

## NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL

## DECISION OF THE DIRECTOR, PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

**DECISION NO: P&C79****SUBJECT: School Term and Holiday dates 2017 - 2018****DECISION:**

That the following dates are recommended by the People and Communities Directorate for the school year 2017/2018:

Figure 1

Term	Day	From	Day		No. Days
1	Mon	04 September 2017	Fri	20 October 2017	35
2	Mon	30 October 2017	Tues	19 December 2017	37
3	Thur	04 January 2018	Fri	09 February 2018	27
4	Mon	19 February 2018	Fri	23 March 2018	25
5	Mon	09 April 2018	Fri	25 May 2018	34
6	Mon	04 June 2018	Tues	24 July 2018	37
					195

**1. BACKGROUND****Setting school term dates and holidays**

- 1.1 Currently school employers are required to set the term dates of their school year. Employers are: the local authority in community, voluntary controlled and community special schools and maintained nursery schools; the governing body in foundation and voluntary aided schools; the academy trust in academies and Free Schools.

Having consulted a number of schools on this matter it is clear that although some may want to exercise their new powers, most still want the Local Authority to suggest dates to provide a basis for any school level decisions.

- 1.2 The calendar for 2017/18 has been determined in accordance with the standing principles (wherever possible) of:
- starting the school year early in September;
  - equalising teaching and learning blocks;
  - allowing for the possibility of a summer holiday of at least six weeks for those schools which want this length of break;

- identifying and agreeing annually designated periods of holiday, including the summer holiday, where head teachers are recommended not to arrange teacher days.

The objective is to provide a model that:

- allows for local flexibility in determining “non-teaching work days”, especially at the beginnings and ends to school terms, so as not to interrupt the integrity of smoother curriculum delivery, learning and assessment;
- ensures that as far as possible teachers and parents with children at school in neighbouring authorities are not inconvenienced by differing term and holiday dates.

1.3 In July 2015 North Somerset Council consulted with colleagues in Bath and North East Somerset, Somerset, Bristol and South Gloucester Local Authorities to consider possible options for the 2017/18 term dates based on a 195-day model. Within the 195-day model schools will be responsible for identifying 5 days for Inset training. Neighbouring authorities have proposed the collective timetable in their own consultation process.

1.4 A consultation with North Somerset Council stakeholders via the Council's on-line E-consult facility was undertaken between 27 January and 29 February 2016, having been published in Noticeboard in November 2015. Notification of the consultation was placed in the Members' Briefing and The Knowledge. The Diocesan bodies were made aware. The consultation was also open to the public.

The consultation invited responses to one timetable that was based on the outcome of the meeting with the neighbouring authorities.

1.5 We had 8 responses, including councillors, parent and schools. SHINS responded on behalf of 5 secondary schools. The feedback indicated a preference for term 2 finishing later and term 3 starting later. See comments in Figure 3. Neighbouring authorities also received similar comments. Only South Gloucestershire has finalised dates. Our other neighbouring authorities are proposing that they make no changes to the dates consulted on and are recommending the timetable outlined in Figure 2. A suggestion was also received to move the Easter break.

## **2. Recommendation**

2.1 It is recommended that the Term Dates in Figure 1 are agreed to provide parity with our neighbours except for a 2 day difference over the Christmas break.

## **3. Reasons**

3.1 This year our Easter and Spring half term dates are different to Bristol. One of our schools near the Bristol border has told us that they have received very negative feedback about the term dates being different between the two authorities due to the impact it has had on families with siblings in different schools and parents who work in schools across the border. This disruption has been mirrored across other local authorities. Neighbouring authorities have worked closely to minimise a repeat of this impact in future years.

Following consultation and to ensure that the number of school days falls within the 195 day model and works towards equalising the teaching and learning blocks, it is recommended that the dates proposed in the consultation are adopted with the exception of a 2 day change over the Christmas break with term 2 finishing on Tuesday 19th December 2017 and term 3 starting on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2018. Neighbouring authorities are yet to finalise their dates.

**4. Alternatives Considered:**

**4.1 Initial proposal aligned with neighbouring authorities**

Figure 2

Term	Day	From	Day		No. Days
1	Mon	04 September 2017	Fri	20 October 2017	35
2	Mon	30 October 2017	Fri	15 December 2017	35
3	Tues	02 January 2018	Fri	09 February 2018	29
4	Mon	19 February 2018	Fri	23 March 2018	25
5	Mon	09 April 2018	Fri	25 May 2018	34
6	Mon	04 June 2018	Tues	24 July 2018	37
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**Revised timetable following consultation**

Figure 1 (repeated from page 1 for ease of comparison)

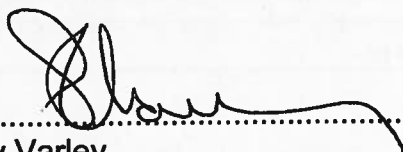
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**5. Financial Implications**

None.

**6. Implications for Future Years**

None.

Reviewed:   
 Sally Varley  
 Service Leader - Planning & Access

Dated: 29/3/16

Signed: Sheila Smith  
 Sheila Smith  
 Director, People and Communities

Dated: 23.3.16

Figure 3

Comments
Looking a long way ahead I see that the schools break up for Christmas for 2016 on Friday 16th December. this is a whole week before Christmas and it is miserable waiting around for the big day. Perhaps for 2017 we could be a bit more pragmatic and break-up on Wed 20th Dec, returning on Thur 4th Jan 2018, which is far more preferable to all.
Some staff have stated that they would prefer to move the Christmas holiday so that we would break up on Friday 22 December and return on Monday 8 January. If the Christmas holiday were moved then the preference would be to also move the October half term to week commencing 30 Oct.
The preference from Worle School is for the last day of term 2 to be Wednesday 20th with a return for term 3 on Thursday 4th January.
We have now had responses from Churchill, Backwell, Ravenswood and St Katherine's schools. They all, including Gordano, would prefer the last day of Term 2 to be Wednesday 20 <sup>th</sup> December with a return to school date of Thursday 4 <sup>th</sup> January. Will you please add these comments to the consultation process
I imagine it will be a difficult task to get total agreement on this. As a school very near to Bristol we have had very negative feedback to Bristol and North Somerset term times being out of line this year. We had siblings and parents who were off last week and back in school today whereas we are not at school this week. I would, therefore, say that my view that we should try to do all we can to be in line with other local authorities. In terms of the suggested dates for 2017-18, I was happy with all of them apart from the end of Term 2 and start of Term 3. I feel that the suggestion of finishing on Wednesday 20th December and returning on Thursday 4th January was a good option. The proposed Dec 15th finish and 2nd Jan start seem too early before Christmas and too soon after New Year.
I have looked at your proposed term dates and feel the Easter break starting on the 23rd March is too early and should be a week later. The fourth term feels too short and by making the holidays a week later, it would make the fifth term slight shorter instead which feels better for the children.
It seems very ambitious and potentially very unfair to restart on 2nd January 2018! Given that 1st is a bank holiday (virtually everywhere!) might we not be making it very difficult for parents (and staff) to get back if they both want to enjoy New Year with family and friends (often not in UK) and travel on 1st January?
Who determines the basis upon which this consultation is constituted? I appreciate that many may be of the view that following the school terms pattern of previous years is the right approach, I would have preferred to see an more general consultation that set out some of the alternative options, including those that I advocated at full council including shifting term dates by one week and encouraging concentration of INSET days. These are approaches that have been adopted in some other council areas and have delivered financial savings on the cost of holidays for many families. I am keen to see North Somerset explore these options, but am mindful that people will generally only comment on the options presented to them - which are pretty narrow in this case.