



Glasgow City Council

**Report by: Councillor Jonathan Findlay,
Executive Member for Education**

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**Education Estate Strategy 2009 – 2012
Response to the Consultation on the Merger Proposals**

Purpose of Report

To advise on the outcome of the public consultation exercise that commenced on 2 February, 2009 and concluded on 18 March, 2009 regarding the proposals to merge 21 primary schools and early years' centres and make final recommendations for the Council's consideration.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Council:

- Notes the thoroughness of the consultation exercise undertaken that went well beyond the current legal requirements and that of the new Bill relating to school closures;
- Approves the recommendations for each of Proposals 1 to 21 contained in the appendices to this report and summarised in Section 5.

Ward No(s): Citywide

Local member(s) advised: Yes No Consulted: Yes No

1. Background

- 1.1 On 23 January, 2009 the Executive Committee approved, in principle, the Education Estate Strategy 2009–2012.
- 1.2 The Strategy recognised the achievements over the last 10 years in transforming Glasgow’s Education Estate which supports the Council’s key aims of raising attainment and achievement and supporting inclusion. It was recognised, however, that much is still required to be done.
- 1.3 After completion of Phase 4 of the Council’s Pre 12 Strategy, 85% of children and young people will be accommodated in good or satisfactory buildings. The remaining 15% (10,200) will, however, continue to be educated in buildings which are in poor or bad condition. It is recognised that there remain significant levels of under occupancy across primary schools due to the decline in the pupil population of the City over the last 30 years.
- 1.4 In the primary sector in 2008 there was 40% under occupancy and, even with a modest projected increase in the number of primary age children over the next ten years, the primary estate would remain at 32% under occupancy in 2019.
- 1.5 Under occupancy is neither efficient nor effective and ties up valuable resources. These resources should be targeted at improving attainment, achievement and supporting inclusion and the quality of the learning and teaching environment.
- 1.6 Over the last decade the Council has addressed the challenges of the condition and under occupancy of its education estate through a £550m investment programme. The updated Education Estate Strategy, however, recognises that the current economic conditions will severely curtail the Council’s ability to secure previous levels of investment, particularly through capital receipts, that will be severely curtailed over the next few years.
- 1.7 In addition, it is not envisaged that the Scottish Government’s Scottish Futures Trust represents an effective framework for achieving the levels of capital investment made in the education estate in recent years.
- 1.8 Taking into account the range of challenges facing the Council regarding its Education Estate and within the context of the policy framework for education services and for services to children and families in Glasgow, the next phase of the Education Estate Strategy - 2009 to 2012 will focus on:
 - Reducing the number of children and young people accommodated in poor or bad accommodation by merging a number of primary schools where there is long term sustainable capacity and clear educational benefits from doing so.
 - Reviewing the range and scope of early years and childcare services across the city in line with the Council’s Early Childhood and Extended Services Strategy, aimed at expanding convenient 8.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. quality provision, 52 weeks per year.

- Improving the quality of accommodation and experience of children and young people currently in Additional Support for Learning provision by relocating/co-locating them to improved alternative settings, whilst retaining their unique identity and ethos.
 - The development of early years/primary and secondary Learning Centres across the 5 strategic planning areas of the city to support children and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.
 - The development of community campuses that will focus on inter agency and partnership working to provide a range of learning, training, childcare, employment, leisure and health opportunities to improve outcomes for children, young people, families and communities.
- 1.9 In considering the Strategy the Council was asked to consider in detail a programme of 21 proposals for the merger of primary schools and early years' centres (in line with bullet points 1 and 2 in paragraph 1.7 above) to take effect from August 2009. In relation to Proposal 22, Golfhill Primary School and Westercraigs Nursery School, consultation commenced on 20 April, 2009 and a subsequent report will be submitted in due course.
- 1.10 In bringing forward these proposals the overriding case has to be based on there being a robust educational and / or childcare benefit to each of the proposals, coupled with securing increased effectiveness and efficiency that would enable scarce resources to be re-invested in children's learning and care, supporting the Council's key aims of raising attainment and achievement and supporting social inclusion.
- 1.11 At the Special Council meeting on 29 January, 2009 approval was given to consult with local communities and other interested parties on each of the proposals and to report back the findings of the exercise to enable the Council to take informed decisions on each of the proposals.

