

**SCHOOL ORGANISATION COMMITTEE OF CABINET –
31 JANUARY 2013**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I

Title of Report:

**PROPOSAL TO DISCONTINUE HYLTON RED HOUSE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND
BISHOP HARLAND CHURCH OF ENGLAND (CE) VOLUNTARY AIDED (VA)
PRIMARY SCHOOL AND
PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A NEW CE VA SCHOOL ON THE EXISTING HYLTON
RED HOUSE PRIMARY SCHOOL SITE**

Author(s): Executive Director Children's Services

Purpose of Report:

The purpose of this report is: -

- (i) to seek the approval of the School Organisation Committee of Cabinet for the proposal published by Sunderland City Council to discontinue Hylton Red House Primary School and Bishop Harland CE VA Primary School; and
- (ii) to consider the related proposal from the Durham Diocesan Board of Finance to establish a new CE VA school on the existing Hylton Red House Primary School site.

Description of Decision:

That the Committee considers the following related proposals :-

- i) To discontinue Hylton Red House Primary School and Bishop Harland CE VA Primary School on 31st August 2013.
- ii) To establish a new CE VA School on the existing Hylton Red House Primary School site on 1st September 2013.

Under the provisions of Schedule 2 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 the School Organisation Committee of Cabinet can either approve the proposals with or without modification or reject the proposals. The School Organisation Committee of Cabinet is requested to approve both proposals.

Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework? *Yes	
If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework	
Suggested reason(s) for Decision: In approving the proposals future concerns around the sustainability of provision in the area would be largely addressed. The large number of surplus places across both schools would be removed, with the additional resources that are currently used to support unused space redirected towards resources to improve teaching and learning. It is expected that this will enable the progress already seen in the quality of provision at both schools to be maintained.	
Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected: The alternative is not to approve the proposals, which would not address the long term sustainability of the two schools. It is not possible to approve one proposal and reject the other, as the two proposals are related.	
Impacts analysed: Equality <input type="checkbox"/> Privacy <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Crime and Disorder <input type="checkbox"/>	
Is this a “Key Decision” as defined in the Constitution? Yes Is it included in the 28 Day Notice of Decisions? Yes	Scrutiny Committee

**PROPOSAL TO DISCONTINUE HYLTON RED HOUSE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND
BISHOP HARLAND CHURCH OF ENGLAND (CE) VOLUNTARY AIDED (VA)
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

AND

**PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A NEW CE VA SCHOOL ON THE EXISTING
HYLTON RED HOUSE PRIMARY SCHOOL SITE**

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek the approval of the School Organisation Committee of Cabinet for the statutory proposal published by Sunderland City Council to discontinue Hylton Red House Primary and Bishop Harland CE VA Primary Schools and the related proposal published by the Durham Diocesan Board of Finance to establish a new CE VA school on the existing Hylton Red House Primary School site.

2. Description of the Decision

- 2.1 That the Committee considers the following related proposals
- To discontinue Hylton Red House Primary School and Bishop Harland CE VA Primary School on 31 August 2013 and
 - To establish a new CE VA school on the existing Hylton Red House Primary School site on 1st September 2013.

Under the provisions of Schedule 2 of the Education and Inspections Act (EIA) 2006 the Committee can either reject the proposals or approve the proposals with or without modification. The Committee is requested to approve both proposals.

3. Background

- 3.1 Reports from the Executive Director of Children's Services to Cabinet on 18th July and 10th October 2012 provided detailed information on the rationale for the proposed changes at Bishop Harland CE Primary School and Hylton Red House Primary School. In brief, both schools in recent years have faced and dealt with significant challenges in terms of Ofsted Inspection. However, as a consequence of the significant levels of surplus places, the schools have also faced, and will continue to face, budgetary challenges that could impact on the schools' ability to maintain their current levels of improvement. The schools are currently operating a 'soft' federation under a single headteacher. This has resulted in close working relationships between teaching staff and

governors in a number of curriculum and pastoral areas. However, despite the ongoing improvements seen at both schools there remains a concern that, in the absence of a local solution, current national policy may result in the imposition of an alternative organisational model for one or both schools.

