

WANDSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 12TH JANUARY 2011

EXECUTIVE – 18TH JANUARY 2011

Report by the Director of Children's Services on the outcome of the Belleville and
Alderbrook consultation

SUMMARY

Background

Paper No.10-846 to the Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 16th November 2010 reported that an admission consultation was being undertaken in November 2010 on various options for managing admission to Belleville School SW11 (Northcote). Stakeholders were also consulted on a proposal to permanently expand Alderbrook School, SW12 (Balham) from one form of entry (1FE) to two forms of entry (2FE) from September 2011. This report sets out the results of the consultation.

Policy

The Council is required to provide sufficient school places to meet demand.

Issues/Proposals

To decide whether there should be changes to the admission policy at Belleville School and whether the proposed expansion at Alderbrook school should proceed to statutory consultation.

Director of Finance Comments

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Supporting Information N/A

Conclusion

Due to the continuing rise in birth rate it is recommended that the planned primary school expansion from 1FE to 2FE at Alderbrook is progressed and that the Belleville Primary school's admissions criteria are amended to establish a first priority area and a second priority area, the latter in two parts as described in this report.

GLOSSARY

DfE - Department for Education
FE - Forms of Entry
PCP - Primary Capital Programme

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee are recommended to support the recommendations in paragraph 3.
2. If the Overview and Scrutiny Committee approve any views, comments or additional recommendations on the report, these will be reported to the Executive for consideration.
3. The Executive are recommended to agree to approve proposals to:-
 - (a) authorise the Children's Services Department to consult as part of the annual statutory admission consultation process on a proposed change to the admission criteria at Belleville Primary School SW11 (Northcote) by the creation of two priority areas (one of which will comprise two parts) as detailed in paragraph 22 below and;
 - (b) publish a statutory Notice to expand the intake at Alderbrook Primary School SW12 (Balham) from 1 to 2FE from September 2011.

INTRODUCTION

4. Paper 10-540 to the Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July 2010 reported on the expansion of Belleville Primary School, SW11 (Northcote). In response to points raised during the response to the published statutory notice, it was agreed that an admission consultation exercise should be carried out in the autumn and this report sets out the results of that consultation and the arising proposals.
5. The consultation also included a proposal to permanently expand Alderbrook Primary School SW12 (Balham) from 1 to 2FE with effect from September 2011.

BELLEVILLE ADMISSION CONSULTATION

6. Consultation proposals were sent out in early November 2010 to all residents in Balham, Northcote and Shaftesbury wards. Parents, staff and the governing bodies at Alderbrook and Belleville were also provided with the consultation proposals. All maintained primary schools and their Chairs of Governing Bodies were informed of the consultation via a Council circular. Discussion also took place with Honeywell Infant and Junior Schools, which are their own admissions authorities, in preparation for the consultation. Council Members were provided with a consultation pack. Copies of the pack were sent to the neighbouring boroughs of Merton, Hammersmith and Fulham, Lambeth, Kensington and Chelsea, Richmond upon Thames, Sutton and Croydon. Members of Parliament for Battersea, Putney and Tooting were also sent a copy. In addition copies were sent to the Department for Education, the Office for the Schools Commissioner, Ofsted, the Diocesan Board and the Archdiocese of Southwark. A copy of the consultation pack and additional information was made available on the Council website and a facility was provided on the website for people to submit their responses electronically. Two consultation meetings were held, one at Belleville

School and one at Alderbrook School attended by parents, local residents and others. The consultation closed on 1st December 2010 and 951 responses have been received.

7. The following options were consulted on:

- (a) Option 1 asked whether the Council should designate a geographical priority area for admission to Belleville Primary School;
- (b) Option 2 asked whether the Council should additionally designate a second priority area for admission to Belleville Primary School;
- (c) Option 3 was that there should be no change to the current admission arrangements.

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION AND OUTCOME

Summary of Consultation Outcome

8. A full analysis of the responses is set out in Appendix 1, with a summary of the Council's response to the issues raised in consultation in Appendix 2. From the response to the consultation questions, there is a majority (523 - 55%) in favour of a change to the admission arrangements at Belleville Primary School, including the proposal that siblings living out of the geographical priority areas would not have priority over children living within. The table below summarises the results of the consultation.