2. The Consultation Process

- 2.1 Where a Council brings forward proposals to merge or close schools there is a necessity to carry out a period of public consultation within the statutory framework defined by Scottish Government.
- 2.2 The consultation process undertaken by the Council went well beyond the current statutory requirements to maximise participation and to ensure openness and transparency.
- 2.3 It should be noted that the Scottish Government is presently consulting on a new Bill with regard to school closures, the Schools (Consultation)(Scotland) Bill, with the aim of improving community engagement, transparency and openness. An evaluation of the consultation process that Glasgow City Council has recently concluded, when compared against the detail of the Bill, demonstrates that the Council has either complied with or indeed exceeded the proposed revised statutory requirements in almost every aspect.

2.4 Further to the Council approving the consultation process in January the following arrangements were put in place:

- Consultation papers were distributed to a wide range of stakeholders and interested parties, well in excess of statutory requirements
- A notice to advise of the consultation arrangements was placed in the press
- A dedicated page was set up on the Council website for both information and to enable interested parties to respond to the proposals
- The consultation period ran for 6 weeks during term time, 2 weeks more than the statutory requirement, commencing on 2 February, 2009 and concluding on 18 March, 2009
- 46 public meetings were held
- A meeting was arranged with the chairs of the relevant Parent Councils
- Children were engaged in the consultation process via their Pupil Councils
- A meeting was arranged with Church representatives
- Meetings were arranged with all the elected members from individual wards potentially affected by the proposals
- Political groups received briefings from senior officers in relation to the consultation process and the proposals
- Meetings were arranged to brief Trade Unions on the proposals
- Area Committees were offered briefings by lead officers
- Meetings were arranged with individual elected members as required to facilitate the consultation process
- Both formal and informal meetings were held with staff in the establishments concerned
- Officers responded to many hundreds of requests for information relating to the proposals
- Officers responded to all Freedom of Information requests within the required timescale
- All responses to the consultation were logged into a database, numbered and acknowledgements sent
- All 7248 responses were read by the lead officers and their teams to ensure that the relevant points from respondents were included in this report and the 21 individual responses to the consultation process

3. Quality Assurance Process

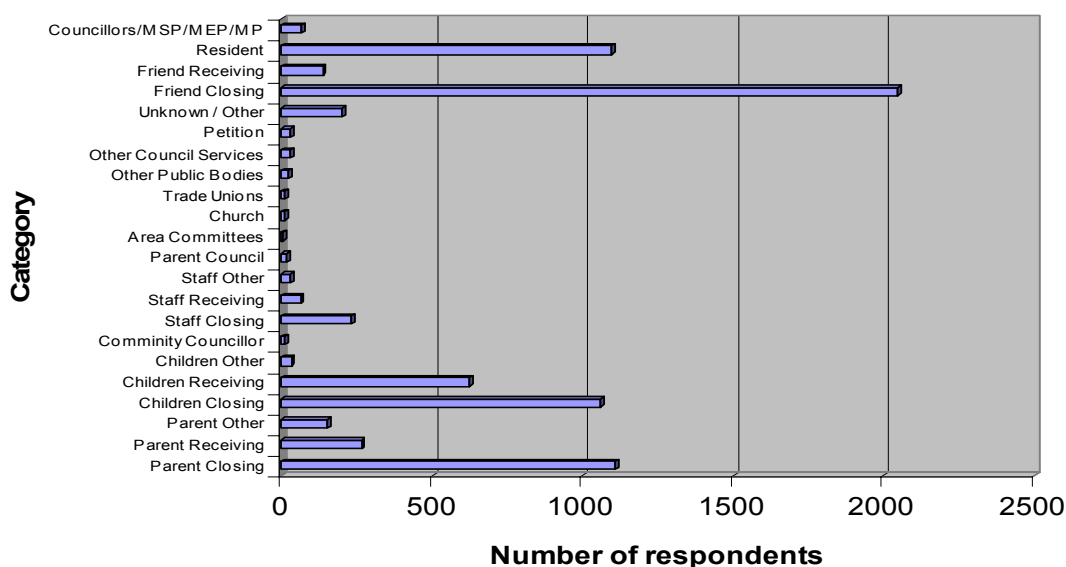
- 3.1 In any major project it is almost certain that errors will occur. Therefore procedures were put in place to identify, amend and record any errors. Throughout the entire process a total of 2 errors were identified. Both were typographical only.
- 3.2 In Proposal 8, the condition of St Mary's Primary School was stated as C when it should have read B. In Proposal 21 the condition of Nithsdale Road and Newark Drive nurseries were stated as C when they should have read B.
- 3.3 The advice of the Solicitor to the Council was sought in relation to these errors and his advice was that the errors were not material and therefore re-issuing the documents, highlighting the errors and recording the errors in the report to the Council was an appropriate response.
- 3.4 It should be noted that in the new Bill regarding school closures, which is currently being consulted upon, it is acknowledged that errors can occur and proposes that these should be amended, recorded and reported accordingly - in line with the practice that has been adopted by this Council.