- 3.2 The current numbers on roll are 143 at Bishop Harland and 330 at Hylton Red House, a total of 473. The number of surplus places is 67 and 97 respectively, a total of 164 between the two schools.
- 3.3 Given the successful relationship that already exists between the two schools, one of the options under consideration in the initial consultation process focused on the formalisation of this 'soft' federation. The 18th July Cabinet report set out, with two other options, the proposal to discontinue provision at both schools and to establish a new voluntary aided school on the Hylton Red House site, utilising its existing resources to deliver to the pupils from both schools. This option would deliver a sustainable school for the future and would create positive educational benefits for the delivery of education. It would also address the surplus places issues faced by both schools and would free up the resources currently used to maintain unused teaching areas and enable these resources to be directed towards educational delivery.
- 3.4 This proposal would also enable the Church of England to maintain a presence in the local community. Bishop Harland CE School is currently the only CE Primary School in North Sunderland and the initial consultation process carried out by the local authority outlined a level of support for this presence to remain.
- 3.5 Initial consultation with the governing bodies of both schools also included consultation with Hylton Red House Nursery staff and its governing body. Following discussions the governing body of the nursery stated that they did not wish to be part of the new school and wished to remain independent. However, a consequence of the proposals is demand for an additional 26 part time places at Hylton Red House Nursery from existing Bishop Harland pupils. Local authority officers have commenced discussions with the nursery in order to plan any remodelling that may need to occur in order to accommodate the increased cohort.
- 3.6 Sunderland City Council currently owns the buildings and playing fields at the Hylton Red House Primary School site. On the current Bishop Harland site the council own the playing fields and the Diocese own the buildings. As part of this proposal a 'land swap' would take place which would result in the council taking ownership of the current Bishop Harland school buildings and in turn ceding ownership of the Hylton Red House school buildings to the Diocese.
- 3.7 Following the appraisal of a number of options, the most effective long term solution to safeguard the primary educational provision in the area currently serviced by the two schools is considered to be the closure of Bishop Harland CE VA School and Hylton Red House Primary School with the Hylton Red House Primary School site then housing a new CE VA school..

4. Consultation, Publication and Representation

4.1.1 Section 16 of the EIA provides that those bringing forward statutory proposals to discontinue a school must consult such persons as appear to them to be appropriate. As such consultation has included the following;

- The governing bodies of both Hylton Red House Primary School and Bishop Harland CE VA Primary School
- The governing body at Hylton Red House Nursery School
- Teachers and other staff members at both schools
- Parents of pupils at both schools
- Members of Durham Diocesan Board of Education (in line with the related proposal to establish a new CE VA school on the existing Hylton Red House Primary School site).
- Teaching and non-teaching trade unions representing staff at consultation events
- Wider representation from the wider community at both schools

In addition to this, copies of the statutory proposals to discontinue Hylton Red House Primary School and Bishop Harland CE VA School were provided to

- The governing bodies of both schools
- The governing body of Hylton Red House Nursery School
- The Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle
- The Lead Member for Education for Sunderland City Council
- The Ward Members of both affected schools
- The Secretary of State for Education
- The Directors of Children's Services of neighbouring local authorities

4.2 Initial discussions included consultation with the governing bodies of both schools and also included consultation with Hylton Red House Nursery staff and its governing body, who were asked to consider whether the nursery would wish to be part of any future proposal. Following discussions the governing body of the nursery declined to take this any further. However, it has been agreed that, should this proposal be approved, the nursery class currently at Bishop Harland CE VA School will be transferred to Hylton Red House Nursery School.

4.3 The first stage informal consultation on options began on 4th September 2012 and concluded on 28th September 2012. As requested by Cabinet (18th July 2012) three options were presented for consultation. They were as follows

Option 1 – To close Bishop Harland CE Primary School and transfer all pupils to Hylton Red House Primary School;

Option 2 – To close Bishop Harland CE Primary School and Hylton Red House Primary School and to open a new voluntary aided C of E school on the Hylton Red House site and;

Option 3 –To keep things as they are, but this would mean further changes in the future.

