

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: 23May 2023	Decision Taker: Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children, Young People, Education and Refugees
Report title:		Approval of Publication of Amalgamation Proposals for Cobourg and Camelot Primary Schools	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		Old Kent Road	
From:		Strategic Director of Children and Adult Services	

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children, Young People, Education and Refugees agree to publish proposals to amalgamate Cobourg Primary School and Camelot Primary School from the 31 August 2023 onwards, entailing the closure of Cobourg Primary School.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. Cobourg Primary School is a one-form entry (1FE) school near to the Old Kent Road and Burgess Park. The school is situated in Planning Area 1 (PA1) – “Borough, Bankside and Walworth” in the Old Kent Road ward.
3. Cobourg Primary School has been through a period of significant leadership turbulence in the past five years. Currently, it is the only school in Southwark, which has received a second, consecutive Requires Improvement (RI) judgement overall from Ofsted (May 2018 and April 2022). Its Early Years provision is the only school based provision in Southwark to have been judged as RI in successive inspections. This means cohorts of children at Cobourg have had an unsatisfactory start to their education.
4. Consistently poor outcomes at the end of Key Stage 2 indicate that gaps opened in early years at the school are not closed by the time pupils transfer to secondary school. The school has consistently been in the lowest performing 5% of schools in Southwark for KS2 outcomes and pupil attendance.
5. Furthermore, the school’s governing body was not able to appoint a substantive Headteacher for more than five years. This means that leadership has been ineffective and inconsistent. In January 2022 the school’s governing body received a Warning Notice from the Director of Education about its failure to address the issues of standards and

leadership at the school. The governing body did not comply with the conditions of the Notice and consequently was removed by the Regional Director's Office in June 2022. It was replaced by an Interim Executive Board (IEB) whose directive was to secure the short and long term future of the school. These actions were taken in accordance with the "Schools Causing Concern" guidance and on the basis that the council considered that the school was eligible for intervention under the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

6. An immediate action taken by the IEB was the establishment of a partnership with nearby Camelot Primary School, a school with the demonstrable capacity to raise standards, lead both schools effectively and implement a strong curriculum offer for all pupils.
7. In addition to immediate concerns about the quality of education, the falling number of children attending Cobourg) poses a threat to its future sustainability. In recent years, Cobourg has not been able to fill the places it was originally configured to admit each year. Indeed, in 2021/22, the school reduced its reception capacity from 60 to 30 to try and address this shortfall. Cobourg presently has a capacity of 390 across all year groups of the school, of which 212 places are currently filled with 178 places empty - 46% of the school's overall capacity - substantially above the Council's average vacancy level of 22%. The number of applicants Cobourg has received since has seen a considerable drop since 2016 in expressed preferences overall – 114 in 2016/17 to 51 in 2021/22. First preferences have fallen from 42 to 25 and 1st to 3rd preferences from 80 to 40. This, along with 21% drop in births in planning area 1, make it unlikely that pupil numbers will recover at Cobourg.
8. The reduction in the numbers of pupils in London in general and in Southwark in particular is a real issue for primary schools in the borough. London Councils (2023) confirmed, "*London local authorities and schools are dealing with a significant and sustained period of reduction in demand for reception places, which has implications for school budgets and standards. The fall in demand reflects the decline in the birth rate since 2012 and changes in migration patterns*".
9. In Southwark, this trend was previously noted by Cabinet in relation to the Pupil Place Planning Report 2022 (October 2022). In December 2022, Cabinet agreed a Strategy to address this issue – this was called '*Keeping Education Strong: Strategy for future proofing primary schools and protecting the quality of education in Southwark*' and outlined a strategy to address falling rolls.
10. There are presently 778 (22%) primary reception vacancies in Southwark, and 5,791 vacancies (also 22%) across all year groups in primary schools as at Spring Census time in 2023. This is some way above the generally accepted 10% vacancy rate that allows for choice across the sector, and is having a severe impact on schools' finances, as school funding is based on the number of children on roll. Whilst rolls are falling, schools have to continue to be required to pay for maintenance of buildings and staffing structures for more places than there are pupils.