4. The Findings of the Consultation Exercise

- 4.1 City wide there were 7,248 respondents to the 21 proposals. Overall 96% of all respondents were against the proposals.
- 4.2 A breakdown of respondents is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1

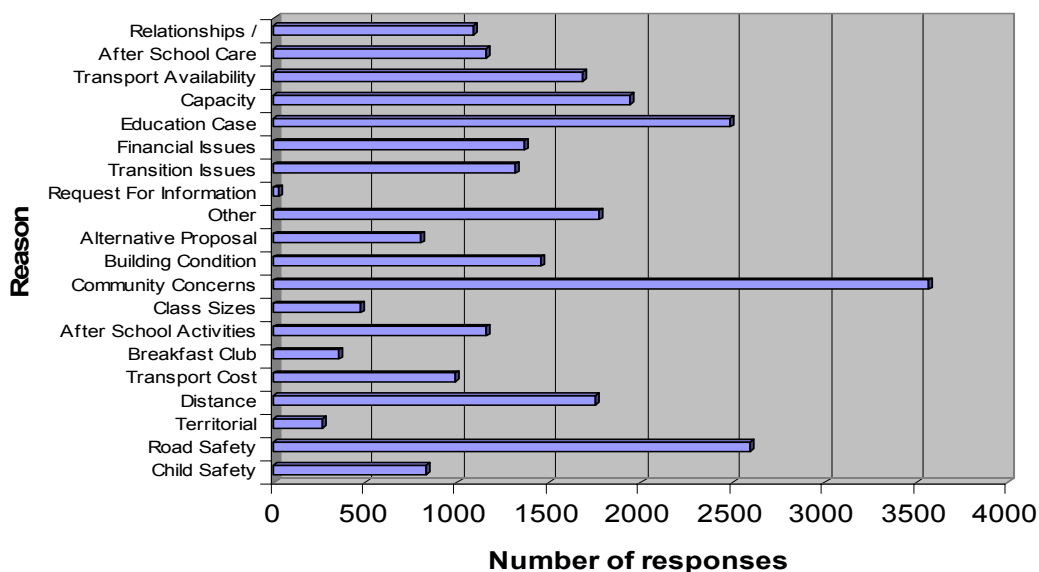
Breakdown of Respondents to all Proposals



- 4.3 It should be highlighted that most respondents fell into the category of a Friend of a Closing Establishment. It is evident from the analysis of the responses that a significant majority were based on a photocopy of an original response from a friend of a closing establishment. It is highly unlikely that this is the correct classification in all instances. The responses, however, are valid in that they are individually signed and addressed.
- 4.4 Table 2 below provides an analysis of the city wide concerns and issues raised by respondents

Table 2

Breakdown of reasons given against all proposals



- 4.5 The main reasons cited for being against the proposals were, in rank order:

- Community concerns
- Road safety
- Educational case
- Capacity

Issue: Community Concerns

By far the most common concern was the loss of a community facility from a locality with many citing that the school or early years' establishment was at the heart of the community and that its loss would have a detrimental effect on the area.

Response

In the vast majority of the proposals the recommended receiving establishment is less than 1 mile from the recommended closing establishment.

In many instances only school lets, not community lets, are currently operating. In those instances where there are community lets these can be accommodated within the receiving establishment or elsewhere in the local area.

Over the earlier phases of the Education Estate Strategy (Pre 12 Strategy), many of the new schools and campuses created are a result of merging multiple schools and early years' centres and relocating to a single site. This has proved successful and has built on the strengths of existing communities and has begun to develop broader community identity. It is anticipated that, given time, a similar outcome can be achieved if these proposals are to proceed.

