

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

At a meeting of the **Cabinet** held in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Morpeth on Tuesday 2 December 2019 at 10.00am.

PRESENT

Councillor P.A. Jackson
(Leader of the Council, in the Chair)

CABINET MEMBERS

Daley, W.
Homer, C.R.
Jones, V.
Oliver, N.

Riddle, J.R.
Sanderson, H.G.H.
Wearmouth, R.

OTHER MEMBERS

Dodd, R.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Aviston, S.
Elsdon, A.
Hadfield, K.

Jackson, D.

Lally, D
Lancaster, H.
McEvoy-Carr, C.

O'Farrell, R.

Roll, J.

Head of School Organisation
Service Director: Finance
Committee Services and Scrutiny
Manager
Service Director: Education and
Skills
Chief Executive
Principal Solicitor
Executive Director of Adult Social
Care and Children's Services
Interim Executive Director,
Regeneration, Commercial and
Economy
Democratic Services Manager

Ch.'s Initials.....

2 members of the press/public were in attendance.

Before the start of the meeting members stood for a minute's silence as a mark of respect to those who had lost their lives in the recent tragic events at London Bridge.

61. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 12 November 2019, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

62. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Jones declared a personal interest in item 4(2) on the agenda having a family member of school age within Northumberland with SEND.

63. REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

(1) Outcomes of the Statutory Proposal on the Extension of the Age Range of West Woodburn First School

The report set out the outcomes of the formal statutory proposal to extend the age range of West Woodburn First School to become a primary school with effect from 1 September 2020, which had come about as a result of a request of the Governing Body of the River Rede Federation. Cabinet was asked to consider whether or not to approve the implementation of this proposal (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix A, along with the report of the FACS OSC circulated at the meeting).

Councillor Daley introduced the report and reminded members of some of the background to the current position. This had begun with a consultation on education in the west of the County and much work had been done in both Partnerships since then. A decision had been taken by Cabinet in July 2018 not to approve the extension of the age range at the school, which had allowed measures to be put in place through the formation of the River Rede Federation with Otterburn Primary School to address teaching capacity and financial issues.

A proposal had been put forward by the Governing Body to become a primary school and consultation had been carried out on that, with the recommendations now in front of members as a result. He stressed this issue was not about finances as the school had a healthy projected balance. The issue was about parental choice and falling birth rates in the area.

There was support from FACS Scrutiny for the proposals and he asked members to note particularly the work of the Headteacher, whose primary objective had always been the educational outcomes of her pupils.

Mrs Aviston highlighted the responses to the consultation detailed on pages 4-6 of the report. The response had not been as officers expected, and she reminded members of the statutory guidance regarding responses to give most weight to those from the people most affected. There had been 8 pupils on roll at the start of the consultation; now there were only 3. She also drew members' attention to recommendation 6(b) in the report and advised that the intention was to target specific groups in the consultation in order to be clear about future parents' views and also to look for alternative options.

Mrs Lancaster then gave detailed legal advice to members about the factors they needed to take into account in reaching their decision.

In response to questions from members regarding the timing and duration of the consultation, Mrs Aviston confirmed that it would be four weeks within term time and not during holidays, but would be done with no delay.

As the local member, Councillor Riddle supported the recommendation for further consultation and the timing of it.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the responses to the statutory proposal for West Woodburn First School published on 5 September 2019 be noted and taken into account in making the final decision on the proposal;
- (b) the implications of the proposal on pupils, parents, staff and the local community as set out in the Statutory Proposal and included with the Background Papers to the report be noted;
- (c) the current number of pupils on roll at the school as at September 2019 and the predicted number in future years be noted;
- (d) the implications for Home to School Transport (where relevant) of the statutory proposals as set out in the report be noted;
- (e) the Department for Education's (DfE) school organisation guidance 'Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools; statutory guidance for proposers and decision makers, October 2018' (noted at para. 7 and attached to the report at Appendix 3) be noted, and that it advised that in making its final decision, Cabinet was able to:

- reject the proposal (see Recommendation 6);
 - approve the proposal without modification;
 - approve the proposal with modifications, having consulted the Governing Body; or
 - approve the proposal, with or without modification - subject to certain conditions (such as the granting of planning permission) being met;
- (f) in the light of the guidance in recommendation 5 above and the inconclusive outcomes of the statutory consultation highlighted at para. 5, Cabinet:
- a) rejects the proposal to extend the age range of West Woodburn First School from an age 4-9 first school to an age 4-11 primary school with effect from 1 September 2020;
 - b) approves a four-week informal consultation with stakeholders on alternative options for West Woodburn First School, including whether the school should close;
- (g) the report of the FACS OSC be noted.