11. It is a principle of the Council to protect Southwark's high quality of education - this may be compromised where the cost of teaching staff, equipment and enrichment activities become unaffordable. The Council has already taken action including supporting the amalgamation and federation of schools and reducing the number of surplus places by reducing the Published Admissions Number (PAN) of schools. However, the link between pupil numbers and school funding means that it is not always feasible to keep a school operating and guarantee a continuing high standard of education for the pupils remaining.
12. Cobourg IEB has taken view that an amalgamation of Cobourg and Camelot on the Camelot site from September 1st 2023 would provide a reliably good quality of education for children currently at Cobourg, and would strengthen the education offer for all children for both schools. It has become increasingly clear that Cobourg School is no longer sustainable financially or organisationally, and Southwark Council agreed, after consideration of a number of options, that the amalgamation of the school should be consulted on. The amalgamation would involve the formal closure of Cobourg Primary School, and the statutory processes this requires. The proposed amalgamation would mean the transfer of staff and pupils to Camelot Primary School, on the Camelot site, leaving Cobourg to be repurposed for other educational use.
13. Until 2019, Camelot Primary School – the school that it is proposed to amalgamate Cobourg with - was a 2.5FE school, with a “net capacity” of 525 pupils. Due to a (slight) fall in rolls, the school reduced its PAN to 2FE, and has been admitting 2 forms of entry over the last 3 academic years. However, no classroom space has been disposed of, and sufficient space still exists at the school to take on all the pupils on the roll of Cobourg, were the amalgamation process to be agreed.
14. There will be – minus the Y6 who will be leaving for secondary school – around 170 pupils in years R to 5 who could potentially transfer to Camelot. We estimate there will be 310 pupils already at Camelot for September 2023 – combined this will total 480 pupils. As Camelot has a net capacity of 525 places, this leaves around 45 places spare. In most year groups, the combined numbers of children will lead to classes of between 21 and 24 children, with Year 5 and 6 having a higher proportion but still under 30.
15. In line with the Department for Education's (DFE) guidance: “*Opening and closing maintained schools, Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers, November 2019*”, and Schedule 2 of the Education and Inspections Act (EIA) 2006 (as amended by the Education Act 2011 and The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013) Southwark Council will be following the statutory process for closing a maintained school. The process is outlined in the guidance, and addressed in detail in paragraphs 18 to 23.
16. To this end, Cobourg and Camelot Primary School undertook a wide range of pre-consultation activities on both sites to answer questions on the proposed amalgamation and to present Cobourg's IEB, Camelot's governing body's and Southwark's rationale for closure. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children, Young People Education and

Refugees agreed via an IDM in March 2023 to start a consultation on the proposal to amalgamate Cobourg and Camelot Primary Schools effective from 31st August 2023. This has been followed by the statutory six-week consultation period that forms Stage 1 on the statutory amalgamation process outlined above and as required by DfE guidance

17. This report seeks approval to move to the next stage of the process, the “publication” of proposal to amalgamate the schools. The Lead Member is required to consider the results of the consultation, as set out in this report, before deciding whether to proceed. A final decision on whether to proceed with the amalgamation of the schools, and closure of Cobourg Primary School, would be taken by the Council’s Cabinet after the end of the representation period that follows the publication of proposal.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

The procedure for the consideration of a school amalgamation and closure

18. The **five stages** to a school closure consideration outlined in the guidance and mentioned in paragraph 15 are set out below
 - *Stage 1: Statutory Consultation with interested parties (completed)*
 - *Stage 2: Publication of proposals (this paper requests this)*
 - *Stage 3: Representation from publication;*
 - *Stage 4: Cabinet decision, and finally,*
 - *Stage 5: Implementation of proposals, if agreed*
19. The school and Southwark Council held a series of informal, information sessions during March 2023, with parents of children at the school, staff and key stakeholders to explain the situation that the school was in and to give notice that a formal process to consult on proposal for closure was to begin.
20. Following Cabinet Member approval to proceed, the LA undertook Stage 1 – Statutory Consultation with interested parties from the 20th March 2023 to the 5th May 2023. Feedback from the consultation is summarised in paragraphs 28 to 35 below.
21. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children, Young People Education and Refugees is required to consider the feedback from this consultation before approving the publication of formal closure proposals (Stage 2) and to invite further comment on formal proposals from stakeholders. These proposals are set out in Appendix 3 of the report.
22. Stage 3 will involve the receipt of formal representations from interested parties and stakeholders for a 4-week period in May 2023. Feedback from this exercise and previous consultation will be summarised and taken into account in a report to Cabinet, scheduled to occur in later in the year (date to be confirmed) (Stage 4). Stage 5 – should the Cabinet agree to the closure of the school - would be the formal process of the school closing on the 31st August 2023.

