

Newton School
Proposed Change of Age Range Consultation
4 July 2012

Staff and Governors

After a brief introduction and background to the consultation, the staff and governors present were invited to ask questions. There were 10 staff and 7 governors present (1 was both a member of staff and a governor).

Questions/Points raised;

- Q** Is there possible slippage in the process to opening the Nursery in January 2013?
- A** Yes. There is the opportunity for councillors to 'call in' a decision made by Cabinet in order to subject the decision to further scrutiny.
- Q** The original business plan was sent in to the county council in September 2011 but no decision has yet been made. If the decision is not cleared in January, and instead the Nursery has to open at Easter, then the pupil census will be missed and children will not be financially included in the school roll until the following January. This will make the Nursery economically unviable until the following year thereby losing more potential pupils.
- A** The process and statutory requirements associated with the provision of Nursery places is complex and lengthy and can take between 12 and 18 months. The time taken for this particular application to be processed has also been delayed by a constitutional change at the county council.
- Q** The Cabinet should be made aware of the short timescale available due to delays in process at the county council.
- A** This information will be contained in the Cabinet report.
- Q** If the Cabinet approve the proposal to open a Nursery in January 2013 do we have to start the provision in January?
- A** This depends on what date is indicated in the statutory notice as a start date. If January is the date then that is when it must start.
- Q** This could make appointing a teacher difficult because of the short timescales. What do you advise a course of action?
- A** It would be possible to combine the Reception class and the new Nursery class up to a total of 30 children (assuming 12 Nursery pupils) using the existing Reception teacher and employing a Teaching Assistant. Then, at a later date, when financially viable, a separate teacher might be sought. There are other examples across the county where this combination of Reception and Nursery teaching works very effectively and the Early

Years Team can come to the school to advise on the arrangements should it be necessary. As this approach was not reflected in the original proposal, there is a need to revise the business plan to take this into consideration. County council officers will be in contact with the school staff during the course of next week to help revise the business plan.

Q Is there any compensation available from the county council due to their delay in handling the process?

A No.

Q If parents are currently applying for a place at the potential Nursery will they get turned away?

A The admissions team are aware of the consultation and will re-direct applicants to the school.

Q How will we know the outcome of Cabinet?

A An Officer from the School Organisation Team will contact the school to inform them of the outcome.

Q If the Cabinet choose to reject the proposal is there a right of appeal?

A It would be possible to re-apply for the provision and submit a new business plan in order to start the process from the beginning.

Q The school has a list of prospective parents for the Nursery, what do you advise saying to them?

A Nursery places are available to apply for all year round and it is possible for parents to apply for more than 1 nursery should they wish.

Q If the application is rejected, would Cabinet give a reason why?

A Yes.

Q How many applications are rejected and how many get through?

A That information is not known

Q Is there any advertising available from the county council?

A No, although the county council would publish notices in the local press should the proposal be approved. Work has been done by the school to publicise the potential provision.

The group were encouraged to make a response to the consultation to the School Organisation Team during the consultation period and it highlighted that there should be a separate response by the Governing Body.

Parents and Public

After a brief slideshow, the parents and public present (12 in total, 6 of whom had attended the early staff and governors meeting) were invited to ask questions.

Questions/points raised;

Q How soon will the Nursery open?

A Subject to the consultation period and Cabinet's decision the soonest opening date would be 7th January 2013.

Q Is there money available from the county council for the Nursery?

A The pupils themselves generate money from central Government.

Q Are there minimum and maximum numbers for the Nursery to be financially viable?

A There can be no more than 12. Finance colleagues will examine the minimum number required.

Q Do the dates in the timescale to go to Cabinet take account of a January start?

A Yes.

Q Are Cabinet meetings open to the public?

A Yes. An application to attend should be made to Democratic Services at the county council. The Barrow Local Committee will be taking place on 13th of July.

Q Can opening times for the Nursery be extended if it proves successful?

A They can but they must not impact on the school budget. Any time above the free 15 hours provision must be charged for. The school Governing Body could make a business case to the county council for an extension of hours and an hourly charge rate (there are examples of this in operation in the county).

Q On what basis is the decision to accept the Nursery proposal made?

A The decision would be made using information provided by officers, the school business case and the consultation responses.

Points were also raised about the advantages that a local Nursery would bring, including the continuity it would provide in bringing children together through their school career, it would bridge the gap between the play group and school, the attraction of an education in a small rural school, and the Nursery encouraging children to apply for a place at Newton.