

**Report to the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools**  
**Report submitted by: Head of Service – Skills, Learning and Development**  
**Date Wednesday, 14 September 2016**

**Part I**

Electoral Division affected:  
Preston Central North;  
Preston Central South;  
Preston City; Preston East;  
Preston North; Preston  
North East; Preston North  
West; Preston Rural;  
Preston South East; Preston  
West;

**The Future of Ashton Community Science College's Post 16 Provision**

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**Executive Summary**

Ashton Community Science College (ACSC) has approached the County Council, as the local education authority, in relation to the future of its post 16 provision and, following discussions, has asked the County Council to start the formal statutory consultation process to consult on the future of that provision. Under The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013, the local education authority must be the proposer for this type of significant change and carry out a statutory consultation process. In line with this, the authority is now required to decide whether to publish a Statutory Notice on the proposal to consult on the future of this provision.

**Recommendation**

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools is recommended to approve the publication, by the authority, of a Statutory Notice to consult on the future of the post 16 provision currently delivered by Ashton Community Science College.

**Background and Advice**

Following a number of discussions with officers in the Autumn term of the 2015/16 academic year, the Principal of Ashton Community Science College (ACSC) informed the County Council of its wish to consult on the future of the College's post 16 provision due to concerns about its financial and educational viability. ACSC has low student numbers and a minimal curriculum offer in its sixth form.

When ACSC approached the County Council in December 2015 to discuss the future of its sixth form provision, there were only 32 students in the sixth form and only four of these were intending to progress into their second year. ACSC has ensured that the students who wish to progress onto their second year are able to make a positive transition onto a course at another local college.

The table below shows the student number and funding allocations ACSC has received from the Education Funding Agency (EFA) since it opened its sixth form in September 2010:

	<b>2010/11</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>
Student Numbers	30	75	42	55	77	66
Funding	£144,694	£355,085	£224,448	£315,202	£350,957	£320,053

The average EFA student number allocations for the school sixth forms and academies in Lancashire were 225 students in 2013/14, 236 in 2014/15, 225 in 2015/16 and 217 in 2016/17. This shows that ACSC's student numbers are significantly below the average level.

In terms of the 2016/17 academic year, ACSC held an open evening for its sixth form on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2015, to publicise its offer for September 2016 and to gauge the level of interest from students wishing to attend. ACSC promoted the open evening in various ways: with its own year 11 students; through its local feeder schools; a radio advert on Rock FM; on its website; and a promotional banner on Blackpool Road. However, following these promotions, no attendees visited the event.

In recent years, there has been minimal interest from students in progressing to ACSC's sixth form. In 2015/16, only 14 pupils chose to stay on at ACSC for post 16 provision, as their first preference. In addition to this, information from the local authority's Wellbeing, Prevention and Early Help Service shows the percentage of leavers from ACSC attending a school sixth form, which would include their own provision, is reducing year on year, with more young people progressing onto an FE college. Of ACSC's July 2015 leavers, only 8.0% progressed to a school sixth form compared to 84.0% progressing to an FE college. Of the 8.0% progressing to a school sixth form, not all will have stayed in the sixth form at ACSC, instead moving on to the sixth forms of other schools.

The Department for Education's (DfE) statutory guidance, Making 'Prescribed Alterations' to Maintained Schools, published in April 2016, sets out the following guidelines which should be considered for proposals to open new sixth form provision:

- School to be rated as Good or Outstanding by OfSTED.
- The quality of pre-16 education must be good or outstanding.
- The proposed sixth form will provide places for a minimum of 200 students.
- The proposed sixth form will, either directly or through partnership, offer a minimum of 15 A level subjects.

- There is a clear demand for the new sixth form (including evidence of a shortage of post 16 places and a consideration of the quality of L3 provision in the area).
- The proposed sixth form is financially viable (there is evidence of financial resilience should student numbers fall and the proposal will not impact negatively on 11-16 education or cross-subsidisation of funding).

As can be seen from the information provided, ACSC would not meet the current criteria for adding a sixth form as the DfE has strengthened the requirements. ACSC's current provision is significantly different from these requirements in the following areas:

- The minimum number of students – the minimum required under the DfE guidelines is 200 places and ACSC has 32 students.
- The required range of subjects – the offer for new provision is a minimum of 15 A level subjects. ACSC only offers provision in two subject areas.
- The need for a clear demand for the provision – the information in this report shows that students have little or no interest in progressing to ACSC's sixth form and that the provision on offer is available at other local post 16 providers.
- For the sixth form to be financially viable – there is a concern that running courses for a small number of students is not financially viable.

