NCC Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Cabinet Members

Northumberland County Council

County Hall

Morpeth

NE61 2EF

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1st May 2018

Dear Councillors,

We are writing in response to the Education in the west of Northumberland report. As advocates of protecting rural schools we are pleased the fifteen schools are no longer at risk and that the Council have listened to many of the concerns raised by communities in west Northumberland. We are delighted that the Hexham Partnership will retain the three tier model which suits our children and communities so well. We are aware that the report still proposes major change particularly within the Haydon Bridge Partnership.

We have a number of questions which we would like the Council to consider within the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel and the Cabinet, these are set out below:

1. The report highlights the development of an NCC MAT. Would NCC support moves by schools to form their own MAT(s)/ federations? Would NCC support the broadening of existing plans for MATS to include schools within the Hexham Partnership? Are NCC flexible in terms of the governance of the MATS/ federations?

2. What will the timeline be for the creation and organisation of MAT(s)/ federations? Will schools have an arbitrary deadline imposed on them?

3. STARS would like more information on the resilience programme. How will this be arranged? Would STARS be able to act as an advisory body/ sounding board?

4. Why is it not suggested that CMS join a MAT within the report? Is this an oversight?

5. Why was more weight given to those schools within the Haydon Bridge partnership who wanted a move towards two tier than those who wanted three tier?

6. What are the parameters for the capital investment in HLT and the development of their business case, including timescales? STARS would like clarification on the scope of the capital investment i.e. will conditions be imposed in terms of size and suggested PAN to ensure that Haydon Bridge's catchment is not affected and HLT are not able to become two tier at a later date? Thus taking into account the resounding "no" to both questions laid out in their proposal.

Thank you for your time in considering our questions, we look forward to your responses.

Kind Regards

The STARS Team

CC. Guy Opperman, MP and Katherine Cowell, Acting RSC