

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET MEMBER FOR SCHOOLS AND LEARNING

DATE: 11 SEPTEMBER 2014

LEAD OFFICER: NICK WILSON, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES

SUBJECT: TO DETERMINE A PROPOSAL TO RELOCATE THE EPSOM SYCAMORE CENTRE BASE OF THE NORTH EAST SHORT STAY SCHOOL TO STANWELL NEW ROAD IN STAINES ON THAMES



SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

The Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning is asked to determine the proposal to relocate the NE Short Stay Secondary School Epsom provision to the former Infant School building on Stanwell New Road in Staines.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that:

- The Sycamore Centre in Epsom is vacated and closed.
- The short stay school provision on this site relocates to the former Riverbridge Primary School building on Stanwell New Road in Staines.
- Prior to the relocation, a modest programme of building works is completed to make the provision suitable for secondary age students.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

The NE Short Stay Secondary School provision currently operates on two sites in Hersham and Epsom. The Epsom site has become unfit for purpose and requires urgent and substantial building work. The school's location is also not ideal: Spelthorne pupils attending the NE Short Stay School have no local provision and therefore have to travel out of borough to the Hersham site. As the former Infant School building on Stanwell New Road has become vacant, it is proposed to relocate the Epsom facility to this site and thus establish a base in Spelthorne Borough. The Hersham site will continue to operate as now.

DETAILS:

Business Case

1. The North East Surrey Short Stay School has developed over recent years as an organisation that works in partnership with the local secondary schools in three boroughs: Spelthorne, Epsom and Ewell and Elmbridge. It is valued by Heads and parents alike for its support for young people who

are finding settling into school challenging. Schools purchase places for students on a short term basis in order to give them access to specialist support with emotional and behavioural issues. The vast majority of students remain on the roll of their school and are able to return to school full time after a short period at the Short Stay School. Only pupils who are permanently excluded from school after January of their Year 11 or who are awaiting a specialist placement are placed on roll at the Short Stay School full time.

2. As the demand for this type of provision has developed, so have the premises of the Short Stay School. It currently operates on two sites: one in Hersham, which meets the requirements quite well, and the other in Epsom. The Epsom building is too small, is in disrepair and it is not financially prudent to try and refurbish it. Few students from the Epsom area are enrolled at the Short Stay School, but there is greater demand from the Spelthorne schools. This means that these students have to travel to sites outside of the borough in order to get the support they need. Officers have therefore been seeking suitable premises in the Staines or Ashford conurbations to re-locate the Epsom base.
3. Riverbridge Primary School in Staines has recently vacated one of its three bases in order to consolidate its operations from two adjacent sites at Knowle Green. The vacant site is located at Stanwell New Road in Staines. A business case was presented to the Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning on 14 May 2014 where it was determined that this primary school relocation could go ahead. In the same report it was recommended that the site be retained for educational purposes and that a Statutory Notice should be published advertising a public consultation on whether to relocate the North East Surrey Short Stay School to the Stanwell New Road premises.
4. This site is in the right location, is of an appropriate size for a Short Stay School, and with some adaptations could be made into a highly suitable building for this purpose.

CONSULTATION:

5. A letter was hand delivered to all residents and businesses on Stanwell New Road on 13 June 2014. This letter informed the public of the proposal to relocate one of the sites of the secondary Short Stay School to the former infant school building. It also explained when the consultation period would begin and how to send a response to the County Council to comment on the proposal. The consultation period commenced on Monday 23 June and ended on Friday 18 July 2014
6. During the prescribed four week consultation period Surrey County Council received only one public response which is appended to this report. The consultee, a resident of Stanwell New Road, was against the proposal for a number of reasons relating to the perceived nature of the Short Stay School and its student body.
7. The Surrey County Council Divisional Member was also informed of the proposal and, in an email sent to the School Commissioning Officer, she signalled her support for the proposal.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:
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8. There are very few risks surrounding this proposal, the work required to adapt the building to use by an older age group is relatively low and the cost for this can be met from within the Special Schools Capital Maintenance budget. The building work should be completed around May 2015. However, if it is not completed by then, students can continue using the Epsom premises until Stanwell New Road is ready to accept them.

