



Northumberland County Council

Families and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Date: 4 March 2021

Update of School Organisation Plan 2018-2021

Report of Cath McEvoy-Carr, Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services

Cabinet Member: Councillor Guy Renner-Thompson, Children's Services

Purpose of report

The School Organisation Plan 2018-2021 for Northumberland Cabinet was approved for publication by Cabinet in June 2018. 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. Families and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee are now asked to approve the final iteration of the current School Organisation Plan before a new version for 2021-2024 is produced in the summer term ready for Cabinet approval and subsequent publication in September 2021.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Families and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee:

1) Note:

- that the School Organisation Plan 2018-2021 has had a final update with the latest data and information on schools since the previous version from June 2019. This reflects changed data and school circumstances over the last 18 months and known changes in the near future.
- that the latest update to the School Organisation Plan has been delayed in order to prioritise the more urgent work with schools and academies that has arisen for the School Organisation and Resources team as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- that the updated School Organisation Plan will be circulated to schools and other partners for comment before publication in March 2021 if approved by Cabinet.
- A new School Organisation Plan for 2021-2014 will be produced in the summer term 2021 and will be brought to Cabinet for approval in September for subsequent publication.

Key issues

1. The first version of the current School Organisation Plan 2018-2021 was approved by Cabinet in June 2018 for the purpose of bringing together key school place planning data and information into one document for the benefit of schools, academies, officers and other interested parties. The first update of the plan was approved by Cabinet in June 2019 and this is the third and final update of this version of the School Organisation Plan.
2. While it is no longer a statutory requirement for local authorities to publish a School Organisation Plan, 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. It also provides information on changes to organisational structures, opening and closing of schools and capital works undertaken at schools and academies in the county.
3. 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. This is used to inform the need for places across the country and the allocation of Basic Need capital funding. Cabinet should note that the 2020 SCAP collection by DfE was cancelled as a result of the impact of COVID-19, DfE resources no doubt being redirected elsewhere at that point. However, there will be a SCAP collection in summer 2021.
4. 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.
5. Some key points to note in the updated School Organisation Plan are:
 - The number of schools and academies in the county is now 164 following the closure of West Woodburn First School in August 2020;
 - The number of academies in the county has increased to 48 from 40 at the last update; this will increase to 50 by April 2022 subject to no other conversions taking place in that period. Academies now make up to nearly 30% of the educational establishments (not including independent or FE) in the county.
 - There are 38,995 children and young people of statutory school age (Reception to Year 11) on roll in all types of schools (excluding Special and independents in Northumberland as at October 2020. This represents a fall of 2% compared to the previous year.
 - There are 17% surplus places in schools and academies overall in the county, although this masks a wide variation between school partnerships e.g. Seaton Valley Partnership has 9% surplus places overall, whereas Berwick Partnership has 34% overall. A strategic plan to manage surplus places more effectively is being developed by the School Organisation and Resources Team this academic year and will be subject to a further report.
 - The number of pupils with ASD and SEMH continues to rise in the county. Forecasting the number of pupils with SEND needs who will require places at

Special Schools to assist with planning for capital schemes is a key focus of the plan and methods for achieving this are set out in the document.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

Report of the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services, 9 July 2019

IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE REPORT

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| Policy: | The publication of the updated School Organisation Plan the Council's corporate policy "We want you to achieve and realise your potential". |
| Finance and value for money | There are no direct financial implications as a result of the School Organisation Plan. |
| Legal | There is no statutory requirement on local authorities to publish a school organisation plan |
| Human Resources: | There are no direct HR implications as a result of the School Organisation Plan. |
| Property | There are no direct property implications as a result of the School Organisation Plan. |
| 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. |
| 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. |

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| Health and Wellbeing | There are no direct implications for Health and Wellbeing as a result of the School Organisation Plan. |
| Wards | All |

CONSULTATION

Should Cabinet approve this iteration of the School Organisation Plan 2018/21, schools and academies will be invited to comment prior to its publication.

Report sign off.

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

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| Finance Officer | CH |
| Monitoring Officer/Legal | HL |
| Human Resources | N/A |
| Procurement | N/A |
| I.T. | N/A |
| Executive Director of Children's Services | CM |
| Portfolio Holder(s) | GTR |

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – School Organisation Plan Update January 2021