chris referred everyone to table 1 in the report and outlined the statutory process for the closure of a maintained school. Officers had received 35 responses to the pre statutory consultation, with 34 in favour and 1 against. The person against had not indicated why they had this view. Mike Stoneman added that the response to the consultation had not been very high but this was not unexpected. The two schools federated in April 2019 and there had been a higher response to this consultation so a lot of the work had already been doing back in April.

Councillor Horton agreed that most of the preparation for this amalgamation had taken place in April when the schools federated. She said that as well as the positives for the two schools amalgamating including sharing resources and a shared leadership and vision, there was evidence that attainment levels dip when children transition from infant to junior and junior to secondary, so this would overcome that. The decision today was timely as the school wishes the decision to be in place for September.

Members' Comments

Councillor Norton said he had some concerns about a potential staff restructure as one of the reasons listed for merger was retainment and recruitment of staff. He said he did not want this to be followed up by a redundancy process, which often starts

with frontline staff and works its way up. It was important to highlight job security now more than ever. Councillor Horton agreed with this statement.

#### Chief Executive's Decision

David Williams said he was very happy to make the decision as recommended in the report and was satisfied that there was a good reason to proceed.

#### **DECISION the Chief Executive:**

- (1) considered the responses to the pre-statutory consultation carried out on the proposal to amalgamate Wimborne Infant and Junior Schools;**
- (2) authorised the Director for Children, Families and Education to proceed to the publication and representation stages of the statutory process to amalgamate Wimborne Infant and Junior Schools.**

(This decision would be reported to all members via the Members' Information Service on 27 March 2020)

Meeting duration: 4:00-4:15pm