



Northumberland County Council

CABINET

Date: 09 JULY 2019

Update of School Organisation Plan and other school organisation matters

Report of Cath McEvoy-Carr, Executive Director of Children's Services

Cabinet Member: Councillor Wayne Daley, Children's Services

Report prepared by Sue Aviston, Head of School Organisation and Resources

Purpose of report

In June 2018, Cabinet approved the publication of the School Organisation Plan 2018-2021 for Northumberland. It was agreed that the plan would be subject to an update on an annual basis in order to include the latest data and information on schools relevant to school place planning, and Cabinet are now asked to approve the updated version of the plan for publication.

This report also sets out other school organisation matters requiring Cabinet approval. These relate to:

- following completion of informal consultation approved by Cabinet in February 2019, a request for approval to publish a statutory proposal to make permanent the expansion of the capacities at Whytrig Middle School in the Seaton Valley Partnership, and Horton Grange and New Delaval Primary Schools in the Blyth and Bede Partnerships;
- The request from the federated Governing Body of Otterburn First and West Woodburn First Schools, to expand the age range of West Woodburn First school to a 4-11 primary school. If approved this would result in the publication of a statutory proposal to expand the age range of West Woodburn First School in the Haydon Bridge Partnership following extensive informal and formal consultation on the structure and management of the school in 2018 and early 2019;
- The request of the Governing Body of Mowbray Primary School, to carry out consultation in line with the Admissions Code on a proposal to reduce the Planned Admission Number (PAN) of Mowbray Primary School in the Bedlington Partnership from 45 to 30 with effect from September 2020 as a result of falling pupil numbers in the school's catchment area.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1) Note:

- that the School Organisation Plan 2018-2021 has been updated with the latest data and information for 2019, as agreed by Cabinet in June 2018, to reflect changed data and school circumstances over the last 12 months and known changes in the near future.
- that the updated School Organisation Plan will be circulated to schools and other partners for comment before publication in September 2019 if approved;
- the feedback received from the informal consultation on the proposals to make permanent the expansion of the capacity of the buildings at Whytrig Middle School and Horton Grange and New Delaval Primary Schools;
- that the request submitted by the Federated Governing Body of Otterburn and West Woodburn First Schools for Cabinet for approval to publish a proposal to expand the age range of West Woodburn First School would align the school with the primary/secondary system that will be prevalent in the Haydon Bridge Partnership from September 2019.
- that the request of the Governing Body of Mowbray First School for Cabinet approval to consult on the reduction of its PAN has arisen as a result of continuing falling pupil numbers in the school catchment area.

2) Approve:

- the publication of the updated School Organisation Plan 2018-2021 in September 2019 (subject to comment as noted in Recommendation 1);
- the publication of statutory proposals to make permanent the expansion of the school building capacities at Whytrig Middle School, Horton Grange Primary and New Delaval Primary Schools;
- the publication of a statutory proposal to expand 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 September 2020 to bring it into line with the prevalent primary/secondary system in place across the Haydon Bridge Partnership from September 2019.
- the commencement of consultation in line with the Admissions Code 2014 on a proposal to reduce the PAN of Mowbray Primary School in the Bedlington Partnership from 45 to 30, to take effect from September 2020.

Key issues

School Organisation Plan

1. It is not a statutory requirement for local authorities to publish a School Organisation Plan. However, the publication of the School Organisation Plan 2018-2021 for Northumberland was approved by Cabinet in June 2019 in order to bring together key school place planning data and information in one document. The document assists schools, parents and partners to understand how the availability of school places in the county are monitored, how the need for additional school places is

identified and, where necessary, how additional places may be delivered and funded within relevant school partnerships.