Issue: Road Safety

Road safety was also a major concern for many respondents.

Response

In advance of the proposals being approved for consultation Glasgow Community and Safety Services, in conjunction with officers of the Council, undertook road safety assessments for each individual proposal to identify safe walking routes for children accompanied by an adult.

In instances where children residing in the catchment area of the proposed closing primary school are more than 1 mile away from the proposed receiving primary school, the Council's current policy is to provide free dedicated transport to school.

During the consultation process, however, there were a number of proposals where there were legitimate concerns identified over road safety that did not meet the current 1 mile distance criteria. These concerns are highlighted within the individual consultation responses and a commitment should be given to reassess these routes with a view to providing free school transport on grounds of safety should the Council decide to proceed with these proposals.

With regard to early years' proposals similar concerns over road safety were highlighted.

Currently there is no statutory requirement to provide free transport based on distance entitlement criteria for early years' services.

Notwithstanding this it would be neither viable nor necessary given that:

- Early years' services are not organised on the basis of catchment areas in order to maximise choice for parents and carers according to their own needs and preferences.
- within any particular locality there are accessible early years' services through either Council managed centres or through partnership provision provided by the voluntary and / or private sectors.

It needs to be recognised that in a large, busy city setting road safety always carries a degree of risk. In making assessments of safe walking routes to primary schools and early years' centres the context is always of a child or children being accompanied by a responsible adult.

Issue: Educational Case

A large number of respondents were not convinced by the educational case put forward for the merger of primary schools and early years' establishments.

Response

Primary Schools

The merger of primary schools with relatively small pupil rolls would help to facilitate the development of the personality, talents and abilities of the children from both establishments in order that they achieve their full potential. This would be through larger and more flexible learning groups which allow for greater peer interaction and access to the full benefits of Curriculum for Excellence.

Larger schools also allow for greater flexibility in the deployment of all staff to meet the specific needs of children. They also provide an opportunity for sharing good practice across a greater number of staff. All the children would benefit from the combined staff expertise and range of learning and teaching methodologies in place at both closing and receiving schools.

The resultant larger senior management team would be able to monitor and support the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence within a quality learning and teaching environment.

Early years' establishments

Early years' centres within Glasgow are increasingly delivered within an integrated context where early childhood education and care are seen as interdependent and mutually supportive of the child and family.

Nationally, Scottish Ministers are clear within statutory guidance that local authorities should not view pre-school education in isolation but should fully link it to wider strategic goals to achieve better outcomes for all children and families. Commitment also exists to support parents to combine family responsibilities with work, study or training. Councils are required to consider the development of children's day-care alongside pre-school education in order to support parents in employment and to support parents who wish to enter training and employment.

It is in this context that the Early Childhood and Extended Services Strategy 2008-2013 has been agreed, with aspirations to develop flexible early years' services within local communities which enable parents and carers to access integrated education and childcare, 52 weeks a year from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m.

By merging early years' establishments this will enable children to engage and learn with a greater range of peers and to experience the added value of learning as part of larger groups of learners. Mergers will also provide greater flexibility to deploy staff with, potentially, a broader collective expertise that will be better able to support a range of styles and learning and teaching approaches to support children's learning.

Issue: Capacity

The capacity of proposed receiving establishments to accommodate all children was of concern to many respondents.

Response

Across the 9 primary school proposals the average occupancy is only 40% against the city average of 60%. This, coupled with an assessment of the 10 year forecast of child numbers taking into account potential housing developments in each of the localities, this demonstrates that each of the receiving establishments has ample capacity to accommodate the current combined and future projected pupil rolls.

With regard to the early years' proposals there has also been a detailed assessment of current and future demand for services tied into the overall capacity of each of the centres.

