

CABINET

Date: 18 June 2015

Outcomes of Consultation on options for the Alnwick Partnership

Report of the Executive Director of Wellbeing and Community Health

Cabinet Member: Councillor Robert Arckless, Children's Services

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1. Purpose of Report

In November 2014 schools in the Alnwick partnership requested that the Local Authority carry out a consultation on the configuration of schools in the partnership area, many of their requests were based upon the belief that change was necessary to improve the quality of education. At that time the Authority had no plans to change structures, extend or reduce age ranges or close schools in the partnership. The Local Authority strategy for school improvement is set out in the Director of Education Annual Report and Education Service Statement. It does not advocate a particular school structure across the Partnership or Northumberland; the strategy focuses on improving standards of leadership and teaching and developing sustainable long-term partnerships to address the issues of underperformance where it occurs.

However, it is a crucial part of the council's role to respond to schools and provide system leadership to ensure that school structures allow appropriate progression opportunities for pupils, hence officers recommended that a consultation took place so that the preferences and plans of individual schools could be shared with the wider community and the implications for long-term sustainability could be analysed. It remains the council's position that there is no over-arching proposal to alter school structures across Northumberland, however if individual schools or groups of schools in other partnership plan to change age ranges, then similar consultations may have to be considered. Hence there may be an incremental change to the structure of schools in Northumberland, but that process would be driven by local schools. As national education policy continues to devolve more powers to individual schools and academies, it is vital that the authority plays a leading role in ensuring there is a coherent and high quality educational system across the county.

At the outset of this consultation officers collated the requests from individual schools and presented three broad models for discussion. It was made clear to consultees that the council had no preferred option and these were simply models to stimulate debate and that the consultation was the result of impetus from schools. However, it was also made clear that the outcome of the consultation might result in proposals that would result in

significant changes to schools, including potential closures and that further consultations might be necessary.

The three broad models put forward for consultation were:

- **Model A** – presented as a result of a request of the governing body of the Aln Federation Schools (Duchess High School, Lindisfarne Middle School and Dukes Middle School) - Amalgamate Alnwick Lindisfarne Middle School with The Duke's Middle School on the Lindisfarne site from 1 September 2015. This option would require the closure of Alnwick Lindisfarne Middle School.
- **Model B** – presented as a result of requests from several first schools - Extend the age ranges of all thirteen first schools within the Alnwick Partnership from 1 September 2016, so that they become primary schools. Extend the age range of The Duchess's Community High School with effect from 1 September 2016 to 11-18. The new school site would be split between the current Lindisfarne Middle school site and the newly built accommodation on the Duchess site, which is due to open in September 2016. Close Alnwick Lindisfarne Middle School, The Duke's Middle School, St Paul's RC Middle School and Seahouses Middle School with effect from 31 August 2016;
- **Model C** – this was presented as a result of instruction by elected members of the council -Make no changes to the current arrangement of schools or current system of school organisation within the Alnwick Partnership

In addition consultees were offered the opportunity to put forward **alternative models** for consideration.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- a) Consider the outcomes of the consultation and consider the feedback from the Governing Bodies of all the schools involved including community and church schools;
- b) Note the views expressed by the Governing Bodies of the eight Church schools in the Alnwick Partnership, who are responsible for decision-making with regard to the change of age range of their schools;
- c) Decide in the light of this report and recommendations from the Petitions Committee and the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee whether to permit further consultation, in line with statutory requirements, on a proposal which includes the following changes to school structure in the Alnwick partnership:
 - The Duchess's Community High School becomes an 11-18 Secondary school from 1 September 2017 on a single site (or as soon as practicable thereafter);
 - Lindisfarne, Duke's, Seahouses, and St Pauls RC Aided Middle Schools close on 31 August 2017; these schools would not receive a Year 5 intake in September 2016;

- Hipsburn, Shilbottle, Swansfield Park, Swarland and Seahouses First schools become Primary schools from 1 September 2016;
- St Michael's CE, Longhoughton CE, Ellingham CE, Felton CE, Whittingham CE and St Pauls RC First Schools become Primary schools from 1 September 2016;
- Embleton Vincent Edwards CE First School closes with effect from 31 August 2016; and
- Branton First School closes with effect from 31 August 2017.

If further consultation is agreed then it is recommended that Cabinet also:

- d) Approve the development of a detailed buildings plan for each school to establish a deliverable and definitive overall budget;
- e) Approve the development of a detailed transport plan for each school to ensure any changes adhere to the council's policy and national guidelines;
- f) Note that the outcomes of the further consultation and plans would be brought back to Cabinet at their November 2015 meeting for a decision on whether or not to permit the publication of a Statutory Proposal on the proposals outlined above;
- g) Note that, subject to a decision by Cabinet to approve the implementation of Model B (revised) at a later date, Cabinet are able to approve the revised capital spend detailed in the report.
- h) Note this report is relevant to the Economic Growth priority included in the NCC Corporate Plan 2013-2017 and that the Medium Term Plan would need to be amended to accommodate the indicative capital costs outlined in this report.

3. Rationale for instigation of consultation

- a). During the Autumn Term, Council Officers were involved in informal discussions with individual headteachers in the Alnwick Partnership about their vision for the long term future of their individual schools and how partnership working might be developed. In November 2014, Council Officers attended an Alnwick Partnership meeting to establish if it would be possible to produce an agreed plan to ensure partnership working and sustainability. It was clear that there was no over-arching agreed view; in fact there was a risk that individual schools would take unilateral action to change structures and this would have an unintended destabilising effect on other schools. Headteachers expressed the view that the debate about the structure of schools in Alnwick (and Northumberland as a whole) which had been taking place for many years, was a barrier to continuous improvement and partnership working.

Following this meeting, the Director of Education asked headteachers to consider their position and inform him if they felt a public consultation would be useful. He received 17 messages from headteachers expressing a desire for a consultation. Broadly, responses stated that a consultation would allow individual governing bodies to make clear what their plans; allow all schools to understand each other's

position, and gain the views of parents, staff and the wider community. In addition, they felt this would aid the local authority in its attempt to develop partnership working and sustain and improve educational standards in the longer term.

- b). A specific request was put forward by the Governing Body of the Aln Federation, which includes The Duchess's Community High School, The Duke's Middle School and Alnwick Lindisfarne Middle School. The Aln Federation proposed implementation of Model A from September 2016; the Council put forward this model with a revised timeline of September 2015.
- c). The consultation process was approved by the Council's Policy Board on 9 December 2015. The Executive Director of Wellbeing and Community Health Services report, prepared for that meeting, provides further detail and is available as part of the background papers to this report. At Policy Board, Councillors made it clear that, whilst permission to consult was being given, officers must communicate with all consultees that the Council had no preference in relation to any of the models of organisation. Further the Council did not have a strategy in place to move from a three to two tier model or close schools, the consultation process was a result of requests from schools to sustain and improve educational opportunities. Policy board insisted that a Model C (no change), must be included as part of the consultation.
- d). As a result of statutory regulations, the Council consulted on behalf of the ten community schools;

Branton First School	Hipsburn First School
Shilbottle First School	Swansfield Park First School
Swarland First School	Seahouses First School
Seahouses Middle School	The Duke's Middle School
Alnwick Lindisfarne Middle School	The Duchess's Community High School

- e) The Governing Bodies of the eight schools with a religious character (church schools) carried out their own consultation in relation to the proposals;

Longhoughton CE First School	Ellingham CE First School
Felton CE First School	Whittingham CE First School
St Michaels' CE First School	St Paul's RC First School
St Paul's RC Middle School	Embleton Vincent Edwards CE First School

- f) The Governing Bodies of the eight church schools carried out an analysis of the responses linked to their individual schools and will have held separate meetings prior to Cabinet's meeting on 18 June 2015 in order to make a decision on their next steps. The decisions of the Governing Bodies who had met at the time of the writing of this report are set out below, while the decisions of the remaining Governing Bodies will be reported to Cabinet, if known, at its meeting on 18 June 2015. Representatives from both Dioceses have also been closely involved in this consultation process.
- g) A consultation document was produced and distributed. The comments and observations of all consultees who responded to the Council's consultation have

been considered in preparing this report and its conclusions. This process took longer than expected due to the extensive nature of the responses and the complicated nature of the issues presented. Detailed analysis of these comments, observations and alternative solutions are provided below and in the background papers to this report.

4. The Consultation Process

- 4.1 Consultation began on 10 December 2014 and closed on 11 March 2015. Approximately 6,930 letters and notifications were sent to parents, staff, informing them of the consultation.
- 4.2 Council Officers held more than 50 meetings at the 17 school sites in the Alnwick Partnership in January and February 2015, with separate meetings for staff, Governors and parents and members of public at each school site. Council officers also held meetings at the four schools in neighbouring partnerships that would be most affected by changes to structures in the Alnwick Partnership. Around 1200 people attended the meetings.
- 4.3 Advertisements were placed in the Northumberland Gazette detailing the consultation and meeting dates and information was placed on the Council website requesting feedback.
- 4.4 Several meetings were held with representatives from the Roman Catholic and Church of England Dioceses.

5. Consultation responses from individual school governing bodies;

Written responses from Governing Bodies of the community schools are summarised below:

- 5.1 **Hipsburn First School** – The Governing Body expressed the desire to become a Primary school. They submitted an extended response attached to the Consultation Response form supporting conversion to a primary structure. An excerpt from their response states:

“We recommend to all stakeholders that the future of our children is better assured by changing to a 2 tier system within the whole Alnwick Partnership. This should be done as soon as possible, as a whole, with careful recognition of the challenges and benefits to all key stakeholders enabling an acceptable strategic plan to support all learners through the transition. We are of the opinion that the optimum time for transition to 2-tier should be September 2016.”

- 5.2 **Shilbottle First School** – The Governing Body expressed the desire to become a Primary school. They submitted an extended response attached to the Consultation Response form supporting conversion to a primary structure. An excerpt from their response states:

“The Governing Body at Shilbottle First School unanimously agrees with OPTION B. Children would be offered continuity in respect of their education, maintaining standards and enabling children to reach their potential in the village school and

delaying the move to the larger schooling environment until they are 2 more years mature. The School would then be able to take full responsibility for KS1 and KS2 results before they leave for the start of KS3. This is an important and critical failing in the 3 tier system.

Option B provides minimal disruption to the Child in its journey through the educational system by limiting the number of major changes, i.e. moving to a new school which can put a Child back 6 months in learning each time. Option B would provide an expansion of the school to 210 capacity which would also address the current constraints on space for teaching. Without Option B it is not clear that the school would receive this investment required to maintain the current and future levels of intake from the village.”

5.3 Swansfield Park First School – The Governing Body expressed the desire to become a Primary school. They submitted an extended response supporting conversion to a primary structure. An excerpt from their response states:

“The Governing Body of Swansfield Park First School are very well aware of and committed to their duty to keep the present performance and future development of the School under careful review, in the best interests of the children and their families, both present and future. The proposed re-organisation options describe the longer term futures for this school and the others in the Partnership. There are considerable opportunities in the options presented, a number of uncertainties and some risks. However, it is the clear view of the governing body that the School extends its age range from 3 to 11, thus becoming a primary school on the existing site (as described in Model B of Northumberland County Council’s consultation document).”

5.4 St Michael’s First School – the Governing Body expressed the desire to become a Primary school and submitted an extended response. An excerpt from their letter states:

“.....Strongly support 2 tier system (Option B) with preference that High School will ensure that all children will be accommodated on the High School site ideally within 2 years of a 2 tier system being implemented.”

5.5 Longhoughton First School – The Governing Body of Longhoughton C of E First School met to consider the outcomes of their consultation and approved the publication of a Statutory Notice to extend the upper age range of the school to become Primary with effect from 1 September 2016, subject to the following conditions:

“The Council will do everything within its power to ensure that full capital funding is available; the school is given time to fully prepare for a Year 5 intake in September 2016. That careful consideration is given to the year groups of children who find themselves in the middle of the changes and that everything is done to support these children. That Councillors do all they can to source funding to extend the new High School build to include Years 7 and 8 on a single site, thus avoiding a split site system; that staff in all schools are supported through these changes. Furthermore, they stated this decision would be conditional upon the decision to proceed being made by other schools in the partnership.”

