

LEAD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND INCLUSION, SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY

DECISIONS made by the Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability, Councillor Bob Standley, on 14 November 2023 at Committee Room, County Hall, Lewes

Councillor Wendy Maples spoke on item 5 (see minute 36)

31. DECISIONS MADE BY THE LEAD CABINET MEMBER ON 16 OCTOBER 2023

31.1 The Lead Member approved as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2023.

32. DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

32.1 There were none.

33. URGENT ITEMS

33.1 There were none.

34. REPORTS

34.1 A copy of the reports referred to below is included in the minute book.

35. HOLY CROSS CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

35.1 The Lead Member considered a report by the Director of Children's Services to determine the statutory proposal to discontinue Holy Cross Church of England Primary School on 31 December 2023.

DECISIONS

35.2 The Lead Member RESOLVED to approve the closure of Holy Cross Church of England Primary School on 31 December 2023.

REASONS

35.3 The local authority believes the case for the closure of Holy Cross is strong for the following reasons:

- The school has suffered from a lack of popularity in the local community for some years, which has led to falling pupil numbers going back over a decade.

- There are surplus school places in Uckfield. The local authority would work with local schools to ensure there are places available for children displaced from Holy Cross in the event it closes.
- The school has struggled to secure good outcomes for pupils over time.
- In recent years the school has experienced several changes of leadership and a significant turnover of teaching staff which has impacted on the quality and consistency of education.
- The diocese and the Interim Executive Board at the school are supportive of closure.

35.4 Having carefully considered the feedback received during the initial consultation and the subsequent representation period, the local authority concluded that Holy Cross can no longer be considered viable.

35.5 The Regulations set out the options the decision-maker has when making a decision on a closure proposal. The decision-maker can:

- reject the proposal;
- approve the proposal without modification;
- approve the proposal with such modifications as they think desirable; or
- approve the proposal, with or without modification, as specified in regulation 16 of the Establishment and Discontinuance Regulations.

36. ST PANCRAS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

36.1 The Lead Member considered a report by the Director of Children's Services to determine the statutory proposal to discontinue St Pancras Catholic Primary School on 31 August 2024.

DECISIONS

36.2 The Lead Member **RESOLVED** to approve the closure of St Pancras Catholic Primary School on 31 August 2024.

REASONS

36.3 A small majority of families at the school who responded to the governing board's consultation (56%) supported the proposal to close St Pancras. Parishioners and other interested parties were generally opposed to the proposal. Five responses were received during the representation period following the publication of the statutory proposal, raising comments and concerns about the proposal.

36.4 While recognising the nature of objections to the proposal, the local authority believes the case for the closure of St Pancras is strong for the following reasons.

- Due to the surplus places in the area, the school has struggled for a number of years to be full.
- Surplus places in Lewes remain high. The local authority is confident there would be sufficient school places available in the area for children displaced from St Pancras on 31 August 2024. Pupil forecasts indicate that the situation in the area is unlikely to change markedly in the coming years.

- The low pupil numbers, and the impact on the budget, limit the school's capacity to improve the quality of education that it can provide.
- The governing board and the diocese have brought forward the proposal and are supportive of closure.

36.5 Having carefully considered the feedback received during the initial consultation and the subsequent representation period, the local authority has concluded that St Pancras can no longer be considered viable.

36.6 The Regulations set out the options the decision-maker has when making a decision on a closure proposal. The decision-maker can:

- reject the proposal;
- approve the proposal without modification;
- approve the proposal with such modifications as they think desirable; or
- approve the proposal, with or without modification, as specified in regulation 16 of the Establishment and Discontinuance Regulations.

37. EAST SUSSEX SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN 2023 TO 2027

37.1 The Lead Member considered a report by the Director of Children's Services seeking approval for the publication of the School Organisation Plan 2023 to 2027.

DECISIONS

37.2 The Lead Member RESOLVED to approve the publication of the School Organisation Plan 2023 to 2027.

REASONS

37.3 The local authority has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places to meet demand across East Sussex. The draft School Organisation Plan for the period 2023 to 2027 sets out how the local authority seeks to ensure there are sufficient primary, secondary and special school places in the right locations to meet demand.

38. REVISION OF HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICIES

38.1 The Lead Member considered a report by the Director of Children's Services regarding the revisions to East Sussex County Council's (ESCC) Home to School Transport policies

DECISIONS

38.2 The Lead Member RESOLVED to agree the revisions to ESCC's Home to School Transport Policies listed below:

- ESCC Home to School Transport Policy for children of compulsory school age (Appendix 1 of the report);
- ESCC travel assistance policy for children of compulsory school age with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan) (Appendix 2 of the report);
- ESCC travel assistance policy for 16-19 year olds with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan) (Appendix 3 of the report); and

- ESCC travel assistance policy for post-19 year olds with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan) (Appendix 4 of the report)

REASONS

38.3 The revised policies comply with updated statutory guidance and provide additional clarification and readability.