23. The timetable outlined in paragraph 18 is given in tabular format below with proposed timescales – a more detailed timetable is given as Appendix 4.

Stage	Dates
Stage 1: Statutory Consultation	20 th March 2023 to 7 th May 2023
Stage 2: Publication	Mid-May 2023
Stage 3: Representation	May 2023 to June 2023
Stage 4: Cabinet decision	July 2023
Stage 5: Implementation	31 st August 2023

Results of the pre-publication consultation (Stage 1)

24. It is a statutory requirement for the Proposer (in this case the LA) to consult any parties they think appropriate before publishing statutory proposals.
25. The process has included a statutory element of consultation that lasted for 6 weeks to allow the widest possible opportunity for views/comments to be made by parents, carers, local residents and other stakeholders. The purpose of the consultation was for the LA to seek the views of and engage with those that could potentially be affected by the amalgamation of Cobourg and Camelot school and the resultant closure of Cobourg School. It was also an opportunity for interested parties to suggest other options for consideration.
26. In addition to this, Southwark sought the views of:
- *All schools/admission authorities in Southwark, governing bodies and academy trusts (via the Headteacher and the Chair of Governors).*
 - *Neighbouring Councils (Lambeth, Tower Hamlets, Lewisham, Croydon, Wandsworth, and Westminster)*
 - *All Southwark Councillors and MPs*
 - *The Southwark Diocesan Board of Education and the Catholic Diocese*
 - *Appropriate trade Unions*
27. Consultation has been undertaken by:
- *Placing a note on the school websites containing the consultation documents.*
 - *Giving an email address to allow for parents, carers and stakeholders to feed back on the pre-publication proposals.*
 - *Distribution of a form for stakeholders to respond to*
 - *An email to all of the five, additional stakeholder groups listed above was sent by the LA*
 - *Six consultation meetings for parents, carers, community and stakeholders were held in March 2023*
 - *Consultation with staff, and their professional associations/trade unions is presently being undertaken*

Results of consultation and responses to issues raised in the initial pre-publication consultation

28. At the conclusion of the statutory consultation outlined above, the LA has reviewed the feedback received.
29. No representations were received from neighbouring councils, Councillors, the SDBE or the Catholic Diocese. The trade unions had a number of operational queries, and liaised extensively with the school's Human Resources (HR) advisors. No trade unions formally objected to the school closure.
30. Ten responses were received from the consultees outlined in paragraphs 24 to 27.
31. In addition a petition on the Change.org website was launched at <https://www.change.org/p/stop-the-amalgamation-of-cobourg-primary-school-and-camelot-primary-school?redirect=false>, which attracted – at the time of publication – 258 responses. The petition was entitled “*Stop The Amalgamation of Cobourg primary school and Camelot Primary School*”, and was promoted using social media.
32. The petition stated that “*Cobourg Primary School is a safe, loving, caring and passionate school. Our children enjoy learning here and the staff are dedicated and passionate about their roles in ensuring our children have the best start in life and catering for all childrens needs*”.
33. Issues raised as part of the petition were
 - *The building's use post-closure*
 - *The distance between the two schools merging*
 - *The effect of the closure of the school on the community*
 - *The loss of amenity due to the school's situation by Burgess Park lake*
34. The consultees in paragraph 25 raised the following issues
 - *The impact of the increase in school size on Camelot's behaviour management*
 - *Affordability of the new uniform.*
 - *Comparison of the air quality between the two schools*
35. In response to the issues raised by consultees and by the people signing the petition, officers can offer the following observations on the broad issues raised, which have been consolidated into a number of categories.

Issue	Observation
Concerns around the building's use post-closure	It is intended that the building will be re-used for education purposes.
The distance between the two schools merging	The distance is 0.7 miles and there are several bus routes between the two schools. A proportion of the pupils at Cobourg already live closer to Camelot
The effect of the closure of the school on the community	As outlined above, the school building will remain in use. Building a successful, sustainable school community forms part of Camelot's ethos
The impact of the increase in school size on behaviour management?	Camelot will remain within 450-480 pupils, still some way less than the net capacity; no particular additional strategy for behaviour management will be needed
Parents cannot afford the new blazer and tie.	Southwark will explore with Cobourg school minimising uniform costs and providing support for disadvantaged families.
Cobourg has less pollution than Camelot due the location close to nature. Cobourg is closer to a Burgess Park and a lake which encourages children to be active.	Cobourg Primary School is much closer to the Old Kent Road than Camelot and air quality levels at both locations are broadly similar. There are no plans to close the lake or access to it.

