

Children and Young People's Services Select Committee

11th September 2019

West Sussex Education and Skills – School Effectiveness Strategy 2018 -2022 - Small Schools Assessment

Report by Director of Education and Skills

Summary

The West Sussex County Council School Effectiveness Strategy 2018-22 sets out the need for a diverse supply of strong schools across the county. It highlights that where schools are identified as being at risk, in terms of their viability to provide an effective and financially sustainable educational provision, options for change need to be considered.

A high level impact assessment has been undertaken to ascertain whether any schools may reasonably be considered to be at risk in relation to factors which represent indicators for viability and meet the case for consideration for change, namely merger, federation relocation or closure, when assessed against the Department for Education statutory guidance.

The next steps are to consider the impact assessment work related to the following schools and determine if we should undertake a consultation to see if specific proposals emerge that may lead to change at the following schools:-

- Clapham and Patching CE Primary School, Clapham, Worthing
- Compton and Upmarden CE Primary School, Compton, Chichester
- Rumboldswyke CE Infants School, Chichester
- Stedham Primary School, Stedham, Midhurst
- Warninglid Primary School, Warninglid, Haywards Heath

The focus for scrutiny

The Committee is asked to consider the attached draft Cabinet Member decision report and provide comment to the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills prior to the formal decision being taken.

Proposal

1. Background and Context

- 1.1 In October 2018 the school effectiveness strategy 2018 - 2022 was adopted by WSCC following public consultation. It set out the objectives for school organisation and the criteria against which schools should be assessed in

order to meet these objectives. Implementation of the strategy will help ensure that in West Sussex:

“Primary schools will be of a sufficient size to be viable in the future, offer a high quality and broad curriculum, attract pupils from the local community and provide strong outcomes for children”.

- 1.2 In 2018, the Small Schools Project identified 25 schools which met the criteria set out in the School Effectiveness Strategy and as a consequence are considered by WSCC as at risk. Discussions and workshops have been held with these schools (and others) to alert them to the issues and to encourage Due to specific circumstances, five of these “at risk” schools, have been the subject of an Impact Assessment, which was conducted between April and June 2019.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 That after considering the Impact Assessments, the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills is asked to approve the proposal to commence the consultation process on options (namely merger, federation, relocation or closure):

- Clapham and Patching CE Primary School, Clapham, Worthing
- Compton and Upmarden CE Primary School, Compton, Chichester
- Rumboldswyke CE Infants School, Chichester(merger, federation and relocation are not options for this school due to the OFSTED rating)
- Stedham Primary School, Stedham, Midhurst
- Warninglid Primary School, Warninglid, Haywards Heath.

3. Resources

- 3.1 A project team is being set up and funded from within the Education and skills budget. We will assess the potential costs that would arise to the County Council next year of implementing the chosen option for each of 5 schools following the consultation process.

Factors taken into account

4. Issues for consideration by the Select Committee

- 4.1 The Committee is asked to consider the attached draft Cabinet Member decision report, which has been informed by an Impact Assessment conducted between April and June 2019. Issues members may wish to explore include:

- a) The DfE guidance for “opening and closing maintained schools” (November 2018 p16) has a presumption against closure of rural schools. The guidance and consideration are set out in section 2.3 of the draft Cabinet Member decision report (Appendix A).

- b) In October 2018 the school effectiveness strategy 2018 - 2022 was adopted by West Sussex County Council following public consultation. The Strategy set out the criteria against which schools should be assessed in order to meet these objectives. An Impact Assessment was undertaken for each of the schools (except Rumboldswyke which is not a rural school) and the results are summarised in section 2.4 of the draft Cabinet Member decision report (Appendix A).
- c) A timetable is set out in section 2.5 of the draft Cabinet Member decision report (Appendix A).

5. Consultation

- 5.1 There is a need to conduct a consultation process on options to inform the Impact Assessments. The draft Cabinet Member decision report (Appendix A) proposal is to undertake such a consultation.

6. Risk Management Implications/Other Options Considered/Equality Duty/Social Value/Crime Disorder Implications/Human Rights Implications

- 6.1 These sub headings are addressed in the draft Cabinet Member decision report (Appendix A).

Paul Wagstaff
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Appendix A: Draft Cabinet Member Decision Report