

18 June 2012

Agenda Item: **8****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION STANDARDS  
AND INCLUSION****SCHOOL TERM AND HOLIDAY PATTERNS 2013-2016****Purpose of report**

1. This report seeks approval of the proposed school term and holiday dates for the school years 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16.

**Information and advice**

2. Nottinghamshire County Council has a duty to set school term times and holiday patterns for all community and voluntary controlled schools. Foundation, Trust, Voluntary Aided schools and Academies have responsibility for setting their own term and holiday patterns.
3. In June 2011 Cabinet approved the school term and holiday pattern for 2012/13 and recommended that prior to determining future dates, consideration should be given to a range of alternative term and holiday patterns.
4. An extensive consultation process has been undertaken in two phases. The first phase between September 2011 and December 2011 involved a range of key stakeholders including primary, secondary and special school head teachers, governing body representatives, relevant professional associations, groups of parents/carers, children and young people, Diocesan Authorities and neighbouring Admission Authorities.
5. Feedback from this initial phase indicated broad agreement about the principles, which would in turn inform the proposals to be taken through to formal consultation. These principles are that the school term and holiday pattern should:
  - seek to meet the needs of all learners, raise attainment and improve attendance
  - take into account the views of all key stakeholders including:
    - parents, carers and the wider community
    - children and young people themselves
    - school leaders and staff including recognised trade unions and professional associations
    - other relevant bodies
  - take into account local, national and, if relevant, international research around maximising the learning and life chances of children and young people
  - ensure that teaching and learning blocks are as equal in length as possible

- avoid split weeks where possible
  - take account of patterns which our neighbouring Local Authorities are proposing or adopting.
6. The benefits and issues of various patterns were considered during the initial consultation stage:
- the traditional Standard School Year (SSY) of three terms
  - the three term year but with a fixed break (two weeks) at the end of the spring term
  - the five term year
  - the six term year
  - other specific proposals to incorporate annual adjustments.
7. The views that emerged from the initial consultation phase included the following:
- there is insufficient evidence to support the view that moving to a five term year or any other radically different pattern would benefit all children in Nottinghamshire which is the overriding principle in determining any change to the school holiday patterns
  - primary schools are concerned about any proposals which may lengthen individual terms and the possible tiring impact on younger learners
  - there would be merit in consulting upon a fixed break (two weeks) at the end of the spring term to create more equal term lengths as an alternative to the current model
  - it was noted that 'cross border' issues are a concern in relation to the decisions of all neighbouring authorities, and that Nottinghamshire has seven of these in total.
8. At the conclusion of this phase, the views of all involved were taken into account, and the decision was taken to formally consult on the following two options for 12 weeks between January 2012 and April 2012:
- Option 1: the Standard School Year of 3 terms (currently adopted in Nottinghamshire)
- Option 2: the 3 term year with a 'fixed break' of two weeks at the end of the spring term
- Both options conformed to the legal requirement for 190 sessions per school year.
9. The formal public consultation yielded 3,913 responses, of which 911 were in paper form. Option 2 proved to be more popular than Option 1 by a significant majority:
- 41.7% in favour of Option 1 (current Standard School Year of 3 terms)
  - 58.3% in favour of Option 2 (a 3 term year with a fixed two week break at end of spring term).
10. Many comments and views were submitted regarding a range of issues. These included the following:

- concern from parents/carers to preserve 'family friendly' term dates, and requesting that the chosen pattern should seek to minimise the burden of additional childcare costs
  - some concern about the impact of any changes around the Easter break in relation to religious celebrations
  - comments about the implications of differences between Nottinghamshire County Council's school term and holiday patterns compared with those of our neighbours, including Nottingham City
  - several respondents argued that the summer break of six weeks is too long and should be shortened to four weeks. Others felt that a summer holiday of six weeks allows children the chance to "recharge completely".
  - some were concerned about the impact if those secondary schools which are required to set their own holiday patterns choose an alternative which does not match with that of their feeder or linked primary schools
  - some recommended that on those occasions when the Easter public holidays occur particularly early or late, the school holidays could be 'detached' from the religious holiday, to ensure more equal term lengths.
11. Throughout the consultation period, collective feedback was sought from a number of stakeholder groups including schools, recognised trade unions, the School Admissions Forum and a parent group representing 500 children and young people with additional needs.
  12. The majority of these groups were supportive of Option 2. The Schools Admissions Forum was disappointed that a more radical model had not been included as an option for consultation.

### **Summary of findings**

13. In conclusion, Option 2 comprising a three term year with a fixed break at the end of the spring term was the most popular pattern. It adheres broadly to the agreed principles outlined and provides a consistent approach year on year to planning, which was generally appreciated by stakeholders. This option was one of many scrutinised as part of the research and discussion phase of this process.

### **Other options considered**

14. The initial consultation process considered a range of options including the three, five and six term year. The formal consultation considered two alternative patterns for the school year.

### **Reason/s for recommendation/s**

15. School term and holiday patterns must be agreed to enable schools, parents and associated school support services to plan effectively for September 2013 onwards.
16. The recommended dates for three years from 2013 onwards provide stability and more balanced periods of teaching and learning throughout the year whilst adhering broadly to the principles established as part of this process.

## Statutory and Policy Implications

17. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### Implications for service users

18. School term and holiday dates are of direct importance to children, young people and their families and to the employees who serve in our schools. The recommended option takes account of the feedback received through the consultation process.

### Equalities Implications

19. As part of the process of making decisions and changing policy, public authorities are required by law to think about the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
  - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics (as defined by equalities legislation) and those who do not.
  - Foster good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not.
20. Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are a means by which a public authority can assess the potential impact that proposed decisions/changes to policy could have on the community and those with protected characteristics. They may also identify potential ways to reduce any impact that a decision / policy change could have. If it is not possible to reduce the impact, the EIA can explain why. Decision makers must understand the potential implications of their decisions on people with protected characteristics.
21. An EIA has been undertaken and is available as a background paper. Decision makers must give due regard to the implications for protected groups when considering this report.

## RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the school term and holiday patterns for 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16 as shown in Option 2 (see **Appendix 1 (a, b and c)**) be approved for three years with effect from 1 September 2013.

**John Slater**

**Service Director, Education Standards and Inclusion**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

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**Constitutional Comments (SLB 24/05/2012)**

22. Children and Young People's Committee has delegated authority to take decisions in relation to the Council's functions as Local Authority in relation to education and is the appropriate committee to consider the content of this report.

**Financial Comments (NDR 24/05/12)**

23. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

**Background papers available for inspection**

Equality Impact Assessment form

Summary of background research

Report to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services on School Term Times and Holiday Patterns 2013/2014 to 2015/2016 (9 January 2012): Proposals on which models to consult upon based upon the outcomes of the initial consultation process

Consultation Questionnaire

Summary of statistical analysis of consultation responses

Statistical analysis, respondent profile

Summary of themes from written comments

Summary feedback from stakeholder meetings

Summary of different patterns; benefits and issues

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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