FUTURE PRIMARY EDUCATION PROVISION IN THE HAKIN AND HUBBERSTON AREA

1. CABINET DECISION

At the Cabinet meeting held on 7 April 2014, further consideration was given to the review of primary education in the Hakin and Hubberston area. In particular, consideration was given to the statutory consultation that had been undertaken and the publication of the subsequent Consultation Report. The decision of Cabinet was as follows:

“DECISION
That the Director for Children and Schools be authorised to issue a Statutory Notice to discontinue Hakin Community School and Hubberston VC School and to establish a single all-through English medium Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School, effective from 1 September 2016.

Reason for Decision:
To strengthen and develop primary education provision for pupils in the Hakin and Hubberston area.”

2. PUBLICATION OF STATUTORY NOTICE

(a) The Statutory Notice (Document A) was published on 7th May 2014 and placed at/in conspicuous places in the area served by the schools, as follows:

i. The County Council’s website

ii. The entrances of both Infant site and Junior site of Hakin Community School

iii. The entrances of Hubberston VC School

iv. Hakin Post Office, 47 Waterloo Road, Hakin

v. Mini Mart, Waterloo Square, Hakin

vi. Hubberston Youth Club/Community Centre

vii. Mini Mart, Gelliswick Road, Hubberston

viii. Hake Inn Fish ‘n Chips Shop, St Anne’s Road, Hakin

ix. Elder’s Chemist, Spikes Lane, Hakin

x. Milford Haven Library

xi. Milford Haven Council Offices
(b) A significant number of copies of the Statutory Notice were provided to both Hakin Community School and Hubberston VC School to distribute to pupils, parents/carers/guardians and staff members; both schools were provided with letters to be sent to parents advising them of the publication of the Statutory Notice and that it could be obtained from the school or the County Council’s website. This letter (Document B) also indicated the duration of the statutory objection period and details of how to object to the proposal.

(c) The following statutory consultees to the proposal received either a hard copy of the proposals or an emailed link to the Statutory Notice on the County Council website:

i. The governing bodies of Hakin Community School and Hubberston VC School
ii. The Chairs of the governing bodies, Headteachers and staff of St Francis RC Primary School, The Meads Infant & Nursery School, Milford Haven Junior School and Coastlands School,
iii. The Directors of Education for the Dioceses of Menevia and St David’s
iv. The Welsh Ministers
v. Estyn
vi. Local and regional Assembly Members, Members of Parliament and County Councillors representing the area subject to the proposal
vii. Teaching and staff trade unions representing teachers and other staff at the schools subject to the proposal
viii. ERW – the Regional Education Consortium
ix. SWWITCH – the Regional Transport Consortium
x. The Dyfed Powys Police and Crime Commissioner
xi. Milford Haven Town Council
xii. All independent nursery/childcare providers in the area
xiii. The Early Years, Childcare and Learning Group of the Childcare and Young People’s Partnership
xiv. The Hywel Dda Health Board
xv. SNAP Cymru
xvi. National Autistic Society
xvii. Pembrokeshire Local Service Board
xviii. Pembrokeshire Communities First

(d) The objection period under the Statutory Notice expired on 4th June 2014. As objections have been made to the proposal, the Council must publish a summary of these and provide appropriate responses. Such objections and responses are contained within the Objection Report attached to this report (Document C).
3. DETAILS RELATING TO CONSULTATION

(a) Preliminary Consultation

Preliminary Consultation on the future direction for primary education provision in the Hakin and Hubberston area was undertaken with staff, governors, parents and Milford Haven Town Council during June and July 2013. A report detailing this consultation was presented to Cabinet on 4th November 2013. Subsequently, the decision of Cabinet was as follows:

*That the Director for Children and Schools consults on the proposal to discontinue Hakin Community School and Hubberston VC School and to establish a single all-through English medium Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled primary school, effective from 1st September 2016.*

Reason for the decision:

*To strengthen and develop primary education provision for pupils in the Hakin and Hubberston area.*

(b) Statutory Consultation

Statutory Consultation was undertaken between 25th November 2013 and 6th January 2014 and complied with the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and School Organisation Code which came into force on 1st October 2013.

Prior the publication of the Consultation Document, a 28 day period of consultation was undertaken with the Director of Education of the Diocese of St David’s.

The Consultation Document (*Document D*) was published on 25th November 2013 and provided details of both the status quo and the Council’s proposal; pupil consultation sessions and public meetings were held during the consultation period.

A Consultation Report (*Document E*) was subsequently published and included:

- A summary of each of the issues raised by consultees;
- A response to these issues by means of clarification, rejection of concerns and supporting reasons;
- Estyn’s view of the overall merits of the proposal.