Option 1: Designation of a priority area for admission to Belleville Primary School		
	<i>Number of respondents</i>	<i>%</i>
In favour	523	55
Against	359	38
Unclear	69	7
Option 2: Designation of a second priority area for admission to Belleville Primary School		
In favour	485	51
Against	401	42
Unclear	65	7
Option 3: No change to the admission criteria for Belleville Primary School		
In favour	351	37
Against	521	55
Unclear	79	8

9. The perspective of respondents tended to be determined by their geographical location in relation to the proposed priority areas. The Council's responsibility is therefore to balance the different interests not only in relation to their numerical significance but also in relation to an objective analysis of the underlying issues.
10. In addition to answering the consultation questions, 465 respondents provided comments on the proposals in the box provided (see Appendix 2). The key issues identified in these comments and in the consultation meetings are set out below.

Second Priority Area

11. A majority of respondents (51%) agreed with the proposal to establish a second priority area. The comments provided in relation to the second Priority Area proposed in Option 2 raised three main issues:
 - that the distance criterion for admission to Belleville Primary School should be measured from the Forthbridge Road site rather than the Webbs Road site (90 respondents – 9½% of all respondents and 19% of those making written comments)
 - that there should be a fixed quota for places allocated for parents living in the area around the Forthbridge Road site (35 respondents/4% of all respondents and 7½% of those making written comments)
 - that the second Priority Area be extended to include additional roads further east of the Forthbridge Road site (49 respondents/5%/10½% respectively).
12. In addition to the Council's consultation, a petition with 108 signatures was sent to the Director of Children's Services by a resident of Taybridge Road asking that the priority area be extended to include Taybridge Road, Jedburgh Street, Freke Road, Garfield Road and Rush Hill Road. It also asked that first priority access should be given to these streets along with the streets closest to the Forthbridge Road site.
13. An on-line petition containing 133 signatures was also received. This proposed the phased introduction of a quota of places for children living in the area of the Forthbridge road site, with the distance criterion measured from the Forthbridge Road site.
14. Although access to Belleville Primary School is clearly still a significant issue for those living around the Forthbridge Road site, it is arguably significant that where there were 479 objections to the original consultation on the Forthbridge Road site in May 2010, the majority of respondents are now in favour of the new proposals. The number of respondents still signalling their dissatisfaction with the proposed revision to the admission arrangements, though significant, has nevertheless reduced from the original consultation.
15. Pupil place projections for the Northcote and Shaftesbury wards (Appendix 3) are complicated by changing trends in relation to retention rates i.e. the ratio of births to reception pupils over time. Where in Northcote retention rates are rising, translating into a higher level of demand, in Shaftesbury retention rates are falling, translating into a lower level of demand. If a two year average retention rate (Scenario 2) for both wards is taken, the projections show a small number of surplus places in Shaftesbury as against a deficit of around 0.5 FE in Northcote until 2016/17 were these places not to be allocated to local children. Using the retention rate of the most recent year (2009/10) instead (Scenario 1) would give deficits equating to around 1FE in Northcote until 2016/17 as against a surplus of around 0.5FE in Shaftesbury ward, rising each year to reach almost 1 FE by 2019/20. These figures indicate that it would not be prudent to divert places from children living within Northcote in the short term. They also indicate that from

2012/13 places may be available to the second priority area, especially in the context of a changed sibling rule. There are, moreover, plans to consult on adding additional bilingual capacity to Shaftesbury Park School in the next few years.