Publication of the notices and representation (Stages 2 and 3) and responses to issues raised in the post publication consultation

36. The LA will, if Member approval is given, proceed to the next, formal stages of the process (Stage 2) with the publication of the proposals, requesting responses from the date to be confirmed to the date to be confirmed. Formal notices (Appendix 2) will be published and displayed at the school, placed on the school website and in the local press, inviting comment on the statutory proposal (Appendix 3) – this would complete stage 3 of the statutory process.

Cabinet decision (Stage 4)

37. At the conclusion of Stages 2 and 3 and in line with the statutory guidance, the decision maker is the Cabinet of the Council and the proposals and such observations, feedback, objections and comments will be presented to the Cabinet for scrutiny and decision. The Cabinet is empowered to:
- *Agree the closure proposal*
 - *Agree the closure proposal with modifications*
 - *Refuse the closure proposal*

38. If Cabinet does not take a decision on the school closure within 2 months of the expiry of the formal notice (i.e. by the date to be confirmed), the matter would then be referred to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) for final decision.
39. The following bodies have the right to have the decision referred to the Schools Adjudicator in any case, independent of the local authority after the cabinet decision is taken.
- *The Diocesan Board of Education of any C of E Diocese in the relevant area.*
 - *The Bishop of any Roman Catholic Church in the relevant area.*
 - *The governing body or any foundation of the foundation or voluntary school specified in the proposals.*

Formal amalgamation of the schools (Stage 5)

40. If Cabinet agrees to the proposals to close, this will be effective from 31st August 2023.

Actions undertaken for the pupils, parents and carers affected

41. The local authority, as the body responsible for school admissions in Southwark, has had to plan for every eventuality to ensure that all children presently attending Cobourg Primary School have a school place for September 2023. It is open for all Cobourg pupils to transfer to Camelot, which, as a stable and successful establishment, will be able to provide the quality of education that existing Cobourg pupils deserve.
42. However, some parents may prefer for their children to take up places at other local schools with vacancies. Parents are welcome to apply through the Council's usual in year admissions process for places at other schools. Children with special educational needs are being fully supported to make this transition with reviews of their Education, Health and Care Plans where appropriate.

Actions undertaken for the teachers and non-teaching staff affected

43. The situation at the start of the process was that the LA informed their staff at the earliest possible opportunity that there was a potential that the school would close in August 2023. The trade unions were also involved at this stage.

Policy framework implications

44. With regard to the Council's council delivery plan, the closure of Cobourg Primary school will address the "*Work with schools to keep standards high*" workstream, as with low pupil numbers, this would be increasingly challenging for the school in the future. The proposed closure also accords with the Council's value of "*spending money as if it were from our own pocket*", as the proposed closure will ultimately mean that schools' expenditure will be deployed on where most demand is concentrated.

Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts

Community impact statement

45. The Public Sector Equality Duty, at section 149 of the Equality Act, requires public bodies to consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work, in shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to their own employees. The statutory guidance requires the Cabinet to consider the impact of this proposal on local integration and community cohesion objectives when they are taking a decision on the proposals. Given that most children are remaining within the locality it is not felt that there will be any discernible impact on integration and community cohesion.
46. Public bodies are required to have due regard when carrying out their activities to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between people with protected characteristics and those with none. The Council's "Approach to Equality" commits the Council to ensuring equality is an integral part of our day-to-day business.
47. "Protected characteristics" are the grounds upon which discrimination is unlawful. The characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. In this case, the characteristics covering gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, and sexual orientation are unlikely to be issues to consider in terms of place planning. In terms of age, disability, race, religion or belief.
48. With regard to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government "Integrated Communities Action Plan" - the guidance issued by the Government lists (under "Education and Young People") a list of actions that schools and local authorities should reference, if needed. None of the 16 issues raised as part of the plan are appropriate to this proposal.

Equalities (including socio-economic) impact statement

49. A detailed Equality and Health Impact Assessment (that includes socio-economic impact) has been completed and is attached at Appendix 5. The statutory guidance requires the Cabinet to consider the impact of this proposal on local integration and community cohesion objectives when they are taking a decision on the proposals. Given that most children are remaining within the locality it is not felt that there will be any discernible impact on integration and community cohesion.