- 4.4 Five consultation sessions were held in total. These were for the staff, governors and wider communities of both schools and Hylton Red House Nursery. Notes of all meetings are appended as Appendix 2 of this report.
- 4.5 Information about the rationale and options for consultation were circulated to parents of children at both schools as well as parents with children at Hylton Red House Nursery and members of the wider community. The deadline for responses was the 28th September 2012. A breakdown of the responses as well as associated comments from respondents is attached as Appendix 3 of this report.
- 4.6 The outcomes from this consultation showed significant support for Option 2 – to close Bishop Harland CE Primary School and Hylton Red House Primary School and to open a new C of E voluntary aided school on the Hylton Red House Primary School Site. 95% of respondents favoured this option with many responses identifying that there was already a good working relationship between the two schools and this merger would represent an extension of that. There was also support for maintaining a C of E presence in the north of Sunderland, with Bishop Harland CE Primary School currently the only C of E primary in the area.
- 4.7 Whilst supporting Option 2 there were a number of responses which expressed concerns about issues such as the impact that the additional footfall may have on parking and access at the Hylton Red House site as well as the additional distance that children may have to walk to school in bad weather. The local authority, the schools, nursery and Diocese have been actively working together to identify solutions which would minimise this (with particular focus on safeguarding and separating children from vehicles on the Hylton Red House Site should the proposals be approved). There was also a concern expressed in relation to the future of the Bishop Harland site which was raised at the meeting held on 19th September 2012 for the wider community around both schools.
- 4.8 Having regard to the outcomes of the informal consultation, Cabinet agreed on 10th October 2012 to proceed to statutory consultation. Further consultation meetings with parents, governors and teaching and non teaching staff from both schools were held in October. In total 6 sessions were held across both schools. These meetings were to inform all parties of the outcomes from the initial consultation period and to outline both Sunderland City Council and the Durham Diocesan Board of Finance's intention to publish statutory notices and proposals for Option 2. Minutes from those meetings are appended as Appendix 4 to this report. Both of the statutory notices and proposals are appended as Appendix 1.
- 4.9 Statutory notices were published in the Sunderland Echo on 5th November 2012. The 6 week statutory representation period ended on 24th December 2012.
- 4.10 In total two representations to the statutory notices were received. Both of these are in support of the proposals. However, in addition to this we have

been requested to note that the staff at Bishop Harland CE VA and Hylton Red House Primary Schools wish for the Committee to note that their positive responses to the first informal stage of consultation reflect their views on the statutory notices. The governing body of the two schools would also like their support to be noted. No official response was received during the representation period but minutes of the Federation Meeting (November 2012) identify their support for the proposals. The responses are included as Appendix 5 of this report

- 4.11 If approved both proposals will be implemented by 1st September 2013.

5. Suggested Reason(s) for Decision

- 5.1 In approving the proposals future concerns around the sustainability of provision in the area would be largely addressed. The large number of surplus places across both schools would be removed, with the additional resources that are currently used to support unused space redirected towards resources to improve teaching and learning. It is expected that this will enable the progress already seen in the quality of provision at both schools to be maintained.

6 Alternative Options

- 6.1 The alternative is not to approve the proposals, which would not address the long term sustainability of the two schools. It is not possible to approve one proposal and reject the other, as the two proposals are related.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 An estimated breakdown of the capital expenditure associated with the proposal is £330,200 to carry out necessary remodelling to the existing Hylton Red House Primary building focusing on structure and fabric, heating and mechanical, electrical work and suitability and sufficiency. A further £30,000 has been estimated to carry out works to improve access to the site.
- 7.2 In addition to this a further estimated £200,000 has been projected to carry out modifications to the Hylton Red House Nursery in order to accommodate a further 26 children who will transfer from Bishop Harland CE VA Primary School's nursery provision. Funding for all Council led activity would be sourced through the Children's Service Capital Budget.
- 7.3 The Durham Diocesan Board of Finance and the school governing body have identified a similar level of capital funding to carry out additional developments to the Hylton Red House site in addition to those to be funded by Sunderland City Council.
- 7.4 At present the council owns the buildings and playing fields at the Hylton Red House Site. On the Bishop Harland site the Council owns the playing fields while the Diocese owns the buildings. Should this transfer take place the Council would continue to own the playing fields at both sites but a land swap

would take place with the Council taking ownership of the buildings at Bishop Harland with the Diocese taking ownership of the buildings at Hylton Red House Primary School. The Nursery at Hylton Red House would remain under the ownership of the Council. Should this proposal be agreed the Council will determine the future use of the Bishop Harland site, having regard to the views expressed during consultation.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 Both proposals have been published in accordance with the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) (England) Regulations 2007

9. Appendices

1. Statutory Notices and Full Proposal Documents
2. Notes of September Consultation Meetings
3. Breakdown of Consultation Responses
4. Notes of October Consultation Meetings
5. Responses to Statutory Notices