

## HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Decision Report

<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Executive Lead Member for Children's Services
<b>Date of Decision:</b>	17 December 2009
<b>Decision Title:</b>	Consultation on the future of Chineham Park Primary School
<b>Decision Reference:</b>	996
<b>Report From:</b>	The Director of Children's Services

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### 1. Executive Summary

1.1. On the 15 October 2009 the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services authorised consultations on the proposal to close Chineham Park Primary School with effect from the 31 August 2010, and for pupils to transfer to a neighbouring school. This report provides details of the outcomes of these consultations and recommends that public notices be published setting out the County Council's intention to close the school.

### 2. Contextual information

2.1. Chineham Park Primary School was inspected by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) in January 2009 and judged to be inadequate and requiring Special Measures because:

*"it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement. The inadequate provision over a period of time, the ongoing gaps in pupils learning and the legacy of under-achievement from the past are all preventing pupils from making appropriate progress. These issues have not been resolved despite being identified in previous reports and monitoring visits".*

2.2. The previous Ofsted inspection in October 2006 had judged Chineham Park to be inadequate and the school was served with a Notice to Improve. Significant support from the Local Authority (LA) was provided. LA powers of intervention were also used to place two additional governors on the Governing Body. Improvements were made and the school was judged by Ofsted to be satisfactory in November 2007, although the standards achieved

by children and school attendance were both judged to be inadequate. Improvement was required in relation to the standards in English, Mathematics and Science, inconsistencies in teaching, and attendance levels.

- 2.3. The monitoring visit in December 2008 by Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Schools (HMI) raised very serious concerns about the standard of education provided by the school resulting in the Ofsted inspection in January 2009. The Ofsted report stated that:

*"Standards are exceptionally low in writing and mathematics and, except for Key Stage 1 in 2007, this has broadly been the picture since 2002".*

The report goes on to state that:

*"Standards have been too low for several years and pupils are not being prepared well enough for their future economic well-being, or for the next stage of their education".*

- 2.4. Following the outcome of the Ofsted inspection of Chineham Park earlier this year the LA used its powers of intervention to ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families for permission to replace the school's Governing Body with an Interim Executive Board (IEB). Permission was granted and an IEB of highly experienced governors is now in place.

### **3. Pupil numbers and surplus places**

- 3.1. Table 1 below sets out pupil numbers, forecasts and the capacities of Chineham Park Primary and of schools within a one-mile radius. As at September 2009, (prior to any consultation on the proposal to close the school) Chineham Park was less than half-full with 86 children on roll. The percentage of schools with more than 25% surplus places (Chineham Park's surplus places equate to 52%) is an element of the County Council's comprehensive performance assessment. As such the County Council needs to consider what action might be taken to address the issue of schools with a high number of surplus places.

**Table 1:**  
Pupil numbers at schools in the area

School	Number of places	Pupil numbers Sept' 2009	Forecast pupil numbers			
			2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Marnel Infant	270	171	185	227	274	304
Marnel Junior	360	237	231	237	258	288
Merton Infant	180	93	98	116	127	138
Merton Junior	240	165	141	137	139	149
South View Infant	179	190	184	179	179	190
South View Junior	256	209	194	217	220	234
Oakridge Infant	180	162	173	162	160	175
Oakridge Junior	240	203	189	205	218	212
Great Binfields Primary	210	186	182	174	174	182
St Bede's Primary	315	282	290	301	313	326
<b>TOTAL</b>	2430	1898	1867	1955	2062	2198
Surplus places		532	563	475	368	232

  

Chineham Park	180	86	85	96	116	121
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3.2. There are a further 11 Infant, Junior and Primary school's within 2 miles of Chineham Park Primary School. The combined total of forecast surplus places at these schools is set out in Table 2 below:

**Table 2 :**

Surplus Places			
2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
361	344	265	176

3.3. An analysis of schools inflow/outflow data in Table 3 below identifies the numbers, also shown as percentages, of pupils in Chineham Park and schools' within a one-mile radius attending their catchment schools. The data reveals considerable movement of children across catchment areas.

