

REPORT TO CABINET – 14 MARCH 2006

ROSEBERY PRIMARY SCHOOL, LOUGHBOROUGH

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG
PEOPLE'S SERVICES (DESIGNATE)**

PART A

Purpose of the report

1. The purpose of this report is:
 - To outline, in full, the options for Rosebery Primary School
 - To summarise the responses from the consultation which took place between 31st January and 3rd March 2006.

Recommendation

2. (i) That the outcome of consultations undertaken on the options for Rosebery Primary School, Loughborough be noted;
- (ii) That, having given detailed consideration to the advantages and disadvantages of the options (including the third option put forward by some respondents), Option B (closure of Rosebery School) be progressed for implementation; and
- (iii) That, accordingly, approval be given to the publication of a statutory notice proposing the closure of Rosebery Primary School.

Reasons for Recommendation

3. The OfSTED Inspection Report published on the 5th January 2006 placed Rosebery Primary School in Special Measures and the County Council has a responsibility to address the matter. This is attached as Appendix A.
4. The County Council has responsibility to consider a range of options set out in DfES Schools Causing Concern Guidance September 2005, including:
 - to assess the scope for the school to be closed or federated taking into account the number of surplus places in better performing local schools
5. Rosebery Primary School has a number of problems, which together question its long term viability. The issues are addressed in detail in

Appendix B – The Local Authority Statement of Action and Appendix D – Detailed account of the issues at Rosebery Primary School.

6. Rosebery Primary School's OfSTED Inspection Report highlights the poor quality of education. It is imperative that this situation is changed as quickly as possible for pupils currently at the school.

Timetable for Decision (including Scrutiny)

7. Education Scrutiny Committee on 27th February 2006 was consulted on the two options for Rosebery Primary School.
8. Their response is included in Part B, paragraph 24. The full MINUTES of Education Scrutiny's discussion are in Appendix J.
9. If Cabinet agree the recommendation a statutory notice will be published for a month. The School Organisation Committee must meet within two weeks of the end of this statutory notice.
10. The proposal to close the school and any objections received will go to the School Organisation Committee at the end of April/ early May for a decision if Cabinet agree to the publication of statutory notices. If the SOC are unable to make a decision the proposal is then sent to the Adjudicator, who is appointed by the Secretary of State, for a decision. If this happens the school will not close before the end of the Autumn Term as the process can take up to 3 months from the date of the School Organisation Committee.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

11. The recommendations do not affect policy framework.
12. Cabinet agreed on the 31st January 2006 to consult on two options for Rosebery Primary School.
 - Option A – amalgamation with a neighbouring school;
 - Option B – Closure of Rosebery Primary School.

Resource Implications

13. There will be some financial implications dependent on the decisions made, for example capital receipts in the event of closure and capital expenditure on the provision of additional places at another school. Any costs of possible closure would be covered by capital receipts if a decision were taken to sell the building.
14. There are implications for staff at the school including the need to consult with Trade Unions on any proposed closure or amalgamation. In the unlikely event that all current staff at the school were made redundant, the cost could be in the region of £185,000. At this stage this is a rough figure. Actual costs would be refined if the School Organisation Committee decided on closure of the school when an Action Plan would be drawn up.

Circulation and Sensitive Issues

Mr. M. J. Hunt CC
Mr. P. G. Lewis CC
Mr Mike Jones CC
Mrs. M. E Newton CC
Mr. N. A. Stork CC

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PART B

Background

15. During the consultation period a number of issues were raised both at the public meetings and in writing. Notes of the questions asked at the public meetings are attached in Appendix E. In addition answers to the queries raised are attached in Appendix F. Notes from the Governor's meetings and staff meetings are attached in Appendix K.
16. The Local Authority Statement of Action and OfSTED Action Plan is included in Appendix B. This sets out the problems in the school and also the Local Authority Support that has and will be offered to the school. Appendix C is Rosebery Primary School's OfSTED Action Plan, which goes to the next Governors Meeting on the 8th March 2006. A detailed account of the issues relating to the school is attached in Appendix D and address many of the issues raised during the consultation period, including at Scrutiny Committee on 27th February 2006.

Proposals and/or Options

17. Option A – Amalgamation. Feedback from the consultation indicates that this option is the least favoured. The disadvantages of this option in this case outweigh the merits. The likelihood of finding a school that would amalgamate with Rosebery Primary School given that both schools would need to close and staff become 'at risk' is minimal. The process for amalgamation is the longer option and would mean that children remain in inadequate education for a longer period of time.
18. Option B – Closure.
The advantages of this option are that:
 - Children would be able to access a higher standard of education more quickly and move to schools with sound behaviour monitoring systems.
 - Issues with falling rolls in Loughborough would be partly addressed with the reduction of one school and the removing of 230 places from the large surplus capacity.
 - The Local Authority would be tackling the issue of a failing school without the capacity to improve and ensuring that all children had the opportunity to benefit from better education.The disadvantages are that:
 - Children and their parents would initially face disruption
 - All staff would be at risk of redundancy and in the short term this could affect the welfare of staff and pupils at the school
 - The community would lose a school
19. The majority of respondents have requested a 3rd Option – Support of the school
The advantages of this option are:
 - Pupils and staff would remain at the school
 - The community would retain a school
 - This option would potentially offer the least disruptionThe disadvantages