2. The capacity and pupil forecasting information set out in the School Organisation Plan is also required by the DfE on an annual basis through their school place data collection process (SCAP) in any event, and is used to inform the need for places across the country and the allocation of Basic Need capital funding.
3. Cabinet approved that the School Organisation Plan 2018-2021 should be updated on an annual basis to reflect new data or information relating to school circumstances, e.g. school reorganisations, conversions to academy status, mergers and closures. The updated version of the plan for 2019 is provided as Appendix 1 of this report and can be accessed separately via the link provided in the Appendices list . It sets out the context of Northumberland with regard to its size, demographics and issues related to rurality. It also provides information regarding schools included within each partnership and where additional school places will be required within the pupil forecast period, currently up to 2027.
4. Cabinet is therefore requested to approve the publication of the updated School Organisation Plan 2018-21 in July 2019, subject to any comments from schools and partners.

Outcomes of informal consultation on the permanent building expansions at Whytrig Middle School, Horton Grange Primary School New Delaval Primary School, and request for approval to publish statutory proposals

5. Local authorities have a statutory duty under Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 to provide sufficient school places for all pupils of a statutory age. In February 2019, Cabinet approved the commencement of informal consultation to make permanent the expansion of the capacity of the buildings at Horton Grange Primary, New Delaval Primary and Whytrig Community Middle Schools. The PANs at these schools had been increased in September 2018 to reflect the growing number of children in the catchment areas of these schools. The latest GP Birth data indicates that these growing pupil numbers will remain consistent for the foreseeable future and therefore there is a need to formally make permanent the temporary arrangements with the permanent expansion of the capacity at these schools, hence the request to Cabinet to commence informal consultation.
6. The consultations commenced on 25 February for 3 weeks. Consultation documents, together with electronic feedback forms, were produced and published on the Council's website and the schools were requested to circulate the links to these documents to all parents, staff and Governors of their schools on behalf of the Council. Other key stakeholders were informed of the consultations by the Council and invited to respond; these stakeholders are set out in the Consultee Register at Appendix 2a and 2b of this report. A public event was held at Whytrig Middle on 6 March, at Horton Grange Primary on 11 March and at New Delaval Primary on 14 March. These meetings attracted a very small number of staff and parents, indicating that, as had been predicted, the proposals were non-contentious in the eyes of staff and parents.

7. Responses received via the electronic response form were likewise very small in number as follows:
- 3 responses were received in relation to the Horton Grange expansion, including from the headteacher, a staff member and a parent. All 3 responses were in support of the expansion.
 - 9 responses were received in relation to the Whytrig expansion, including from the head of school, another member of staff, 6 parents and a member of staff from another school. All but one of the responses was in support of the expansion. The concerns raised by the consultee who was not in support were around the amount of space available for Whytrig pupils on the Astley site; they felt more space should be allocated to these pupils and that there were concerned there could be a negative impact on their educational experience and standards.
 - No responses via the electronic response form were received from New Delaval Primary consultees.
8. Four additional classrooms will be added to the accommodation at Horton Grange Primary and 3 additional classrooms will be added to New Delaval Primary to accommodate the predicted increase in pupil numbers over the coming years. Two modular classrooms have already been added to the accommodation at Whytrig Middle and another, with another 2 classroom modular building to be added at some point in the future should it be required. The additional accommodation required at these sites will be resourced through the Council's Basic Need funding grant from the DfE which is specifically allocated to local authorities to assist with pupil growth and the costs are as set out in the table below:

School	Description	Costs (£m)
Horton Grange Primary	4 standard classrooms	2.058
New Delaval Primary	3 standard classrooms	1.049
Whytrig Community Middle	Up to 4 classrooms in modular form	(upto) 0.672

9. In light of the feedback from informal consultation and the need to make permanent the planned expansions to the buildings of Horton Grange and New Delaval Primary Schools and Whytrig Middle School, Cabinet is asked to approve the publication of a formal statutory proposal on 13 June. The publication of the statutory proposal would open a 4 week formal representation period during which time any interested party would be able to submit a representation to the Council either in favour of the proposal or objecting to it. Thereafter, Cabinet would need to consider the outcomes of the statutory representation period and decide whether or to implement the proposal as published or with some modifications, or whether to reject the proposal within 2 months of the date of publication of the formal proposal i.e. on or before 8 August 2019.