- 5.6 Ellingham CE Aided First School** – the Governing Body met on 21 April 2015 and made a decision to approve the extension of the upper age range of the school to become Primary with effect from 1 September 2016, subject to the following conditions:

“That necessary capital funding is made available for building adaptations or extension of our school; the new High School be extended to accommodate all pupils aged 11-18 years on one site.”

- 5.7 Whittingham CE First School** the Governing Body of Whittingham CE First School supports the proposal to become a Primary school in an extended response. An excerpt from their letter states they state;

“... first schools know their pupils well and can deliver continued progression. The school has the support of parents and the Governing Body believes becoming a primary school would provide consistency and offer educational benefits to the pupils.”

- 5.8 St Paul's RC Aided First School and St Paul's RC Aided Middle School** (joint governing body) explained the schools position in an extended response, an excerpt of which is as follows;

“We strongly support a single site High School which would provide education for children 11-18 years (years 7-13). We believe that the key stage 3 pupils would benefit educationally, being taught consistently by the same teachers who will take them through to their GCSE examinations. One move to a new school at age 11 would boost children's confidence and reduce any emotional problems that can occur from changing schools.”

“If at the end of this consultation a two tier system is chosen then we would like the council to find the appropriate funding to support the High School on one site. We have grave concerns that without a clear consensus some schools in Alnwick may become Primary with detriment to the Middle Schools and that the partnership needs to agree to any re-organisation at the same time. This will prevent chaos for pupils, parents and staff. We also have concerns that if different structures of schools exist (e.g. some Primary, some Middle, some First) this will exacerbate further, admissions into schools at different stages, making progress of pupils across a school and accountability more challenging to access.”

- 5.9 Duchess Community High School, Lindisfarne Middle School Dukes Middle School** (Aln Federation joint governing body) –expressed the desire to establish an 11-18 school on a single site and close the two middle schools in their federation. If Model B (revised) was not available they would propose to take forward Model A, the merger of the middle schools from September 2016. The following excerpts are taken from the Governing Body's extended response:

“...this Governing Body believes the impending changes to Key Stage 3 education and the move to Progress-8 as a measure of students' progress and attainment means the Council must explore every option to enlarge the accommodation at the

new High School site as part of the current building programme. We believe that our Middle Schools can offer a very good standard of education. However, the challenge presented by the changes mentioned above mean that it will become more difficult for everyone who works in the present system to deliver comparable outcomes at 16 and 18 to other areas of the country. Therefore, change through improved communication and accountability is necessary.”

- 5.10 Embleton Vincent Edwards CE First School** – the Governing Body has now met to consider the responses to their school’s consultation; of the sixteen responses received, 15 were in favour of Model C, maintaining the current 3-tier system. The Governing Body of the school **supports this view** for the following reasons:

“The Governors expressed concern that if merging Seahouses First School with Seahouses Middle School happened it could have an adverse effect on our small school by encouraging some pupils to move to a school in another direction instead of ours. Funding from a small number of pupils in Year 5 & 6 would be insufficient to expand facilities, buildings and possibly staffing, unless our numbers grew significantly. At present our predicted numbers would not warrant us to radically adapt our provision for Year 5 & 6. At the end of the day our decision has to reflect the all-round education for each child. As a caring school we must provide the best education we can as every child matters to us.”

- 5.11 Felton CE Controlled First School** – the Governing Body made an extended response to the consultation in which they recognise benefits of Model B for many schools but concluded that Model C (no change) would be preferential. An excerpt from their response states

“ In our initial meetings it was considered that Felton could make the transition to a Primary school for the following reasons; We the capacity on site to do so; we also have the expertise and will from our headteacher to do so; it was felt initially that increased capacity and numbers within the school would help secure the future for our community; it would bring us in line with national standards and procedures and make our targets much easier to set and teach towards and thus increase our capacity to improve standards; improved transition from school to school, as far as we can interpret the statistics has the possibility of raising standards and bringing Northumberland into a more favourable position with national league tables”
However it goes on to state;

“Many of our parents consider that better opportunities exist within the Morpeth pyramid where at present there are greater opportunities for stability. A large proportion of our present year 4 children are moving out of the Alnwick Partnership into the Morpeth Partnership. This move also brings uncertainty around how the parents of our younger children will react in the future. If we at Felton C of E First School chose to extend our age range whilst a middle school option still existed for parents in Rothbury with a clear route to the much respected High School in Morpeth, we could be putting our financial security at risk by setting aside resources for years 5 and 6 without a clear picture of whether there would be viable numbers in those year groups. It is also a concern that our neighbouring school in Swarland is proposing to enter the Morpeth Pyramid via the Rothbury Middle School route and therefore this potentially means that we could lose numbers to this school, making the viability of our school less certain. We share the concern that even if the whole partnership became “two tier”, those schools, like ours, at the edges of the

partnership would have issues around the viability of their years 5 and 6 and could be put at risk through the presence of relatively close middle schools from other partnerships. Many of our parents regard the uncertainty of the structure within the partnership as a diminution of opportunities for their children. A small school, such as ours, cannot at present offer the opportunities that are available at the Middle schools. This would only improve if the proposed High School in Alnwick has the capacity to take children from the age of 11 and when shared specialist provision across the newly formed primary schools is established”

5.12 Branton First School - the school submitted a joint response from Governors, parents, staff and members of the local community, which was **in favour of Model C (no change)**. In supporting Model C, the school’s response states:

“Branton First School is a very good school and we believe Glendale Middle School is very good school acting as a good bridge to the Duchess High. The disruption from reorganisation would last for many years and impact on many children. Northumberland cannot afford to do this reorganisation properly without having to borrow large sums of money that neither they nor the schools can afford to repay without further detrimental effects on the children’s education. Any savings from reductions in sites would go back into the central pot and be reallocated elsewhere in the county, not being of benefit to our local area. School transport is an important consideration in our rural area and if catchments should change it could have an enormously detrimental effect on families and children in North Northumberland. 47% of respondents said that school transport is key to the choices they make for their child. We are happy with the current transport and worry that Model B would jeopardise this.”

5.13 Swarland First School – the Governing Body of the school is **in favour of Option C (no change)**, their letter states:

“The school is performing well at present. Achievement, attainment and progress are impressive and these judgements have been validated by external agencies. Becoming a Primary school may hamper the progress the school is making. A feasibility study, carried out by Council staff, indicated that should Swarland First School become a Primary school it already has the capacity to accommodate the expected number of pupils and would therefore need very little capital expenditure. The Governors feel that without substantial capital expenditure the high quality education of our students would be jeopardised. We believe that becoming a Primary school would have a detrimental effect on the school’s finances. Resource allocation for teaching and learning and the funding of the wide range of enrichment activities would be impacted upon and budgets stretched to unacceptable levels. Our aim as governors is to make sure every child in our school gets the best possible education. We believe a change to a Primary school would hamper the progress of the students and the school in future. Swarland First School would be expected to provide the same quality of education as at present for an increased number of students, but without the adequate funding that governors believe is necessary.”

5.14 Seahouses Middle School – the Governing Body submitted a response in favour of **Model C (no change)**, giving the following reasons:

“This isn’t a true 2 tier system. Pupils will transfer to the annex of the Duchess High School in Year 7 for two years before moving to the new High School campus at Greensfield. There is no guarantee funding will be found in the short term to reverse this situation and ensure the pupils will be taught on one-site.

Pupils will stay in feeder first schools for 2 more years. These schools do not have the facilities that are currently available in the middle schools, particularly for subjects like ICT, Music, Science and PE.

There will be less opportunity for the pupils to take part in extra-curricular activities at Primary Schools and also at the Secondary School where large numbers will limit opportunities to take part in sports fixtures and productions.

Seahouses Middle School is a community school in every sense of the word. It is at the heart of the community. Children who attend both the first and middle schools in Seahouses have a real sense of belonging to a community. If Model B was chosen, the community would suffer greatly. One of the downsides of living in rural North Northumberland is the cost of transport and it is a real concern for parents when their children are attending after-school clubs etc.

*There is no clear evidence that a 2-tier system is better educationally, in fact 3-tier partnerships appear better when looking at the following results. In the 2014 DfE Northumberland League Tables of Key Stage 2 Results, six out of the 10 schools (achieving Level 4 in English and Maths) were Middle schools (including Seahouses Middle School) and four were primary In the 2014 DfE Northumberland League Tables of GCSE results six out of the top ten (achieving 5*A-C GCSE’s including English and Maths) were from three tier partnership. Of the others, 3 were from two tier and 1 was independent. The 3 tier system allows pupils to grow both educationally and emotionally. Three distinct phases reduce the possibility of pupils becoming disengaged or disadvantaged.*

Pupils have a greater responsibility in Middle Schools than in either primary or secondary, allowing them to develop personal skills. Middle Schools can offer a greater degree of pastoral care, especially during the early years of adolescence .Middle Schools benefit disadvantaged and vulnerable children the most as they are protected from the influences of older pupils and allowed to remain children for longer while they develop resilience and strategies to overcome adversity. These are the very pupils that the government are concerned about with their ‘Closing the Gap’ agenda. Middle School staff have a better knowledge of pupils and their needs due to smaller numbers and a different approach to pastoral care.”

Responses from schools outside the Alnwick Partnership that would be impacted by changes to the system of organisation are set out below:

5.15 Belford First School – The Governing Body submitted an extended response setting out reasons for their support of a change to a two-tier system in the Alnwick Partnership and expresses their desire that a similar arrangement is put into place in the Berwick Partnership. An excerpt from the Governing Body’s response is as follows:

“We fully support this model, on educational grounds. We believe strongly that children and young people will achieve more and make better progress within a 2-

tier arrangement. We have considered this issue in considerable detail, and support Model B even though it has the potential to cause us some difficulties as a school. We feel we cannot deny those children from Belford First School who ultimately attend The Duchess High School the opportunity to make better progress and achieve at higher levels. Our detailed reasons for this are set out in the attached two documents [these are available in the Background Papers to this report.]

5.16 St Mary's CE Middle School, Belford – The Governing Body submitted a detailed response setting out **positive benefits of middle schools** in rural areas. The following are excerpts from the response of the St Mary's Governors;

"It is obvious from consultation meetings at both Seahouses Middle and Glendale Middle that there is a significant body of teachers, parents and community leaders who firmly believe in three tier education within these communities. While no formal consultation meeting has taken place at Belford, there is concern and strong support in favour of maintaining the three tier system.

Should model B be the preferred option, following consultation, the governors of St Mary's would like serious consideration to be made to ensure that any remaining middle schools within or on the periphery of the Alnwick partnership are still able to feed pupils into the Duchesses' High School at the end of year 8 as they currently do. We also ask that serious consideration is given to the fact that, despite Lindisfarne Middle School being in special measures, the performance of all the middle schools that model B proposes close, is currently above national average at Key stage 2.

Our governors are open to further discussion regarding any other proposed model that offers greater protection to the rural communities, including the creation of a new high school to accommodate pupils from Seahouses, Wooler and Belford."

5.17 Glendale Middle School – the Governing Body is in favour of **Model A (amalgamation of The Duke's and Lindisfarne Middle Schools) or C (no change)**. An excerpt from the Governing Body's response is as follows:

"3 tier produces local schooling, rich in social and cultural life where children are treated as individuals. Retaining children until 13 not only increases self-confidence it also results in local social cohesion. Community middle schools are also of vital importance to the local community where their facilities are used for life-long learning and leisure activities. We strongly object to Alnwick schools' ability to change Glendale Middle School's catchment area by removing Whittingham and Branton with substantial consequences to schools and pupils. At the Glendale consultation meeting it was stated that the above two schools were not in GMS catchment. Since 1977 this has not been the case. In year 5 children to the south of Whittingham have transferred to The Duke's Middle as part of their catchment and those to the north to Glendale; this is using the information provided by NCC over the last 30 plus years."

