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<b>Legal cleared on:</b>	<b>16/03/23</b>
<b>Section 151 Finance cleared on:</b>	<b>05/04/23</b>
<b>Cabinet Member consultation completed:</b>	<b>12/04/23</b>

## SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

### CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND LEARNING

**DATE:** 25 APRIL 2023

**REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER:** CLARE CURRAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND LEARNING

**LEAD OFFICER:** RACHAEL WARDELL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND LIFELONG LEARNING

**SUBJECT:** Proposal to change the age range and extend the premises at Meadowcroft Infant School

**ORGANISATION STRATEGY PRIORITY AREA:** Tackling Health Inequality, Empowering Communities, Enabling a Greener Future



#### SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

As part of a wider strategy, Surrey County Council is seeking to provide a sustainable education landscape across the county.

Surrey County Council, in collaboration with the Governing Body of Meadowcroft Infant School, are proposing to extend the school's age range, allowing them to become a 1FE primary school for pupils aged 4-11 years. This would allow for a roll of 210 pupils across the school. Further building work will be required on the site of the school to provide appropriate accommodation for the additional pupils, which will be subject to planning permission.

The rationale behind this proposal is that it provides Surrey County Council with the opportunity to reorganise primary places in an area of Chertsey by providing an all-through primary school, which will benefit the local community and provide opportunities for siblings in a family to attend the same school. It would also ease the transition made by children when transferring from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2, as pupils will have the opportunity to remain at Meadowcroft School instead of transferring to another school for their junior education.

The proposed change of age range allows Meadowcroft Infant School to offer junior places. The increase in junior places in the Chertsey planning area will then match the total number of Reception places available. This would improve the sustainability of the school without negatively impacting pupil numbers at other primary schools across Addlestone, Ottershaw, and Runnymede as a whole.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that:

The Cabinet Member for Education and Learning determines the statutory notices published thereby bringing into effect the formal commencement of the proposal to change the age range and extend the premises at Meadowcroft Infant School.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Learning may:

1. reject a proposal
2. approve a proposal without modification
3. approve a proposal with modifications, having consulted the LA and/or GB (as appropriate)
4. approve a proposal, with or without modification – subject to certain conditions (such as the granting of planning permission) being met.

#### **REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The proposal supports and delivers the Local Authority's statutory obligation to provide sufficient school places to meet demand and forms part of a reorganisation of primary places in the borough of Runnymede.

Implementing the proposal will:

- Allow pupils to transition through the school from Reception year, without the need to apply elsewhere, giving them and their families the reassurance of a continuity of educational provision
- Seek to enhance pupils' experiences, enabling higher standards of education to be provided
- Enable the school to deliver the curriculum in a continuous and coherent way, putting them in a stronger position to plan for both continuity and progression in learning
- Provide the opportunity to build partnerships with pupils, parents and families over a longer period of time
- Enable siblings to remain together during their primary education, rather than parents having to travel to two different schools
- Create a sustainable school to serve the local community

The Cabinet Member for Education and Learning's approvals and recommendations completes the statutory process in accordance with the DfE guidance "Making significant changes ('Prescribed Alterations') to Maintained Schools."

#### **DETAILS:**

1. Meadowcroft Infant School is a community school and is situated in Chertsey, within the borough of Runnymede. At present, Meadowcroft Infant School is a one-form entry (1FE) infant school for pupils aged 4-7 years, with a published admission number (PAN) of 30 and provides permanent accommodation for up to 90 pupils. The school is rated as "Good" by Ofsted in its last full inspection in November 2021.
2. St Ann's Heath Junior School is a community school with a "Good" rating from Ofsted in April 2015. The school is situated in Virginia Water and is a three-form entry junior school for pupils aged 7-11 years with a published admission number (PAN) of 90.
3. Children currently leave Meadowcroft Infant School at the end of Year 2 and parents make separate admission applications for Year 3 places. The admissions criteria for St Ann's Heath Junior School currently lists Meadowcroft as a feeder school. If this proposal goes ahead, there will be a change to the admissions criteria and reduction to the PAN at St Ann's Heath Junior proposed in conjunction (this is subject to a separate process and is contingent on the outcome of this proposal).

4. Historically, Meadowcroft Infant School has had no formal follow-on for junior provision and, as such, pupils have previously been offered places at different schools across Chertsey, Addlestone, Ottershaw, and beyond; based on wherever Year 3 vacancies existed at the time. In 2014, Meadowcroft became a formal feeder school for St Ann's Heath Junior School to secure a junior pathway for Meadowcroft pupils. However, St Ann's Heath is over three miles away from Meadowcroft and therefore some distance from the homes of Meadowcroft pupils, who tend to live near the infant school. This therefore affects parental preference and, as a result, Meadowcroft suffers with fluctuating pupil numbers as parents elect to move their children at other points during the school year to avoid having to make a junior transition by securing a place in a local all-through primary school.
5. Over the years, Meadowcroft's 1<sup>st</sup> preferences have been affected due to the uncertainty of local junior provision, as illustrated in **Table 1** below. The school also experiences fluctuating pupil numbers throughout the school year.

