

# CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

## SCHOOL ORGANISATION SUB-COMMITTEE

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**Date of meeting:** 3 June 2009

**Report of:** Peter Davies, Interim School Organisation Manager

**Title:** **PROPOSED CLOSURE OF CHURCH LAWTON PRIMARY SCHOOL**

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### **1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This Decision Paper and its attachments set out the proposals published by the Cheshire County Council to close Church Lawton Primary School on 31 August 2009. The attachments also report on the level of objections received to the proposal and provide brief comments on those objections.
- 1.2 The reasons for publishing the proposal that Church Lawton Primary School should close were:
  - To remove surplus places through the closure of Church Lawton Primary School, which is a small school with a high level of surplus places and a low take-up of places by the local community. The Local Authority has previously reduced the school from 210 to 105 places. Nevertheless, the school currently has significant surplus capacity which is set to increase;
  - To ensure that pupils currently attending Church Lawton Primary School continue to receive education of a sustainable high quality. Children at the school are currently taught in three classes, due to low numbers, with one class spanning four year groups. Numbers of pupils at the school are set to continue to fall if it remains open, to the point where its sustainability would be put in question;
  - To make more effective use of resources within the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) by reducing the additional allowances paid to schools to support the curriculum outside the allocation produced by Age Weighted Pupil Units (AWPUs).

### **2.0 Decision Required**

- 2.1 The Cabinet School Organisation Sub-Committee, as the relevant Decision Maker under the Education and Inspection Act 2006, is required to decide whether to approve the proposed closure of Church Lawton Primary School on 31 August 2009.

### **3.0 Financial Implications for Transition Costs**

3.1 None

### **4.0 Financial Implications 2009/10 and beyond**

4.1 The proposals to close Church Lawton Primary School on 31 August 2009 would result in a DSG saving of approximately £58,000 in 2009-10 and an annual DSG saving of approximately £100,000 thereafter.

### **5.0 Legal Implications**

5.1 All statutory requirements set out in legislation and guidance have been complied with in relation to the proposal.

### **6.0 Risk Assessment**

6.1 There are risks associated with a failure on the part of the Local Authority to have in place mechanisms to manage the supply of school places. Where individual schools have 25% or more surplus places, the Local Authority, in its monitoring return to DCSF, is required to set out what it intends to do to address the issue. Based on the current capacity of 105 pupils – which is half the capacity for which the school was originally designed and built, the projection is for 44% surplus places in 2013. There are also implications regarding the effective deployment of resources and Best Value if school place provision and pupil demand are not well matched.

### **7.0 Background and Options**

7.1 See Paragraph 1.2 above.

Details of the proposals are attached, as follows:

**A** Procedure for considering school re-organisation proposals;

**B** Statutory Guidance on the factors to be considered in deciding school closures;

**C** The full proposal, including annexes, as follows, to be considered by the Sub-Committee:

**C1** Public Notice, proposing the closure of Church Lawton Primary School;

**C2** Report to Cheshire County Council's School Planning Select Panel on 26 January 2009;

**C3** Report to Council on 12 February 2009;

**C4** Report to the County Council's Children's Services Executive on 17 February 2009;

**C5** Letter dated 22 January 2009, from the Governing Body of Church Lawton Primary School, to the Children's Services Executive;

**C6** Revised Two-year Recovery Plan of the Governing Body of Church Lawton Primary School;

**C7** Consultation Document on the proposal;

**C8** Summary of consultations with the Governing Body of Church Lawton Primary School;

**C9** Summary of the formal consultation event;

**C10** Summary of consultations with the staff of Church Lawton Primary School;

**C11** Summary of responses received to the consultations;

**C12** Questions to the County Council's Children's Services Executive on 17 February 2009, together with responses;

**C13** Decision of the County Council's Children's Services Executive on 17 February 2009;

**C14** Schedule of stakeholders consulted;

**C15** Schedule of pupil numbers in schools within two miles of Church Lawton Primary School;

**C16** Schedule of spare places at schools local to Church Lawton Primary School;

**D** Matrix: the proposed closure in relation to the Decision-maker's guidance;

**E** Copies of objections received to the proposal (included separately as the Local Authority regards individual objections as confidential and not in the public domain unless the objector has indicated otherwise); and

**F** Brief comments on the objections.

## **8.0 Overview of Day One, Year One and Term One Issues**

8.1 None

## **9.0 Reasons for Recommendation**

9.1 The recommendation will give effect to the requirements for the Local Authority to have in place mechanisms to manage the supply of school places, and to deploy resources effectively and Best Value, in order to match better school place provision and pupil demand.

***For further information:***

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***Background Documents:***