Proposal to extend the age range of West Woodburn First School

10. Between 15 January and 2 February 2018 and then 19 February and 9 April 2018, informal consultation was undertaken in the Haydon Bridge and Hexham Partnerships on proposals for school reorganisation. Subsequently, Cabinet approved the publication of a Statutory Proposal to close Bellingham Middle School in August 2019 and to extend the age ranges of the remaining maintained first schools in the partnership, including West Woodburn First School, from September 2019.
11. However, during the statutory consultation period, information arose on issues that caused concern on whether or not West Woodburn First School could become a viable primary school at that point. Pupil numbers at the school had fallen and no children were due to start in Reception in September 2018. While small numbers on roll is common in rural schools, the situation for West Woodburn was of more concern as the school's 3 year budget forecast was under significant pressure. Furthermore, the incumbent Governing Body at that time indicated that it was their preference to remain a first school. Officers therefore recommended that West Woodburn should remain as a first school at that time so that further exploratory work could be undertaken during the Autumn Term 2018 to investigate and identify what arrangements could be put in place at the school to provide additional capacity and reduce costs.
12. From Autumn 2018, the headteacher at Otterburn First School provided oversight and leadership capacity at West Woodburn. Subsequently, the two Governing Bodies at the school carried out consultation on forming a federated Governing Body with a view to providing improved financial stability and educational continuity for children in Years 5 and 6. While some parents did not support the proposal, in March the two Governing Bodies decided it would be in the best educational interests of the pupils at West Woodburn to federate with Otterburn First School. This was on the basis that there would be better financial monitoring and control at the school and there would be enhanced educational provision. This will now include the creation of a Deputy Headteacher to support the Executive Headteacher who will work across both schools to ensure consistent leadership capacity. The pupil numbers currently predicted to be on roll at the school for September 2019 are 6; this number includes a child now joining the school in Reception. The number of children living in the catchment area that could join the school in future years are as follows:

Potential Reception 2020	Potential Reception 2021	Potential Reception 2022
2	5	4

13. From September 2019, the remaining maintained first schools in the Haydon Bridge Partnership will become primaries in a phased way, by retaining their current Year 4 pupils into Year 5. Wise Academies Trust has also been approved (subject to the completion of a listening period in May 2019) to close Haltwhistle Middle Academy in August 2019 and extend the age range of Haltwhistle First Academy to become a primary from September 2019. Therefore, with the exception of Bellingham Middle School (noting Cabinet's decision to close the school in September 2019 was

overturned by the School's Adjudicator) and West Woodburn First School, all schools in the Haydon Bridge Partnership will be organised within the primary/secondary structure. The Federated Governing Body of Otterburn and West Woodburn now feels that, having placed West Woodburn in a more financially stable and educationally viable position, it would be better for the school to be organised as a primary school in order to benefit from the clear educational pathway that will be established across the partnership from September 2019 onwards. The Governing Body has now written to the Council to request that statutory consultation be approved to take place to reorganise West Woodburn to become a primary school in line with all other schools in the Haydon Bridge Partnership (with the exception of Bellingham Middle School).

14. As stated earlier, informal and formal consultation on reorganisation was undertaken in the Haydon Bridge Partnership in 2018 and parents of pupils in West Woodburn have subsequently been consulted on the federation proposals between Otterburn and West Woodburn. The proposed timeline for reorganisation of the school would be as follows:

November 2019

- parents wishing to apply for a place for their child in Reception at West Woodburn for September 2020 will be able to apply as usual but will be aware that the school will become a primary school from that date.