16. In terms of the population projections the designation of a second priority area would both ensure a greater number of places available for local children by excluding siblings outside the priority areas and give those living around the Forthbridge road the chance of benefiting from surplus places in later years should the projections align more closely with Scenario 2 than Scenario 1.
17. In terms of the issues raised, residents around the Forthbridge Road site emphasise that they should have access to what they regard as their local school. Whilst this desire is understandable, it is important to remember that the reason the Council is investing in the Forthbridge Road site is to meet the demand for places in the area around Belleville and Honeywell Primary Schools (Northcote Ward). At a time of financial austerity, the principal justification for investing over £2m to refurbish the Forthbridge Road site is to provide additional places to meet that need. There is currently a surplus of reception places in the area north of Clapham Common Northside (Shaftesbury Ward) in which the Forthbridge Road site is situated. There are three reception vacancies at Shaftesbury Park Primary School and Wix Primary School has currently admitted children into its non-bilingual reception class up to a distance of 2306m (1689m at 30 July 2010).
18. A quota system appears unworkable in practice, both in terms of setting the quota in relation to the need for places in the Northcote Ward area and in terms of allocating fairly the inevitably relatively small number of places which could be provided without risking a breach of the Council's statutory obligation to provide sufficient school places for families living in the Northcote ward.
19. Wix Primary School, now popular and successful, is in close proximity to the residents in the area of the Forthbridge Road. Indeed for some it is the nearest school. The distance threshold for admission to the bilingual class at Wix School is only 279m, suggesting an unmet demand for bilingual education in the area. A parallel report to this committee proposes consulting on providing bilingual places at nearby Shaftesbury Park Primary School. This proposal would not only expand the number of places available in the Shaftesbury Ward area but could also boost the popularity of the school as was the case at Wix Primary School when bilingual education was introduced.
20. There seems little justification for extending the second Priority Area to include additional roads such as Taybridge Road and Jedburgh Street. This is because these streets, in addition to not being a part of the grid of interconnected streets immediately around the Forthbridge Road site, are adjacent to Wix Primary School. Residents in those streets, based on 2010 distance thresholds, would have had no difficulty in securing a place at in the English class in this school.

Area South of Broomwood Road and north of Thurleigh Road

21. A second key issue to emerge from the consultation (53 respondents who provided comments, 5½% of all respondents and 11½% of those providing written

comments) is the exclusion of the area south of the Broomwood Road from the priority area proposed in Option 1. This was also a key concern raised at the consultation meetings. The respondents felt that they would be excluded from Belleville School, whereas until now, under the current arrangements, they might have had a reasonable expectation of gaining a place. The Council agrees that, in contrast to families living around the Forthbridge Road site, there is a possibility that these residents might not be able to secure a place in a local school. The distance threshold around their nearest school, Honeywell, is very tight and there is no guarantee that a place would be available alternatively at Alderbrook Primary School, even with the proposed expansion there, and the school is in any case some distance from parts of this area.

Siblings

22. An overall majority (55%) of those who responded are in favour of changing the admission criteria for Belleville School, which will include a change to the current sibling rule on a transitional basis. Of the people who provided written comments, 45 (5% of all respondents, 10% of those providing written comments) objected to 'out of area' siblings gaining places ahead of children who live locally. On the other hand, 53 people (6% of all respondents, 11½% of those providing written comments) felt that siblings should always be able to attend the same school wherever they live. The siblings issue is clearly a difficult one as legitimate concerns about local places for local children need to be offset against legitimate concerns about logistics for parents with children attending different primary schools. However, as the proposal does include a transitional period up to 2017 giving priority to siblings of children already in the school, other parents would be able to make an informed decision on the likelihood of younger siblings being able to attend Belleville School under the published admission arrangements. It is also important to bear in mind that siblings living within the priority areas (ie most siblings) would still have priority over children living outside the priority areas.
23. Twenty-five people who provided comments (3%/5½% respectively) also objected to the idea that families might rent accommodation close to the school to gain a place, then move out later but continue to have their child (and subsequent siblings) attend the school. Whilst acknowledging this perspective it would not be practical for the Council to exclude such parents through its admission criteria. The change to the sibling rule will, however, potentially deter some short term renting in order to gain a school place.

Honeywell School

24. Concern was expressed by some respondents that the nearby Honeywell Schools SW11 (Northcote) were not part of the consultation exercise given the geographical proximity of Honeywell and Belleville schools. Honeywell Infant and Junior Schools are Foundation Schools where the Governing Body are responsible for admissions rather than the Council. The Governors have indicated that they will review their admission arrangements in the New Year.