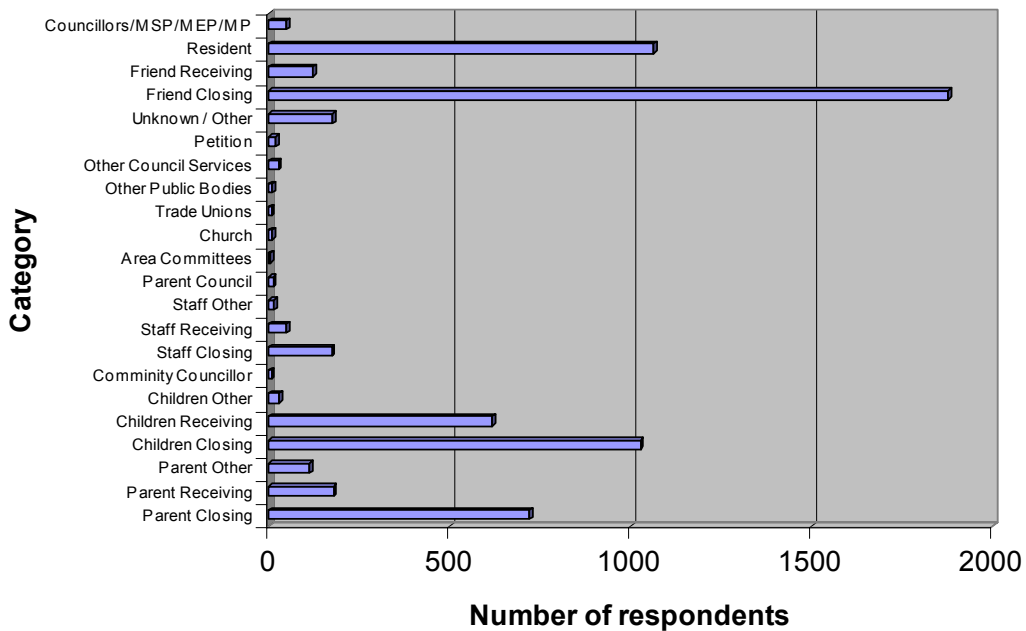
Early years' services are organised on an area basis - not on a catchment area basis. This provides parents and carers with maximum flexibility to choose an early years' place most suitable to their children's and their needs and circumstances. It is true that many early years' centres prove to be very popular and require to operate waiting lists as a consequence. These proposals will not have an adverse effect on the overall level of provision available within any particular

area. Nor, however, will they resolve over-subscription at popular early years' centres. The Early Childhood and Extended Services strategy is a five year strategy. It is currently in year one. Over the period of the strategy the service will work with other providers to extend and enhance services for the benefit of all children under five years and their parents / carers.

4.6 Table 3 provides an analysis of respondents in relation to the primary schools proposals

Table 3

Breakdown of Respondents to Primary Proposals

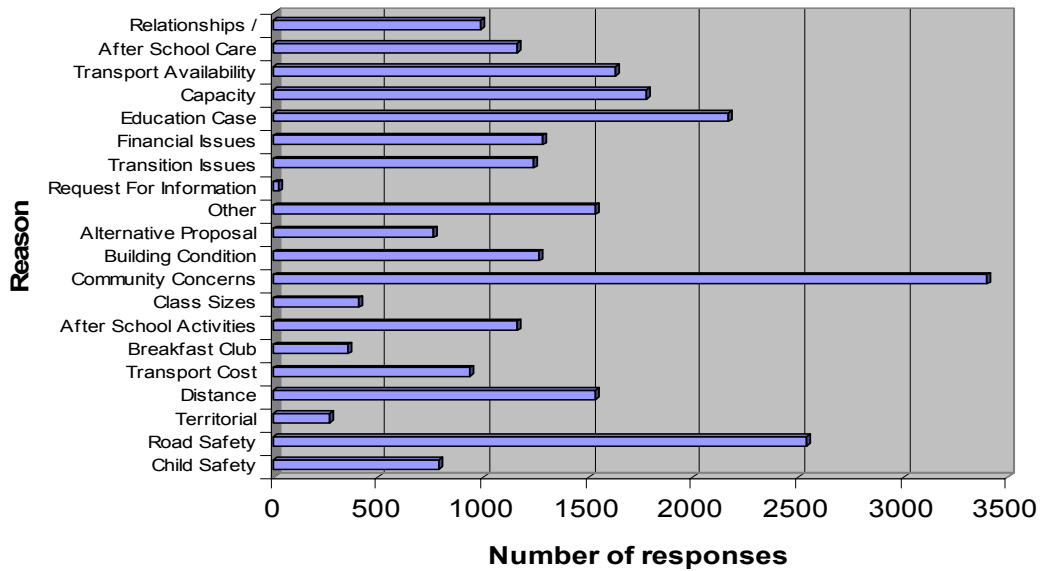


4.7 The comments made in paragraph 4.3 above require to be taken into account when considering the above table.

4.8 Table 4 below provides an analysis of the concerns and issues raised by respondents regarding the primary school proposals.