**Table 3:**

School	Number in catchment area	Number on roll from catchment area	Percentage on roll from catchment area	Catchment area children at other schools	Percentage at other schools
Chineham Park Pri	320	51	16	269	84
Marnel Inf	138	77	56	61	44
Marnel Jnr	188	110	59	78	41
Merton Inf	122	55	45	67	55
Merton Jnr	181	103	57	78	43
South View Inf	244	127	52	117	48
South View Jnr	300	161	54	139	46
Oakridge Inf	96	65	68	31	32
Oakridge Jnr	131	89	68	42	32
Great Binfields Pri	290	99	34	191	66

Note: St. Bede's Catholic Primary School does not have a designated catchment area but serves the parishes of The Holy Ghost, Basingstoke; St. Michael's, Tadley; The Sacred Heart, Hook. Of the 282 children at St. Bede's School, 142 live within the catchment areas of the schools listed in table 3 above, 25 from Chineham Park.

#### **4. School Performance**

- 4.1. The LA recognises and supports the Ofsted inspection judgement that Chineham Park Primary requires Special Measures to ensure children receive an acceptable standard of education. The school was categorised by the LA as "satisfactory" in Spring 2008, although subsequent on-going termly monitoring raised significant concerns about the quality of teaching seen and the overall provision. This, together with pupil attainment and progress evaluated in the autumn term, led to the school and the LA's Primary Phase Inspector/School Improvement Partner recognising in November 2008 that, once again, considerable and immediate improvement was required in core areas.
- 4.2. When a school is judged by Ofsted to require Special Measures to improve its performance the LA must produce a statement of action setting out how it will support the school to remove the causes of identified weakness through an improvement plan. The LA's plan identifies 39 days of support for the school from a variety of professionals, including Primary Phase Inspectors, Subject Consultant/Advisors and Advanced Skills Teachers.

- 4.3. As stated earlier in this report (para 2.4 refers), the LA's improvement plan also made reference to replacing Chineham Park Primary School's Governing Body with an IEB.
- 4.4. The first monitoring inspection by HMI since Chineham Park School became subject to Special Measures took place on 1 and 2 July 2009, and found that progress on the areas for improvement was satisfactory. However, it must be recognised that the school's performance remained at a low level and that HMI's findings were not synonymous with a satisfactory judgement on the overall effectiveness of the school. HMI commented that steady improvements in the quality of provision had been seen as a result of the well-targeted support that has been delivered in conjunction with LA advisors and consultants, and that teachers had been supported effectively by advisory staff from the LA.
- 4.5. A second monitoring inspection by HMI took place on 2 and 3 December 2009 and judged there to be inadequate progress overall against the areas identified for improvement. Whilst satisfactory progress is being made in improving pupil's achievement, inadequate progress is being made in improving the quality of teaching, in curriculum development and in improving leadership and management. HMI recognised the considerable expertise and commitment of the IEB and commented on the appropriate and regular challenge it was providing. HMI also commented that LA support was well-targeted and timely.

## **5. Early Years provision**

- 5.1. Chineham Park Primary school shares its site with "Pebbles", a Phase 2 purpose built children's centre, designed to provide 56 full day care places for 0 – 5 year olds, weekdays between 8.00am and 6.00pm for 48 weeks of the year. Thirty places for the under-3s are housed in the children's centre and 26 places for 3 – 5 year olds are housed in the school. This core offer for childcare has recently been secured through a tender exercise with a contract being awarded to "Kids" who specialise in meeting children's special education needs (SEN). The tender was linked with the County Council's SEN strategy and the provision secures 10 places for children with SEN in the Basingstoke area, with the provider acting as the SEN hub of expertise in this area of the County.
- 5.2. Kid's contract commenced in July 2009 and runs, initially, for 2 years. Currently, owing to a lack of accommodation, this early years setting is unable to provide 56 places (including 10 with SEN) as Ofsted are only able to register the setting for 52 children. Discussions have already taken place with the school with a view to securing additional space for lease to Kid's.

