

**CABINET – 17 SEPTEMBER 2021****LEICESTERSHIRE SCHOOL TERM-TIME PATTERNS  
FROM AUTUMN 2022 TO SUMMER 2027****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY  
SERVICES****PART A****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet of the outcome of the consultation on the preferred Leicestershire school term-time pattern to apply from autumn 2022 to summer 2027 for schools controlled by the Local Authority and to seek approval to a preferred term time pattern.

**Recommendations**

2. It is recommended:
  - a) That the outcome of the public consultation on the proposed term-time options be noted;
  - b) That the current Leicestershire term-time pattern that includes an earlier autumn and summer holiday and longer autumn term (Proposal 1) be approved.

**Reasons for Recommendations**

3. The Education Act 2002 places a statutory obligation on the County Council to determine the number of school days that schools under its control must be open. The County Council is required to determine a pattern that ensures at least 380 sessions (190 days) during a school year.
4. The consultation responses overwhelmingly supported the retention of the existing Leicestershire term-time pattern and no imperative to change this has emerged.

**Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)**

5. Although there is no prescribed timetable offering a framework by when term dates must be determined there is a generally accepted convention to determine dates at least a year before they come into force.
6. A copy of this report has been shared with members of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### **Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

7. Term dates are determined by school employers following public consultation, as is set out in the Education (School Day and School Year) (England) Regulations 1999.
8. As the Local Authority is the employer for any community, voluntary controlled and community special schools, any changes to agreed term time dates proposed by such schools must be agreed in advance by the Director of Children and Family Services.
9. Leicestershire's school term time dates were last agreed by the Cabinet in June 2018 when it was agreed that it would follow the traditional Leicestershire pattern for the period autumn 2019 to summer 2022.

### **Resource Implications**

10. There are no resource implications arising from this report. The cost of administering the recommended term time pattern forms part of the existing Children and Family Service budget allocation.

### **Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

11. As stated above, a copy of the report has been sent to members of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee. All Members will be advised when the term time dates are published on the County Council's website.

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## **PART B**

### **Background**

12. The Local Authority remains responsible for setting school term time dates for all community, voluntary controlled and community special schools, under Section 32 of the Education Act 2002. In order to fulfil this duty, it is good practice to consult with parents and interested parties to take a view of potential options. The length of the school day remains the responsibility of each schools governing body.
13. From September 2015, Schedule 16 of the Deregulation Act 2015 amends Section 32 of the Education Act 2002 such that all state funded schools in England will be able to decide their own school term and holiday dates, a flexibility that is already available to academies and free schools. However, schools will still be expected to agree common dates so that families can continue to plan their holidays together. All local authority maintained schools will still be required to be open for a minimum of 190 days a year.
14. The Rt. Hon. Gavin Williamson MP, the Secretary of State for Education, has not given any indication of a date for when maintained schools shall have the freedoms to set their own term time patterns, as has been previously suggested by the government. Until then the Local Authority retains the responsibility to set term time patterns, following consultation.
15. It should be noted that with the advent of academies there is now a disparity of term time patterns in the County, as some schools have moved away from the traditional Leicestershire pattern. There are also differences between maintained schools in Leicestershire and adjoining authorities.
16. Leicester City Council ran a concurrent consultation with identical options to Leicestershire.

### **The Consultation Process**

17. An eight-week public consultation exercise was undertaken, from 24<sup>th</sup> May 2021 to 18<sup>th</sup> July 2021 (the consultation document is attached as Appendix A). This was widely publicised through the Local Authority's website and local press and the Council engaged with a range of stakeholders including parents/carers, schools, governing bodies, neighbouring authorities, the Diocese and the professional associations/trade unions to seek their views. The consultation document sought views on three options;

Proposal 1: The existing traditional term time pattern with an earlier autumn and summer holiday dates but a longer autumn term;

Proposal 2: Summer holiday at similar dates to Leicester City and significantly earlier than the majority of schools elsewhere, but aligning the autumn and spring breaks in line with most other authorities, including Leicester;

Proposal 3: A mixture of Proposals 1 and 2 to achieve a more balanced spread of holidays across the year and which incorporates a 2-week autumn half-term and a shorter Easter break.

A link to Leicester City Council's consultation was included on the webpage.

### **Consultation Results**

18. A summary of the consultation results is attached as Appendix B. By the close of the consultation on 18<sup>th</sup> July, the Local Authority had received a total of 12,467 responses. The majority of responses received 8,585 (69%) were in favour of Proposal 1, i.e. to remain with Leicestershire's traditional patterns.
19. Proposal 2 received 1,568 (13%) support and Proposal 3 received 2,128 (17%) support and 176 (1%) of respondents had no preferred preference or no view. Most of the responses 9,733(78%) were provided by parents and grandparents with 2067(17%) from teachers or employers, the remainder being from students, members of the public and Early Years providers. More females 8,371(83%) responded than males 1,631(16%) the remaining 56(1%) indicated a non-binary gender, with 9,282 (93%) of respondents categorised as white, and the remainder 707(7%) being from Asian/mixed race and other ethnic groups. It should be noted that 11,149 (91%) of the respondents were Leicestershire residents.
20. The consultation received just under 500 pages of comments that predominant favoured Proposal 1, comments ranged from: '*cheaper holidays, less childcare costs, family time off together and could not afford a holiday otherwise*'. There are word clouds at Appendix C that captures views expressed.
21. Leicester City Council officers have confirmed they too saw an overwhelming demand for Proposal 1 and have confirmed that this will be their recommended option presented for approval later in September.

### **Conclusion**

22. The consultation had over 12,400 responses received and shows that the current Leicestershire (traditional) term-time pattern remains the most popular option for respondents.

### **Equality and Human Rights Implications**

23. An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) screening questionnaire was completed to ensure the patterns applied equally to all children. Furthermore, where for example families that have children in a schools with different term time patterns e.g. one child in a secondary academy and another in a maintained primary school , there is flexibility for the maintained school to seek permission from the LA to adjust their pattern

for exceptional circumstances, so as to allow children to be off at the same time. A full EHRIA was not therefore required.

### **Background Papers**

House of Commons Library Briefing Paper: The School Day and Year (England) issue 24<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn07148/>

Report to the Cabinet on 12 June 2018 - "Leicestershire School Term-time Patterns from Autumn 2019 to Summer 2022 - <https://bit.ly/3hE8zzx>

### **Appendices**

Appendix A - Consultation document

Appendix B - Summary of consultation results

Appendix C – Word Cloud of textualised responses

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