

Procedure for School Organisation Proposals

Stage 1: The Corporate Director (Children and Young People's Services) will consult with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Young People on the necessity for any changes in school organisation in accordance with the County Council's School Organisation Policy. The Corporate Director commissions an officer investigation of numbers for schools identified for possible review.

Stage 2: The investigation involves checking the Directorate's information related to identified schools. Headteachers of schools identified for investigation are advised that this is a professional matter and should be treated on a confidential basis. A separate letter is also sent to individual Governors and the local County Councillor at this stage informing them that this investigation is being undertaken. **This information should be treated as confidential.** If it was openly made known at this stage that a school was under investigation this could, in fact, act against the school in that parents might place their children elsewhere if it were widely known that the school's future was uncertain.

Stage 3: Following the investigation a report is made to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services. If the decision is to take no action this is notified in confidence to the Headteacher, governors and the local County Councillor.

Stage 4: If a formal review is proposed then a report is made to Cabinet. A copy of the report is sent to the Governors and Headteacher of any school recommended for review, the local MP and other interested parties at the same time as the agenda is despatched to elected Members. The Headteacher and Chairman of the Governing Body of any school in question will be notified in advance of the publication of the cabinet papers to press and public.

Stage 5: If Cabinet decides that formal consideration will be given to the closure of any school then a public consultation with various bodies is undertaken:

Governors and Parents: An opportunity will be given for governors, parents and members of the public to meet with senior Councillors and County Council officers to discuss any issues and questions on the proposals. Typically, there will be separate arrangements made for meeting with governors, to those arrangements made for parents and the public.

Governors, parents and members of the public are invited to put their views in writing.

Staff: A meeting will be held with staff to discuss any views or concerns they might have.

Local Councils: District and Parish Councils in the area are informed of the consideration being given and are asked for their official views on any proposal.

Stage 6: At the earliest convenient meeting of Cabinet the results of the consultation are reported. Any written statements that have been received e.g. from Governors, parents or other bodies are made available to members in unedited form.

Cabinet will consider the recommendation put to them by the Corporate Director for Children and Young People's Services.

Stage 7: Should Cabinet agree to pursue any proposals for school closure, this will lead to the issue of formal Public Notices detailing the proposals. The Notices are “posted” in each area as well as appearing in the local press.

The Notice is valid for a period of six weeks from the date of issue. Within this timescale representations on the notice may be made in the manner detailed in the Notice.

Stage 8: Written representations on the Public Notice are received by the Corporate Director (Children & Young People’s Services). These representations, together with copies of previous comments received under Stage 5, the Authority’s comments and the recommendation of the Corporate Director, will be presented in a paper to Cabinet within two months of the date specified for objections to be received. If the recommendation is for closure and this is approved by Cabinet, the process of implementation by the date specified within the notices will commence subject to Stages 10 and 11. Any written statements that have been received e.g. from Governors, parents or other bodies will be made available for inspection by all County Councillors unedited.

Stage 9: In situations where no objections are received, a report noting this will be presented to Cabinet, setting out the arrangements for implementation.

Stage 10: If Cabinet fails to make a decision within two months of the end of the representation period, the proposals and any received representations (not subsequently withdrawn in writing) must be sent to the schools adjudicator for decision. The proposals must be sent within one week of the end of the two month period.

Stage 11: Where Cabinet has made a decision to implement a proposal, the following bodies may appeal to the schools adjudicator on the proposals:

- the local Church of England diocese;
- the Bishop of the local Roman Catholic diocese; and
- where the proposals are published by the local authority, the governors and trustees of the foundation or voluntary school that is proposed for closure.

Appeals must be submitted to the local authority within four weeks of the Cabinet decision. The proposals, comments and objections received and a copy of the Cabinet papers and minutes will be sent to the schools adjudicator within one week of any appeal being received. The schools adjudicator’s decision will normally be sent to all interested parties within six weeks of the papers being sent to the adjudicator’s office. The decision of the school’s adjudicator is binding on all parties.