



<u>Committee and Date</u>	<u>Item</u>
Cabinet	
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Consultation on Prescribed Alterations – Shropshire Hills Federation

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Summary

On 27 February 2019, the governing body of the Shropshire Hills Federation agreed to formally consult on the proposal to transfer provision for the education of the pupils at Stiperstones CE Primary School to the site of Norbury Primary School and Nursery, with the opportunity for parents to opt to have their children educated at the Federation’s other school, Chirbury CE Primary School. A statutory four-week consultation was undertaken between 12 March and 9 April 2019.

Under Department for Education statutory guidance for making significant changes to maintained schools (termed ‘prescribed alterations’) - including the transfer of education provision to a new site - a governing body can propose the transfer, but it is the local authority that is the decision-maker.

This report therefore details the outcomes from the Federation’s consultation and, based on these outcomes, the recommendation of the Director of Children’s Services to agree the prescribed alterations so that the governing body can proceed to implementation from January 2020.

Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- a. note the outcomes from the statutory consultation undertaken by the Shropshire Hills Federation
- b. agree to the prescribed alteration to transfer education provision from Stiperstones CE Primary to Norbury Primary from January 2020, with the option for parents to elect for their children to be educated at the Federation’s other site at Chirbury CE Primary.

REPORT

1. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 1.1 There are no identifiable risk management issues involved in this proposal. School places will be available at Norbury Primary for pupils from Stiperstones CE Primary, as well as Chirbury CE Primary for those parents who elect for this option. There are no known human rights issues resulting from this proposal.
- 1.2 The revised transport arrangements for the Stiperstones pupils may lead to some increase in traffic and carbon emissions in the area and may result in some congestion outside the Norbury Primary site at key times of the day.
- 1.3 The communities serving all of the three schools, together with those in neighbouring areas, have been given the opportunity to comment on the proposal as part of the statutory consultation process undertaken by the Shropshire Hills Federation in the Spring term.
- 1.4 In the context of the Department for Education statutory guidance *Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools*, the proposal is classified as a transfer to a new site, which applies when the main entrance of the proposed new site is more than two miles from the main entrance of the current school site. The main entrances for the sites at Chirbury (6.3 miles) and Norbury (5.0 miles) are more than two miles from the main entrance for the Stiperstones site.
- 1.5 The statutory guidance states that the local authority should decide on a proposal within two months otherwise it will fall to the Schools Adjudicator. There is no prescribed timescale for the implementation of the decision, though the Shropshire Hills Federation have made it clear that their intention is to complete the transfer of provision from January 2020.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 The majority of school revenue funding is pupil-led which means that the funding for the pupils transferred to Norbury Primary or Chirbury CE Primary will be retained within these schools or will follow any pupils whose parents elect to transfer to another Shropshire school. The local authority will continue to allocate funds to the three individual schools through the funding formula. The consolidation of provision from three school sites to two within the Federation will make the overall cost of provision more financially viable and sustainable.
- 2.2 The redistribution of income, which will largely be retained within the Federation, means that there is no direct saving to the local authority or to the overall Shropshire schools' budget. It is anticipated that the cost of transport will increase as a result of the proposal, which the

Federation has budgeted for, meaning that no costs will fall to the local authority for this provision.

- 2.3 The Federation is planning to expand provision at the Norbury site, with the majority of the required capital funding being met from other Federation resources and external grant funding. The local authority has earmarked around £75,000 in capital funding from the School Condition Allocation for a part of the project. The release of these funds is dependent on the Cabinet approval of the prescribed alteration and confirmation from the Federation of the securing of the external grants.

