

CABINET MEMBER DECISION

Decision:

Proposed Amalgamation of Starhurst and Chart Wood Schools

(i) Details of decision

The Leader of the Council:

- a. approved the closure of Starhurst School as part of the proposed amalgamation with Chartwood School (formerly St Nicholas) such that there will be one school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) in the south east area of the County from 1 September 2017;
- b. noted that the amalgamation of Starhurst and Chartwood schools will take place in two phases with the children currently at Starhurst School being moved to the Chartwood School site in Merstham following which the amalgamated school will be relocated to a new, permanent site in Dorking upon completion of the new building which would then reduce the number of residential places at the school to 24.
- c. noted the financial information related to the proposed amalgamation of Chartwood and Starhurst schools as outlined in the Part 2 report.

(ii) Reasons for decision

The proposal will streamline SEMH provision in the south east of Surrey. It will allow for the more effective use of the available Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) resources. The aim is to develop outstanding provision with a larger and more sustainable single special school for SEMH in the east quadrant of Surrey based on one site in Dorking. Critically, it will release the site of Chartwood in Merstham to allow for delivery of a new mainstream secondary free school.

The Leader is asked to take a decision prior to 6 June 2017 otherwise, in accordance with statutory processes, the decision will pass to the Schools adjudicator to make.

(iii) Details of any alternative options considered and rejected

None

(iv) Details of any consultation and representations received not included in the published report

Following a request by the Leader of the Council, officers provided an overview of the background to the proposed amalgamation of Starhurst and Chartwood schools including a detailed timeline of events related to the decision which contained the following information:

- The Council held a consultation from 8 February 2016 to 8 March 2016 on proposals to amalgamate Starhurst School in Dorking and St Nicholas School in Merstham to create a single school for SEMH provision in the south east of Surrey.
- Following the conclusion of the consultation process, Statutory Notices were determined by Surrey County Council's Cabinet Member for Schools, Skills

and Educational Achievement on 30 June 2016 which brought a combined Starhurst and St Nicholas School into existence from September 2016.

- In September 2016 the Governing Body of St Nicholas and Starhurst schools agreed to change name of the combined School to Chartwood.
- At its meeting on 28 February 2017 Cabinet then agreed a Business Case for a programme of building works for a new permanent site in Dorking which would enable Chartwood School to be settled on a single location. The intention is that the school will come together on the Merstham site during the building works before permanently relocating to the new site in Dorking. The Merstham site will then be released for a new mainstream secondary school.
- It came to light that the Council's approach to implementing the process for the closure of Starhurst School had a technical flaw (was technically flawed), and it was therefore necessary to reissue statutory notices to consult on the closure of the school in March 2017. The report requests that the Leader approve the closure of Starhurst School following the reissue of the correct statutory notices.

The Leader had received a letter from the Chair of Governors of Chartwood School and the issues raised in the letter were taken into consideration. The Leader was satisfied that the Monitoring Officer had confirmed that, in making this decision, the process for closing Chartwood School was now correct. The Leader was satisfied that the remaining issues could be taken forward separately with the school by officers but, in relation to some of the specific concerns raised within the letter, made the following points:

- The Leader understands how important it is to agree a budget for the School and officers will continue to work with the School in order to do this.
- The Leader recognises that the closure of Starhurst will impact on staff and indicated that the Council will work with Babcock 4S in order to mitigate this.
- The Council has undertaken a full and thorough Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) to give full consideration to the implications for the closure of Starhurst on its pupils who would be relocated to Merstham and then Dorking following the completion of the new permanent site for Chartwood School. The Leader recognises that the process of relocating twice will have an impact on some children but that the necessary support will be put in place to minimise any negative impact of the moves. The EIA also considers any implication that the move could have on staff and has an action plan in order to mitigate these.

Conflicts of Interest and any Dispensations Granted

(Any conflict of interest declared by any other Cabinet Member consulted in relation to the decision to be recorded and any dispensations granted by the Audit and Governance Committee)

None

Decision taken by:

- (i) **Name:** David Hodge
- (ii) **Portfolio:** Leader of the Council

Date of Decision: 05 June 2017

Date of Publication of Record of Decision: 06 June 2017

Date decision effective (i.e. 5 working days after date of publication of record of decision unless subject to call-in by the Council Overview Board): 13 June 2017