5.18 Wooler First School – The Governing Body is in favour of **Option A** but **believes the timescale is too short. Governors do not believe Model B would resolve the problems within the educational system in Northumberland and**

therefore favour Model C. An excerpt from the Governing Body's response is as follows:

"We have been told throughout this process that good education is about good schools and not 2 tier/3 tier systems. There seems to be an assumption that by turning Alnwick Partnership into 2 tier, the educational system will automatically improve. We think that the problems within Alnwick are not caused by the system being 3 tier specifically. We have concerns that changing the system within Alnwick will cause further disruption and concerns in the near future."

"We feel that Model B is not a good option for many reasons. However, if it was adopted we would like

A) a consultation on the changing catchment areas of Whittingham and Branton schools

B) a guarantee our children would have their choice of highs schools protected by providing enough places to accommodate our children leaving Glendale and moving onto the Duchess as well as protecting their eligibility for free transport to the school of their choice. We are aware that transport is often separated on paper from education but they are inevitably linked and one will substantially affect the other. If the Duchess does change their age range we would like our children to be considered so they may be integrated into the school at 13, two years after some of the other children starting."

5.19 Warkworth CE First School The Chair of Governors and Headteacher of the school did not state whether they were in favour or not in favour of any of the models, but submitted the following main comments:

"If we remain a first school there needs to be middle school provision in Alnwick. We think there should be consistency within the Alnwick Partnership and therefore also the Coquet Partnership. We will need to respond to ensure consistency of progression by a) remaining as a 1st school or b) becoming a primary school. If there is no change we will need support and funding to ensure equality of opportunity, transparent moderation and clear transition arrangements."

5.20 Dr Thomlinson's Middle School was consulted but did not submit a formal response from the Governing Body.

6. Other Responses to the Consultation

Around **593** responses from groups or individuals were received specifically in relation to the Council's consultation on proposals for the ten community schools. **250** of the 593 were from the Seahouses area.

During the consultation it was made clear that the outcome of the process would not be determined by the equivalent to a simple referendum but would involve a detailed analysis of evidence put forward. However the consultation document did offer consultees the opportunity to answer simple YES/NO questions regarding favoured model as presented, the results are shown below:

Overall responses:

Option A		Model B		Model C	
Yes	171	Yes	153	Yes	360
No	265	No	394	No	189

However, as previously noted, almost half of the responses received to the Council's consultation were received from consultees associated with the Seahouses schools and area. A table showing the responses with the views of those consultees not associated with the Seahouses schools and local area removed is given below by way of comparison.

Overall responses minus those associated with Seahouses First and/or Middle School:

Model A		Model B		Model C	
Yes	142	Yes	151	Yes	238
No	83	No	144	No	56

Clearly the majority view expressed from the Seahouses area was that no change Model C was preferential.

Further analysis indicated that many of the consultees who answered 'No' to Model B stated they did so because Model B as presented relied upon a split-site High school being created.

Officers have attempted to analyse and collate the main reasons given in favour and against the various options; (, the Governing Bodies of the church schools analysed the responses to their consultation and presented conclusions and recommendations to their Governors for consideration).

6.1 Main responses in support for Model A:

- With falling rolls and rising costs for buildings , amalgamation makes sense and is more cost effective;
- Amalgamation would assist with the issues faced by Lindisfarne Middle School;
- A larger school will benefit pupils;
- Greater expertise with teachers based on one site.

6.2 Main responses against Model A

- The timescale of September 2015 (as presented) is too short to achieve an effective amalgamation of the two schools;
- The amalgamation would be too disruptive to pupils in both schools – parents, staff and pupils are happy with the present situation;
- The amalgamation would result in larger class sizes and lead to teachers having less time for individual pupils;
- Parental choice is being removed; many parents have chosen The Duke's Middle School specifically to match the needs of their child;

- This is a short-term solution to the Special Measures category placed on Lindisfarne Middle School;
- Leave the schools how they are until Lindisfarne is re-inspected by Ofsted and then reconsider structures
- There will be too many pupils on one site, large schools are not good for children
- The three tier system is a better system educationally

6.3 Main responses given in support of Model B:

- Each school would have clear responsibilities and could be held accountable fairly. Primary schools would be responsible for Early Years, Key Stages 1 and 2; and the secondary school would be responsible for Key Stage 3, 4, and 5.
- Year 7 and 8 students would have a broader curriculum with more specialist subjects and would have time to settle in before making GCSE choices;
- The current structure isn't working, this is clear from pupil outcomes at the end of Key Stage 4;
- Children receive an excellent education in first schools which according to Ofsted are mostly good or outstanding; so we would want them to stay there an additional two years;
- The majority of the country is 2-tier and it makes sense to come into line with the national model;
- There would be fewer transitions
- Transition in the middle of key stages are very disruptive to pupils;
- The financial savings would mean there would be more money available for all pupils
- The two tier system is better educationally

6.4 Main responses against Model B:

- Would support Model B but only if the high school could be wholly on one site.
- Children would have to travel further at a younger age; it is not appropriate to expect children aged 11 to travel between Seahouses and Alnwick
- Seahouses Middle School is thriving and a community asset and its removal would affect the wider community
- Parental choice would be reduced and those who wanted 3-tier could not opt for it
- The 3-tier system suits rural areas and is superior to the 2-tier system it provides better support for children's educational and emotional needs;
- Middle Schools in the Alnwick Partnership perform at a high level so why close them;
- Not good educationally or socially for children to be kept an additional 2 years in small primary schools;
- Primary schools do not have the facilities available in middle schools;
- Going from a small primary to a huge secondary school would be a shock to pupils at the age of 11;

- Families won't be attracted to move to villages without a first and middle school;
- We would not want 11 year olds mixing with 18 year olds because of the potential for bullying;
- There is no evidence that educational standards will improve as a result of movement to a 2-tier system.

6.5 Main responses in support of Model C (no change):

- This consultation has happened before and was rejected;
- This consultation has come about through just a few headteachers and governors, most people are happy with the current structure;
- Current system serves children well; pupils stay children for longer and do not have to grow up as quickly;
- 3-tier serves the Seahouses area well;
- It would cost too much money to reorganise and the money should be spent on improving education for pupils instead;
- There would be implications for viability of Glendale Middle School if change to 2-tier;
- Some people will lose their job.

6.6 Main responses against Model C (no change):

- Many of the responses against Model C are simply reflections of why consultees are in favour of Model B.
- Younger children can stay in their first school longer and won't have to get on the bus into Alnwick at age 9;
- This is not really an option. Change is needed as the current system is failing and pupils are underachieving;
- The National system is changing and we won't be allowed the choice for much longer by national government, they will take over from the local authority
- Need to attract more and better teachers into Northumberland; most teachers are trained for primary/secondary not the 3-tier system and most teachers like the two tier system.

7. Summary of feedback received from consultees attending consultation meetings

A total of 52 meetings were held including 18 with staff, 16 with Governing Bodies and 18 with parents and the public. Four additional meetings were held in schools outside of the partnership that might be significantly affected by any of the proposals. Detailed notes were taken and later analysed by council officers at each of the community school meetings; the Church schools were responsible for making their own notes and doing an analysis. The notes taken at the community schools are available in the background papers to this report and are published on the Council's website. Approximately 1200 individuals attended the meetings with some of the parent/public meetings at some schools attracting 200 consultees.

Many comments/questions/issues were raised at the meetings and it is difficult to summarise the discussions without being repetitive. Meetings lasted for more than 2

hours in most cases, however an attempt has been made to summarise the headline issues below, and the answers given. It should be emphasised that detailed notes were taken and analysed separately by council officers.

7.1 Alnwick Lindisfarne Middle School, 7 January 2015

a) Staff meeting:

Model A is it about finance but it should it be about the welfare of the children;

Model B still include two transitions;

Has pressure from Northumberland Estates been put on the Council to vacate The Dukes Middle School building? (*Answer – No*)

Would posts be ring-fenced in the first schools for middle school staff under Model B? (*Answer – LA would work with Unions to ensure minimum disruption to staff*)

b) Governors meeting:

Why has the Council put forward September 2015 for Model A? (*Answer – it could be done as soon as that*)

What are the costs of Model B?

Would there be any new builds at the first schools? (*Answer – would be determined as next stage of process*)

c) Parents/Public meeting:

Is Model B viable for the very small first schools? (*Answer – would be analysed in next stage of process*)

Could the plans for the high school be amended to include space for the Year 7 and 8s? (*Answer – would be analysed in next stage of process*)

Any amalgamation should take place in 2016, not 2015.

What provision will there be for children caught in the transition? (*Answer – would be determined as part of next stage of process*)

7.2 The Duke's Middle School, 8 January 2015

a) Staff meeting:

If further models arise during consultation, will it be extended? (*Answer – if they are significantly different then yes*)

A late decision by Council followed by having to make teachers redundant is a concern.

Will I have a job under Model A or Model B. (*Answer depends on outcomes of consultation and subsequent events, LA strongly committed to supporting staff*)

Model B still includes two transitions for pupils?

Could the sixth form be housed at the Lindisfarne site? (*Answer – no this would not be possible*)

Primary schools do not have the same sports facilities or equipment as middle schools;

b) Issues raised at the additional Governors meeting:

An additional meeting was held for one Governor who was unable to attend the Lindisfarne meeting:

Unable to understand the rationale for the proposed merger of the two middle schools;

Why risk The Duke's School's chance to become outstanding?

Massive impact on children and parents if schools were to merge in September 2015;

c) Issues raised at the Parents/Public meeting:

The pupil numbers County are predicting are not accurate; ***(Further separate meetings were held with this group to explain the LA calculations and their basis)***

Parental choice is being removed if close middle schools;

Concern there won't be enough facilities for the pupils if the two schools merge;

Are there enough Council funds for these options *(Answer this would be determined by elected members)*

The Duke's Parent Action Group – against Model A, might support Model B if properly consulted upon; ***(Meeting held with Action group and Director of Education and Skills)***

This is being rushed (Model A).

The split-high school site is a problem in Model B.

The impact on other schools in this area will be wider than just the Alnwick Partnership;

7.3 Seahouses Middle School, 14 January 2015

a) Staff meeting:

Middle schools are particularly important in rural areas;

Distance to Alnwick is too long a journey for an 11 year old;

How would all staff be looked after if school proposed for closure; difficulties with re-deployment due to rurality; *(LA position set out by HR officer)*

b) Governors meeting:

What advantages would there be for Seahouses First and Middle Schools if 2-tier was implemented? *(Answer – council does not have a preferred model, consultation as a result of school requests and need to maintain a coherent system)*

How viable would the very small first schools be under 2-tier? *(Answer - To be determined by further analysis)*

Issues should be resolved through partnership working, not change or organisation. *(Answer – many schools feel no change is not an option)*

How would pupils be supported as primary schools do not have specialist teachers? *(Answer – national Primary model would be adopted as determined by each school)*

Seahouses is a very different community to Alnwick and has different needs;

c) Parents/Public meeting:

Chair of Governors confirmed to parents and public that school wished to remain within 3-tier system;

Middle Schools are important in North Northumberland due to distance to large towns;

Could the excellent facilities at the Middle School be continued in a primary setting for the pupils? *(Answer – Primary facilities generally do not replicate middle school facilities)*

What safety measures would be in place for children moving between the sites at The Duchess's High School? *(Answer – for LA safeguarding children is a top priority)*

Could there be a mixed economy in the partnership i.e. could Seahouses area stay within 3-tier system? *(Answer – to be determined as part of next stage of analysis)*

Concerns around children not being able to participate in after-school activities if no transport after school hours; *(Answer – to be considered as next stage of analysis)*

Alnwick is a good performing partnership with good schools; the poor results in the County must be elsewhere;

7.4 Seahouses First School, 15 January 2015

a) Staff meeting:

Consultation has been driven by schools in Alnwick town;

Seahouses First and Middle School have great transitional links;

Is finance driving this process? *(Answer – No, consultation has come about due to requests of schools)*

Would Councillors not from this area know what is best for Seahouses?

b) Governors meeting:

Does the 2-tier system work better than the 3-tier? *(Answer, LA is concerned about standards not structures, but has responsibility to ensure whatever system is chosen by schools works)*

Year 7 and 8 pupils would be disrupted if on a split-site away from the rest of the High School; *(Answer – to be considered further)*

Pupils would lose out on extra-curricular activities if the middle school closed; *(Answer, would be closely monitored by LA and Ofsted)*

c) Parents/Public meeting:

Would there be an adult supervising children on the bus to and from Alnwick? (*Answer – transport to be considered as next stage*)

Could a mixed-economy operated in the partnership, with Seahouses remaining 3-tier? (*Answer, to be considered after consultation*)

7.5 Swansfield Park First School, 19 January 2015

a) Staff meeting:

The current Year 4 will be most affected by the disruption. Will there be resources to help them through transition? (*Answer – yes, if change occurred support would be provided*)

There are good staff at the middle schools and they would be needed for primary and secondary;

b) Governors meeting:

Parents worried about Year 3 and Year 4's; could temporary staff be hired in order to keep them here for September 2015? (*Answer – depends on outcome of consultation and governor's decision*)

What is wrong with being a sponsored academy? (*Answer – not relevant to current discussion – benefits outlined on DfE website*)

Could the high school be made bigger? (*Answer – to be considered as part of analysis*)

Parents want detail now of what would happen to this site, plans and finance etc? (*Answer – to be made available after consultation*)

Could there be a mixed-economy in the Alnwick Partnership? (*Answer – to be considered*)

c) Parents/Public meeting:

Who will make the final decision? (*Answer – elected members*)

A split-site high school adds another transition;

The rest of the country is 2-tier and the curriculum is set up for this.

