

# North Tyneside Council Report to Cabinet 11 August 2014

## ITEM 6(a)

School Term and Holiday  
dates 2015/16

Portfolio(s): Children Young People &  
Learning

Cabinet Member(s): Councillor Ian  
Grayson

Report from Service Area: Commissioning and Fair Access

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Wards affected: All Wards

### PART 1

#### 1.1 Purpose:

To consider the proposed school term and holiday dates for 2015/16.

At the time of writing, not all authorities in the region have confirmed their term dates for 2015/16. However the recommended calendar is in line with proposed dates in Northumberland and matches current proposals in all other Tyne and Wear authorities except Newcastle. The calendar published by Newcastle has schools returning on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2015, which gives a 7-week summer holiday. Other authorities in the region are proposing to return on 1<sup>st</sup> Sept 2015.

#### 1.2 Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that Cabinet approve the school term and holiday dates for 2015/16, as set out in Appendix 1 to this report.

#### 1.3 Forward Plan:

Twenty eight days notice of this report has been given and it first appeared on the Forward Plan that was published on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2014.

#### 1.4 Council Plan and Policy Framework

This report relates to the following priority in the 2014/18 Our North Tyneside Plan: *Our People will be supported to achieve their full potential, especially our children and young people.*

## 1.5 Information:

### Background

- 1.5.1 Regulations require that 190 school term days be provided for pupils in each school year (see 2.2 below). In addition, 5 teacher training days must be identified in the school year; the dates are set at the discretion of the school.
- 1.5.2 In 2008 a short questionnaire was circulated to 280 parent governors in North Tyneside requesting views on the preferred maximum and minimum length of term, and about the factors which were most important to parents. This exercise was undertaken following discussion of the 2008/09 dates at Cabinet in August 2007, where Members queried the 7-week summer break in 2009. Cabinet resolved that parental views should be sought regarding the length of breaks within the school year.
- 1.5.3 The responses to the survey did not indicate high demand for changes to the recognised pattern of term dates. However they did provide a useful indication of the factors that parents consider important. The key messages were that most parents would like no holiday to be longer than 6 weeks, no period of term time to be longer than 7 weeks, and that school holidays should take account of bank holidays, particularly those around Christmas and Easter.
- 1.5.4 Consultation with headteacher representatives and professional associations indicates that a major consideration for schools and school staff is consistency with neighbouring authorities, particularly Newcastle and Northumberland. Where there are differences between these authorities, the preference is for the best possible match with other authorities in the region.
- 1.5.5 In previous years, consistency with the Local Government Association (LGA) recommended calendar has been a consideration, however the LGA has now ceased providing recommendations: the final LGA calendar was for the 2013/14 year.
- 1.5.6 The proposed School Term and Holiday dates for North Tyneside schools 2015/16 are as set out at Appendix 1. In 2015/16, it is likely that most neighbouring authorities will use this pattern of term dates. Northumberland and Gateshead have published calendars based on this model, and most other authorities in the region have indicated that they will be following a similar pattern.
- 1.5.7 Newcastle have confirmed and published a calendar which is broadly similar, but has a later start date in September and includes a 7-week break in summer 2015. This calendar is set out at Appendix 2 and forms the basis of Option 2 below.
- 1.5.8 For clarity, the Draft Deregulation Bill published by central government in 2013, is not yet law. The Bill includes proposals to allow all school governing bodies to set term dates for their schools, independently of the local authority. The second reading of the Bill recently took place in the House of Lords, but the committee stage is yet to be scheduled. Should the Bill become law, it is possible that the 2015-16 school year would be affected. Many schools in North Tyneside are already able to set term dates independently, e.g. due to Trust or Voluntary Aided status. Schools have indicated that their preference is for a consistent calendar, co-ordinated by the Local Authority.

## 1.6 Decision options:

The following decision options are available for consideration by Cabinet:

### Option 1

Cabinet can approve the calendar at Appendix 1 (recommended). This meets parent governor preferences with regard to no holiday being longer than 6 weeks. The preference for holidays to take account of the Christmas and Easter bank holidays is also met by this model.