Belleville Primary School

25. The governors of Belleville Primary School have made it clear that they do not support any proposal to change the school's admission arrangements. This is because they are concerned that the change of admission policy would negatively impact on the school ethos of welcoming families and that the socio-economic and cultural diversity achieved by having a wider catchment area through siblings would be compromised. There is also a concern that it might be more difficult to fill casual vacancies in higher years if the sibling rule were removed, as parents living outside the priority area might be less keen to place an older child at Belleville in the knowledge that younger siblings might not gain a place.

RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM THE CONSULTATION

26. In view of the substantive issue raised by those living south of Broomwood Road and north of Thurleigh Road and the real possibility that some residents in this area may not be able to secure a place in a local school at all, it is recommended that the second priority area is established comprising two parts, one to the north and one to the south of the first priority area (see map at Appendix 4). Siblings of children living within either part of the second priority area would be given the same level of priority as siblings of children living within the first priority area. Other applicants who are resident within either part of the second priority area will be given priority for any places which remain after the offer of places to siblings living in the first or second priority areas and other applicants living in the first priority area. Places will be offered on the basis of distance from the home to Belleville School (Webbs Road site), irrespective of whether the applicant lives in the second priority area (north) or the second priority area (south).

- (a) The boundary of the second priority area (north) runs along the following roads. These roads and all the roads within the boundary are included in the second priority area (north):

St John's Road (East side odd numbers 19-99), Lavender Hill (south side odd numbers 125a-315), Stormont Road, Gowrie Road, Nansen Road, Fontarabia Road, Marmion Road, Tregarvon Road, Clapham Common Northside (numbers 75-122), Battersea Rise (north side even nos 2-66c).

- (b) The boundary of the second priority area (south) includes the following roads which are south of Broomwood Road and north of Thurleigh Road (i.e. properties in the SW11 postal district only):

Bolingbroke Grove (nos 23-32), Gorst Road, Dents Road, Rowan Court, Blenkarne Road, Montholme Road, Gayville Road, Devereaux Road, Hillier Road, Wroughton Road (nos 1-61 and 2-82 even), Kyrle Road, Ballingdon Road, Amner Road, Broxash Road, Manchuria Road, Roseneath Road, Baldwin Road, Walsingham Place, Clapham Common West Side (nos 21-53)

Conclusion

27. It is not possible to satisfy the aspirations for access to Belleville Primary School of all residents living in Northcote and Shaftesbury wards. Although the desire of those living around the Forthbridge Road site to gain a place at the school is understandable, the Council's first priority, and indeed its statutory duty, is to ensure that the supply of places meets demand. The Council has nonetheless sought to respond to the strength of feeling shown by local residents by proposing the designation of a priority area including the streets around the Forthbridge Road site. Although the distance criterion would still be measured from the main Webbs Road site, this secondary priority area does offer the potential for places to be available to these residents in a way in which the previous criteria would not have done. The original proposal has been amended to include streets south of the Broomwood Road in response to legitimate concerns raised by these residents that school places might not be available in this area.

ALDERBROOK EXPANSION CONSULTATION

28. Stakeholders were asked to respond to a fourth option. This was the Council's proposals to expand Alderbrook School from one to two forms of entry from September 2011.
29. The responses have been broken down by category and the detail is shown in Appendices 1 and 2. The vast majority of responses (784 - 85%), including those from Alderbrook parents and local residents, supported the expansion of Alderbrook School. Some concerns were raised regarding play space, traffic and the impact of building work were raised and these will be addressed in the final proposals. It is therefore recommended that a statutory notice is published for the permanent expansion of the school to 2 FE as set out in Appendix 5.

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE COMMENTS

30. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

CONCLUSION

31. Due to the continuing rise in birth rate it is recommended that the planned primary school expansion from 1FE to 2FE at Alderbrook is moved forward.
32. In addition, it is recommended that Belleville Primary school's admissions criteria are amended to establish a first priority area and a second priority area, the latter in two parts as described in paragraph 15 above.

Increase of Primary School Places and expansion of Primary Schools

PAUL ROBINSON
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4th January 2011

Background Papers

All reports to Overview and Scrutiny Committees, regulatory and other committees, the Executive and the full Council can be viewed on the Council's website (www.wandsworth.gov.uk/moderngov) unless the report was published before May 2001, in which case the Committee Secretary, Ozu Okere (020 8871 6035) (ookere@wandsworth.gov.uk) can supply if required.

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