

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a virtual meeting of the **Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Tuesday 12 May 2020 at 10.30 am**

PRESENT

Councillor G Renner-Thompson
(Chair in the Chair)

COUNCILLORS

Campbell D
Cessford T
Lang J

Stewart G
Stow K
Swinburn M

CHURCH REPRESENTATIVES

Hodgson A
Lennox D

Rickeard P

TEACHER UNION REPRESENTATIVES

Parkin J

OFFICERS

Angus C
Aviston S
Jackson D
Lancaster H
Little L
McEvoy-Carr C

Scrutiny Officer
Head of School Organisation & Resources
Service Director, Education & Skills
Principal Solicitor
Democratic Services Officer
Executive Director of Adult Social Care &
Children's Services

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor W Daley, Cabinet Member for Children's Services

72. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dickinson, Dunn and Wallace along with S Payne and J Sanderson.

PRE-SCRUTINY OF CABINET REPORT

73. REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Outcomes of statutory consultation on a proposal to close West Woodburn First School

The report attached to the signed minutes outlined the results of the statutory consultation process undertaken by the Council in relation to the proposed closure of West Woodburn First School with effect from 31 August 2020. This consultation had come about as the school currently had no pupils on roll and had received no applications for a place in reception class in september 2020. The Head of School Organisation and Resources provided an introduction to the report for the Committee in which she highlighted that the school was designated as a Rural Primary School within the Department of Education's List of Designated Rural Schools 2019 and outlined the five additional tests which must be completed when proposing the closure of a Rural School. There had been one representation received within the statutory period of four weeks from a member of the public who was neither a governor, parent of a child, nor a member of staff in any of school in the Haydon Bridge Partnership.

Councillor W Daley, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Services was in attendance to ascertain the views of the Committee prior to the report being considered by Cabinet. He requested clarification from the Principal Solicitor regarding a typographical error in the last paragraph of the statutory proposal which had been highlighted by the respondent, whereby it inadvertently stated that the school was to extend its age range rather than close. The Principal Solicitor advised that she agreed with the commentary against point 8 of the response as outlined on page 10 of the report, that it had clearly been set out that the proposal was to close West Woodburn First School with effect from 31 August 2020 throughout the statutory proposal and had only made this one reference at the end. She advised that whilst there was always scope to be challenged on a decision, the prospect of this being a factor would be very slim as it was clearly a typographical error.

In response to a question regarding the future use of the estate, it was confirmed that there were no immediate plans for its use and whilst there currently had been no interest in utilising the existing building for community use, any views of the community would be taken into consideration in the future.

The Committee in coming to their conclusion advised that points had been well clarified and the points regarding the rural nature of the school had been noted.

RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised that this Committee supported the recommendations as outlined in the report.

74. URGENT BUSINESS

As this was the first meeting of this Committee since it was announced that schools were to close on 21 March 2020 due to the Covid 19 lockdown, Councillor Daley wished to place on record on behalf of himself and the Council, thanks and appreciation to all the staff within schools and other educational settings who had continued to work to keep these services open for the children of key workers and vulnerable children in the County. At the time of the meeting there were 147 schools/settings open with 1376 pupils in attendance with over 1400 pupils attending the previous week. This was a vital service that was being provided and all were doing a phenomenal job.

The Chair reiterated those thanks and stated that this Committee would look forward to receiving detailed reports on the services that had been provided at a suitable time in the future.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that there was a meeting of all of the Scrutiny Chairs on 14 May 2020 to discuss future meetings and details of these would be provided to Members as soon as possible.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____