

Crewkerne & Ilminster Schools Consultation

Children and Families Scrutiny
November 2020

- Cllr Faye Purbrick, Cabinet Member for Education and Transformation
- Amelia Walker, Assistant Director - Education, Partnerships & Skills

www.somerset.gov.uk/crewkerne-and-ilminster-strategic-school-review



Improving
LIVES

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Background



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History of this review

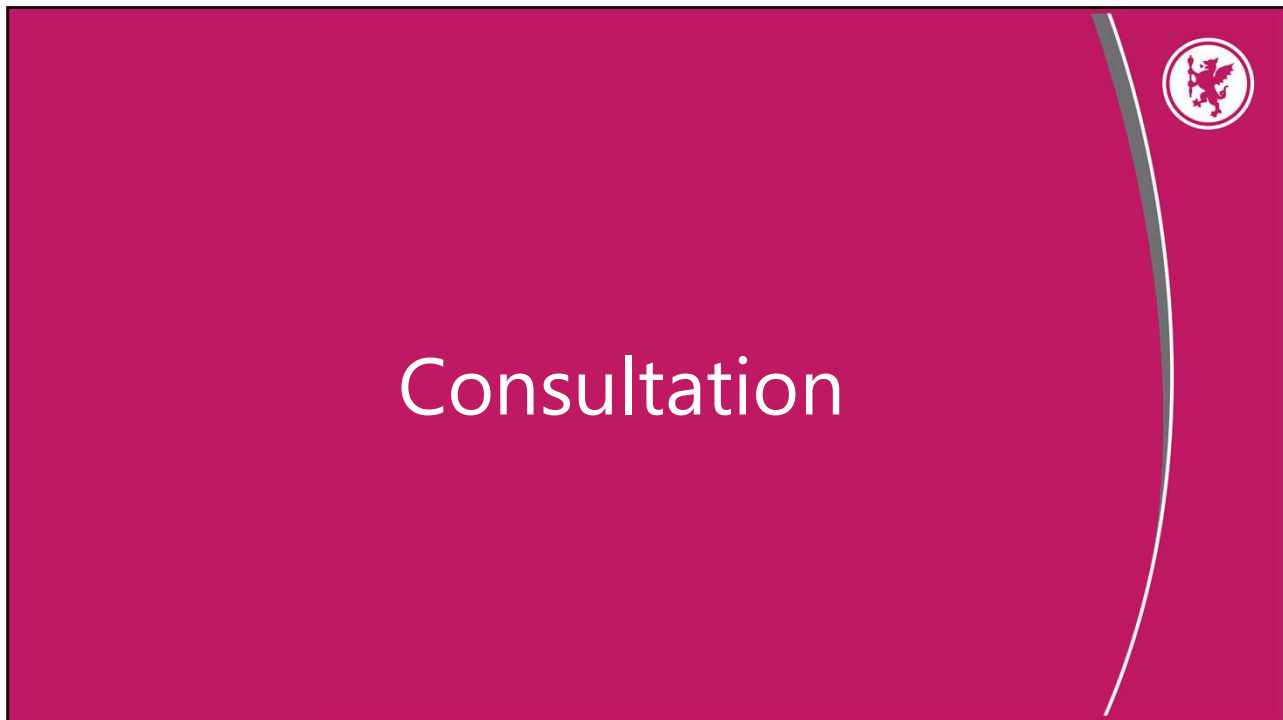
- Declining pupil numbers and resultant overspending has been a growing issue in Ilminster and Crewkerne for over ten years.
- The biggest impact of declining numbers has been on Wadham. It's deficit was previously cleared but the underlying cause has not changed – leading to new deficits.
- Five years ago schools in the area were funded to develop a new school organisation model. This was not successful.
- In early 2019 an independent review was commissioned by SCC from Futures for Somerset. This review found that the system was unsustainable.
- In summer 2019 there was a public consultation on a wide range of different options. This consultation was inconclusive.

