

Record of Delegated Executive Decision(s)

1. Name and Title of Decision Maker

Julie Firth, Director of Children's Services in consultation with Jon Ritchie, Director of Resources and Cllr Phillips, Cabinet Member for Education, Inclusion, Employment and Skills

2. Subject of decision

Strategic Education Review Update – Outcome of the pre-publication consultation in relation to the future of Monkseaton High School

On 9 September 2024, Cabinet authorised the commencement of an initial pre-publication consultation in relation to the future of Monkseaton High School. Cabinet also authorised the Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Director of Resources and the Cabinet Member for Education, Inclusion, Employment and Skills to:

- (i) consider the responses to the pre-publication consultation; and
- (ii) determine if there should be statutory consultation with schools, parents and other stakeholders in line with the Department for Education's statutory guidance on school closure proposals.

3. Details of any Conflict of Interest and any Dispensation granted in respect of such Interest

None

4. Executive summary (*taken from written report)

The purpose of this report is to inform the Director of Children's Services, the Director of Resources and the Cabinet Member for Education, Inclusion, Employment and Skills about the responses to the pre-publication consultation and allow them to determine if there should be statutory consultation with schools, parents and other stakeholders.

The pre-publication consultation took place for six weeks between 17 September and 30 October 2024 and was carried out in accordance with Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance.

The community has displayed real passion for their school. The Authority is very thankful for the time and effort taken so far by community members who have expressed their views as part of this process. The Authority is confident that a rigorous and robust consultation process was undertaken. The views expressed have been listened to and carefully considered. The main themes from the consultation can be seen below with all responses to the consultation shared in the Appendices.

During the period of pre-publication consultation, no viable alternatives or options were presented, though all were carefully considered. The proposals that came forward have either been previously explored and ruled out or did not provide sufficient evidence which would enable the Authority to make a new proposal that would satisfactorily resolve the pupil number trends and financial implications of keeping the school open.

It is therefore recommended that the Director of Children's Services agrees to publish a statutory notice proposing the closure of Monkseaton High School; this will commence the statutory Representation Period. The statutory notice will be published in accordance with section 15(1) of the

Education and Inspections Act 2006 and regulation 12 of the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013.

The closure of Monkseaton High School is considered necessary on the basis that it is no longer viable. In addition, there are surplus places elsewhere in the local area, which can accommodate displaced pupils, and there is no predicted increase in demand for the school in the medium to long term.

5. Alternative Options considered

During the period of pre-publication consultation, no viable alternatives or options were presented, though all were carefully considered.

6. Decision(s)

The Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Director of Resources and the Cabinet Member for Education, Inclusion, Employment and Skills:

1. considered the responses to the pre-publication consultation;
2. agreed that there should be statutory consultation with schools, parents and other stakeholders, in line with the Department for Education's statutory guidance on school closure proposals;
3. agreed to finalise and publish on the Authority's website a statutory proposal document, together with publishing a statutory notice of the proposal in a local newspaper
4. agreed that the publication of a statutory notice will take place on 14 November 2024 and that this will commence the statutory Representation Period for a period of four weeks between 15 November and 13 December 2024;
5. noted the requirement to present a further report to Cabinet on the outcome of the statutory consultation, so that Cabinet can consider the responses and determine next steps.

7. Reasons for the Decision(s)

- Under section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the Authority believes the closure of Monkseaton High School is considered necessary on the basis that it is no longer viable. In addition, there are surplus places elsewhere in the local area, which can accommodate displaced pupils, and there is no predicted increase in demand for the school in the medium to long term.
- Monkseaton High School has a significant financial deficit, currently over £5m, which is projected to increase to over £7 million by 2027. This is not sustainable and is impacting the stability of the school and, despite the best efforts of school leadership and staff, it poses a risk to the quality of education that can be delivered to pupils. Financial rules state that schools cannot operate with sustained deficits, and forecasts from the school show this deficit is set to increase.
- Declining pupil numbers and lower birth rates mean that the school is operating at just over 50% of its capacity. The school has capacity for 964 pupils. In 2009 the number of pupils on roll was 783 and in 2024 it was 527. Whilst pupil numbers have recovered from a low of 431 in 2016, it's clear the school still has significant surplus spaces. Housebuilding in the area is not likely to improve this at the level required for the school to become sustainable.
- While parental choice plays a significant role in this decline, with only one in five current pupils coming from the local community, there has also been changes to the local demographics and an overall decrease in pupils in the catchment area.
- The financial position is made more challenging by higher than average building running costs, maintenance and changes to government funding.
- The Authority believes it has explored every option available. This has been reinforced through discussions with the Department for Education, which have not identified any further options.
- The Authority is now clear that without long term changes beyond its control, it is not possible to make the school viable. The operational

and financial challenges faced by the school mean there is a risk it will not be able to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum.

- During the period of pre-publication consultation, no viable alternatives or options were presented, though all were carefully considered. The proposals that came forward have either been previously explored and ruled out or did not provide sufficient evidence which would enable the Authority to make a new proposal that would satisfactorily resolve the pupil number trends and financial implications of keeping the school open.

8. Date decision made

6 November 2024

9. Is this decision subject to call-in and if so expiry date of call-in period

Yes, the call-in period expires at 5.00pm on 13 November 2024

10. Date of Publication

6 November 2024

11. Implementation Date (if decision not called in)

After 5.00pm on 13 November 2024