Table 4

Breakdown of reasons given against Primary proposals



4.9 The main reasons cited for being against the primary school proposals were, in rank order:

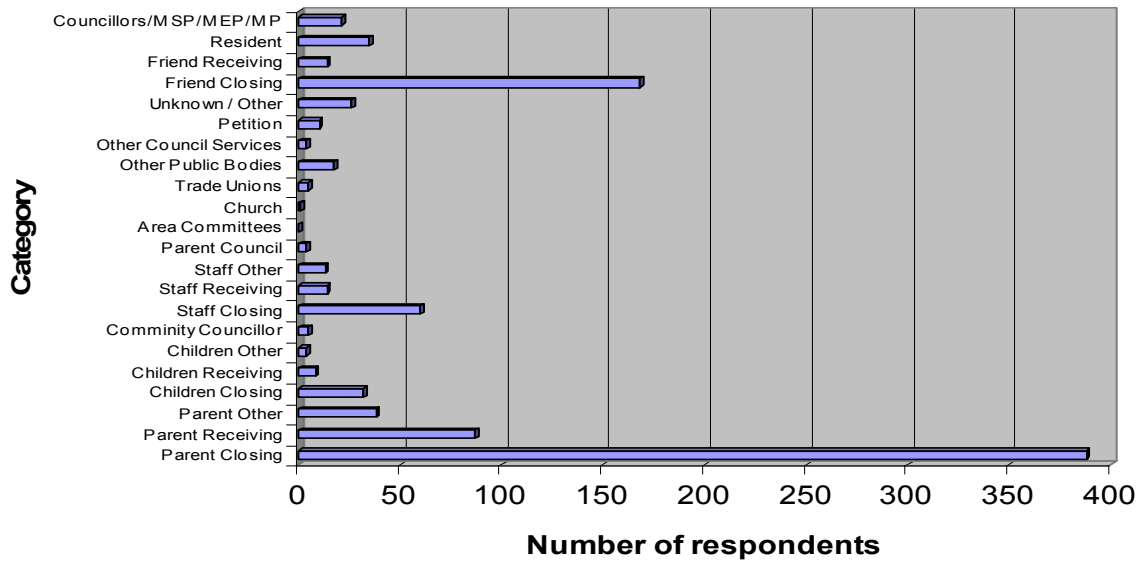
- Community concerns
- Road safety
- Educational case
- Capacity

4.10 The rank order of the main reasons against the primary school proposals are the same as the city wide analysis of all the proposals as described in paragraph 4.4 above.