## **6. Consultation**

- 6.1. A full list of consultees, together with a schedule of meetings and drop-in sessions which have taken place regarding the consultation on the proposal to close Chineham Park Primary school are attached as appendices 1 and 2 respectively. Notes of issues raised and comments made at meetings with parents, staff and the IEB are attached as appendices 3a, 3b, 3c and 3d.

6.2. The consultation document attached at appendix 4 was widely distributed, including all parents of children attending Chineham Park Primary School, the on-site early years provision, the children's centre and was published on the County Council's website. The attached questionnaire asked recipients to indicate whether or not they agreed with the proposal to close Chineham Park Primary School and invited comments. A breakdown of the 62 questionnaire responses received is set out in Table 4 below.

**Table 4:**

Number of responses	Agree with proposal to close	Disagree with proposal to close	Parent of child at the school	Member of the teaching staff	Member of the support staff	Parent of pre-school age child	Member of the community	Other
62	7	55	33	6	5	1	10	7

## 7. Issues raised by Consultees

- 7.1. Reference was made on a number of separate occasions to the planned new housing in the catchment area of Chineham Park School and that this would result in a rise in pupil numbers at the school. It was pointed out that the forecast pupil numbers for Chineham Park confirmed this.
- 7.2. There was speculation amongst parents that the school was being proposed for closure so that the site could be sold for development, as had been the case some years earlier when part of the school site was sold for housing.
- 7.3. There was concern that the closure and the consequent displacement of children to other schools would be very disruptive to their education, particularly children presently in Year 5 who would, as well as taking SATs next academic year, face the prospect of changing schools twice within a year.
- 7.4. A number of parents and some staff commented that Chineham Park children benefit from being in a small school with small class sizes. It was pointed out that the largest class in the school is made up of only 19 children. Reference was made to the high percentage of children with SEN at the school and the view expressed that these children would be lost in a bigger school, their needs would not be met and these children will not cope in bigger classes. There was some concern that Chineham Park children would be picked on and bullied in other schools. Conversely, one parent expressed the view that bullying in Chineham Park Primary school had not been dealt with.
- Notwithstanding the predilection of parents for a small school with small class sizes there was recognition that the school, being less than half-full, needed more children on roll. Staff pointed out that the consultation on the proposal for closure had led to children moving to other schools and it was asked what the LA would do about this situation, and whether the LA's School Admissions Team would help to get more children to attend Chineham Park Primary School.
- 7.5. Several comments were made regarding the number of surplus places, there was frustration, and some suspicion expressed regarding the recent expansions of Marnel Infant and Junior Schools. It was pointed out that

Merton Infant School was only a little more than half-full and the question was asked why this school was not under threat of closure.

- 7.6. There were strong feelings expressed regarding the breakfast and after-school clubs, which operate at Chineham Park. There was real concern that the closure of the school would result in parents in having to reduce work hours or potentially lose their job if these childcare facilities were to be lost. Parents and staff referred to excellent grounds and outside play facilities, which children benefitted from both within the school and the wider community, pointing out that Popley's under-7s and under-11s football teams use the grounds for training purposes.
- 7.7. A recurrent theme throughout the consultations related to the timing of the decision to consult on the school's closure. One member of staff queried why closure was being proposed now but not when the school had "failed" a previous Ofsted inspection. Parents, staff and the IEB were concerned at the lack of time being given to "turn the school around". Parents commented on their understanding that the school had 2 years in which to remove itself from Special Measures, and queried why the process of consultation on closure was being carried out so quickly. Members of the IEB expressed frustration at seemingly being given neither the time nor the opportunity to do what they were put in place to do, and queried how much thought was given to putting forward such a proposal at this particular time. It was pointed out that the school had failed an Ofsted inspection before and bounced back, so why not again.
- 7.8. A number of consultees queried how much support the LA had provided and was providing for the school to address the challenges which the school had faced in the past and was facing now.
- 7.9. It was pointed out that walking routes to some of the schools within 1 mile of Chineham Park Primary School, and identified as possible alternative schools for children to attend, involved negotiating either the A33 or the A339, both of which are very busy roads. With this in mind, the IEB suggested that these schools should be excluded resulting in a relatively low number of surplus places in primary schools in the area in 4 years time.
- 7.10 Members of the school council commented on the enjoyment pupils gained from the school grounds referring to a nature trail, playground equipment, the woodland area, a mountain bike trail and football training. They liked the opportunities which visiting specialists brought to the school such as football coaching and "strictly dancing", and the school trips which were on offer to places like Marwell Zoo, the Anvil theatre and the House of Commons. Breakfast and after school clubs are valued by pupils along with one-off events such as the Halloween disco and "Chineham live". In considering moving to a different school pupils were concerned that they might not be with their friends, that they would miss their teachers, there would be new rules and they might be bullied. Letters from pupils endorsed the comments above and made reference to not being able to move up their learning ladder if the school closed, losing their peer mentors, healthy lunches and to missing the kind and caring staff.

