



## **Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 15 May 2019**

### **Determination of Statutory Proposal to close The Henry Prince CE (C) First School, Mayfield**

#### **Cllr Philip White, Cabinet Member for Learning and Employability said,**

“The closure of any school is always an incredibly difficult decision to make and is based on a number of factors. I know that the headteacher and governors have done all they can to try and attract enough pupils to the school to ensure it is viable, but with such low numbers and the reduced funding this brings, the school is not financially sustainable. This then will have a knock-on effect on the quality of education that the children receive.

“It is with great sadness that cabinet is asked to approve the closure of The Henry Prince First School. However, we have to act in the children’s best interests, ensure they have access to a high quality education and that they are given every opportunity to succeed in their studies.”

#### **Report Summary:**

In accordance with statutory guidance (Appendix A), Cabinet is required to determine the proposal to close The Henry Prince School (Appendix B) and consider the response received (Appendix C) and the director’s commentary (Appendix D).

#### **Recommendations**

I recommend that:

- a. Cabinet approves the statutory proposal to close The Henry Prince CE (C) First School, Mayfield on 31 August 2019; and
- b. Expenditure of up to £750 to provide parents with a contribution towards the cost of new school uniform for their children.

<b>Local Members Interest</b>	
Philip Atkins	East Staffordshire - Uttoxeter Rural

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### **Determination of Statutory Proposal to close The Henry Prince CE (C) First School, Mayfield**

#### **Recommendations of the Cabinet Member for Learning and Employability**

I recommend that:

- a. Cabinet approves the statutory proposal to close The Henry Prince CE (C) First School, Mayfield on 31 August 2019; and
- b. Expenditure of up to £750 to provide parents with a contribution towards the cost of new school uniform for their children.

#### **Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities**

##### **Reasons for Recommendations:**

1. In accordance with statutory guidance (Appendix A), Cabinet must determine the proposal to close The Henry Prince School (Appendix B) and consider the response received (Appendix C) and the director's commentary (Appendix D).

##### **Background**

2. The governing body of The Henry Prince school takes seriously its responsibility for achieving the best educational outcomes for its children. It continues to be a "good" school, following Ofsted inspections in June 2013 and November 2017. However, as the statutory proposal states, the school is facing two critical issues: low pupil numbers and a large budget deficit.
3. To try and secure the future of The Henry Prince, governors have, over the years, engaged fully with locally-arranged meetings of schools to discuss ways to work together and have also made numerous and repeated contacts of their own with individual schools to discuss ways to reduce costs and share resources. Governors have always been willing to participate in a MAT, federation or alliance with other schools, but none of these engagements have resulted in a proposal for the school to consider and no options are available to the governing body.
4. Over recent years, too few local parents have chosen the school for their children and, despite actions by the governing body to boost numbers, the school is less than half full. With 75 places available, there are only 20 full-time pupils on roll and, with more due to move this term, the total number expected in September 2019 is only around 10 to 15 pupils.

5. Funding for schools comes from central government and is dependent on pupil numbers. This means that the budget for Henry Prince is extremely limited and the school has a large deficit that is forecast to exceed £400,000 in 2021/22.
6. The governing body aspires to keep the school open, however, there is no prospect of them being able to set a balanced budget without significantly harming the quality of education. Therefore, as every school's priorities are the education and welfare of the children in its care, the governing body had no alternative than to propose the closure of the school from 31 August 2019.
7. If the school was closed, officers are satisfied that there are sufficient good school places across the area. Dove CE (VC) First would become the catchment area school as it has enough places to absorb the pattern of demand for places from parents in The Henry Prince catchment area. The county council would provide free shared transport to all eligible children who attend Dove First, which is approximately 5½ miles by road from The Henry Prince.

### **Decision Making**

8. One response to the closure proposal was submitted, from Mayfield Parish Council, in Appendix C - and the director's commentary is in Appendix D.
9. Statutory guidance states that Cabinet "should adopt a presumption against the closure of rural schools. This does not mean that a rural school will never close, but the case for closure should be strong and a proposal must be clearly in the best interests of educational provision in the area". As a rural primary school, Section 15(4) of the Education and Inspections Act is considered by the school in Appendix B. The specific factors for Cabinet to consider are set out in the Director's commentary and attention is drawn to the parish council's concerns.
10. If closure is approved, there would be sufficient places across the local area for all pupils. There is a wide range of rural, village and town schools, judged good or better by OFSTED in two and three-tier education systems in Staffordshire and Derbyshire, plus eligibility to free transport for children to their catchment school.
11. If Cabinet approve the closure, the headteacher of The Henry Prince has asked members to consider providing a contribution towards the cost of new uniforms for the parents of 30 full-time pupils on roll when consultation on closure started on 23 January 2018: based upon a £25 contribution per child, this would cost £750.

### **List of Appendices**

Appendix A: [Statutory guidance for decision-makers on closing maintained schools](#)

Appendix B: [Full Proposal for the closure of The Henry Prince](#)

Appendix C: Response from Mayfield Parish Council

Appendix D: Director's Commentary

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