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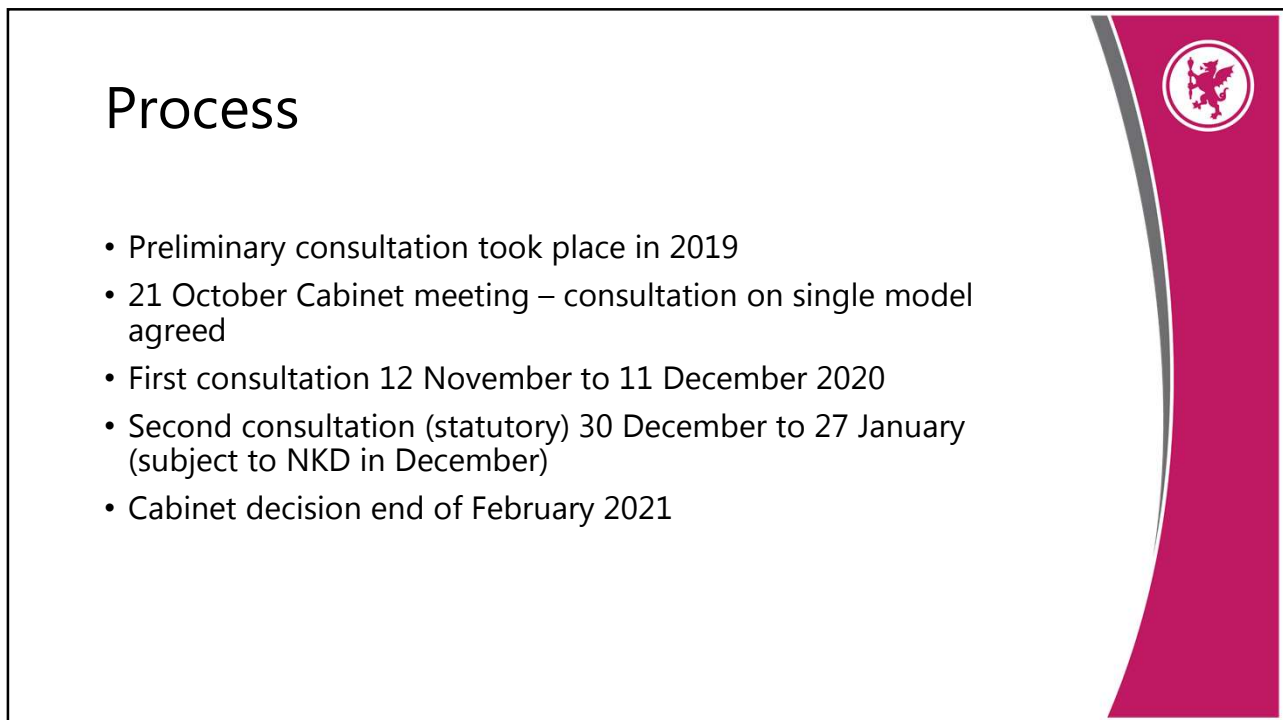
What are we hoping to achieve?

- What matters most is that every child and young person in Somerset have access to **excellent, well-rounded teaching and curriculum** at every stage in their education.
- We also want **thriving schools** that are able to confidently recruit the best teachers and staff, deliver a rich curriculum, maintain attractive and well-cared for buildings and plan for the future.
- Our world and economy are changing faster than ever before. Our schools need to be confident, outwardly focused places that are evolving the **curriculum for the next generation**, not worrying about having enough financial stability to survive.
- Schools are part of the community. Somerset is a beautiful, rural area, and our **town and village schools are at the heart of those communities**. Recognising it is not always possible, we want to secure the future of those schools where we can.

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What is being proposed?

- We are proposing to change the upper school (Wadham School) to a **secondary** to maintain a high quality of education with a good range of subject choices.
- First and middle schools would change to teach the **primary** age range.
 - Ashlands, St Barts, Maiden Beech, Merriott and Haselbury Plucknett would become primary schools (alongside Hinton St George, already primary)
 - Misterton would close
 - Greenfylde and Swanmead would merge and become a single primary over two sites
- This is about **protecting the quality of education in the long-term** for the area.



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How would this affect pupils?

- If Cabinet members decide to implement in February, it would be 18 months after that decision before these changes would take place
- As a guide, for children in:
 - **Year 3 or below** – pupils would stay in their current school until they go to secondary school in Year 7
 - **Year 4, 5 or 6** – pupils would do at least two years in middle school before going to secondary school
 - **Year 7 or 8** – pupils would go to secondary school in Year 9 as at present



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How would this affect staff?

- It is very important that we keep the committed and expert staff that work in schools in the area.
- We would work alongside every school to plan what staff would be needed in each school in future.
- Any member of staff who may need to move to a comparable role in another local school would be fully supported to do so.
- We would 'ring-fence' jobs in the area so that local staff are always first in line to be appointed.
- Trade unions are part of regular communications about the process.

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Issues emerging
to date

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Process

- Is during the pandemic the right time to do this?
- Does holding events online disenfranchise vulnerable people?
- What are the costs of change?
- Is the consultation period long enough?
- What would the timing and process look like for appointing a leader in Ilminster?

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Quality of education

- Would this mean teaching classes across key stages?
- Does this risk losing subject specialism?
- Is Wadham a good enough school?
- Why do parents take their children out of area?
- Will this make schools larger and less supportive for pupils with SEND?

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Transition

- Would pupils with SEND get lost in transition?
- Would new primary schools in Crewkerne get transitional funding?
- Would staff be supported to retrain?
- Would admission numbers be too small in Crewkerne to keep siblings in the same school?
- Would catchment areas need to change?
- Would it be better to phase the movement of pupils?

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Community and context

- How accurate is the understanding of housing growth potential?
- What would be the impact on early years provision?
- Would this result in primaries that were too small and at risk financially?
- Is the road from Misterton into Crewkerne unsafe?

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Alternatives

- Middle schools and upper school joining the same MAT
- All primaries in Crewkerne to have an admission number of 30
- Maiden Beech and Swanmead (middle schools) to become secondary schools
- Misterton to become a primary school (and not close)
- Greenfylde to become the only primary school