September 2020

- Children on roll in Year 4 at West Woodburn First School in August 2020 would remain at the school as Year 5, or would transfer to another school subject to parental preference;

September 2021

- Children on roll in Year 5 at West Woodburn Primary School in August 2021 would remain at the school as Year 6, or would transfer to another school subject to parental preference;

September 2022

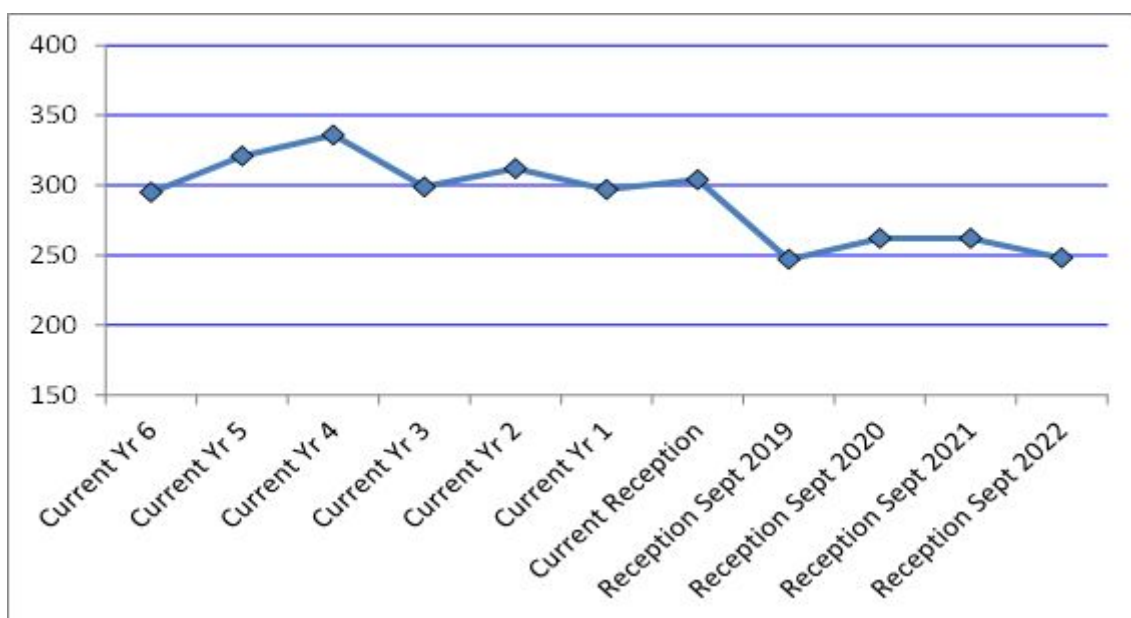
- Children on roll in Year 6 at West Woodburn Primary School in August 2022 would transfer to Haydon Bridge High School as Year 7, or would transfer to another school subject to parental preference;

15. Cabinet is therefore requested to approve the publication of a statutory proposal on 5 September 2019 to extend the age range of West Woodburn First School from an age 4 to 9 first school to an age 4 to 11 primary school with effect from 1 September 2020.

Proposed to reduce the PAN of Mowbray Primary School

16. Mowbray Primary School is a 1.5 form entry (45 place per year group) school in the Bedlington Partnership. Birth rates across the partnership have been steadily declining for a number of years, as evidenced by the following graph;