**Table 1: Number of preferences received for Meadowcroft Infant School over the last three years**

Academic year	No. 1st preferences	No. 2nd preferences	No. 3rd preferences	No. 4th preferences
2023/24	9	17	24	13
2022/23	9	13	23	17
2021/22	12	11	28	16

6. St Ann's Heath Junior School also has fluctuating numbers due to the uncertainty of pupils transferring across from Meadowcroft. As a result, the school is now operating at two classes in some year groups rather than three.
7. For the purposes of education place planning, Surrey County Council produce pupil projections based on planning areas. Planning areas do not have geographical boundaries but are groups of schools which reflect the local geography, reasonable travel distances and existing pupil movement patterns. From September 2022, there has been a reorganisation of planning areas within Runnymede. Meadowcroft Infant School is now located in the planning area of Chertsey.
8. **Table 2** below outlines the primary projections for the Chertsey planning area. Housing permissions and trajectories received from boroughs and districts are combined with birth data and pupil movement trends to create projections. Providing Year 3 places at Meadowcroft from September 2024, will help reduce the forecasted deficit of places in the planning area. By moving the Year 3 places from St Ann's Heath to Meadowcroft, it enables a continuity of education within the area where they are most needed.

**Table 2: Current pupil place forecasts for Chertsey planning area**

Chertsey									
School year	Year R places	Year R forecast	Surplus / deficit	Year 3 places	Year 3 forecast	Surplus / deficit	Proposed Year 3 places	Year 3 forecast	Surplus/ deficit
2023-24	150	159	-9	120	131	-11	150	131	19
2024-25	150	155	-5	120	134	-14	150	134	16
2025-26	150	155	-5	120	133	-13	150	133	17
2026-27	150	153	-3	120	140	-20	150	140	10
2027-28	150	153	-3	120	135	-15	150	135	15
2028-29	150	155	-5	120	132	-12	150	132	18
2029-30	150	155	-5	120	129	-9	150	129	21
2030-31	150	156	-6	120	128	-8	150	128	22
2031-32	150	157	-7	120	129	-9	150	129	21

9. Subject to the agreement on this proposal by the Cabinet Lead Member for Education and Learning, the local authority will apply to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) for an in-year variation to decrease the PAN and amend the admissions arrangements at St Ann's Heath Junior School for September 2024.
10. Subject to the decision on this proposal and planning permission, building work will be required to the existing site at Meadowcroft Infant School to make it suitable for an additional 120 permanent pupils. This will involve adaptations and refurbishment to the interior of the existing accommodation and a new single-storey classroom block to increase classroom and resource space.
11. The proposal will enable Meadowcroft to start providing Key Stage 2 places from September 2024. The Year 2 class for 2023/24 would transfer into the newly established Year 3 class in September 2024/25, and Key Stage 2 will increase incrementally each year as each new Reception cohort is admitted. Meadowcroft Infant School would be operating as a full 1FE primary school from September 2027/28 onwards.

**CONSULTATION:**

12. An informal consultation was published from 22 June to 15 September 2022 and further Statutory Notices were published from Friday 13 January and concluded on Friday 10 February 2023. All consultation documents are available at [www.surreysays.co.uk](http://www.surreysays.co.uk). The full Statutory Notice is also attached as **Annex 1** of this report.
13. During the Informal Consultation period, there were 62 responses to the consultation:
  - 71% of respondents agreed with the proposal
  - 17.7% of respondents disagreed with the proposal
  - 11.3% of respondents stated they didn't know
14. During the Statutory Notice period, there were 61 responses to the consultation:
  - 44% of respondents agreed with the proposal
  - 51% of respondents disagreed with the proposal
  - 5% of respondents said they didn't know

15. Of those agreeing with the proposal, the majority of respondents were parents/carers of pupils currently attending the school and members of staff working at the school.
16. Of those disagreeing with the proposal, during both consultation periods, the majority of respondents were residents living near the school.
17. More local residents responded to the consultation during the Statutory Notice period than that of the informal.
18. Fewer parents/carers of pupils currently attending the school and members of staff working at the school responded to the consultation during the Statutory Notice period than that of the informal.
19. The full consultation analysis is attached as **Annex 2**.

#### **RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:**

20. There are design, planning and building risks associated with the project and a project risk register has been compiled, which is regularly updated. A contingency allowance appropriate to the scheme has been included within the project budget to mitigate for potential identified risks.
21. The Local Authority needs to be satisfied that the appropriate fair and open local consultation and or representation has been conducted and that the proposer has given full consideration to all responses received. To ensure that this is the case the consultation and decision-making processes are quality assured.

