

Motion further updated by Cllr Jon Hubbard 22/4

Wiltshire Council

Annual Council

10 May 2016

Notice of Motion No. 31 – Forced Academisation of Schools Councillors Jon Hubbard and Glenis Ansell

To consider the following motion:

“Central Government have announced plans to force every school in Wiltshire to be forced to convert to an Academy, even if the headteacher, governors and parents would prefer the school to remain within the Local Authority Family.

These forced changes to how schools are run have been condemned by teachers, parents and politicians alike – the Conservative chair of the influential 1922 committee in Parliament recently commented that the plans could lead to the creation of “new and distant bureaucracies” rather than delivering greater freedom and autonomy for schools.*

Wiltshire Council has estimated that the average cost for converting each school in the County to an academy is £10,500. These costs include legal fees, accountancy, staffing issues and other costs such as changes to estate management.

Figures recently released by the Department for Education also confirmed that the average cost per school to central government for the conversion of a school from Local Authority control to being an Academy was just under £66,000.**

The Secretary for State for Education has also confirmed that it is her intention to scrap the position of ‘Parent Governors’*** as part of her reforms to England’s schools.

Council Notes:

So far in Wiltshire 71 schools have converted to academies; indicating that an estimated £4,815,000 has been spent by central government on converting the schools and potentially a cost of £766,500 to Wiltshire Council.

With 165 schools still to convert this would mean an additional cost to Central Government of almost £11m and a bill for Wiltshire Council of over £1.7m.

Council Believes:

The estimated £12.5m that will be spent forcing the remaining schools in Wiltshire to convert to academies would be better invested in delivering local services for residents in the county and providing additional resources for schools in our communities.

That Schools in Wiltshire would be worse off without the insight and local knowledge brought to the County's Schools Boards of Governors by parents and local residents.

Council Calls On:

Wiltshire's MPs and Peers to actively lobby in Parliament to protect Wiltshire's schools from unnecessary and unwanted reform being forced on them and for Wiltshire to instead be given the estimated remaining £12.5m of funding for a fairer funding for Wiltshire Schools or for investment in our communities.

Officers at all levels to ensure that this Council's opposition to forced academisation to be reflected in any consultation responses submitted by the council".

* The Guardian, 2 April 2016

(<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/apr/02/backbench-pressure-on-osborne-academy-scheme>)

** Written answer to Parliamentary Question provided by Department of Education to Jess Phillips MP, 16 March 2016

(<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2016-03-16/31449>)

*** The Guardian, 17 March 2016

(<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/mar/17/parent-governor-role-scrapped-schools-teacher-qualifications>) and The Daily Mail, 17 March 2016

(<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3497639/Schools-allowed-scrap-elected-parent-governors-plans-focus-skills.html>)

To assist Council in its consideration of the above motion, an officer response is attached.