4.11 Table 5 below provides an analysis of respondents in relation to the early years' proposals.

Table 5

Breakdown of Respondents to Early Years Proposals

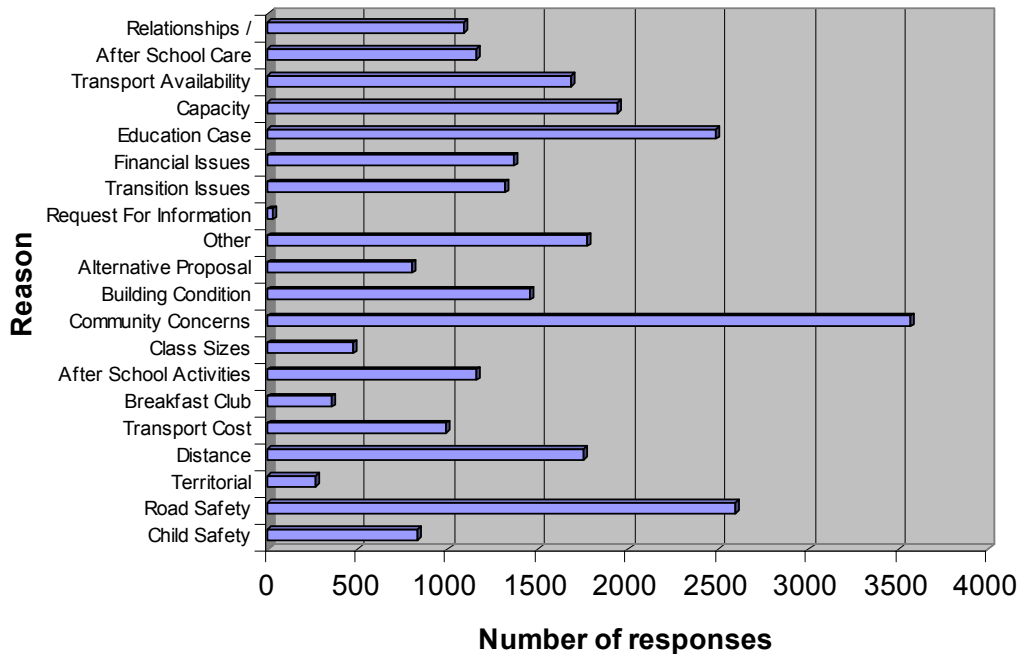


4.12 Again, analysis of this table should be read in conjunction with the comments made in paragraph 4.3 above.

4.13 Again the rank order of the main reasons against the early years' proposals is the same as both the city wide and primary school analysis. An analysis of all concerns and issues raised are detailed in Table 6 below.

Table 6

Breakdown of reasons given against Early Years proposals



4.14 Each of the 21 appendices to this report details the issues and responses pertinent to the individual proposal.

5. Conclusions from the Consultation Exercise

- 5.1 It is widely recognised that change is often not welcomed and it is clear from the overall findings of the consultation exercise that this is reflected in the responses to the merger proposals.
- 5.2 It is also clear that communities value the services they receive from the Council.
- 5.3 In bringing forward these proposals the Council aims to build on the value of services that communities articulated during the consultation process.
- 5.4 The view remains that there are clear educational and childcare benefits from proceeding with almost all of the proposals, either in full, or as amended, as a result of the consultation process.
- 5.5 In a number of the proposals, through the consultation process, some issues are identified where it is recommended that the proposals are either amended or indeed recommended not to proceed, details of which are provided below.

- 5.6 **Primary**
- proposals to proceed: 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12
 - proposals to be amended: 3 and 4
 - proposals not to proceed: 11
- 5.7 **Early Years**
- Proposals to proceed: 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 20
 - Proposals to be amended: 19 and 21
 - Proposals not to proceed: 13
- 5.8 The rationale for the recommendations in 5.6 and 5.7 is detailed in each of the appendices to this report.

6. Staffing Implications

- 6.1 The Executive Committee on 20 February, 2009, without prejudice to the final decisions regarding the merger proposals, agreed a Policy to manage the staffing implications associated with any approved proposal. This Policy had been developed in consultation with both teaching and support staff trade unions.
- 6.2 During the consultation period, meetings took place with all staff groups potentially affected by the proposals to explain the policy and to listen to their concerns and issues. The Service is currently meeting with individual members of staff to discuss their future options in line with the approved Staffing Policy should the recommendations be agreed by Council.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 The consultation process was conducted in full compliance with statutory requirements and, indeed, exceeded these requirements in many aspects.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 The initial estimate of the revenue savings associated with the 21 proposals was £2.29m in financial year 2009/2010 rising to £3.72m in financial year 2010/2011. Because a number of the proposals are recommended to be amended or withdrawn as a consequence of the findings of the consultation exercise the estimated revenue savings have been amended to £1.97m in 2009/2010 and £3.20m in 2010/2011.
- 8.2 The capital fund of £5.0m to carry out improvements and adaptations will remain intact and will be deployed in line with the profile contained in each of the proposals. Due to the alteration and withdrawal of a number of the proposals, this will provide for a modest contingency sum.
- 8.3 The costs of the consultation process have been contained within the £30,000 estimate provided for within the original report.

- 8.4 The transport costs for children who will meet the 1 mile distance eligibility criteria based on the recommendations contained in this report remains within the initial estimate of £250, 000.
- 8.5 It should be noted however, that a number of the proposals contain commitments to review safe walking routes to schools (less than 1 mile) and this may, in some instances, result in a recommendation to provide transport on some routes on grounds of safety. At this stage it is difficult to cost the impact of the outcome of this commitment but should be no more than £25,000.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 It is recommended that Council:
- Notes the robustness of the consultation exercise undertaken that went well beyond the current legal requirements;
 - Approves the recommendations for each of proposals 1 to 21 contained in the appendices to this report and summarised in Section 5.