### **Quality and Post 16 Provision Offer at the College**

ACSC was last inspected by OfSTED in October 2013 and the outcome for Overall Effectiveness was 'Good'. However, the inspection report made the following comments in relation to the sixth form:

- The sixth form requires improvement. Although many students make good progress, a significant proportion do not achieve as well as they could because their attendance is poor and they do not complete courses.
- In order to improve further, the report advises the school to raise achievement at post 16 by improving the attendance of sixth form students and ensuring that more students continue the courses they start in Year 12 into Year 13.
- Overall attainment at the end of the sixth form is low because many enter with low GCSE grades. The achievement of students who complete courses is often good but too many start courses and do not complete them and some students' low attendance prevents them from making good progress in their learning.

To support the new inspection arrangements, which were introduced in September 2015, OfSTED and the DfE have developed an inspection dashboard. The validated 16-19 inspection dashboard for ACSC, which was published on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2016, identified no strengths within the dataset. It did, however, identify five weaknesses which are shown below:

- Value added was significantly below average and in the lowest 10% for the qualification types: academic, vocational, GCE A level

- Academic value added was significantly below average and in the lowest 10% for the group: female
- Vocational value added was significantly below average and in the lowest 10% for the group: female
- GCE A-level value added was significantly below average and in the lowest 10% for the group: female
- Vocational value added was significantly below average and in the lowest 10% for learners with prior attainment grade: D or below

In addition, the report stated that the 16-19 minimum standards were not met for vocational qualifications.

The local authority maintains a Post 16 Early Warning System which brings together all of the key performance indicators for the school sixth forms, post 16 academies and colleges in Lancashire. Using the most up to date information, the indicators are assessed as being either red, amber or green against national and local averages and an overall rating is determined for each institution. For the last two years, ACSC has been assessed as Red overall, highlighting that there are concerns about their post 16 provision and the outcomes being achieved by their learners. Key indicators which have led to this assessment are as follows:

- The reduction in post 16 student numbers;
- The negative value added for vocational provision; and
- Only 33% of students leaving the sixth form progress onto a positive and sustained education or employment destination.

In the 2015/16 academic year, ACSC is only delivering post 16 provision in two curriculum areas: one course is offered under Science and Mathematics and four courses are offered under Hair and Beauty.

Some or all of the courses offered by ACSC are available at a number of other post 16 institutions in the local area. These providers are Cardinal Newman College, Preston's College, Moor Park High School and Sixth Form and Carr Hill High School and Sixth Form Centre. All of these have been rated by OfSTED as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' and they are within 3-6 miles from ACSC.

The local authority's Post 16 Adviser for ACSC undertook a review of their sixth form provision in October 2015. They noted that ACSC should only run courses which meet a minimum student number threshold to ensure that they are financially viable and that running a sixth form on low numbers was 'becoming detrimental to the school's core business at key stage 3 and key stage 4'. A further concern was noted in that running small courses is exacerbating the financial difficulties being projected by ACSC.

Should the outcome of the statutory consultation process be that ACSC's sixth form is closed, the capacity currently used for the delivery of this provision will become available. As the number of mainstream pupils is set to increase in the Preston area over future years, this will enable the school to consider increasing the number of statutory aged pupils it can accommodate.

## Consultation and Statutory Requirements

The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 state that the alteration of an upper or lower age range by one year or more, including the removal of a sixth form, is a statutory process. For a local authority maintained community school, the local authority is the proposer and also the decision maker. The statutory process follows four stages and these are set out in the table below, along with the suggested timeline for this proposal:

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
Stage 1	Publication of Statutory Notice and Proposal	26 <sup>th</sup> September 2016
Stage 2	Representation (formal consultation)	26 <sup>th</sup> September to 24 <sup>th</sup> October 2016
Stage 3	Decision	December 2016
Stage 4	Implementation	31 <sup>st</sup> August 2017

To ensure that the process remains within the statutory requirements, the local authority must ensure that the timescales outlined above are adhered to.

### Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

### Risk management

Under section 15ZA of the Education Act 1996, local authorities have a statutory duty to secure sufficient and suitable education and training provision to meet the reasonable needs of all young people in their area by influencing and shaping provision through local partnerships and by identifying gaps, enabling new provision and developing the market. The young people covered by this statutory duty are those aged 16-19 and those aged 19-24 who have either a learning difficulty assessment (LDA) or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

As the number of 16-19 year olds attending ACSC is minimal and the other post 16 providers in the local area offer the same courses as part of their provision, the local authority does not believe that there will be an adverse impact on participation should ACSC not offer sixth form provision in the future.

### Financial Implications

Should the outcome of the consultation be to remove the sixth form provision at ACSC, there would not be an adverse financial impact on the local authority in terms of post 16 funding as this is provided by the EFA and the authority merely makes the payments on its behalf.

The overall financial position of the school would be improved through the removal of small courses which are not financially viable.

**List of Background Papers**

N/A

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A