

The full minute can be found on the county council website at:

<http://moderngov.ccc/documents/g7580/Printed%20minutes%2024th-Jul-2014%2010.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=1>

**52 PROPOSED CLOSURE OF SOUTHFIELD TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE AND STAINBURN SCHOOL AND SCIENCE COLLEGE AND THE PRESUMPTION OF A NEW ACADEMY IN WORKINGTON**

The Leader set out in detail the procedure to be followed in relation to the school organisation proposals below having regard to the Protocol adopted by Cabinet on 4 September 2007.

The Acting Corporate Director – Children’s Services set out the detail of statutory proposals for the closure of Southfield Technology College and Stainburn School and Science College on 31 December 2014 in order to establish a single 1,200 place secondary academy in Workington on 1 January 2015.

The report explained the background to the publication of these proposals and the outcome of the subsequent period of representation. It then went on to ask members to consider the approval of the proposal based upon all relevant factors as set out in the statutory guidance notes attached as Appendix A. Cabinet Members were advised of one representation had been made by the Chair of the Independent Executive Boards (IEBs) overseeing both the affected schools. The representation sought a delay in the implementation of the closure proposals and the consequent establishment of the replacement academy for reasons including the problem of establishing a single school based over two sites in the middle of an academic year and the associated budget and curriculum issues this would create. A delay until September 2015 would ease the transition and enable pupils to come together on one site at the start of a new academic year. There had been no requests to address Cabinet under public participation in relation to the proposals.

The Cabinet Member for Children’s Services confirmed that this proposal was the culmination of a long-established plan for education in Workington and the final step towards transforming secondary education in Workington. Cabinet support would enable the development of a single new, purpose-built, secondary school in the town to replace the two existing buildings. A single new larger school would support healthier budgets, greater stability in staffing, allow for a wider curriculum offer and support improved standards for the young people of Workington. The County Council’s long term aspirations to amalgamate the schools in a new build for Workington, was first put forward under the Building Schools for the Future programme, which unfortunately was not progressed by the incoming government in 2010. However, the new school would now be built by the government through the Priority Schools Building Programme. As is required by government this new school would be an academy and government would also decide which of the existing school sites the new school was to be built on. Any agreement to close the schools would be conditional on a funding agreement being

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## Cabinet meeting 24072014 – Extract of Minutes

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signed by the end of June 2015 between the DfE and the academy sponsor that will run the school.

Falling pupil numbers and resultant reduced budgets had made it extremely difficult to sustain two schools and high quality education. Both schools were placed in special measures by Ofsted following inspections in December 2013. The Cabinet Member welcomed the response of the IEBs seeking a delay in implementation to September 2015 in order to allow more time to manage the transition and considered that Cabinet should respect their professional judgement to avoid any additional disruption for pupils. She reminded Cabinet that following a rigorous selection process earlier this year the County Council had recommended the Lakes Academy Trust as the academy sponsor for the new school. The recommendation had been passed to the Secretary of State and the final decision on the selection of a sponsor rested with them and the decision was expected imminently.

Cabinet Members welcomed the proposal to accept the proposal put forward by the IEBs to delay the implementation to facilitate a smoother transition for pupils and staff.

The Cabinet Member set out the reasons for the proposed decision as below and subsequently moved the recommendations set out at paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2 of the report:

- The long-term aspiration to amalgamate schools in a new build for Workington
- Falling pupil numbers and resultant reduced budgets made it difficult to sustain two schools and high quality education
- A single, larger school would support healthier budgets, greater stability in staffing, allow for a wider curriculum offer and support improved standards for young people of Workington
- The local sponsor (subject to agreement by the Secretary of State) – Lakes Academy Trust – knows the area, the issues it faces, would be able to offer new opportunities for pupils, and continue the improvements already begun following Ofsted judgement in December 2013.
- Availability of funding for new build, predicated on amalgamation, from government's Priority Schools Building Programme; the County Council would be unable to provide funding itself for such a large project from its own resources

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In considering the decision on the proposal members had regard to the relevant DfE guidance and the factors set out at paragraphs 4.15-4.31 of the report.

The Interim Monitoring Officer confirmed that she was satisfied that all procedures had been followed correctly leading up to this stage and that the Cabinet were in a position to legally take a decision on these proposals.

The Leader seconded the recommendations and it was,

**RESOLVED,** that

- (1) the statutory proposals to close Southfield Technology College and Stainburn School and Science College be conditionally approved but with a modified implementation date of closure from 31 December 2014 to 31 August 2015, in line with the representation received from the Interim Executive Boards (IEBS) (see paragraph 4.32 and Appendix E);
- (2) it be noted, that approval of the proposals be conditional upon the signing, by 30 June 2015, of a funding agreement between the Secretary of State and an academy trust under section 1 of the Academies Act 2010 allowing the establishment of a 1,200 place Academy in Workington on 1 September 2015.