9. The Epsom premises are, though, becoming less acceptable as time goes on and so if permission is not obtained to relocate the Short Stay School to Staines then officers will have to renew their efforts to find another suitable building that is within the fairly modest cost envelope of this project. Remaining at Epsom for any length of time is not an option. Not only is the building unsuitable for delivering the curriculum, it will also become a health and safety issue if allowed to remain in use for the longer term.

10. The concerns raised by the resident who responded to the consultation might also be seen by some as a minimal risk. The minority of students with occasional serious behavioural issues are generally well managed by the experienced staff at the Short Stay School. The most recent OFSTED report for this school states that:
 - Students make good progress and levels of attainment have risen since the previous inspection.
 - Students' attendance has improved significantly. Their behaviour is now typically good.
 - Students' skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics improve substantially during their time in the school and that prepares them for their next stage.
 - Work with partnership secondary schools is particularly successful in ensuring that difficult behaviour is properly managed, thereby reducing incidents of students being permanently excluded.
 - Teaching is now good. All staff work hard to ensure that the life chances for students who have often faced severe and acute problems are enhanced.
 - Leadership and Management are good and enable most students on short-term placements to return successfully to mainstream schools. Those who leave at the end of Year 11 gain places in education, training or employment.

11. The adaptations to the building will include some additional fencing and security measures (controlled access) which should ensure that students are safeguarded from intruders and residents are not aware of or inconvenienced by any unacceptable behaviour.

12. The amount of traffic to and from the school should reduce substantially if it were to change its provision. Generally, there are no more than 25-30 students on roll at any given time and will typically arrive either by taxi or on foot. They are mainly part-time 'sessional' attendees and so would not all be there simultaneously. The Short Stay School would not normally have students on site after 2.30pm. This should render the whole operation quieter and less congested for residents.

14. **Summary of benefits to Surrey residents of proposed action:**

- Responds to the demand for short stay provision in Spelthorne.
- The school is in an urban area with few residential houses and some light industry and retail businesses. This location should provide easy access for local students arriving either by taxi or by public transport.
- The proximity of the proposed new location to other Spelthorne secondary schools cuts down the amount of travel for students and staff working in the Short Stay School (between the site and the base school).
- The building offers increased potential for developing the curriculum which in turn should help raise standards of behaviour and attainment.
- The empty building will be brought back into use rapidly and should have a positive effect on the immediate residential area.

Financial and Value for Money Implications

14. The cost of the proposed capital works will be met from the capital funding included in the 2014/19 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for Short Stay School. The revenue funding for the Short Stay School will continue at the new site.

Section 151 Officer Commentary

15. The Section 151 Officer confirms that funding for this capital scheme will be met from the 2014/19 allocation in the MTFP for Short Stay Schools.

Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer

16. There are no legal implications or legislative requirements associated with this report.

Equalities and Diversity

17. The proposals will have no impact on residents, students or staff with 'protected characteristics'. The building is already disability compliant and both accessibility and safeguarding arrangements will be improved within the planned internal refurbishment. There are no community safety issues. The admissions arrangements comply fully with the Surrey County Council Equalities Impact Assessment of its policy.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

- Pending the decision to proceed, the completion of the refurbishment is scheduled for the end of the Spring Term/ Easter Holidays 2015. This means that the Short Stay School could relocate in May 2015 (summer term).
- If the decision is made to allow the Short Stay School to relocate to Stanwell New Road then building work will commence during the Autumn Term 2014.
- The outcome of this decision will be communicated to the Short Stay School Head and Management Committee by email after the Cabinet Member Decision Making meeting. The School will then undertake to communicate the information to staff, students and parents. Residents will

be able to see the decision when it is published on the Surrey County Council website within five days of the meeting.

Contact Officer: Melanie Harris, School Commissioning Officer NE Surrey Tel: 020 8541 9556

Consulted: Denise Saliagopoulos, County Councillor for Staines, local residents of Stanwell New Road, Staines.

Annexes:

Letter to Residents of Stanwell New Road

Email from resident in response to consultation (to be tabled at meeting)

Email from County Councillor (to be tabled at meeting)

Sources/background papers: Report to Cabinet Member May 2014 relating to the publication of statutory notices

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