The Consultation Report was presented for consideration to Cabinet at its meeting on 10th February 2014 and reflected the many observations made by pupils, parents and residents.
4. FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED IN DETERMINING THIS PROPOSAL

(a) Standards of provision in the Hakin and Hubberston area
The standard of provision in the Hakin and Hubberston schools is good and provides very well for the pupils of the area. However, the current provision has some limitations which would be addressed by the proposal to establish a single primary school for the area. The proposal will result in new facilities being provided which will enhance the learning experience for all pupils and provide ample opportunity for the new school to become the educational hub for all pupils and other members of the community. Establishing a single 3-11 school will result in a rationalisation of teaching accommodation onto one site and this will lead to improved standards and learner outcomes. The new school will provide a learning environment that meets 21st Century schools requirements which is flexible and robust to support change in the future.

(b) The standard of education currently provided and the continuing ability of the school to maintain satisfactory standards
The proposal will build upon the strengths of the existing schools. Both schools received "Good" judgements from Estyn for current performance and their prospects for improvement following their inspections in 2012 and 2013. It is reasonable, that in light of this performance, that the prospect for a successful new school to be established as a result of the proposal, is good. However, it should be noted that Hakin Community School operates across two sites and that this provides an element of risk in maintaining such standards in the longer term.

(c) Delivery of the curriculum
A new school for the Hakin and Hubberston area will result in a considerable strengthening of the delivery of the National Curriculum requirements of the Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2. It will enable staff to fully plan for a more pupil-led approach to meeting individual needs of particular learners and vulnerable pupils. The increased resource will facilitate the development of specific teams of staff to deliver specific programmes to meet the full and diverse range of needs of the pupils. Improved data systems will enable staff to monitor and track progress more effectively right through from Nursery to Year 6. The emotional and wellbeing needs of all pupils and their families will be further developed and a programme of ‘wrap around’ care offered by the school.

(d) The effect of the proposal on other schools and educational institutions
The proposal seeks to establish a new school whose catchment area will remain as the area currently serving Hakin Community School and Hubberston VC School. In view of the large percentage of in-catchment attendance at these schools and the self-contained community of Hakin and Hubberston, it is unlikely that there will be any significant impact on adjacent schools in Milford Haven and the Dale peninsula.
(e) **The need for places and the impact on accessibility of schools**
The Hakin and Hubberston, and wider Milford Haven area is a densely populated area which is currently covered by five primary schools. Pupil places are at a premium with only 26 spare places across the whole of the area. In making the proposal for a new school to serve the Hakin and Hubberston area, the Authority has to consider the sufficiency of school places and the likely demand for places in the future. It is clear that the current schools are unable to cater for the growing population in the area and it is estimated that there will be a shortfall of 128 pupil places by 2018 due to a combination of increased birth rate and in-migration due to the significant level of new housing. Within the context of the proposal, the need for additional places is therefore justified.

(f) **Demand for schools of a particular type**
The establishment of a new school as having a religious character is as a result of the responses received from parents during preliminary consultation. A large number of responses cited the importance of retaining a Church based provision in the area, and the subsequent development of the proposal reflected this.

(g) **Journeys to school**
There should be no impact on school journeys as a result of this proposal.

(h) **Access for disabled pupils**
The proposed new school will be fully compliant with equality legislation.

(i) **Financial implications**
The Strategic Outline Case in relation to the proposal was approved by Welsh Government in April 2014. The Council has no other source of funding other than through the 21st Century Schools building programme and it is imperative that the related business case process identifies the best option. In the case of this proposal, the potential revenue savings amount to an average of £218,000 per annum. This amount is based on the assumptions included in the approved Strategic Outline Case and will be further revised as part of the ongoing business case process. It is apparent from the recent Estyn inspection and the various correspondence received from parents of that school, that Hubberston VC School is an effective and popular school. The proposal to rationalise the schools in the area will ensure that although this school is to close, the proposal offers at least equivalent quality and diversity of education at a lower cost than if the school remains open.

(j) **Views of consultees**
Five objections were received in relation to this proposal; these consisted of three objections from parents, one from a former pupil and one unknown. However, it should be noted that there has been a significant
level of opposition to this proposal from parents of pupils attending Hubberston VC School, and this has been evidenced in previous Cabinet reports relating to this proposal. In the main, opposition has centred on the size of a new school and a presumption that this will lead to larger class sizes and the loss of a caring, nurturing environment that only a smaller school can provide. The Authority’s response to this matter cites a recent Estyn report “School size and educational effectiveness” (Estyn, Dec 2013) which provides compelling evidence which suggests that larger schools tend to perform better than small and medium-sized schools. In addition, the Authority’s response re-iterates the caring environment found at both existing schools and that this is unlikely to change as a result of an amalgamation.