## **Response of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council**

- 7.11. Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council's portfolio holder for Education, Performance and Partnerships sought views of other borough councillors to inform the borough council's response.

Whilst recognising the difficult nature of the decision to be made regarding the future of Chineham Park Primary School, given the issues of poor school performance, low pupil numbers and the retention of experienced staff, the borough council expressed a number of concerns as follows : the impact the closure of the school might have on the Children's Centre; the upheaval for pupils; the accessibility of alternative schools and extended services, in particular breakfast and after-school clubs. Whilst the borough council accepts that Hampshire County Council has complied with the letter of its duty in respect of consultation and engagement, the borough queries whether the county has fully complied with the spirit and intent of consultation. As such Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council would wish to be assured that all other options, other than closure of the school, have been considered and that parents' views will be fairly allowed to influence the decision process.

In addition to the above response from the borough council correspondence was received from the Labour Group of Councillors at Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council and from one of the local councillors for Popley East, the ward in which Chineham Park Primary School is located. The former queried whether the consultation process complied with statutory guidance and expressed the view that the consideration of new housing development, and its impact on pupil numbers at Chineham Park Primary, should not be confined to simply the school's catchment area. The latter stated total opposition to the proposal for closure due to the author's perceived detrimental impact on social cohesion in the area, and the author's perception that the school is improving.

### **Diocesan view**

- 7.12. The proposed closure will not have a direct impact on the Church of England and Catholic dioceses and no comments have been received.

### **View of the Local County Councillor**

- 7.13. The local County Councillor has indicated her intention to attend and speak at the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services decision meeting.

## **8. Consideration of consultation responses**

### **Pupil numbers/housing development**

- 8.1 Forecast pupil numbers set out in Table 1 take into account planned new housing, including type and tenure. Discussions have taken place with Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council to ensure that all new housing is accounted for in the forecast figures.

It is the case that the pace of planned housing development has slowed recently and the expected new pupil yield has not materialised. This is reflected in the number of surplus places in schools in the area, particularly

so in Marnel and Merton Infant and Junior Schools. Forecast increases in pupil numbers for these schools arising from planned new housing in and around the schools' catchment areas, indicated the need for additional primary school places. As the nearest schools to the large-scale housing development a decision was taken several years ago to create additional capacity at the Marnel Schools, with the expectation that this would be occupied by children from the new housing with a resultant increase in the numbers of children attending their catchment schools at Merton Infant and Junior. In the event, the recession hit building industry has resulted in far fewer houses being completed to the original timescale.

- 8.2. Table 1 indicates a steady overall increase in pupil numbers in the area in the next 4 years. The individual forecast for Chineham Park Primary School reflects this, and is predicated on a continuing pattern of enrolment of the past 3 years. Given the circumstances pertaining to the school, and the surplus places which exist in neighbouring schools, it is likely that the forecast rise in pupil numbers at Chineham Park is optimistic.

With regard to the future of the school site in the event of Chineham Park's closure, the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services has stated that, were the school to be closed, the LA intends to continue to use that part of the school buildings for the in situ early years provision (paragraph 8.3 below refers) and would intend for the remainder to be used for children's services / educational provision (section 12, recommendation 2 refers).

