

Report to: **Lead Members for Learning and School Effectiveness**

Date: **8 June 2015**

By: **Director of Children's Services**

Title of report: **Hastings Academy Trust: Process to end sponsorship**

Purpose of report: **To provide the Lead Member with information to support a decision to withdraw from the sponsorship of Hastings Academy Trust**

RECOMMENDATION

To seek approval for East Sussex County Council to withdraw from the sponsorship of Hastings Academy Trust

1 Background

1.1 The Hastings Academies Trust was formed in 2011 to sponsor two secondary academies in Hastings and St Leonards.

The Trust's sponsors are:

- The University of Brighton
- BT
- East Sussex County Council

1.2 The Hastings Academy and The St Leonards Academy have been in operation since September 2011. The Local Authority (LA) had a leading role in the creation of the Trust and development of the first two academies.

1.3 The LA in its role as a Trust member has supported the two secondary academies in their journey to 'Good' Ofsted judgements and the extension of the Trust to include seven local primary schools. Dudley Infant Academy, West St Leonards Academy and The Baird Primary Academy joined the Trust during the 2013-14 year, whilst Churchwood Primary Academy, Hollington Primary Academy and Robsack Wood Primary Academy joined the Trust in September 2014. Silverdale Primary Academy recently joined in February 2015.

2 Supporting information

2.1 The education landscape has changed significantly since the Trust was created and the New Academies Act in 2010 provided the opportunity for all schools to convert to academy status. Local Authorities are now not permitted to sponsor new academies. This has led the LA to review its role as a sponsor and it has reached the view that acting as a sponsor creates an unhelpful distinction in its relationship with the academies it sponsors and those that it does not sponsor. The Local Authority has a responsibility to champion educational excellence across all its schools and is committed to working with them irrespective of their status.

2.2 The decision to withdraw from the Hastings Academy Trust has been taken at the same time that the University of Brighton, as the main sponsor, has also reconsidered its role and agrees now is the right time to consider changing the sponsorship arrangement. The University now has broader ambitions across Sussex and is seeking more involvement in the Trust.

2.3 The LA will continue to work with schools in the Hastings Academy Trust in order to support their shared ambition for educational excellence and remains committed to supporting

them to achieve this. We will continue to work closely with the Academy Trust and support further improvements and any necessary expansion to accommodate more pupils if required.

2.4 The LA's role as a sponsor for other academies will also be reviewed going forwards and this will be done at a time that is appropriate to the situation for each academy trust.

2.5 The LA will need to give one year's notice of resigning from Hastings Academy Trust, which means that the resignation will take effect from July 2016.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 The Lead Member should approve the decision for East Sussex County Council to resign as a sponsor from the Hastings Academy Trust as continued sponsorship creates an unhelpful distinction between the academies it does sponsor and those it does not. The Local Authority has a responsibility to champion educational excellence across all its schools and is committed to working with them irrespective of their status.

STUART GALLIMORE
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Jessica Stubbings
Tel. No. 01323 463537
Email: jessica.stubbings@eastsussex.gov.uk

LOCAL MEMBERS

Cllr Peter Pragnell
Cllr Michael Wincott
Cllr Godfrey Daniel
Cllr Trevor Webb
Cllr Phil Scott
Cllr Kim Forward
Cllr John Hodges