Could Year 3 and Year 4 children stay at this school in temporary accommodation? (*Answer – to be determined after consultation by governors*)

What about specialisms, facilities etc that are currently at the middle school? Would these continue at primary? (*Answer – No, primary model is different*)

Does the national school place shortage affect Alnwick? (*Answer – not currently*)

7.6 Hipsburn First School, 21 January 2015

a) Staff meeting:

How would staff be affected by redundancy process? *(Answer from LA HR officer)*

Under these proposals, the high school would become a split-site again.

Is this a money-saving exercise? *(Answer – no)*

b) Governors meeting:

Is the high school in favour of operating across two sites? *(Answer – Aln federation put forward Model A, they are considering other options)*

What is the budget for reorganising first schools to primary? *(Answer – to be determined later)*

Would a new school building be considered for Hipsburn? *(Answer – to be determined later)*

c) Parents/Public meeting:

Does Hipsburn Governing Body support Model B?

Would pupils miss out on the facilities available at the middle schools?

Ability of first schools to deliver whole Key Stage 2 curriculum *(Answer – to be analysed later);*

Is a single site for the High School feasible? *(Answer – to be looked at)*

Could the general election have an impact? *(Answer – yes)*

7.7 Branton First School, 3 February 2015

a) Staff meeting:

Transport implications: length of travel distances and implications for transport costs of children travelling to schools out of the Alnwick Partnership. *(Answer – council has own policy and also national guidelines, further planning and analysis necessary)*

What would be the implications if some schools changed to primary even if the Council decided to maintain the status quo? *(Answer – system may become chaotic and places for pupils put at risk)*

b) Governors meeting:

Might reorganisation result in closer of small schools? *(Answer - the council is not currently proposing the closure of schools purely based upon size. However options may result in school closure or further consultation on closure)*

Extent of financial support for schools if reorganisation implemented; *(Answer – to be determined)*

Governors require further information required before making a decision; *(Answer – consultation report will provide comprehensive picture)*

Could there be two intakes into The Duchess High School i.e. at Year 7 and Year 9? *(Answer – depends on option adopted)*

Why change a system that is working. *(Answer – schools requested consultation)*

c) Parents/Public meeting:

If money was available, could The Duchess High School be made bigger to accommodate Years 7 and 8? *(Answer - yes it is possible but would be determined by elected members)*

What do Ofsted say is the best structure of Education, 2 or 3 tier? *(Answer- Ofsted focus on standards not structures)*

3-tier system suits rural communities, not right to keep children in a small school until age 11;

Glendale Middle School will suffer if Alnwick goes 2-tier;

Concerns around travel distance and times for younger children; *(Answer – LA would adhere to its policies and national guidance)*

Potential for High School to be on a split-site is a backward step;

7.8 Swarland First School, 5 February 2015

a) Staff meeting:

Pupil numbers at this school fluctuate – might be looking at a mixed age class of Years 3, 4, and 5 and 6 if became primary;

The Governors have discussed moving the school wholly into the Morpeth Partnership;

Concerns around recruiting and maintaining Year 5 and 6 staff;

b) Governors meeting:

What powers to the Governing Body have e.g. if we decide no change? *(Answer – council have powers to close school or extend age range)*

Could we opt out of the Alnwick Partnership? *(Answer – school could approach council to suggest this)*

How much funding is available for this school if it converted to primary? *(Answer – to be determined by analysis)*

Under Model B, year 4 will have years of disruption;

How many first schools would be viable as primary schools? *(Answer – to be determined by consultation analysis)*

Will middle school staff be forced into other schools? *(Answer – no)*

c) Parents/Public meeting:

Clarify the current structure of transition for pupils attending Swarland;

Can catchments not be moved for Swarland? *(Answer – school can request this)*

The majority of children feed into Dr Thomlinson's Middle School;

How much work has been done on the cost of these models? (*Answer – feasibility study followed by more detailed work after consultation*)

Some parents have no choice on where to send their children due to transport costs;

7.9 Shilbottle First School, 11 February 2015

a) Staff meeting:

Model B – For current Year 4s, this proposal (as published) of moving children to middle school then moving them again 2 years later is bad;

Would be preferable to retain the Year 4s at Hipsburn this September to minimise disruption for them;

We want to become a primary school, but don't want to be the only one who changes;

b) Governors meeting:

Model B is not a full rounded model. Children would still move sites twice if the high school is split.

Could the 6th Form at the High School be based at the Lindisfarne site instead of Years 7 and 8? (*Answer – no not feasible*)

How would middle school staff be impacted? (*Answer – from HR rep of council*)

This school has unanimously agreed that we want to become a primary school.

c) Parents/Public meeting:

If Model A, this reduces parental choice as only one middle school in Alnwick

[if don't want to send child to St Pauls' RC Middle School]

Parents of Year 4s want to keep them here for Years 5 and 6.

What is the decision-making process? Is it based on numbers? (*Answer - process outlined*)

7.10 The Duchess's Community High School, 24 February 2015

a) Staff meeting:

What is the general feeling on these proposals from other schools?

How will feedback be weighted e.g. small school feedback compared to larger school feedback? (*Answer – not a simple referendum model*)

Will the new planned high school building still go ahead? (*Answer – yes*)

If Year 7 and 8 could be accommodated on the Greensfield site, how soon could this happen? (*Answer – at earliest 2017, maybe later*)

Who would teach the Year 6 at the Lindisfarne site if Model B went ahead? (*Answer – to be determined by Headteacher*)

b) Parents/Public meeting:

If Council makes a certain decision one way regarding the models, can individual schools choose to make their own decision another way?
(Answer – process explained, plus given information re academies/free schools)

Who is responsible for paying redundancies as a result of school changes? (Answer – standard redundancy rules apply)

What will Model B cost overall? (Answer - to be determined after consultation)

Have numbers of children arising from new housing been factored in?
(Answer – full consideration has been made of pupil numbers)

It would take a large number of schools to change to primary/secondary to make it viable;

3-tier is more viable with the High School on one site.

7.11 Correspondence from the Church of England Diocese of Newcastle, 11 March 2015

The Local Authority received a written response to the consultation from the Church of England Diocese of Newcastle dated 11 March 2015. The key points are highlighted below:

“As an underlying principle, the Diocesan Education Board will seek to ensure the continuance of a thriving Church of England school presence in the Alnwick area...

A meeting of the six CE schools directly affected held on 3rd March confirmed that some are more keen, and in a better position than others to extend their age range. All however made it clear that if the Alnwick middle schools were to close then their preference would be to become primary schools. To remain as a first school (with pupils having to transfer to primary school for years 5 and 6 before going on to secondary school) would present pupils and parents with the perceived weaker elements of the three tier system (in particular two transfers of school) and none of the claimed benefits (for example access to specialist facilities).

The board shares the concerns of the Diocesan schools about the possibility of a mixed economy...

.....the Board considers that the County Council should bear any necessary capital costs.

The board believes that extending the age range of the high school, to include years 7 and 8 should not go ahead without a very clear and firm commitment from the local authority to finance a suitable extension on the new site within two years.”

Further meetings and discussions were held with representatives of the diocese to clarify their views. Further responses are expected and will be presented to cabinet on 18 June.

7.12 Correspondence from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, 28 April 2015

A letter from the Director of Education for the RC Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle was received by the Local Authority in response to the options for the Alnwick Partnership set out during the consultation. The key points are highlighted below:

- *If the decision is to continue with three-tier we will support this.*
- *If the decision is to move to two-tier incorporating an 11-18 secondary school on a SINGLE campus we will support this. This will mean that St Paul's would become an all-through primary school.*
- *If the decision is to move to two-tier but with Years 7 and 8 educated on a DIFFERENT campus to Years 9 – 13 then we would wish to give careful consideration as to the appropriate course of action for St Paul's."*

7.13 Responses from parish councils

All of the parish councils in the Alnwick Partnership area were consulted on the proposals for schools in the partnership.

Thirston Parish Council recognises the benefits of Model B, but has concerns regarding the ability of small rural first schools to offer adequate educational provision for pupils Years 5 and 6. An excerpt from their submission is as follows:

"Model A – A possibility. With falling numbers the two middle schools are perhaps not viable individually but would be viable if put together and they already have the same governing body. This would be relatively straight forward to "fix".

Model B – A possibility. This would be a much bigger shake up of the system. There are reservations about changing the first schools to primary schools. Rural first schools are often very small and there are concerns that these schools might not be able to give the children in Years 5 and 6 as good an educational experience as they currently get in the middle schools. Granted there would be smaller classes, but perhaps they would be in mixed year classes and it would be challenging for the first schools to provide the subject breadth that is currently available in middle schools. There is an argument that there is a plus point for primary schools/secondary schools model to have the break in the logical place, this middle school system does cut across KS2 and KS3 making continuity much more difficult, however middle schools suit the rural county by pulling children in from the country schools at a time when they need to be educationally stretched and benefit from the camaraderie of larger classes.

Model C – This is not really an option with the Lindisfarne being in special measures and the problem of falling numbers in both middle schools. “

Beadnell Parish Council expressed support for the continuation of the 3-tier system in the Seahouses area; an extract from their submission states:

“While we appreciate that the two-tier system fits with the exam structure, we are not persuaded that our middle schools fail to provide an adequate level of education to allow children to achieve the levels appropriate for their age. We therefore contend that while Model B may suit schools in the Alnwick area, it is not of educational benefit to children attending and feeding into Seahouses Middle School and would suggest an additional option which allows rural areas to retain a three-tier system with Alnwick town consulting on moving towards a two-tier system. This dual approach operates successfully in other parts of the county/country and would be a practical and appropriate solution for the Alnwick Partnership.

Longframlington Parish Council expressed the desire to preserve the pathway of pupils living in Longframlington to Dr Thomlinson’s Middle School and then to King Edward VI High School for the following reasons:

“Longframlington is different from other villages in catchment for the Alnwick Partnership.

1. Longframlington has NO schools. All our children are in catchment for the Alnwick Partnership for First School education at Swarland County First School, subsequently transferring to Morpeth’s Three Rivers Learning Trust.....