Health impact statement

50. The Equality and Health Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached at Appendix 5 - this includes Health impacts. No adverse health impacts were ascertained during the Impact Assessment process

Climate change implications

51. Following the Council Assembly meeting on the 14th July 2021, the Council has now committed to considering the climate change implications of any decisions made. The council is developing a toolkit for staff on the council's climate change strategy. This provides guidance for staff to consider climate change impacts. Cabinet report authors are now required to detail the implications of their recommendations. This report has not directly considered the impact of climate change in the main body of the report, as the effects on climate change of the recommendation will have a minimal effect on climate change.
52. As the numbers of pupils in the authority area falls, and the numbers of pupils attending particular schools reduce, then it is likely that less pupils will be travelling to schools, thereby potentially reducing travel (and carbon emissions) overall, and, where it is utilised, car use.
53. There will be a negligible effect on the other categories outlined - enhancing the environment and green space, green jobs and businesses, sustainable energy and reducing waste, so these are not substantively addressed in this report.
54. No direct measures have been taken to reduce or enhance the impact on climate change as part of this work, as no substantive negative effects have been identified. Additionally, as no direct measures have been taken to reduce or enhance the impact on climate change as part of this work, no monitoring will be required.
55. As explained above, the falling numbers of pupils is likely, if anything, to have a net positive effect (albeit small) on climate change, as less pupils attend school and are therefore transported by car or other forms of transport.
56. Whilst reducing the number of school places will not directly enhance the environment and green space, or create "green" jobs and businesses, less schools operating could potentially benefit sustainable energy or reduce energy and waste from consumables
57. Therefore, there will be, in our opinion, no substantive negative effects as a result of the recommendations and proposals.

Resource and risk implications

58. The Council aims to ensure that demand for school places is as closely matched to supply as possible. The closure of a school where there is considerable overcapacity supports this process.
59. Section 14 of the Education Act 1996, places a duty on local authorities to "*secure that sufficient schools for providing primary and secondary school education are available for their area*". The authority is required to exercise these functions with a view to increasing opportunities for parental choice. The large level of existing and anticipated vacancies and the compact

nature of Southwark's geography mitigate considerably against any risk of there being insufficient places to house pupils affected by the closure.

60. The freehold of the building belongs to the Council, who would ultimately decide what use the building would be put to, if closure were agreed. Planning constraints presently limit the use of the building for anything other than education or training purposes. Southwark Council's clear preference would certainly be for the building to remain in use as an educational or community facility.

Legal Implications

61. Please see the comments below from the Assistant Chief Executive (Governance and Assurance).

Financial Implications

62. The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Schools Block, which is awarded to fund education provision, is primarily calculated using pupil numbers and pupil characteristics. Consequently, there is expected to be minimal impact on the amount of the grant as a consequence of the closure.
63. With a similar amount of income spread over a smaller number of schools, there will be a positive impact on the financial position of schools. This will be seen in those schools which accept pupils formerly attending Cobourg, particularly Camelot
64. Cobourg Primary ended the 2022/23 financial year in a deficit position of £20k. This forecast is expected to rise significantly if the school remains open therefore it is important that decisive and timely action is taken.
65. It is also estimated that the closure will also incur costs such as redundancies, site security, uniforms for children transferring to other schools, archiving/disposal etc. and is estimated at around £100k. In order to minimise the costs of closure it is important that the school and officers work together to maximize redeployment opportunities to existing staff to alternative, suitable positions.

Human Resource Implications

66. The Council is the employer of all staff at the school, and will follow formal staff redundancy processes in consultation with trade unions and staff as per the Restructure, Redeployment and Redundancy Policy. This may or may not result in staff redundancies.

Consultation

67. Consultation in this proposal has been extensive including the statutory consultation processes and has involved all relevant stakeholders, and is outlined in paragraphs 24 to 27.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Assistant Chief Executive - Governance and Assurance

