

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**CABINET MEMBER FOR SCHOOLS, SKILLS AND
EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT****DATE: 3 MARCH 2016****LEAD OFFICER: JULIE FISHER, DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE****SUBJECT: AMALGAMATION OF THE WILLOWS PRIMARY AND WEY
VALLEY COLLEGE****SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

Surrey County Council (SCC) has consulted on a proposal to amalgamate The Willows Primary and Wey Valley College from 1 April 2016 so that the south west area has one single Pupil Referral Unit (PRU).

The consultation period was from 5 January to noon on 19 January 2016 and there was a public meeting during this time, held on 13 January. Statutory Notices were issued on 19 January, were displayed at each site and published in the local newspaper stating the intention to amalgamate the two PRUs.

The Cabinet Member is asked to review the proposal and comments received during the consultation and statutory notice periods.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the Statutory Notice stating the Local Authority's intention to amalgamate the two PRUs is determined, such that there will be one PRU in the south west area from 1 April 2016. The single establishment will be based across two sites: the primary provision at the Pewley Hill site and the secondary provision at the Southway site.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

This will lead to streamlined PRU provision in the south west area of Surrey which replicates that in the south east area. All pupils at risk of permanent exclusion in the area will be supported under the same leadership team leading to a consistent approach to pupils' needs and working arrangements.

DETAILS:**Business Case**

1. The Willows is a PRU located in Guildford for pupils aged 5-11. The Willows was rated as Good by Ofsted during its last inspection in June 2015. Following a change to the age range of the PRU last year the school is funded for 11 full time primary aged places.
2. Wey Valley College is a PRU also located in Guildford for pupils aged 11-16. The last inspection visit by Ofsted in January 2015 rated the school as Good, with leadership and management rated as Outstanding.

3. Both The Willows and Wey Valley College offer provision for pupils that have been or are at risk of being permanently excluded from a school and who live in the south west area of Surrey.
4. Following the change of age range to The Willows, and in partnership with both The Willows and Wey Valley College's Management Committees, Wey Valley College has been providing interim leadership to The Willows with an Executive Headteacher overseeing both PRUs. The opportunity for close working arrangements between the PRUs started during the autumn term 2015 and has been further developed during the interim leadership period. The interim arrangements have led to the consideration of a formal amalgamation between the PRUs and the end of the financial year would provide a natural point for an amalgamation to occur.
5. The amalgamation of The Willows with Wey Valley College will form an all through 5 – 16 years of age statutory PRU which replicates arrangements that exist in the south east of the county. This will provide the schools in the south west area with a similar model of provision to support vulnerable pupils across all key stages that are at risk of permanent exclusion, under the same leadership team.
6. There will be no change to pupil admissions or transition arrangements. Pupils will continue to access the provision according to the processes that are currently in place. Wey Valley College and The Willows staff will continue to support the re-integration of pupils into mainstream schools at the appropriate time dependent on the individual pupil needs.
7. No changes to staffing are anticipated. There are permanent members of staff who will continue to work with either the primary or secondary pupils, as they do currently. With the amalgamation there will be opportunities for staff to gain experience, where appropriate, at a different phase of education enhancing the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) offer. With a larger organisation there are more opportunities for internal progression as a middle leadership level will be created to support the senior team.
8. The Management Committee and Senior Leadership Team at both PRUs are fully in agreement with the proposal to amalgamate.

<u>CONSULTATION:</u>

9. A consultation period started on 5 January and concluded at noon on 19 January 2016. A public meeting was held on 13 January. There were no attendees at the public consultation meeting.
10. A total of 5 written responses were received during the consultation period via the Surrey Says website, post and email:

Young Person attending The Willows	0
Young Person attending Wey Valley College	0
Parent/carer of a young person attending The Willows	1
Parent/carer of a young person attending Wey Valley College	0
The Willows staff or management committee	0
Wey Valley College staff or management committee	1
Healthcare professional	0
Social care professional	0
Other	3

11. Of the responses received 100% agreed with the proposal to amalgamate the two PRUs. Additional commentary was provided by four of the responders focussing on the benefit to pupils and staff at both PRUs, leading to shared expertise and better outcomes.
12. One responder, although fully supportive of the proposal, commented that economies of scale should not be overestimated and that there would be additional complexities and costs with a split site campus.
13. The Statutory Notice period ran from 19 January to noon on 17 February 2016 and generated no further responses to the proposal.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

14. If the amalgamation did not occur then there is a risk that different approaches would continue to be taken across the south west area dependent on age groups. By working with the same management team at the PRU an amalgamation would offer a continuity of service and consistent approach to all mainstream schools in the south west area of Surrey.
15. There is significant pressure on expenditure for Special Educational Needs and Disability provision and a duty for the authority to ensure that this funding is used to maximum effect. The amalgamation would create a larger more sustainable organisation, leading to more efficient use of public resources. If the amalgamation did not happen there is the risk that two smaller organisations would be unable to offer earlier help approaches to the mainstream sector for pupils prior to permanent exclusion, rather than only to those pupils that have been permanently excluded.

Financial and Value for Money Implications

16. There will be economies of scale obtained with an amalgamation of the two schools as there will be greater flexibility with a larger budget to deploy staff and curriculum resources effectively. There will also be opportunities to refine costs in relation to teaching and support staff by, for example, one whole school business manager and developing a leadership team that can work across all key stages.

Section 151 Officer Commentary

17. The proposed merger of the two pupil referral units does not create any new financial risks and the combined, larger, pupil referral unit can be expected to be more sustainable than the two existing, smaller units.

Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer

18. In considering this Report, Cabinet must give due regard to the results of the consultation set out and the response of the Service to the consultation comments and conscientiously take these matters into account when making its final decision.
19. In coming to a decision on this issue the Cabinet needs to take account of all relevant matters. The weight to be given to each of the relevant matters is for the Cabinet to decide. Relevant matters in this context will include the statutory requirements under the School Organisation Regulations 2013, policy considerations, the impacts of the options on service provision, the medium term financial plan, the Council's fiduciary duty, any relevant risks, and the results of the consultation.
20. The best value duty is contained in Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 as a result of which the Council is under a duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The relevant guidance states that Councils should consider overall value, including economic, environmental and social value when reviewing service provision.

Equalities and Diversity

21. No impacts have been identified as part of this proposal. The two PRUs will continue to offer provision as they have done previously, with no changes for children and young people or staff.

Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults implications

22. Safeguarding vulnerable children is a high priority in Surrey schools and PRUs. Schools and PRUs have considerable expertise in safeguarding vulnerable children and adhere to robust procedures. The PRU would continue to apply good practice in the area of safeguarding. Safeguarding is monitored when Ofsted carries out inspections.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

23. Subject to Cabinet Member approval of the Statutory Notice, the proposal will be confirmed for The Willows Primary and Wey Valley College being amalgamated to form one PRU for pupils aged 5 - 16, called Wey Valley College, across two separate sites from 1 April 2016.

Contact Officer:

Julie Beckett, School Commissioning Officer, Tel: 01483 518109

Consulted:

SCC County Councillors for the local area

All south west secondary schools

All south west primary schools

All special schools

All parents of young people at The Willows and Wey Valley College

All staff and the Management Committee at The Willows and Wey Valley College

Family Voice
SCC Officers
Unions
Babcock 4S Consultants

Sources/background papers:

School Organisation Consultation paper: Proposal to amalgamate The Willows Primary and Wey Valley College to form a single establishment

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