First School aged children travelling from Longframlington continue to make up approximately 50% of the total number of children attending Swarland County First School. As a result, we feel that the possible change for Swarland County First School from first to primary school would have a detrimental effect on the education of our Parish’s children and all other children attending the school. If Swarland County First School was to change to a primary very few children would remain within the system beyond the end of Year 4. As a result the cohort in Years 5 and 6 would be tiny. The reasons for this are that we believe the majority of Longframlington parents will continue to choose to follow the three tier system, sending their children to their next catchment school, Dr Thomlinson’s CE Middle School, leaving Swarland School at the end of Yr4.”

8. Pupil responses to consultation

Feedback from pupils in schools in the Alnwick Partnership was also sought as part of the consultation process. Older students in the middle schools and high schools were invited to complete the Response Form (electronically or in hard-copy), while some of the first schools were able to gather feedback from their pupils via classroom discussions.

Students in **Seahouses Middle School** felt that they enjoyed the learning and activities the school had to offer and that the teachers at the school were good.

Students in **The Duke's Middle School** expressed how safe they felt at school, how good the teachers are and how worried they would be about transferring to a larger school.

Pupils in the Year 4 School Council of **Seahouses First School** submitted a 'Save our Middle School' Petition in which they set out the reasons why they believe Seahouses Middle School should remain open, together with signatures from all the year groups in the school.

Pupils in various year groups in **St Michael's CE First School** were asked "Should St Michael's become a Primary School?" Pupils had various questions about how the school might operate as a primary school, e.g. would uniforms change? Would there be enough space for all classes? Many pupils had positive comments about the possibility of the school becoming a primary, e.g. they would like to stay at St Michael's as the teachers know them well, they could stay with friends for longer, while others commented that they may get bored with this school and would like to make new friends.

Swansfield Park First School held a discussion with the current Year 3 children. The school found that 38 of the children were in favour of the school becoming a primary, while 4 of the children wanted to go on to middle school. Reasons for wanting to stay at the school included staying with younger siblings for longer, feeling comfortable with teachers at Swansfield Park and concerned about stricter teachers at middle school. Those who wished to go to middle school were worried they wouldn't see their friends in the current Year 4 and wanted to meet new teachers.

Pupils at **Swarland First School** had many questions about how Year 5 and 6 would be managed, including whether there would be a classroom. There were mixed views about middle school; some felt they would like to have the same teachers and friends for longer, while others saw benefits of moving to middle school such as having more facilities, having more responsibility and going on trips.

9. **Save Seahouses Middle School Petition**

In addition to the information provided above, a petition was submitted for consideration. The petition asked petitioners to agree with the statement below:

"As a community we are fighting against the proposal of closing our Middle School, due to the proposed reorganisation of the Alnwick Partnership. We do not want our children travelling to Alnwick at age 11. If this decision is approved it will have a massive effect on the area. Please sign our petition and help us fight for our school and our children's future."

The petition gathered **1, 216 signatures**. This petition is due to be considered by the Petitions Committee at its meeting on the morning of 18 June 2015 and the report from that Committee will be presented to the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee and subsequently to Cabinet at their meetings later on the same day. The petition is included in the Background Papers to this report.

10. Alternative Models

Around 370 consultees suggested alternative models or variations to the three models consulted upon either via the Consultation Response Form or during meetings. Similar alternative models or variations have been pooled with an indication of how many consultees proposed that model, while other models included were proposed by only one or two consultees. Twenty-one alternative main models or variations were put forward as follows:

- 10.1 Extend the new building for The Duchess's Community High School on the Greensfield site to accommodate Years 7 and 8 (some consultees suggested this could be funded through sale of Lindisfarne Middle School site or retain The Duke's Middle School building until the High School is ready).

Comment: This was by far the most popular alternative proposal, which is a variation to Model B, with over 140 consultees putting it forward for consideration. The strength of feeling from consultees against the proposal to have Years 7 and 8 educated separately on the Lindisfarne site (and thereby continue to have a split-site high school) was compelling. Many consultees who put this alternative forward stated that the new building for The Duchess's Community High School on the Greensfield site (scheduled to open in September 2016) would remove the current split site arrangement between the main body of the high school and the 6th Form building, which for many years had been an organisational difficulty for the school. They believed that a proposal to have Year 7 and 8 students on a different site to the new building at Greensfield was a retrograde step educationally and negated one of the perceived benefits of the two-tier system, which is fewer transfers between school phases.

- 10.2 In relation to Model A, variations on delaying the amalgamation of Lindisfarne Middle School and The Duke's Middle School until September 2016. Nearly 50 consultees believed that the amalgamation of the two middle schools in September 2015 would be a rushed process with detrimental outcomes for students and staff. The additional year would allow more effective planning and preparation to take place.

Comment: This view was also expressed by the Governing Body of the Aln Federation that would be responsible for managing the amalgamation.

- 10.3 Variations on implementing Model B in the first schools in the Alnwick Partnership in September 2015 to reduce negative impact on the current Year 4 pupils/implement Model B fully in 2015, using portable classrooms

Comment: A significant number of the first schools in the Alnwick Partnership are in favour of extending their age ranges to become primary schools. Around 38 consultees felt that the current pupils in Year 4 in the first schools would be impacted most by a change to a primary/secondary system in the partnership under Model B; these pupils would join a middle school as Year 5 in September 2015 and would then become the new Year 6 in The Duchess High School in September 2016. A number of the first schools and parents believed that if the first schools extending their age range from

September 2015, the disruption for this group of pupils would be minimised.

- 10.4 Variations on extending the timescale of the implementation of Model B over a longer number of years in order to minimise the impact on individual groups of pupils

Comment: Around 35 consultees felt that Model B had merit but would be more effectively implemented if a longer timescale was planned; some suggested that Model A could be implemented in 2015, followed by Model B in a gradual, phased way while others felt a longer timescale would allow for the possibility of the high school to be extended without the need to use the Lindisfarne site for Years 7 and 8.

- 10.5 In the event of Model B being adopted in the greater part of the Alnwick Partnership, Seahouses Middle School and Seahouses First School to continue to operate within the current 3-tier system and pupils from Seahouses Middle, Glendale Middle and St Mary's Belford Middle School to continue to transfer to the Duchess's Community High School at the end of Year 8

Comment: This variation on Model B was strongly supported by parents and the community at the consultation meetings at Seahouses Middle and First Schools. This alternative would lead to a mixed-economy of school organisation within the Alnwick Partnership.

- 10.6 Transfer the entire catchment area of Swarland First School to the Morpeth Partnership if Model B is adopted by the Alnwick Partnership

Comment: Swarland First School is currently a 'split-catchment' school, where a small section of the catchment area that includes Longframlington village is included in the catchment area of Dr Thomlinson's CE Middle School in the Morpeth Partnership, which therefore subsequently feeds to King Edward VI High School. The remainder of the Swarland catchment area lies within the catchment area of Lindisfarne Middle School and The Duchess's Community High School. The majority of the pupils who attend Swarland First School, including those who reside in the section of the catchment within the Alnwick Partnership or entirely out catchment, transfer to Dr Thomlinson's CE Middle School at the end of Year 4 as a result of parental preference.

The concerns of the 16 or so consultees who put forward this variation are that should Model B be adopted, Swarland First School would not have the facilities to compete with Dr Thomlinson's Middle School and would therefore lose pupils at the end of Year 4. Consultees believe the school would not be able to sustain a viable Year 5 and 6 and provide the broad and balanced curriculum required. This view is shared by the Governing Body and staff of the school.

- 10.7 Variations on consolidating or closing the smaller first schools or creating 'primary hubs' (where pupils from the smaller first schools are transported to larger local primary schools in Years 5 and 6)

Comment: In the light of the implementation of Model B, concerns around the quality of the educational offer able to be made by the very small first schools to pupils in Years 5 and 6 was raised on a number of occasions during consultation, including by some of the smaller schools themselves.

10.8 Create a new 11-16 school in the north of the Alnwick Partnership to enable pupils to attend after-school activities, reducing the number of pupils entering Year 7 and 8 in The Duchess High School thereby enabling the whole school to be on the Greensfield site

10.9 Create a new 6th Form college in the north of the Alnwick Partnership/county

10.10 Alternative proposals in relation to schools in the St Paul's Federation

Comment: A number of alternative models/variations were put forward specifically in relation to the schools within the St Paul's Catholic Federation. One variation to the version of Model B consulted upon put forward by the school and the Roman Catholic Diocese was that, should a primary/secondary system be implemented, in the first year of implementation the Year 6 class should remain at the proposed St Paul's Primary School rather than transfer to the Lindisfarne site.

Other alternative models suggested were that the St Paul's site could become a primary and junior high school site (up to age 16) or first/middle/high school site (up to age 16).

There were other proposals made in relation to how the space at the St Paul's site could be used effectively should a primary/secondary system be implemented in Alnwick; these proposals included possibly basing the Council's LIST team in the building or the accommodating extended SEN provision.

10.11 If Model B approved, Branton First School to remain a first school and link with Glendale Middle School and/or become part of the Berwick Partnership

Comment: During consultation, Branton First School and community responded that they did not believe that the school could provide a viable primary offer in Years 5 and 6 due to the size of the school and its educational capacity. The school and community also responded that the usual route for children leaving Branton at the end of Year 4 was to attend Glendale Middle School and then carry on to The Duchess's Community High School for their upper secondary education.

10.12 Create an age 4-13 school on Seahouses Middle School site

Comment: The overwhelming response to consultation from consultees linked with the Seahouses area was that Seahouses had specific issues relating to rurality and that children from age eleven would have to undertake substantial bus journeys to Alnwick for their secondary education, possibly missing out on after-school activities as a result and mixing with older

students.

- 10.13 Put Years 7, 8 and 9 on the Lindisfarne site so as not to split the key stage
- 10.14 Place Key Stage 3 wholly in the High School, centralise Key Stage 2 wholly in the Middle Schools and change first schools into nursery and Key Stage 1 schools
- 10.15 Use the Lindisfarne Annex building to house Year 5
- 10.16 Re-draw The Duchess's High School catchment area and move Seahouses Middle School into the Berwick Partnership and Alnmouth area into the Coquet Partnership; this will reduce numbers feeding to Alnwick and enable all of the Year 7 and 8 pupils to fit onto the Greensfield site
- 10.17 If Model B implemented, preserve free transport for Glendale Middle School pupils to The Duchess's Community High School from Year 9 onwards
- 10.18 Consider opening a new primary school in Alnwick so there are 4 small schools instead of 3 large schools
- 10.19 Retain the first schools and build a middle school on the new high school site / create a learning village on the high school with a first, middle and high school or primary/secondary arrangement
- 10.20 Include schools in the Amble Partnership as many children feed to The Duchess's Community High School
- 10.21 Consult on a county-wide basis to introduce the 2-tier system across the County to remove barriers due to different systems of organisation

11. Conclusions and recommendations

- 11.1 The variety of alternative models put forward reflects the many and varied views on what would be the most effective system of school organisation for the Alnwick Partnership. It is unlikely that complete consensus will be achieved whatever model is finally adopted, even if the decision was to remain with the status quo. Therefore this report sets out a compromise position founded upon the principles of providing children with the best possible education taking into account the views of governors, headteachers, staff, parents, pupils and the wider community. **It is not based upon a philosophical approach that believes one particular system is in principle better than another. However it recognises that unless an attempt is made to bring continuity and order to the system then there is a danger that the configuration of schools across the partnership becomes unviable and disadvantages children and parents**
- 11.2 The suggestion to expand the new building for The Duchess's Community High School at the Greensfield site in order to accommodate Years 7 and 8 was the most popular and also has significant educational merit. However it would involve significant cost as set out below for consideration by Cabinet. The Governing Bodies of **twelve of the eighteen schools in the**

partnership stated that they are in favour of the implementation of Model B, albeit with certain conditions (the expansion of the High School building at the Greensfield site to accommodate Years 7 and 8). **These twelve schools educate 2,656 of the 2,991 pupils on roll in the Alnwick Partnership, which is 89% of the total pupil population in the partnership.**

- 11.3 **There was considerable concern expressed whether some of the small first schools would be able to offer a broad and balanced curriculum to pupils in Years 5 and 6 should they become primary schools.** This is a valid concern and one that is likely to become even more detrimental if national government changes to curricular structures are put in place. If a modified version of Model B is adopted then the continuation of very small first schools within the Alnwick partnership as first schools would not be a viable option as there would be no middle schools. **Therefore it is recommended that further consultation takes place on the potential closure of Branton First School and Embleton Vincent Edwards CE First School. This was not included as part of the original consultation process, therefore additional extensive consultation is necessary.** The School Organisation Regulations require that special consideration is given when proposing the closure of small, rural primary schools and these matters will be addressed through the proposed consultation process
- 11.4 **Legislation allows parents the right to express a preference to be admitted to a school of their choice**, and schools use catchment areas as a tool to give priority in the admissions process to local children. Catchment areas are also used by the Local Authority to determine eligibility for free transport. Some parents express a preference for a school which is closest but outside of the catchment area, and can also receive free transport. However, a number of parents choose to send their children to schools outside of catchment areas and pay the transport costs themselves because they perceive these schools to be the best choice for their children. Under Model B (revised) these principles would not change.

