

25th April 2022**Agenda Item: 10****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, EDUCATION, LEARNING AND
SKILLS****THE FUTURE OF NORTH CLIFTON PRIMARY SCHOOL****Purpose of the Report**

1. This report seeks approval that North Clifton Primary School remains open following the statutory consultation around the future of the school undertaken between 23rd June and 23rd July 2021.

Information

2. Members have considered two separate reports relating to the future of North Clifton School during the last nine months. On 21st June 2021, the Committee agreed to an initial statutory consultation regarding the future of the school including possible closure. The consultation feedback was considered by the Committee on 13th September 2021 when it was agreed that given the level of support for the school, decisions about possible closure would be delayed for up to 12 months to allow the school to increase the number of children attending the school. Both reports are available as Background Papers.
3. This report is written within the context of Department for Education Statutory Guidance which presumes against the closure of rural schools. North Clifton Primary School is designated as a rural school. Nottinghamshire County Council has therefore followed the guidelines regarding the presumption against the closure of rural schools. This is enshrined in the prescribed process described in 'Opening and closing maintained schools: Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers' Department for Education, 2019.
4. Stage One of this statutory process, consultation, indicated options available to the Council with regard to the future of North Clifton Primary School. One of these was to 'Continue with no change'. This is the option which is being recommended to the Committee, and if approved, no further action will be taken in this regard.
5. Since September 2021, the Governors at North Clifton Primary School have refurbished their community room with the support of the late Councillor Maureen Dobson's financial contributions - combined with voluntary contributions of finance and labour from the community. This allowed for a breakfast and after school club to be opened which is now attended by an average of six pupils per day.

6. Whilst the actual number of statutory aged children has not increased since September 2022, the governing body continue to be of the view that the school can continue to provide an education for children in their catchment and beyond. Projections continue to suggest that numbers will remain small, and likely to be below 30.

			PAN				School years								Whole school projection	
DfE No					Net ca	Proj Yea	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	TOTAL	surplus / deficit place	
	School Name	Planning Area	FA	IJ												
2793	North Clifton Primary School	Rural	8	0	56	2021-22	3	3	4	4	3	6	4	27	+29	
2793	North Clifton Primary School	Rural	8	0	56	2022-23	4	3	3	4	4	3	6	27	+29	
2793	North Clifton Primary School	Rural	8	0	56	2023-24	4	4	3	3	4	4	3	25	+31	
2793	North Clifton Primary School	Rural	8	0	56	2024-25	5	4	4	3	3	4	4	27	+29	
2793	North Clifton Primary School	Rural	8	0	56	2025-26	6	5	4	4	3	3	4	29	+27	

7. The Local Authority will continue to work with the Chair of Governors and the Governing Body to continue to secure the sustainability of this small rural school.

Other Options Considered

8. Consideration has been given to closing the school. Given the strength of the community support for the school as well as the Council's commitment to rural schools, and in the context of a Department for Education presumption against the closing of rural schools, this option is not recommended at this time.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

9. Small rural schools provide more than education to children; it is a central resource and landmark in their communities. Therefore, supporting the school to remain open is the recommendation to the Committee.

Statutory and Policy Implications

10. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability, and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

11. In November 2021 North Clifton Primary School forecast a £21,000 deficit. If the school closed, then the Local Authority would be liable for this deficit. Other costs if the school closed include redundancy costs.
12. If the school remains open, then the financial position of the school is dependent on variable factors. These factors will affect the school's ability to be sustainable. This includes pupil numbers as funding is dependent on this. October 2021 census data showed that pupil numbers were 24 compared with 26 in October 2020.

13. Another factor is the school funding formula. Should the formula not be affordable a gains cap may be applied again. The funding formula for future years is subject to School Forum consultation.
14. Finally, staffing costs and the stability of the staffing structure and leadership will impact the school finances.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That Committee completes the Stage One Consultation process by approving the option 'Continue with no change' and that, as a result, North Clifton Primary School remains open.

Marion Clay
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Constitutional Comments (LPW 07/04/22)

15. The recommendations fall within the remit of the Children and Young People's Committee by virtue of its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (AC 06/04/22)

16. As stated in the financial implications, in November 2021 North Clifton Primary School forecast a £21,000 deficit. If the school closed, then the Local Authority would be liable for this deficit. Other costs if the school closed include redundancy costs. If the school remains open and the school cannot meet its financial commitments with its school budget, then there is a financial risk to the Local Authority that the school could increase its deficit and increase the liability for the Local Authority.

Background Papers and Published Documents

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.

[Proposed consultations on options for the future of North Clifton Primary School and the alternative use of the Manners Sutton Primary School site – report to Children & Young People's Committee on 21st June 2021](#)

[Outcome of the consultation on options for the future of North Clifton Primary School and response to petition to keep the school open – report to Children & Young People's Committee on 13th September 2021](#)

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

Collingham

Cllr Debbie Darby (Ind)

C1562