### **Early Years provision**

- 8.3. As stated previously (para 5.1 refers). Chineham Park Primary School shares its site with a children's centre. Both buildings house day care provision with the third party provider, Kids, in the process of developing a SEN hub of expertise for the area. There is no intention to disrupt this provision if Chineham Park Primary School were to close.

### **School and class size**

- 8.4 The present number on roll at Chineham Park Primary School of 86 is made up of seven year groups, ranging in size from 4 to 18 children. In planning terms, primary schools' of this size are rarely appropriate and, even then, only in sparsely populated rural areas. Whilst parents and staff value the small class sizes at Chineham Park (the largest has 19 children) such pupil/teacher ratios are not sustainable in budgetary terms. It is also the case that greater loads are placed on individual staff as they strive to deliver the broad and balanced curriculum to which pupils are entitled.

### **Transfer of pupils**

- 8.5 The potential disruption to pupil's education is an inevitable consequence of any school closure proposals. It is testimony to the professionalism of staff at Chineham Park Primary that they have maintained a "business as usual" approach to their work.

If the County Council decides to publish notices setting out an intention to close the school with effect from 31 August 2010, notices will run for a period of 6 weeks during which time any objections and representations regarding the County Council's proposal would be received. Should any objections or

representations be received a final decision on the future of Chineham Park Primary School will be made in March 2010. It is proposed that during the spring term the LA will engage with parents to determine preferences for an alternative school for their child to attend. Although this will be in advance of any final decision regarding the closure proposal, and as such potentially unnecessary, should it be decided that Chineham Park Primary School will close then the LA will be in a position to ensure timely and effective planning takes place and links are established to facilitate children's smooth transfer.

8.6. All schools are inspected by Ofsted. The inspection is a process of evidence gathering in order to assess how well a school is performing. Table 5 below lists the schools within a one-mile radius of Chineham Park Primary School and sets out the outcomes of the most recent Ofsted inspections.

**Table 5:**

School	Date of Inspection	Overall effectiveness of the school	Achievements and Standards	Personal development and well being	Teaching and Learning	Curriculum and other activities	Care guidance and support	Leadership and Management
Marnel Infant	January 2007	3	3	2	3	2	2	2
Marnel Junior	April 2009	2	2	1	2	1	1	1
Merton Infant	March 2008	3	3	2	3	3	3	3
Merton Junior	October 2008	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
South View Infant	March 2007	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
South View Junior	March 2008	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Oakridge Infant	March 2007	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Oakridge Junior	September 2006	3	3	2	3	3	2	3
St Bede's RCA Primary	January 2009	2	2	2	2	2	1	2
Great Binfields Primary	October 2009	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Chineham Park Primary	January 2009	4	4	2	4	4	3	4

Grade 1 – outstanding; 2 – good; 3 – satisfactory; 4 – inadequate

8.7. Notwithstanding the IEB's contention that the schools on the other sides of the A33 and A339 in relation to Chineham Park Primary School should be discounted; at the spring census 2009, 26 children from Chineham Park's catchment area were attending these schools with a further 38 Chineham Park catchment area children attending schools other than those listed in Table 6 above.

- 8.8. It is clear from responses to the consultation that the breakfast and after-school clubs which operate at Chineham Park Primary School are highly valued by the parents that access them. The clubs are part of the core offer of extended services which schools, along with other partners and agencies, are required to deliver. There are a number of alternative breakfast and after-school clubs for primary aged children operating within North Basingstoke, some located on schools' sites. If Chineham Park Primary School were to close the identification of suitable alternative provision in terms of breakfast and after-school clubs would form part of the transition measures which the LA would put in place to support parents and children (para 8.5 above refers).
- 8.9. The LA assigns support to schools as part of an annual process. Schools receive support based on inverse proportion to success. In keeping with this principle, reference is made in para. 4.2 to the support from the LA identified in the improvement plan for Chineham Park Primary following the school being judged to require Special Measures to ensure children receive an acceptable standard of education. Over the years, Chineham Park Primary School has received a wide range of LA support. From November 2006 when a previous Ofsted inspection judged the school to be inadequate, to November 2007 when the school was judged to be satisfactory, the amount of LA support for the school equated to 42 days from a variety of professionals including Primary Phase Inspectors, Advanced Skills Teachers, and Subject Advisors. The following year, November 2007 to November 2008, the school received a further 22 days of LA support. Between November 2008 and June 2009 the school received a further 34 days of LA support, and considerable support is ongoing in keeping with the improvement plan for Chineham Park Primary School.