However, since each address must be included in one, and only one, catchment area for pupils of any given age, some changes to catchment areas are unavoidable. With the proposed closure of all four Middle Schools, their catchment areas would disappear and in general the catchment area of the High School would apply from Year 7 and the catchment area of all the First Schools would apply until the end of Year 6.

The catchment area of Embleton CE First School in respect of Reception to Year 6 would be transferred to another school within the Alnwick partnership, and it is proposed to divide this between Longhoughton CE Primary and Ellingham CE Primary Schools. Similarly, the catchment area of Branton First School in respect of Reception to Year 6 would be transferred to another school within the Alnwick partnership, and it is proposed to allocate this in its entirety to Whittingham CE Primary.

In the case of Swarland First School, part of the catchment area feeds into KEVI via Dr Thomlinson's CE Middle School, and it is not proposed to change these arrangements. Consequently, the catchment area of Swarland

First School would remain unchanged for Reception to Year 4, but will be reduced in size for Years 5 and 6 by excluding that part of the catchment area around Longframlington that feeds ultimately into KEVI. Other than these no changes to catchment areas are being proposed but would be considered as part of any further consultation..

- 11.5 Considerable opposition has been expressed by parents in Seahouses village regarding any change. However balancing all the arguments regarding the future of the Alnwick partnership as a whole **the development of a 'mixed economy' of schools is not seen as a desirable and sound educational option.** If this were agreed then a small cohort of children from Seahouses Middle school would have to transfer into a well-established larger cohort of Year 9 children at the Duchess High School. This would put them at a considerable disadvantage compared to their peer group.

In the longer term, if the Model B (revised) were to become well established, parents may decide to opt to send their children to High school aged 11 and therefore destabilise numbers in the Middle school.

Concern was also expressed about access to extra-curricular activities for pupils from rural areas. This is a common issue across many schools in Northumberland and one that several schools have very successfully overcome, including The Duchess' High School which already has an arrangement in place with the Arriva bus company to pay the fares of students in Years 9 to 13 who have stayed behind at school to take part in extra-curricular activities, including those from Seahouses. The same arrangement would be available for Years 7 and 8. The local authority and Ofsted would carefully monitor the position at the new school.

Additional comments were made regarding the benefits of the three-tier model of education, it is important to re-iterate that Model B (revised) proposals have **not** been developed by the authority as a means of changing structures, rather as a response to school plans and proposals and the need to have a system that is **coherent**. There are very successful first and middle school arrangements in other parts of the county, in these partnerships the debate about structures has not been brought to the attention of the authority as a potential barrier to educational success.

- 11.6 Model A was put forward by the Governing Body of the Aln Federation, which was at that time unaware of the potential for a Model B proposal. They have indicated they would prefer Model B, provided that Years 7 to 11 and the Sixth Form of The Duchess's Community High School could be educated on the Greensfield site.
- 11.7 Model C envisages no change to any of the schools in the Alnwick Partnership. However, during consultation it became clear that in practice **it is unlikely that the status quo will be maintained due to the plans of some schools to unilaterally change the age range of their schools under School Organisation regulations,** provided sufficient accommodation or sufficient funding is in place. Even if a relatively small number of first schools became primary, this would lead to a significant destabilisation of the Alnwick Partnership in particular affecting middle

schools who would need to shed staff as a result of having fewer pupils in Years 5 and 6.

- 11.8 There would be implications for staff in all schools within the whole of the Alnwick Partnership as a result of any of the models for change, especially for those staff employed in the schools proposed for closure. **Discussions with the Headteachers of all schools impacted and with the Trades Unions have been held and further detailed discussions will be undertaken so as to minimise the staffing implications of the proposals.**
- 11.9 Transport for all pupils affected by the proposed reorganisation should it be approved would be arranged in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy. Should Model B (revised) be approved for implementation, **most pupils in Years 5 and 6 in schools reorganising would have shorter journeys to schools as they would be educated for an additional two years in their local communities.** A crucial part of further consultations about the closure of Branton and Embleton Vincent Edwards First schools would be the implications for young children on transport arrangements. All proposals would have to meet best practice outlined in the Department for Education Guidance on Home to School Transport.

Transport issues have been analysed and the change proposed in Model B (revised) would mean that on average secondary aged pupils from Seahouses village would spend 45 minutes each way travelling to and from school; journeys from the villages such as Bamburgh may add an additional short time to student's journeys. This would not breach the Department for Education's School Travel and Transport guidance, which recommends that students of secondary age (11 upwards), should travel no more than 75 minutes each way to and from school.

In relation to the Branton and Embleton Vincent Edwards First Schools that are proposed for closure, journey times for existing pupils to the schools proposed to receive them have been assessed and these would not be in excess of the 45 minutes recommended by the DfE; **for the current Branton pupils, the journey to Whittingham would be less than 30 minutes for the majority, while in the case of Embleton pupils, the journey to either Ellingham or Longhoughton would be under fifteen minutes for the majority.**

- 11.10 Several consultees suggested that federations of small schools would be a solution by the creation of 'primary hubs' or trusts. Governing bodies have had this option for several years and as yet there has been limited success in setting up such arrangements. **The Local Authority will continue to encourage governing bodies to be proactive about considering partnership approaches and collaboration that meet the needs of small rural communities.** Other consultees suggested the establishment of new schools in the Alnwick partnership, for example an 11-16 school in the north of the partnership area or create a new school in Seahouses. **Under school organisation regulations, any new school created would have to be an academy or free school, therefore run by a sponsor.**

12. Revised Model B

Table 1

SCHOOL	CURRENT SITUATION			PROPOSED PRIMARY/SECONDARY MODEL		
	Net Capacity in Sept 2014 (Number on Roll in Jan 2015)	Forms of Entry (FE)	Planned Admission Number (PAN) 2014/15	Capacity	Forms of Entry (FE)	Planned Admission Number (PAN)
Swansfield Park First School	210 (201)	1.6	48	315	1.5	45
St Michael's CE First School	210 (122)	1.4	42	210	1	30
St Paul's RC VA First School	135 (129)	0.8	24	210	1	30
Branton First School	30 (13)	0.2	6	Proposed closure - 31 August 2017		
Ellingham CE VA First School	65 (53)	0.4	12	105	0.5	15
Embleton Vincent Edward's CE First School	75 (24)	0.4	12	Proposed closure - 31 August 2016		
Felton CE First School	70 (56)	0.7	22	105	0.5	15
Hipsburn First School	108 (92)	0.7	20	150	0.7	21
Longhoughton First School	187 (99)	1.7	35	210	1	30
Seahouses First School	115 (74)	0.8	23	150	0.7	21
Shilbottle First School	85 (116)	0.8	25	210	1	30
Swarland First School	110 (66)	0.7	22	120	0.6	17
Whittingham First School	75 (46)	0.5	15	105	0.5	15
Alnwick Lindisfarne Middle School)	535 (355)	4	120	Proposed closure - 31 August 2017		
The Duke's Middle School	342 (151)	2.3	68	Proposed closure - 31 August 2017		
Seahouses Middle School	144 (102)	1.1	34	Proposed closure - 31 August 2017		
St Paul's RC VA Middle School	261 (182)	1.7	50	Proposed closure - 31 August 2017		
The Duchess's Community High School	1181 (1109)	10	300	1651 (all pupils at Greensfield site)	8.3	250

13. Timeline and transitional arrangements

13.1 Hipsburn, Shilbottle, Swansfield Park, Seahouses, Swarland, St Michael's CE, Longhoughton CE, Whittingham CE, Ellingham CE, Felton CE, St Paul's RC First Schools -

1 September 2016

- Pupils in Year 4 in the first schools on 31 August 2016 would be retained by their new primary schools as Year 5.
- All four middle schools in the partnership would not receive a Year 5 intake and operate with Years 6, 7 and 8 only.

1 September 2018

- Pupils in Year 6 in the primary schools on 31 August 2018 would transfer as the new Year 7 to The Duchess's Community High School at the Greensfield site.

13.2 Branton First School: Proposed closure timeline

1 September 2016

- Pupils in Year 4 in Branton First School on 31 August 2016 would transfer either to Glendale Middle School (this is the common pattern currently) or another middle school or to one of the new primary schools in the partnership according to parental preference as Year 5.

31 August 2017

- Branton First School would close.

1 September 2017

- All pupils would be guaranteed a place in Whittingham CE Primary School, which is the proposed catchment school, or to another school offering primary provision according to parental preference.

13.3 Embleton Vincent Edwards CE First School: Proposed closure timeline

31 August 2016

- Embleton Vincent Edwards First School would close.

1 September 2016

- All pupils would be guaranteed a place at Ellingham CE Primary School or Longhoughton CE Primary School, whichever is the relevant proposed catchment school, or to another school offering primary provision according to parental preference.

13.4 Alnwick Lindisfarne, The Dukes, Seahouses and St Paul's Middle Schools

1 September 2016

- All four middle schools in the partnership would not receive a Year 5 intake and operate with Years 6, 7 and 8 only.

31 August 2017

- The middle schools in the partnership would close on 31 August 2017.

1 September 2017

- Pupils in Year 8 in all the middle schools in August 2017 would transfer as Year 9 as usual to either The Duchess's Community High School at its new site at Greensfield, or to another high school according to parental preference.
- Pupils in Years 6 and 7 in all the middle schools in August 2017 would be guaranteed a place as the new Years 7 and 8 in The Duchess's Community High School, although some pupils in Years 6 and 7 in St Paul's Middle School may choose to transfer to St Benet Biscop RC High School in Bedlington to join the Year 7 and Year 8 cohorts in that school or to another middle, high or secondary school according to parental preference.

13.5 The Duchess's Community High School

1 September 2016

- The Duchess Community High school relocates to its new building on the Greensfield site in Alnwick.
- The school will receive its new Year 9 intake as normal.

1 September 2017

- The school will receive its new Year 9 intake as normal.
- The school would receive new Years 7 and 8 transferring from the closed middle schools, to be educated in new accommodation on the Greensfield site. However, should the new accommodation not be complete, it may be necessary to use the Lindisfarne site as a short-term temporary measure.

1 September 2018

- The school would receive some additional pupils from Middle Schools outside of the partnership subject to places being available.
- The Duchess Community High school receives its new Year 7 transferring from the primary schools.

14. Costs of the Proposed Recommendations including School Buildings

Building costs set out in Table 2 are estimates and should be treated as draft as they are subject to further detailed work should Model B (revised) be implemented.