(k) 21st Century Schools
The establishment of the new school will promote a high standard of education provision, with purpose built facilities for a 21st Century School. The proposal will assist the authority in its ambition to develop learning environments to the same high standard across all schools, improve efficiency in the use of energy and other resources and help to ensure that the school can meet future curricular needs. The provision of one sustainable school for the Hakin and Hubberston area will contribute to good strategic management of the school estate.

(l) Consideration of alternatives
In arriving at the proposal, eight options for change were considered and described in the Consultation Document (Document D). All options have been appraised through the investment objectives and critical success factors of the 21st Century Schools HM Treasury Five Case Business Model. The report to Cabinet on 10th February 2014 sought Cabinet’s agreement on one of three options, namely:
1. Proceed with the proposal
2. Retain the status quo
3. Provide a new build for Hakin Community School only
Following a request to provide additional information on these options, a subsequent report was considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 7th April 2014. In view of the fact that capital investment from the 21st Century Schools Programme will be used to fund the new school included within this proposal, a full appraisal of the options has taken place.

(m) The impact of the school’s closure on accessibility to a school with a religious character, balanced with the need for efficient provision
Whilst the effect of the proposal is that a primary school with a religious character will close, the new primary school will have a religious character which will conform with the doctrines of the Church in Wales.

(n) Impact on the community
A draft Community Impact Assessment was included in the Consultation Document for this proposal, and which was further completed as a result of the responses received during the statutory consultation period.
It should be noted that the new school will be able to continue to provide the extensive range of opportunities for pupils, parents and the wider community as is available currently, and that it therefore has the potential to become a truly community focused school for the whole of the Hakin and Hubberston area.

Parents’ and residents’ concerns regarding the potential loss of community and green space areas were highlighted and responded to as part of the Consultation Report. In particular, the need to work proactively with the community sports clubs has been recognised in previous reports to Cabinet, and discussions with these clubs are ongoing with a view to reaching a satisfactory conclusion.

The concerns of respondents in relation to the proximity of the proposed school site to South Hook LNG were also reflected and addressed in the final Community Impact Assessment included in the Consultation Report.

(o) **Equality issues**
An equality impact assessment has been undertaken and has identified no negative impact on any vulnerable or minority groups. This proposal should not, therefore, lead to any unlawful discrimination.

(p) **The impact of changes on other services for children with SEN**
The proposal will expand and enhance current provision, and will provide an inclusive environment for all pupils in the area. This adheres to the Authority’s plans and Welsh Government policy on inclusion.

(q) **Standards of accommodation for pupils with SEN**
There is a good standard of accommodation for pupils with SEN at Hakin Community School. However, the nature of infant and junior units on separate sites inhibits greater effectiveness and this will be resolved as a result of establishing this provision on one school site. A new school will therefore result in improved standards of accommodation for pupils with SEN.

5. **CONCLUSION**

(a) Maintaining the status quo offers no strategy for the future

(b) The Strategic Outline Case for the proposal has been approved by Welsh Government and offers a high degree of certainty of substantial investment from the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century Schools Programme. The Council has no other source of funding for such projects. Thus in the event that the proposal is not agreed the authority has no source of capital funding to proceed with other options and thus the status quo would remain.

(c) It is acknowledged that there was a level of opposition to the proposal at consultation stage. However, previous experience would indicate that
when faced with making a preference for a school for their children, parents invariably opt for the new school. It should be noted that many of the children affected by this proposal have not yet been born, and therefore their parents are unlikely to have responded to the consultation. This likelihood is exacerbated by the close proximity of the sites of the existing schools and this would risk, in time, creating uncertainty about the future sustainability of Hubberston VC School.

(d) Whilst there is considerable opposition from current parents of pupils of Hubberston VC School, not all will be affected by this proposal and the benefits for all children in the area of a new learning environment, outweigh their concerns.

(e) Prior to reaching a decision, Members should note the factors to be considered in determining this proposal, and which are set out in Paragraph 4 above. These individual factors represent the reasons for the recommendation set out below. It should be noted that:

i. the statutory consultation in relation to this proposal has been conducted in accordance with the School Organisation Code
ii. the proposal has been published in accordance with the School Organisation Code
iii. all objections received to this proposal have been considered and appropriate responses provided

6. **RECOMMENDATION**

To discontinue Hakin Community School and Hubberston VC School and to establish a single all-through English medium Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School, effective from 1 September 2016.

Background Documents:

Consultation Document – Hakin/Hubberston amalgamation
Consultation Report – Hakin/Hubberston amalgamation
Statutory Notice – Hakin/Hubberston amalgamation
School Organisation Statutory Code – Welsh Government (July 2013)