



Purpose: For Decision

Cabinet report

Date	15 JULY 2021
Title	DETERMINE ACADEMIC YEAR/TERM DATES FOR 2022/2023
Report of	CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION AND SKILLS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of this paper is to seek approval from the Cabinet on the determination of the pattern of school term and holiday dates for the school year 2022/2023 and to note the outcomes of the consultation process that has been followed.
2. For 2019/2020 the Isle of Wight Council introduced a 2-week October half term and used the same approach in subsequent years. This will be the 4th year in which this pattern of term dates operates. During the last two school years the Covid-19 pandemic significantly affected school attendance; there has not been two consecutive school years applying the two week October half term with full attendance.
3. The recommendation is to agree the proposed school term dates for 2022/23, to provide a consistent and appropriate term date calendar for schools across the Isle of Wight, taking into consideration the usual pattern of local authority calendars across the UK and the ongoing partnership arrangements with Hampshire County Council.

BACKGROUND

4. It is the responsibility of a local authority to schedule a school year which provides the statutory 190 pupil days and 195 teacher days in voluntary controlled and community schools. The structure for delivering this entitlement has been the subject of national and local debate in recent years.
5. Establishing more balanced term lengths with regular breaks supports an aim of the corporate strategy, to maximising wellbeing, by helping schools and families to plan learning more effectively.
6. Children benefit from good attendance in school; in particular it supports educational achievement and lays the foundation for a positive contribution to society and economic well-being. Properly structured periods of learning and rest help children to remain healthy, enjoy their school time and achieve more. The publication of dates

well in advance enables families to plan holidays and arrange childcare so that school attendance need not be compromised.

7. The proposed pattern for term and holiday dates on the Isle of Wight takes account of the last day of term in July 2022 and then provides the best available balanced half terms and holiday periods. There has been agreement with Island schools that one of the non-teaching days is taken on the first day of the autumn term, the remaining four are determined and allocated by the school as they wish.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

8. Raising educational achievement is a priority of the council as set out in the council's Corporate Plan. The standardisation of dates helps all schools to plan effectively
9. Following a major consultation for the 2019/2020 School Year the Isle of Wight Council introduced a 2-week October half term break. Reports of the first experience of the 2-week October half term suggest it was positively received. However, the impact of Covid-19 meant that attendance in schools during the following two academic years was disrupted. Therefore, the full 38 weeks of schools operating for pupils, 39 weeks for staff, has only applied to the 2019/20 school year.

CONSULTATION

10. A consultation with all schools and professional associations began in January 2021. An official request for comments were invited on the preferred pattern of dates, responses being required by 26 February 2021. 10 responses were received and have been provided in Appendix 1.
11. Previously questions have been raised about the impact, if any, of the 2 week October half term on pupil attendance; no official figures have been produced since 2019/20, with Covid impacting schools and key data returns, that can provide additional analysis.
12. Appendix 3 provides the proposed pattern of term and holiday date. The consultation responses include comment from both primary and secondary phase schools and the IoW HT Forum, regarding the proposed last day of the Autumn term being on Wednesday 21 December 2022 and the proposed 12-day Christmas break. The Autumn Term is 6 weeks 4 days, the two-week break and a 2nd half term of 7 weeks and 3 days.
13. From the first day of term until the start of the spring term is 18 weeks. That time period includes 18 days of holiday. In the same period in an authority with a 1 week half term holiday the school year has the same number of holiday days and term days.
14. A number of consultation responses made comments regarding a review of the use of the two week October half term.
15. The responses to the consultation were considered by the Cabinet Member as requiring further exploration. Therefore, all schools were written to on 17 June 2021 and given until 22 June 2021 to reply. The schools were asked to advise the authority of their preferred option from the following:

- As in the proposed 2022/23 school year – a two week half term in October
- A hybrid option – two weeks at Christmas (3 weekends are possible in 2022/23) and 11 days half term holiday which includes two weekends.
- The same pattern as majority of other Local Authorities and previously used on IoW – one half term week holiday in October, two weeks at Christmas including 3 weekends.

16. The short period of consultation was to ensure that the authority sets its 2022/23 school year as soon as possible to allow schools to arrange their local calendars.

The summary count of the responses is as follows:

Row Labels	Count
As in the proposed 2022/23 school year - a two week half-term in October	8
Hybrid option – two weeks at Christmas (3 weekends are possible in 2022/23) and 11 days half term holiday which includes two weekends	9
Same pattern as majority of other Local Authorities and previously used on IoW - one half term week holiday in October, two weeks at Christmas including 3 weekends	14
Grand Total	31

17. The analysis of the responses shows a majority prefer two weeks Christmas break. 23 of the 31 responses support having a two-week, 3-weekend Christmas break (whenever possible). Of the 23, 14 want to return to the pattern used in most local authorities, with a 1-week October half term break. A list of responses and comments is provided in Appendix 2. The majority view is being recommended for approval.

18. Key features of the IWC proposed pattern are now:

- One week October half term break,
- Where possible a two week, three weekend Christmas break

It is hoped that most schools on the IoW can adopt the proposed pattern.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

19. Under s32 Education Act 2002, the local authority shall determine the dates when the school terms and holidays are to begin and end for community, voluntary controlled or community special schools.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

20. The proposed calendar for 2022/2023 term dates applies to all community, voluntary-controlled schools, community special schools. Other local authority maintained schools on the Island routinely utilise the determined calendar. Academies and Free Schools are free to set their own term dates. The proposed calendar is applied across

all schools using it in the same way and therefore does not have any impact of any of the protected characteristics.

OPTIONS

21. Option 1 - To approve the proposed calendar for the term dates 2022/23 as set out in Appendix 3.

Option 2 - To approve an alternative calendar to that set out in Appendix 3.

22. Options considered have included;

- i) retaining the two week October half term break,
- ii) a 'hybrid' with more than one week's holiday in the October half term break and more time at Christmas,
- iii) the more typical one week October half term holiday and seeking to establish two weeks and 3 weekends in the Christmas holiday whenever possible.

RISK MANAGEMENT

23. It is a requirement for the local authority to set school term and holiday dates for all its maintained schools, other than voluntary aided and foundation schools, to whom the dates are recommended. If the Council fails to agree term dates it is failing in its statutory duty to comply with section 32 of the Education Act 2002.

EVALUATION

24. The proposed calendar has been carefully considered in light of the change that applied for 2019/2020 and has continued. Having considered the above, it is felt that the option in Appendix 3 is the most suitable.

RECOMMENDATION

25. Option 1 - To approve the proposed calendar for term dates 2022/2023 as in Appendix 3.

APPENDICES ATTACHED

Appendix 1 - Consultation Responses

Appendix 2 - Further consultation responses

Appendix 3 - Proposed calendar of term dates for 2022/2023

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