Table 2

School	Description	Costs
St Michael's CE First School	School has capacity within current building	Nil
Felton CE First School	School has capacity within current building	Nil
St Paul's RC First School	School has capacity within current building	Nil
The Duchess's High School	Modify new build to allow Years 7 and 8 pupils to be accommodated on single site	£6m
Swansfield Park First School	Extension works to accommodate additional pupils	£1.1m
Seahouses First school Option 1 for Primary school in Seahouses	Extension works should the first school site to be used to implement Model B (revised)	£600k
Seahouses Middle school Option 2 for Primary School in Seahouses	Remodel Middle school building to provide primary education	£895k
Shilbottle First	Extension works to accommodate additional pupils	£743k
Hipsburn First school	Extension works to accommodate additional pupils	£260k
Swarland First School	Extension works to accommodate additional pupils	£57k
Whittingham CE First School	Internal remodelling to create an additional classroom	£66k
Longhoughton CE First School	Extension works to accommodate additional pupils	£260k
Ellingham CE First School	Extension works to accommodate additional pupils	£260k

The total cost of funding the capital work associated with Model B (Revised) is **£9.6m** plus any dilapidation costs associated with The Duke's Middle School.

Table 3

Funding Source	Contribution
Council's Medium Term Plan	£4.5m
School's Capital Investment Programme	£4.9m
LCVAP (church capital grant) (90% of RC and C of E Aided costs.) NOTE: Further discussions to take place with diocese regarding this process	£234k

To support the investment identified above, there is a potential for the release of the vacant school sites as a result of the consultation; this has a potential to gain relatively modest capital receipts that would contribute towards the investment in the school estate.

IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE REPORT

Policy:	The consultation has been consistent with the Council's policy to implement changes in the structure of schools as appropriate in accordance with local wishes and needs so as to ensure that pupils attend only good schools.
Finance and value for money	<p>This consultation has not been carried out as a cost saving exercise and will have significant additional funding implications. These will be offset in the long term by the possible closure of the middle schools could save £140k per school in a full year, whilst the possible closure of the first schools could save £110k per school in a full year. In addition, ceasing to use The Duke's Middle School site would save a further £93k in a full year. These savings would accrue to the Dedicated Schools Grant and be spent on the education of pupils across the whole county.</p> <p>Any of the four middle schools may close with a surplus or a deficit depending upon the costs, including redundancy costs, which may need to incur during the period leading up to the proposed closures. Any surplus would accrue to the DSG whilst any deficit would have to be met from either the DSG or other Children's Service's budgets.</p> <p>Extensive buildings costs in relation to Model B varied have been identified.</p>
Human Resources:	There would be a need to support staff displaced as a result of any proposed reorganisation with redeployment opportunities.
Property	Refer to 'Finance and value for money' above
Equalities	An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out concurrently with consultation and is included at Appendix 2.
Risk Assessment	A full risk assessment has been carried out on the project during the consultation period.
Carbon Reduction	It is not envisaged that this proposal would have a significant positive or negative impact on carbon reduction.
Crime & Disorder	This report has considered Section 17 (CDA) and

the duty it imposes and there are no implications arising from it.

Customer Considerations: The majority of governing bodies who represent schools and in turn parents and pupils are in favour of this proposal. A significant minority, centred around Seahouses do not believe the proposal is appropriate.

Consultation This report has been considered by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Chief Legal Officer.

Wards Bamburgh; Longhoughton; Amble West with Warkworth; Shilbottle; Alnwick; Wooler; Rothbury; Longhorsley

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Executive Director of Children's Services Report to Policy Board 10 December 2014

Notes of meetings held during consultation

Feedback from consultation in the form of Response Forms, emails and letters received

Report sign off

Finance Officer	JB
Monitoring Officer/Legal	LM
Human Resources	PG
Procurement	TP
I.T.	NA
Executive Director	DL
Portfolio Holder	RA

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01670

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Consultation Register

Appendix 2 – Equalities Impact Assessment

Consultation Register

Staff, Governors, Parents and Pupils of the following schools directly affected by proposal:

Duchess High School
Lindisfarne Middle School
The Dukes Middle School
Seahouses Middle School
St Paul's Middle School
St Michael's First School
Branton First School
Ellingham CE First School
Embleton CE First School
Felton CE First School
Hipsburn First School
Longhoughton CE First School
Seahouses First School
Shilbottle First School
St Paul's RC First School
Swansfield Park First School
Swarland First School
Whittingham CE First School

Other schools potentially impacted by the proposals

Dr Thomlinson's CE Middle School
St Mary's CE Middle School, Belford
Glendale Middle School
Belford First School
Wooler First School
Warkworth First School
Acklington First School
Rothbury First School
Netherton North Side First School
Barndale House Special School
St Benet Biscop Catholic Academy
King Edward VI High School
James Calvert Spence High School

Church of England Diocese of Newcastle

Roman Catholic Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle

Early Years Care and Education Providers in the locality

Constituency MP

Parish Councils

Unions



Northumberland County Council

Equality Impact Assessment

To be completed for all key changes, decisions and proposals. Cite specific data and consultation evidence wherever possible. Further guidance is available at:

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=3281>

Duties which need to be considered:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

PART 1 – Overview of the change, decision or proposal

Title of the change, decision or proposal:

Proposals under consultation 10 December 2014 – 11 March 2015

The Council consulted on 3 broad options for schools in the Alnwick Partnership as follows:

Model A – Amalgamate The Duke's Middle School with Lindisfarne Middle School on the Lindisfarne site with effect from 1 September 2015.

Model B – Close The Duke's Middle School, Lindisfarne Middle School and Seahouses Middle School with effect from 31 August 2016, extend the age ranges of Branton, Seahouses, Shilbottle, Swarland, Hipsburn and Swansfield Park First Schools to become Primary Schools with effect from 1 September 2016 and extend the age range of The Duchess's Community High School with effect from 1 September 2016.

Model C – No change to the current system of education

All interested parties in line with statutory guidance were consulted by the Council, including parents, staff, pupils and Governors of the schools named above, other schools that would be impacted, parish councils, early years providers, unions, relevant MP and others.

The Governing Bodies of Embleton Vincent Edwards CE First School, Ellingham CE First School, St Michael's CE First School, Longhoughton CE First School, Felton CE First School and Whittingham CE First Schools have consulted concurrently with the Council on proposals to extend the age ranges of their respective schools to become

Primary Schools with effect from 1 September 2016, while the Governing Body of the St Paul's Federation have consulted concurrently on proposals to close St Paul's RCVA Middle School with effect from 31 August 2016 and extend the age range of St Paul's RCVA First School with effect from 1 September 2016.

The Council's Policy Board approved a 13 week consultation on the above proposals. The outcomes of consultation will be reported back to Policy Board on 18 June 2015.

Date of equality impact assessment: Initial assessment March/April 2015.

Brief description of the change, decision or proposal:

As provided in 1.

Name(s) and role(s) of officer(s) completing the assessment:

Lorraine Fife, FACT Board and School Organisation Officer

Overall, what are the outcomes of the change, decision or proposal expected to be? (E.g. will it reduce/terminate a low-priority service, maintain service outcomes at reduced cost, or change the balance of funding responsibility for a service which will remain the same?)

Consultation has been undertaken to gauge the views of interested parties on all proposals. The Council did not have a preferred option at the inception of consultation. A decision made by Councillors following consultation on whether or not to support any of the proposals will be made after consideration of all views put before them and following this consideration of what they believe to be in the best interests of all the children in the Alnwick Partnership.

If you judge that this proposal is **not** relevant to some protected characteristics, tick these below (and explain underneath how you have reached this judgement).

Disability ☐ Sex ☒ Age ☐ Race ☒ Religion ☒ Sexual orientation ☐

People who have changed gender ☒ Women who are pregnant or have babies ☐

Employees who are married/in civil partnerships ☒

[Double-click this link to modify the form to match this list](#)

The characteristics checked above are not relevant because:

Should the Council decide to implement Model A, (albeit at an alternative implementation date to that consulted upon), all pupils who would have remained on roll at Lindisfarne Middle School at the implementation had it remained open would be affected equally by the proposal. These pupils would be guaranteed places at The Duke's Middle School from the implementation date. Parents would also be able to exercise their parental preference for another school subject to places being available in the selected alternative schools.

Should the Council decide to implement Model B, all pupils who would have remained on roll at The Duke's, Lindisfarne and Seahouses Middle Schools on 1 September 2016 had they remained open would be affected equally by the proposal. These pupils would be guaranteed places at The Duchess's Community High School from 1 September 2016. Parents would also be able to exercise their parental preference for another school subject to places being available in the selected alternative schools.

In the medium to long-term, there is no reason to believe that the proposed closure of The Duke's, Lindisfarne and Seahouses Middle Schools and the reorganisation of Branton, Seahouses, Shilbottle, Swarland, Hipsburn and Swansfield Park First Schools would affect more positively or negatively than their peers any group of children, parents or staff defined by their gender, race or gender-reassignment status. Should the Council decide to implement either Model A or Model B (see para. 1), during the immediate process of transition, we will invite families to let us know if they are concerned about the impact that the change may have on the support networks for any individual children who may be at particular risk of harassment or discrimination. Reasonable adjustments will be made to support individual disabled pupils who move to an alternative school or are affected by reorganisation.

In the event of the implementation of either Model A or Model B, existing HR policies covering organisational change and redundancy would apply to staff employed at any of the community middle schools affected in the Alnwick Partnership. These are designed to ensure that the equalities duties of the Council and the schools are fully met. Reasonable adjustments will be made for disabled members of staff. The Council operates a guaranteed interview scheme for disabled members of staff

Option C (status quo) would involve no change to current arrangements for pupils and staff.

PART 2 – Relevance to different Protected Characteristics

Answer these questions both in relation to people who use services and employees

Disability

Note: "disabled people" includes people with physical, learning and sensory disabilities, people with a long-term illness, and people with mental health problems. You should consider potential impacts on all of these groups.

What do you know about usage of the services affected by this change, decision or proposal by disabled people, about disabled people's experiences of it, and about any current barriers to access?

There is currently no evidence to suggest that any member of the community with a disability would be disproportionately impacted positively or negatively should the approval be given to implement Model A or Model B.

Any pupil, parent or member of staff in the community schools impacted directly by the implementation of Model A or Model B who has a disability would not be affected by these proposals as any reasonable adjustments or arrangements already in place to would be unchanged if moving to a new school appropriate reasonable adjustments will be made

By default, there would be no change to current arrangements for disabled people as a result of a Council decision to uphold Model C.

Could disabled people be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?

In the event of a decision to implement Model A or Model B, in the medium to long term, there is no reason to believe that the proposals would affect disabled children, staff or parents more positively or negatively than their peers. In particular, the support identified through the special educational needs system would continue to be provided to all pupils who need it. During the immediate process of transition, we will consult families about any specific potential impacts on individuals; for instance and we would ensure that appropriate individual arrangements are made where this is necessary to avoid potential adverse impacts.

By default, there would be no change to current arrangements for disabled people as a result of a Council decision to uphold Model C.

Could the change, decision or proposal affect the ability of disabled people to participate in public life? (e.g. by affecting their ability to go to meetings, take up public appointments etc.)

The implementation of either Model A or Model B would not affect any current arrangements for disabled people to participate in public life as access to the school buildings would remain the same as currently.

Under Model C, there would be no change to current arrangements for disabled people and therefore there would be no impact on the ability of disabled people to participate in public life as a result of this proposal.

Could the change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards disabled people?
(e.g. by increasing or reducing their presence in the community)

There is no evidence to suggest that the implementation of Model A or Model B would affect public attitudes either positively or negatively towards disabled people. Model C would have result in no change to current arrangements.

Could the change, decision or proposal make it more or less likely that disabled people will be at risk of harassment or victimisation?

No evidence has arisen through consultation to suggest that the implementation of either Model A or Model B would increase or decrease any risk of harassment or victimisation above that which may already exist to any pupil, member of staff or member of the community with a disability. Should either proposal be implemented, in line with current special educational needs systems families would be consulted about any potential issues for individual children arising from the disruption of support networks during the process of transition. Disabled children, parents and staff will be given the opportunity to discuss any support or particular issues throughout the process

Implementation of Model C would result in no change to current arrangements.

If there are risks that disabled people could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

So far during the consultation process, no risks that identify that any pupils or members of staff with a disability in any of the schools that would be involved in change could be disproportionately disadvantaged through the implementation of either Model A or Model B. In any event, should either Model A or Model B be approved for implementation and any disproportionate disadvantages identified during the planning, implementation and ongoing monitoring phases, these would be reviewed and solutions to remove such disadvantages would be sought.