#### **Financial and value for money implications:**

22. The project will be funded from Surrey County Council's Basic Need Capital Programme (SBN) and the budget for this scheme is included in the approved Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
23. The project will be subject to robust cost challenge and scrutiny to drive optimum value for money.
24. In situations where one school reduces its PAN and another increases its age range there tends to be a period of double funding. This occurs as funding is based on pupils on roll in the previous October. In order to reflect the increase in pupils the expanding school will be funded in the year of expansion for the consequential increase in pupils. Conversely, to avoid a sudden drop in funding, the school with reducing PAN remains funded at the numbers on roll at the previous October unless there is a specific ruling from the Department for Education (DfE) to do otherwise. Experience has indicated DfE are unlikely to support such a proposal.
25. As a result, the cost of that double funding will need to be met from the Dedicated Schools Grant growth fund within the schools block. Based on this scenario an estimate of £40k double funding will occur. This has no direct impact on the Council's General Fund.

#### **Section 151 Officer commentary:**

26. Although significant progress has been made to improve the Council's financial position, the financial environment remains challenging. The UK is experiencing the highest levels of inflation for decades, putting significant pressure on the cost of delivering our services. Coupled with continued increasing demand and fixed government funding, this requires an increased focus on financial management to ensure we can continue to deliver services within available funding. In addition to these immediate challenges, the medium-term financial outlook beyond 2022/23 remains uncertain. With no clarity on central government funding in the medium term, our working assumption is that financial resources will continue to be constrained, as they have been for the majority of the past decade. This places an onus on the Council to continue to consider issues of financial sustainability as a priority in order to ensure stable provision of services in the medium term.
27. Appropriate capacity within the Surrey maintained estate is a key element of ensuring sufficiency of school places in the right areas of the County. The Section 151 Officer therefore supports the proposal.

#### **Legal implications – Monitoring Officer:**

28. Section 13 of the Education Act 1996 places a general duty on the Council to secure that efficient primary and secondary education is available to meet the needs the population in its area. In doing so, the Council is required to contribute to the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community.
29. Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on the Council to secure that sufficient schools for providing primary and secondary education are available in its area.
30. Section 27 Children and Families Act 2014 places a duty on the local authority to keep under review the educational provision for children and young people who have special educational needs and or a disability.
31. The local authority has published statutory notices thereby bringing into effect the formal commencement of the proposal prior to the consultation stage in accordance with statutory requirements.
32. In considering this Report, the Cabinet Lead Member for Education and Learning must give due regard to the results of the informal consultation as set out in the report and the response of the Service to the consultation comments and conscientiously take these matters into account when making a final decision.

#### **Equalities and diversity:**

33. The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) for the proposal is attached to this report as **Annex 3**.

**Other implications:**

34. The potential implications for the following Council priorities and policy areas have been considered.

<b>Area assessed:</b>	<b>Direct Implications:</b>
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	Set out below
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	Set out below
Environmental sustainability	Set out below
Public Health	No significant implications arising from this report

**Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children implications:**

35. This proposal would provide increased primary provision from Key Stage 2 in Chertsey, which would be of benefit to the community served by the school, thereby ensuring that those who are Looked After Children can attend a school closer to home and be more connected to local communities and support services.

**Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults' implications:**

36. Safeguarding vulnerable children is a high priority in all Surrey schools. Schools have considerable expertise in safeguarding vulnerable children and adhere to robust procedures. The schools will continue to apply good practice around safeguarding as they do currently. In addition, safeguarding is a key area for monitoring when Ofsted conducts inspections.

**Environmental sustainability implications:**

37. The provision of Key Stage 2 places closer to home will reduce the average journey times for children and their families.

38. The design philosophy is to create buildings that will support low energy consumption, reduce solar gain and promote natural ventilation. Any new infrastructure will be built to the local planning authority's adopted core planning strategy.

**WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:**

39. Subject to the Cabinet Member determining the statutory notice, Surrey County Council and the Governing Body of Meadowcroft Infant School will proceed to implement the proposal. The significant change will be implemented from 1 Sept 2024.

**Contact Officer:**

Lauren Comer, Commissioning Manager

**Consulted:**

Headteachers of the schools featured in the proposals  
Parents of children attending the schools featured in the proposals  
Children and young people who attend the schools featured in the proposals  
Governing bodies and staff members of each of the schools featured in the proposals  
Surrey Family Voice  
Local residents in Surrey  
Local Cllrs in the areas of each of the schools featured in the proposals  
Divisional (Surrey County Council) members  
Cllr Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Education and Learning  
Rachael Wardell, Executive Director for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning  
Liz Mills, Director Education and Learning  
Carrie Traill, Assistant Director Education

**Annexes:****Annex 1 Statutory Notice (Full)****Annex 2 Consultation Analysis****Annex 3 Equality Impact Assessment**

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