

OPEN

Children and Families Committee

12 February 2024

Academisation of Schools Forward Plan

Report of: Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services

Report Reference No: CF/51/23-24

Ward(s) Affected: All

Purpose of Report

- 1 This report is presented to the Children and Families Committee to inform committee members of planned schools across the borough who are seeking to move to academy status and join a multi academy trust. The forward plan highlights schools that will require Committee approval at future meetings.
- 2 The report is connected to the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25 priority, an open and enabling organisation:
 - (a) ensuring that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making.
 - (b) supporting a sustainable financial future for the council, through service development, improvement and transformation.

Executive Summary

- 3 At the Children and Families Committee on 20 March 2023 the committee approved to receive a six-monthly update on academy conversions rather than a separate report each committee meeting.
- 4 This is the first update since the 20 March 2023 committee, following changes to the single point of contact for academy conversions within the local authority.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Children and Families Committee are recommended to note the forward plan in Appendix 1.

Background

- 5 The introduction of the Academies Act in 2010 enabled schools to apply to the Secretary of State to convert to an Academy. The effect of becoming an Academy is to remove the school from the control of the local authority and enables them to become a publicly funded independent state school which is directly funded by the Department of Education. Academies are run by academy trusts which are charitable companies limited by guarantee.
- 6 The committee approved to receive a six-monthly update on academy conversions at the 20 March 2023 meeting.

Consultation and Engagement

- 7 Consultation and engagement takes place for each school as part of the academy conversion process with both local authority staff and other interested parties.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 8 The forward plan allows the committee to note schools who are planning to convert and those who have converted.
- 9 Committee approval will be sought for each academisation of a school as it is a significant decision in terms of the effects of the decision on communities living or working in an area comprising one ward or electoral divisions.

Other Options Considered

- 10 The option to not inform the committee of academy planned conversions and completed conversions is not considered appropriate as each academy conversion will have varying levels of risk and the inclusion of a forward plan allows committee members to be kept aware of future changes.
- 11 School governing boards apply to the secretary of state to progress with an academy order, the alternative is to remain a maintained school. There is no requirement for a school to convert to an academy unless directed to do so through an inadequate Ofsted inspection.

- 12 Failure to cooperate could result in the Secretary of State making transfer schemes which would be binding on the council.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

- 13 All legal requirements are undertaken and approved ahead of any academy conversion. On going legal support will be provided and legal advice will be given when required.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

- 14 All financial requirements are undertaken and approved ahead of any academy conversion.

Policy

- 15 The implementation of an academy conversion is undertaken in accordance with national legislation as per the various Education Acts.
- 16 The report is connected to the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25 priority, an open and enabling organisation:
- (a) ensuring that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making.
 - (b) supporting a sustainable financial future for the council, through service development, improvement and transformation.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 17 Not applicable for this report.

Human Resources

- 18 All HR requirements (mainly relating to TUPE arrangements) are undertaken and approved ahead of any academy conversion.

Risk Management

- 19 All associated risks are considered by legal, finance, HR and audit and risk, as part of managing the academy conversion process.

Rural Communities

- 20 Not applicable for this report.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

- 21 There is scrutiny of multi academy trusts by the Regional Schools Commissioner to ensure the trusts have capacity to adopt the school.

Public Health

- 22 There are no direct implications for public health.

Climate Change

- 23 There are no direct implications for climate change.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Joe Carter Education Project Manager Joe.carter@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix 1 - Academisation Forward Plan 120224
Background Papers:	Report for Committee 20 March 2023 (see page 217) Minutes from 20 March 2023 (see page 7, item 99)