The recommended calendar does not meet the preference for no period of term time being longer than 7 weeks, as the first half of the Autumn term would be 8 weeks long. Also, over 50% of parents also felt that terms should be of approximately equal length, whereas there is some variation in the recommended calendar. The shortest period of term time is 4½ weeks and the longest is 8 weeks.

The proposed calendar gives 194 term days, of which 4 would be taken as teacher training days to be set at the discretion of the school. (One further training day would be taken from holidays or as twilight sessions, to fulfil the requirement for 190 pupil days and 5 training days.)

Option 1 contains some weeks where the end of term does not fall on a Friday. The proposal is for the Spring term to end on Wed 23<sup>rd</sup> March, so the Thursday before Good Friday is a bank holiday. Summer term 2016 also ends on a Wednesday. This is to avoid having more than the required 195 days in the calendar.

In this calendar, schools would break up for the Easter holiday on 2<sup>nd</sup> April, the day before the Good Friday bank holiday. This calendar is consistent with published dates for Newcastle, and with proposals in South Tyneside, Gateshead and Sunderland.

### Option 2

Option 2 is consistent with the term dates published by Newcastle, and is similar to Option 1. The difference is the later start date on 7<sup>th</sup> Sept, giving a 7-week holiday in summer 2015. In this calendar, schools would break up for the Easter holiday on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> March, and the summer term would end on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> July.

This option gives 193 term days, of which 3 would be taken as teacher training days. One day would be taken from holidays or as twilight sessions to make up the required 5 training days.

Option 1 is the recommended option.

## 1.7 Reasons for recommended option:

Option 1 is recommended for the following reasons:

The calendar at Appendix 1 includes many of the factors that parent governors see as important. It matches the pattern in the majority of neighbouring authorities, and is likely to be the most acceptable to schools and families.

The calendar at Appendix 2 also meets many of the important factors, but would put the authority out of step with most neighbouring authorities. Also, this calendar includes a 7-week holiday in summer 2015, which does not meet the preference of parents for no holiday to be longer than 6 weeks.

## **1.8 Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Proposed school term and holiday dates for North Tyneside schools in 2015/16. This calendar is in line with most authorities in the region, including Northumberland.

Appendix 2: Alternative option, consistent with the dates confirmed by Newcastle.

## **1.9 Contact officers:**

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## **1.10 Background information:**

The following background papers/information have been used in the compilation of this report and are available at the office of the author:

- Parent governor survey results.
- Cabinet Report – School Term and Holiday Dates 2014/15, August 2013.
- School term and holiday dates 2015/16 for Northumberland, Newcastle and Gateshead.

## **PART 2 – COMPLIANCE WITH PRINCIPLES OF DECISION MAKING**

### **2.1 Finance and other resources**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

### **2.2 Legal**

The Education (School Day and School Year) (England) Regulations 1999 require that 190 school term days be provided for pupils in each school year. The Education Act 2002 requires that the dates of the terms be set by the local authority. In addition the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) requires 5 training days to be identified. The dates of the training days are organised at the discretion of the school.

The Local Elections (Principal Areas) (England and Wales) Rules 2006 (no 3304) Schedule 2 provides for the use of schools and facilities in schools, free of charge, for the purpose of taking the poll or counting of votes.

There are currently thirty-five schools used as polling stations across the borough. Many of the schools allocate one of the required 5 training days to polling day(s). However, schools may explore the option to remain open on the day of poll, by the identification of an area within the school site, which can be used for the purposes of polling (being compliant with the regulations above), with the agreement of Electoral Services. For safeguarding reasons, such an area must be isolated from any pupil accessible areas of the site.

### **2.3 Consultation/community engagement**

Consultation has been undertaken with headteachers and professional associations. Parent governors were also consulted via email. The proposed dates have been forwarded to all the authority's schools.

### **2.4 Human rights**

This report is relevant to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 28: access to education.

### **2.5 Equalities and diversity**

There are no equalities and diversity implications arising from this report.

### **2.6 Risk management**

There are no risk management implications arising from this report.

### **2.7 Crime and disorder**

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

### **2.8 Environment and sustainability**

There are no environment and sustainability implications arising from this report.

## **PART 3 - SIGN OFF**

- Deputy Chief Executive
- Head of Service
- Mayor/Cabinet Member(s)
- Chief Finance Officer
- Monitoring Officer
- Strategic Manager–  
Strategic Services