Implementation of Model C would result in no change to current arrangements.

Are there opportunities to create *positive* impacts for disabled people linked to this change, decision or proposal?

No evidence has arisen at this stage.

Age

What do you know about usage of the services affected by this change, decision or proposal by people of different age groups, about their experiences of it, and about any current barriers to access?

The Duke's, Lindisfarne and Seahouses Middle Schools provide education to pupils between the age of 9 and 13, Branton, Seahouses, Shilbottle, Swarland, Hipsburn and Swansfield Park First Schools currently provide education to pupils aged either 3-9 or 4-9 respectively and The Duchess's Community High School provides education to students between the ages of 13 and 18.

Staff at the 3 community Middle Schools in the Alnwick Partnership are employed equitably in accordance with the relevant schools' and council's employment policies. In relation to Model A, should approval for closure of Lindisfarne Middle School be given, the Governing Body of the Aln Federation, working with the County Council, would seek suitable alternative employment for staff within the schools in the federation in the first instance in accordance with the schools' and council's redeployment policies on an equitable basis, regardless of age.

Similarly, should Model B be approved for implementation, the County Council (and the Aln Federation Governing Body in relation to staff working in The Duke's and Lindisfarne Middle School) would seek suitable alternative employment for staff in the 3 community schools in accordance with the schools' and council's redeployment policies on an equitable basis, regardless of age.

In relation to the first schools under Model B, the age range of the schools would be extended up to age 11 years in a phased way. However, parents would still be able to express a preference to transfer their child to a local middle school at the end of Year 4. No staff at the first schools above would be at risk of redundancy should Model B be approved for implementation.

Under Model C, there would be no change to current arrangements for staff at the schools impacted by the three proposals under consultation.

Could people of different age groups be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?

See para. 13. Above.

Could the change, decision or proposal affect the ability of people of different age groups to participate in public life? (e.g. by affecting their ability to go to meetings, take up public appointments etc.)

There is no evidence to suggest that Model A or Model B would have any effect on the ability of different age groups to participate in public life.

Model C maintains current arrangements and would have no impact on participation of different age groups in public life.

Could the change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards people of different age groups? (e.g. by increasing or reducing their presence in the community)

In relation to Model A, no evidence has arisen from consultation to suggest that public attitudes to pupils at the schools impacted by either proposal would be affected should the relevant changes be implemented. However, in relation to Model A, there is a possibility that local residents who live in close proximity to Lindisfarne Middle School may perceive that parking outside of the schools at start and finish times may become problematic due to the increased numbers of pupils at the school. Should this issue be raised by local residents, action would be taken to investigate the impact of any increase in traffic and where necessary measures put in place to address it.

Similarly in relation to Model B, no actual evidence has been presented during consultation to suggest that public attitudes to pupils at the schools impacted by either proposal would be affected should the relevant changes be implemented. However, in relation to Model B, there is a possibility that local residents who live in close proximity to any of the first schools, the Lindisfarne Middle School site and to The Duchess's High School site may perceive that parking outside of the schools at start and finish times has increased due to additional year groups at those schools/sites. Should this issue be raised by local residents, action would be taken to investigate the impact of any increase in traffic and where necessary ameliorating measures put in place.

Model C, the continuation of current arrangements, would have no impact on public attitudes to different age groups.

Could the change, decision or proposal make it more or less likely that people of different age groups will be at risk of harassment or victimisation?

No evidence has arisen to suggest that Model A or Model B would increase or reduce the risk of harassment or victimisation of people of other pupils within the schools. However, in relation to Model B where pupils currently in Year 4 in the community first schools and pupils currently in Years 5 and 6 in the 3 community middle schools would transfer to The Duchess's High School as Years 6, 7 and 8 in September 2016, some parents of pupils in those age groups during consultation have expressed concern that younger pupils travelling to school or within the school would be at increased risk of harassment or bullying from older pupils. Similarly, some parents of pupils in The Duke's Middle School expressed concern that their children could be at increased risk of harassment through joining a larger cohort of pupils at the Lindisfarne Middle School site.

While the concerns of parents are recognised, all schools have anti-bullying policies and arrangements in place to as far as possible remove the risk of bullying of pupils by fellow pupils. Should either Model A or Model B be approved for implementation, schools would review their current anti-bullying and pupil safety policies to assess whether additional measures were required to be put in place.

If there are risks that people of different age groups could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

There has been no evidence arising from consultation to suggest that any group would be disproportionately disadvantaged through the implementation of either Model A or Model B (refer to para. 4 re staff in middle schools). However, if such evidence is identified, this would be reviewed and solutions to remove such disadvantages would be sought.

Are there opportunities to create *positive* impacts for people of different age groups linked to this change, decision or proposal?

Refer to paras. 4 and para 12.

Pregnancy and Maternity

Note: the law covers pregnant women or those who have given birth within the last 26 weeks, and those who are breast feeding.

What do you know about usage of the services affected by this change, decision or proposal by pregnant women and those who have children under 26 weeks, about their experiences of it, and about any current barriers to access?

In relation to Model A and Model B, there is no evidence to suggest that the proposals would create any barriers to pupils accessing any of the schools impacted by the proposals who have a parent who may be pregnant or who has other children under 26 weeks old.

Model C would have no impact on current arrangements.

Could pregnant women and those with children under 26 weeks be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?

No evidence has arisen at this stage to suggest that pregnant women and those with children under 26 weeks could be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the proposals under Model A or Model B.

Could the change, decision or proposal affect the ability of pregnant women or those with children under 26 weeks participate in public life? (e.g. by affecting their ability to go to meetings, take up public appointments etc.)

There is no evidence to suggest that Model A or Model B would affect the ability of this protected group to participate in public life under the proposals.

Model C would retain current arrangements.

Could the change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards pregnant women or those with children under 26 weeks? (e.g. by increasing or reducing their presence in the community)

There is no evidence to suggest that Model A or Model B would have any effect on public attitudes to this protected group under the proposals.

A decision to carry on with Model C (the status quo) would maintain current arrangements.

Could the change, decision or proposal make it more or less likely that pregnancy women or those with children under 26 weeks will be at risk of harassment or victimisation?

No evidence has arisen during consultation to suggest that either Model A or Model B would make it more or less likely that this protected group would be at risk of harassment or victimisation under the proposals. Model C would have no impact on current arrangements.

If there are risks that pregnant women or those with children under 26 weeks could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

No evidence has been identified during the consultation period that would suggest that the protected group could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the implementation of either Model A or Model B.

However, if a decision is made to take the next steps towards implementation of either Model A or Model B and any disproportionate disadvantages are identified during the subsequent phases of consultation and implementation, these would be reviewed and solutions to remove such disadvantages would be sought.

Are there opportunities to create *positive* impacts for pregnant women or those with children under 26 weeks linked to this change, decision or proposal?

See para. 21.

Sexual Orientation

Note: The Act protects bisexual, gay, heterosexual and lesbian people.

1. What do you know about usage of the services affected by this change, decision or proposal by people with different sexual orientations, about their experiences of it, and about any current barriers to access?

There is currently no evidence to suggest that any member of the community who identifies as LGBT would be disproportionately impacted positively or negatively should the approval be given to implement Model A or Model B.

However, should any pupil who identifies with this group be identified as requiring support, the authority will encourage schools to use the Stonewall Education champion's resources and to increase awareness of any potential issues such as increased risk of bullying.

Should a member of staff identifying as LGBT in the community schools impacted directly by the implementation of Model A or Model B feel that their support networks have been disrupted, staff will be made aware of the support available through the Council's LGBT staff group and managers will be made aware of the guide to supporting LGBT staff on the Council Equality and Diversity webpage. HR policies aim to promote equality and inclusion.

2. Could people with different sexual orientations be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?

There is currently no evidence from consultation to suggest that different sexual orientations would be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by Model A or Model B. However, ameliorating actions stated in para. 27 would be implemented in the event that issues were identified.

3. Could the change, decision or proposal affect the ability of people with different sexual orientations to participate in public life? (e.g. by affecting their ability to go to meetings, take up public appointments etc.)

There is currently no evidence from consultation to suggest that the ability of people with different sexual orientations to participate in public life would be affected. However, ameliorating actions stated in para. 27 would be implemented in the event that issues were identified.

4. Could the change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards people with different sexual orientations? (e.g. by increasing or reducing their presence in the community)

To date, there has been no evidence to suggest that public attitudes to people with different sexual orientations. However, ameliorating actions stated in para. 27 would be implemented in the event that issues were identified.

5. Could the change, decision or proposal make it more or less likely that people with different sexual orientations will be at risk of harassment or victimisation?

Should Model A or Model B be implemented, the risk of harassment or victimisation of people with different sexual orientations would be monitored. Should evidence be identified that risk of harassment had increased, the relevant actions stated in para. 27 would be implemented.

6. If there are risks that people with different sexual orientations could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

No evidence has so far been identified to suggest that people with different sexual orientations could be disproportionately disadvantaged through the implementation of Model A or Model B. However, ameliorating actions stated in para. 27 would be implemented in the event that issues were identified.

7. Are there opportunities to create *positive* impacts for people with different sexual orientations linked to this change, decision or proposal?

While none have been so far identified, any opportunities to create positive impacts for people with different sexual orientations would be implemented, possibly through the implementation of the actions set out in para. 27.

Human Rights

Could the change, decision or proposal impact on human rights? (e.g. the right to respect for private and family life, the right to a fair hearing and the right to education)

While there is no specific evidence to suggest that the implementation of Model A or Model B would impact positively on human rights, the proponents of these proposals have reasons to believe that pupil's achievement can be enhanced through the implementation of the changes proposed and therefore this would improve the life chances of the pupils within those schools that would undergo reorganisation.

There would be no impact on human rights as a result of the implementation of Model C as this proposal would maintain current arrangements.

PART 3 - Course of Action

Based on a consideration of all the potential impacts, tick one of the following as an overall summary of the outcome of this assessment:

<input type="checkbox"/>	The equality analysis has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The equality analysis has identified risks or opportunities to promote better equality; the change, decision or proposal will be adjusted to avoid risks and ensure that opportunities are taken.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The equality analysis has identified risks to equality which will not be eliminated, and/or opportunities to promote better equality which will not be taken. Acceptance of these is reasonable and proportionate, given the objectives of the change, decision or proposal, and its overall financial and policy context.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The equality analysis shows that the change, decision or proposal would lead to actual or potential unlawful discrimination, or would conflict with the Council's positive duties to an extent which is disproportionate to its objectives. It should not be adopted in its current form.

Explain how you have reached the judgement ticked above, and summarise any steps which will be taken to reduce negative or enhance positive impacts on equality.

From the initial analysis of the possible negative or positive impacts of Model A and Model B on groups with protected characteristics, there is no evidence to suggest that any of these groups would be disproportionately disadvantaged or advantaged by the proposal. Should a decision be made by the Council's Policy Board to take the next steps in consultation in relation to either of these proposals, any evidence arising from the statutory consultation or implementation phases that suggests that there could be possible negative impacts, those risks would be analysed to establish whether or not there were certain risks to any or all of those groups. Steps to reduce negative impacts or enhance positive impacts would then be defined.

Model C maintains the current arrangements within schools within the Alnwick Partnership and therefore would have no negative or positive impacts on the groups with protected characteristics.

PART 4 - Ongoing Monitoring

What are your plans to monitor the actual impact of the implementation of the change, decision or proposal on equality of opportunity? (include action points and timescales)

This EIA has been updated in the light of feedback from the consultation period. Should the proposals be approved and the process move to the publication of a statutory proposal, the EIA would be further updated at the end of the statutory period. Appropriate action would be identified in the light of the consultation and where necessary, an action plan with timescales developed.

PART 5 - Authorisation

Name of Head of Service and Date Approved

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Once completed, send your full EIA to: Irene.Fisher@northumberland.gov.uk. A summary will then be generated corporately and published to the Council's website.