In relative terms, the amount of LA support which the school has received equates to double that of schools who have been judged inadequate and then satisfactory by Ofsted.

## **9. Personnel implications**

- 9.1. The closure of Chineham Park Primary School would affect all existing staff. The retention of high quality staff is a crucial element in the County Council's drive to raise standards and raise pupil achievement. As a responsible and caring employer the County Council would manage the situation sensitively and every effort would be made to redeploy staff into appropriate alternative posts and to avoid redundancies.

## **10. Financial implications**

- 10.1 As stated in Section 5, the school shares its site with a children's centre and part of the school buildings are used to house childcare provision for 3 – 5 year olds through a lease arrangement. If Chineham Park Primary School were to close this space would continue to be needed, but the majority of the building will not be used and this will have implications for ongoing running costs.

If the decision is taken to publish notices setting out the County Council's intention to close the school then, as part of the process, consideration will be given to alternative uses/occupation of the school buildings and a more detailed analysis of the financial implications will form part of a future report.

## 11. Conclusion

11.1 School performance and pupil achievement at Chineham Park Primary School has fluctuated considerably over a period of time. The school has struggled to ensure its pupils have received a satisfactory standard of education for a number of years, during which time the school has failed Ofsted inspections on three separate occasions. This, despite the school receiving considerable support from the LA.

The monitoring inspection by HMI in July 2009 judged there to be satisfactory progress being made. The latest monitoring inspection by HMI in December 2009 to assess progress against the areas identified for improvement judged this to be inadequate.

HMI's findings are consistent with previous patterns, which show improvement with LA support, but when the LA support is reduced the school is unable to sustain the improvement.

11.2 The low number of pupils attending Chineham Park Primary raises serious questions regarding the schools sustainability both in educational and economic terms.

In September 2010, there will be in excess of 560 surplus places in primary schools within a one-mile radius of Chineham Park. The quality of education at all of these 10 schools is judged by Ofsted and the LA to be better than that presently on offer at Chineham Park.

11.3 It is clear that a significant minority of parents living within the Chineham Park Primary School's catchment area value the school and what it offers their children. Arguments put forward by them for the retention of the school have been well expressed. A recurrent theme throughout the consultations is that the school needs more time to effect the changes necessary to turn the school around. Having been in this situation on two previous occasions, history would point to the fact that the necessary improvement made by the school, with intensive LA support, has not proved sustainable when that support has been removed.

## 12 Summary recommendations

12.1 It is recommended that :

**Public notices be published in accordance with Section 15 (1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, to discontinue Chineham Park Primary School with effect from 31 August 2010.**

**The Director of Children's Services explores options for the future use of that part of the school building which will be made vacant in the event of the schools closure.**

**CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:****Links to the Corporate Strategy**

<b>Hampshire safer and more secure for all:</b>	no
Corporate Business plan link number (if appropriate):	
<b>Maximising well-being:</b>	yes
Corporate Business plan link number (if appropriate):	
<b>Enhancing our quality of place:</b>	no
Corporate Business plan link number (if appropriate):	
<b>OR</b>	
<b>This proposal does not link to the Corporate Strategy but, nevertheless, requires a decision because:</b>	

**Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents**

**The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)**

Document: NONE

Location

## **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:**

### **1. Equalities Impact Assessment:**

1.1. Equalities have been considered and no adverse impact identified.

### **2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:**

2.1. The proposals will have no impact on crime and disorder.

### **3. Climate Change:**

a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

No impact has been identified.

b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer-term impacts?

No specific measures have been identified.