**Number of children living in Bedlington up to Year 6
(as registered with GPs at Birth)**



17. As a consequence of the oversupply of places due to falling numbers, parents requiring places in schools in the Bedlington Partnership for their children at the primary/first school phase are able to have a choice of schools, and often express a preference for schools that are not their child's catchment or even nearest school.
18. Predicted numbers for Mowbray have not been much above 30 per year group for a number of years, but predicted numbers for children living in the catchment who will be entering the Reception in September 2019 to September 2022 (which is as far forward as can be currently forecast) indicate that the numbers on roll will be significantly below 30 per year group. It is probable that the issue with surplus places in Bedlington Partnership will continue into the future given that an additional 210 places will be provided as a result of Meadowdale Academy converting to become a primary school. The Governing Body and Headteacher at Mowbray have found that with numbers much less than 45 in each cohort, it is becoming increasingly difficult to manage the school financially in relation to getting the right balance of teaching and support staff. Therefore, in the light of falling pupil numbers in the catchment, the Governing Body believes that a PAN of 30 would enable the school to more effectively plan the delivery of education in the school.
19. Cabinet is therefore requested to approve a consultation on the reduction of the PAN of Mowbray Primary School into Reception from 45 to 30 effective from 2020. This consultation would need to be in line with the requirements set out in the Admissions Code 2014. Should the results of consultation support the proposal, the Council would need to apply to the School's Adjudicator for a variation to the admission arrangements for Mowbray, including the rationale for the variation and the results of the consultation, given that the PANs for entry into schools in Northumberland in September 2020 have already been agreed.

20. Should the School's Adjudicator support the proposal, officers would need to publicise the change to ensure that parents applying this Autumn for a place at the school in September 2020 were aware of it.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services, 14 June 2018

Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services, 10 July 2018

IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE REPORT

Policy:	The publication of the updated School Organisation Plan and the proposals for Horton Grange Primary, New Delaval Primary, Whytrig Middle, West Woodburn First and Mowbray Primary Schools are consistent with the Council's corporate policy "We want you to achieve and realise your potential".
Finance and value for money	The cost of any additional staff required within the schools will be funded through the schools delegated budgets. The cost of the additional classrooms noted in point 8 will be funded from the Basic Needs capital grant, which is allocated within the MTFP.
Human Resources:	There may be a need for the respective Governing Bodies of the schools with increasing pupil numbers to employ additional staff in future years, Conversely, Mowbray Primary School may have to reduce staffing numbers over time in light of falling pupil numbers.
Property	Refer to 'Finance and value for money' above.
Equalities	Should Cabinet approve the publication of the updated School Organisation Plan, the Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried updated concurrently with the circulation of the plan to schools. Should Cabinet approve the publication of Statutory Proposals for Whytrig Middle and New Delaval and Horton Grange Primary Schools, an EIA would be completed concurrent with the statutory period and would be included in the final report for Cabinet in September 2019. Should Cabinet approve the publication of Statutory Proposal for West Woodburn First School, an EIA would be completed concurrent with the statutory period and would be included in the final report for Cabinet in November 2019.
Risk Assessment	Not applicable

Carbon Reduction	It is not envisaged that this proposal will have a significant positive or negative impact on carbon reduction.
Crime & Disorder	This report has considered Section 17 (CDA) and the duty it imposes and there are no implications arising from it.
Customer Considerations:	The proposals set out in this report are based on the best educational interests of children and young people in Northumberland.
Consultation	This report has been considered by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Chief Legal Officer.
Wards	All

Report sign off.

	Full name of officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Liam Henry
Interim Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Annabel Scholes
Relevant Executive Director	Cath McEvoy-Carr
Chief Executive	
Portfolio Holder(s)	Wayne Daley

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - [School Organisation Plan](#)

Appendix 2a - Consultation Register; Horton Grange and New Delaval

Appendix 2b - Consultation Register; Whytrig Middle School

Appendix 2a - Horton Grange and New Delaval Primary Schools Consultation Register

1. All parents with pupils on roll at the schools
2. All Staff of the schools
3. All Governors of the schools
4. All other headteachers and Chairs of Governors of schools in the Blyth and Bede Partnerships
5. Blyth Town Council
6. Unions
7. All early years providers in the Blyth area
8. Local MP
9. Church of England Diocese
10. Roman Catholic Diocese

Appendix 2a - Whytrig Middle School Consultation Register

1. All parents with pupils on roll at the school
2. All Staff of the school
3. All Governors of the school
4. All headteachers and Chairs of Governors of schools in the Seaton Valley Partnership
5. Seaton Valley Community Council
6. Unions
7. All early years providers in the Seaton Valley Area
8. Local MP
9. Church of England Diocese
10. Roman Catholic Diocese