- Experience indicates that moving a school from Special Measures takes at least two years and even then there are still a number of weaknesses in the school. The new inspection framework expects school improvement to be considerable within one year.
 - Experience shows that the role played by a Headteacher is key to improvement. It is unlikely the school will be able to improve without the continued input of an Executive Head, or the appointment of a substantive Head.
 - The school has no substantive head teacher and is unlikely to recruit one in the current climate and with the issues facing the school.
 - There would need to be drastic staff reductions to manage the deficit budget and the impact of continued falling rolls. This will make school improvement more difficult.
 - As the numbers on roll decrease, the cost of running the premises will take an increasing percentage of the school budget, leaving an inadequate amount for staff salaries. This will further compound the financial difficulties.
 - The opinion that the OfSTED inspection is flawed has been expressed by people closely associated with the school. The Local Authority does not agree with this opinion.
 - Recent visits from Local Authority Officers show that the school is still not addressing the issues and have only just started to write an action plan following additional Local Authority intervention.
20. To ensure that pupils at Rosebery Primary School are allowed to access a satisfactory standard of education quickly, the proposal put before Cabinet is to publish statutory notices on the closure of Rosebery Primary School.

Consultation

21. A consultation on two proposals for Rosebery Primary School began on 1st February 2006. Letters were sent out on 31st January to the list of consultees in Appendix F, after the decision to consult was made by Cabinet. The consultation period lasted until 3rd March 2006. The length of the consultation exercise was extended by a week to accommodate the fact that the leaflet and letter had not included information in different languages. Two letters were sent out to all consultees within the first week of consultation to address the error.
22. During the consultation period, meetings were held with teaching staff, non-teaching staff and the Governing Body. In addition, two public meetings were held which were attended by over 150 people.
23. Responses to the proposals could be made through a number of mediums, including via post, e-mail, online and by telephone. 274 responses were received; a number of these were duplicated.

	Option A - Amalgamation		Option B - Closure		3 rd Option - Support	
	Parent	Other	Parent	Other	Parent	Other
Leaflet	0	1	4	9	57	35
Online	0	1	22	3	14	84
Telephone	0	0	2	0	0	0

Total	0	2	28	12	70	119
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Parent refers to parent of a pupil at Rosebery Primary School

In addition 42 letters were received which will be available at the meeting.

24. Education Scrutiny Committee met on the 27th February 2006 to make a response to the consultation. This was "That Cabinet be recommended to consider all options, including the option of a properly resourced recovery strategy to enable the school to improve, when it considers the outcome of the present consultation process".
25. The overall response, including from Education Scrutiny Committee was for a 3rd option (232), to save the school and for the Local Authority to provide resources and funding to ensure an improvement in the quality of education and funding.
26. In addition, the following issues were included in the leaflet responses, online forms and letters:
 - A flawed OfSTED inspection report
 - The feelings of the children at the school
 - The new housing developments which would generate further pupils
 - The need for a school in the community
 - The need for male Head Teacher and staff
 - The means and time of travel to another school
 - Childcare issues at another school
 - The future developments at Loughborough University that would mean students would move from the area onto campus, so freeing housing for young families
 - The cost of buying new school uniform
 - The good quality of education at Rosebery Primary School
 - The past excellence of the school
 - The catchment area of the school that needs to be re-aligned and at present favours pupils going out-of-catchment to closer schools
27. A petition was received on Friday 3rd March by Cllr G Hart requesting that the school remain open and that funding and resources be provided to improve the quality of education at the school.
28. A minority of responses (39) stated that closure was the only option. The reasons for this were:
 - The need to ensure the best for the children
 - The problems with the quality of education and behaviour currently at the school
 - The impact on children's welfare of the behavioural issues
 - The falling roll in Loughborough

Equal Opportunities Implications

29. If the school remains open there are significant equal opportunity issues due to the inadequate standard of education at the school.
30. All pupils would be able to access a higher standard of education if the school were closed.

Background Papers

Rosebery Primary School OfSTED Inspection Report
Schools Causing Concern Guidance
OfSTED Inspection Framework

Appendices

Appendix A – OfSTED Report for Rosebery Primary School
Appendix B – Revised Local Authority Commentary on the Governors Action Plan and Statement of Action
Appendix C – Rosebery Primary School OfSTED Action Plan (yet to be received)
Appendix D – Detailed Account of issues at Rosebery Primary School
Appendix E – Notes of Public Meetings held on 7th February 2006
Appendix F – Answers to Queries raised at the meetings of the 7th February 2006.
Appendix H – List of Consultees
Appendix I – Local Authority Monitoring Report, 22nd February 2006
Appendix J – Notes on Rosebery agenda taken from Education Scrutiny
Appendix K – Notes of Governors and staff meeting

All papers which have been received through the consultation will be taken to the Cabinet meeting by the Director of Children's Services (Designate).