(2) The Development of Additionally Resourced Provision for Pupils with SEND in Northumberland

The report set out a proposal to develop Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP) in mainstreams schools in order to offer an additional tier of provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix B, along with the report of the FACS OSC circulated at the meeting).

Councillor Daley welcomed this report. 21 expressions of interest had been received resulting in the additional provision of 18 places in two schools within the Seaton Valley partnership pilot area. This would build on the 82 places already provided in the last two years and the pilot would be used to drive forward SEND support in the future.

Funding available from Additional Resource Provision in the Berwick area which was not being utilised would be used to support this proposal, and discussions were ongoing about the best fit for that area in terms of alternative provision. Mrs Aviston added that the project would attract capital investment via grant funding for both schools.

The Leader reported that FACS OSC had supported the report, adding that SEND demand was increasing rapidly, and the more that need could be met locally, the better.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Cabinet approve the establishment of two Additionally Resourced Provisions at Seaton Sluice First School and Astley High School for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, with the expectation that pupil admissions will begin in the Spring Term 2020;
- (b) it be noted that officers will evaluate the pilot projects with the intention of carrying out further work with schools to determine the need for Additionally Resourced Provision across the whole County;
- (c) the decommissioning of existing ARP places within the Berwick Partnership be noted;
- (d) the capital investment of £253k to create eight places at Seaton Sluice First School and ten places at Astley High School be approved. The projects will be funded from the balance of £648k Special Provision Capital grant funding received from central government to create additional capacity for pupils with SEND; and
- (e) the report of the FACS OSC be noted.

(3) Key Education Outcomes - 2018-19 Academic Year

The report advised Cabinet of the education outcomes for Northumberland as published in the DfE performance tables (copy attached to the signed minutes as Appendix C, along with the report of the FACS OSC circulated at the meeting).

Councillor Daley highlighted the main points of the report, adding that all of this information was publicly available on the DfE website. The results were very pleasing to see:-

- the Northumberland GLD average was 3% above the national average.
- 84% of pupils had passed the Phonics screening check which was 2.4% above the national average
- KS1 - Northumberland was above the national average overall though there was a wide variation between some schools which was being addressed
- KS2 - Outcomes had risen for maths, reading, writing and maths combined. Northumberland was now above the national averages in all subjects. A small number of larger schools were underperforming at KS2
- Disadvantaged Pupils in Primary- gaps had closed in Early Years
- and in KS2 maths, but remained static in KS2 reading and writing, and had grown over time in KS1.
- Attainment 8 - Five schools were above the National Average
- Progress 8 - Three schools Progress 8 scores were highlighted as Well Below Average and more needed to be done in this area, though this issue was a national one.

- In 2017, for both Attainment 8 and Progress 8, Northumberland was below the national average and ranked 5th out of the 12 North East Local Authorities. In 2018, the Authority had moved to 3rd for Average Attainment 8 and 2nd for Progress 8. In 2019, Northumberland was 2nd in the North East for Attainment 8 and 1st for Progress 8. This was due to hard work, commitment and leadership, though he acknowledged more work needed to be done in some areas and he urged members to work together to improve educational performance across all types of schools.

Mr Jackson cautioned that the GCSE data was still to be formally validated and there was some work to be done on those pupils who were not achieving the national average to find out where they were. However, it was clear that investment in schools and in a strong school improvement team was paying off, and the aim was to be in the top 25% nationally.

The Leader commented that he had been shocked to learn of the Authority's position in national performance figures. However, this was now much improved and his aim also was to be in the top 25%, and to have all Northumberland schools rated as either good or outstanding. Mrs McEvoy-Carr reminded members about additional capacity being provided in particular areas where performance was a concern.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the contents of the report be noted; and
- (b) the report of the FACS OSC be noted.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....