3. **Background**

- 3.1 Following a separate consultation in the summer of 2018, the Federation of the primary schools in Chirbury, Norbury and Stiperstones was approved and the Shropshire Hills Federation established in September 2018. This consultation made it clear that unless significant increases in school funding were identified by December 2018 to support provision at Stiperstones CE Primary, it was likely that provision would have to transfer to the primary school sites at Norbury or Chirbury, with parents having the option to choose. At the time, the majority of parents stated a preference for their children to transfer to the Norbury site, with a small number preferring Chirbury.
- 3.2 As the schools funding position has not improved, the governing body of the Shropshire Hills Federation agreed at a meeting on 27 February 2019, to undertake a statutory consultation on the transfer of provision from Stiperstones CE Primary to the Norbury Primary, with an option for parents to elect for their children to be educated at the other school in the Federation, Chirbury CE Primary.
- 3.3 The statutory process for significant changes in maintained schools – ‘prescribed alterations’ - requires a four-week representation stage or formal consultation period. The Federation undertook this consultation in the Spring term, between 12 March and 9 April 2019. The consultation document outlining the proposal, is appended to this report (Appendix A).
- 3.4 A broad range of strategies were employed to inform stakeholders of the consultation process and collect views, including: the publication of the consultation document, the posting of the document on the Federation’s website, and meetings with staff, governors and stakeholders (separate meetings were held at each of the Stiperstones and Norbury school sites).
- 3.3 The responses to the consultations have informed this report.

4. **Proposal**

- 4.1 The Federation's consultation proposal appended to this report details the reasons for the prescribed alteration, the expected benefits and specific information on a range of future operational issues that are relevant and impacted upon by the proposal.
- 4.2 The Federation leaders are clear that 'children have only one opportunity at education and deserve excellence' and that without 'making cuts to current provision, it would not be possible for education to remain as it is now'.
- 4.3 The Federation governing body has made it clear in the proposal document that this is not a proposal to close Stiperstones CE Primary. In the event that they do propose to formally close the school, a separate statutory consultation process will need to be initiated, for which the Council will be responsible for the final decision. In relation to this possible scenario, the appended proposal document states that whilst 'no assumptions should ever be made, it is the intention of governors to take further steps in the future to amalgamate Stiperstones CE Primary and Norbury Primary schools, forming a much stronger school, to secure outstanding education for future generations of children from Stiperstones, Snailbeach, Norbury and surrounding areas.'

5. **Consultation**

- 5.1 A number of meetings were held during the consultation period:
 - meeting with all staff from across the Federation schools on 18 March
 - drop in meeting with parents and the community at Stiperstones CE Primary on 19 March
 - drop in meeting with parents and the community at Norbury Primary on 20 MarchKey points raised and responded to at these meetings are appended to this report (Appendix B)
- 5.2 A total of 43 response forms were returned or email responses received, broken down as follows:
 - Stiperstones parents – 16 returns
 - Norbury parents – 12 returns
 - Stiperstones staff – 6 returns
 - Norbury staff – 3 returns
 - Hereford Diocese
 - Chirbury and Brompton Parish Council
 - Local primary schools – 3 returns
 - Other – 1 returnThe full set of responses are available in the Member's Library.
- 5.3 No major concerns were raised in these responses. One of the local primary schools wanted assurance that the additional provision at the Norbury site was not intended to grow further than what was planned or

that the Federation would not seek to attract additional numbers from neighbouring catchment areas. The planned expansion is meeting the requirements of the Federation's schools and does not impact on other schools.

- 5.4 Besides a number of queries on detail and specifics, for which response have been provided, the Federation governing body is satisfied that there are no objections to the proposal and are advising the local authority that they have unanimous support for the prescribed alteration.

6. **Decision Making**

- 6.1 As decision-maker, Cabinet has to be satisfied that the appropriate, fair and open local consultation and/or representation period has been carried out and that the Federation governing body has given full consideration to all the responses received. Officers in Learning & Skills are satisfied that this threshold has been met and so the Director of Children's Services is recommending that Cabinet agree to the proposed prescribed alteration detailed in this report.
- 6.2 Within one week of Cabinet making a decision, the local authority must publish their decision, and the reasons for it, on the Federation's website and send copies to:
- the Schools Adjudicator
 - the Federation governing body
 - the trustees of the Stiperstones CE Primary
 - Hereford Diocese, and
 - any other appropriate body deemed appropriate.

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)
Cllr Ed Potter
Local Member
Cllr Heather Kidd – Chirbury & Worthen
Cllr Jonny Keeley – Bishop's Castle
Appendices
Appendix A: Consultation document outlining the proposal to make a prescribed alteration to Stiperstones CE Primary School
Appendix B: Meetings held during the consultation and key points raised