68. This report seeks the agreement of the Cabinet member to publish proposals to close Cobourg Primary School under the Education and Inspections Act 2006. Cobourg School is a community school and the council therefore has the power under section 15 of the 2006 Act to propose closure. The basis of this closure is to facilitate an amalgamation of Cobourg School with Camelot School. There is no formal legal process for doing this apart from by closing at least one of the schools. In this case the proposal is to close Cobourg School for the reasons set out in the report and to facilitate a transfer of pupils from Cobourg to Camelot School so far as possible given the partnership that already exists between the two schools.
69. As explained in the report, publication can only occur once statutory consultation processes have taken place. These have been carried out in accordance with the 2006 Act, the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 and the DFE statutory guidance "*Opening and Closing Maintained Schools*". A statutory proposal to close has to be published within 12 months of the consultation being completed. The decision to publish school closure proposals is an executive decision which is delegated and reserved to the Cabinet member in accordance with part 3D of the Council's constitution.
70. A process of statutory consultation has been carried out in relation to this proposal, the results of which are set out in the report. It is necessary for the Cabinet member to properly consider the results of that consultation and take them into account when deciding whether to proceed to publish statutory closure notices.
71. The report clarifies how the notices will be published, that this will be for a four week period, and that any representations made as a result of the notices will need to be considered prior to any decision to close the school. This will be the subject of a separate report and is a decision that is reserved to the Cabinet to make.
72. When making this decision, the Cabinet member should have regard to the statutory guidance "*Opening and closing maintained schools*" issued by the Department for Education in November 2019 .
73. The proposals will be "published" (stage 3 of the statutory process) by the LA in June 2023. Any person may send objections or comments to these proposals to the council within four weeks of the date of publication of the proposals. Any objections or comments will need to be considered prior to any decision to close the school. This will be the subject of a separate report and is a decision that is reserved to the Cabinet to make.

74. The Cabinet decision in relation to these proposals has to be made within two months of the close of the representation period of the publication of the statutory proposals, or the decision has to be referred to the Schools Adjudicator to make. If the decision is made to approve the proposals to close the school, the 2006 Act requires these to be implemented by the council.
75. The cabinet member needs to apply the public sector equality duty in section 149 Equality Act 2010 in making this decision, which requires it to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. An equalities impact analysis has been produced and needs to be considered by the cabinet member in making this decision.
76. The Cabinet member also needs to have regard to the council's statutory duty under section 14 of the Education Act 1996 to secure that sufficient schools for providing primary and secondary education are available for their area. The report clarifies the availability of alternative schools in the event of the closure of Cobourg School.

Strategic Director of Finance REF: [CAS23/17]

77. The Strategic Director of Finance notes the proposal to amalgamate Cobourg Primary School and Camelot Primary School entailing the closure of Cobourg Primary School. Maintained schools receive the majority of their funding via the Dedicated Schools Grant, which is broadly distributed on a per-pupil basis.
78. As a result, falling rolls over a period of time can result in significantly reduced grant income, which can impact the ability of a school to balance its budget whilst maintaining teaching and learning standards at the school.
79. In the case of Cobourg Primary School, the financial strain due to falling rolls is compounded by its location where there are significant surplus places across the maintained school estate.
80. Schools in financial difficulty contribute to wider financial stresses within the maintained schools estate and so it is important that the financial position of all schools are reviewed regularly to ensure they are living within their means.

81. Section 22 of the Schools and Standards Framework Act (SSFA) 1998 sets out the Local Authority's responsibilities with respect to the funding of schools and includes a duty to defray all the expenses of maintaining a school. Whilst the financial management of maintained schools is delegated to their governing bodies, ultimate responsibility lies with the local authority and it is incumbent upon officers and members to ensure robust governance and controls are in place, both with respect to falling rolls and financial deficits, to limit any further exposure to financial risk arising from schools in deficit.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Opening and closing maintained schools Statutory guidance for proposers and decision makers January 2023	Education Directorate 4 th Floor, Children and Adult Services, 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Ric Euteneuer 07925 637558
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1131568/Opening_and_closing_maintained_schools_Jan_2023.pdf		
School Admissions Code - Statutory guidance for admission authorities, governing bodies, local authorities, schools adjudicators and admission appeals panels. 2021 – DfE	Education Directorate 4 th Floor, Children and Adult Services, 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Ric Euteneuer 07925 637558
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/389388/School Admissions Code 2014 - 19 Dec.pdf		
Integrated Communities Government Action Plan, February 2019	Education Directorate 4 th Floor, Children and Adult Services, 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Ric Euteneuer 07925 637558
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/778045/Integrated Communities Strategy Govt Action Plan.pdf		
The Essential Guide to the Public Sector Equality Duty – EHRC July 2014	Education Directorate 4 th Floor, Children and Adult Services, 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Ric Euteneuer 07925 637558
https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/psed_essential_guide_-_guidance_for_english_public_bodies.pdf		
Managing Surplus School Places in London (2023) – London Councils	Education Directorate 4 th Floor, Children and Adult Services, 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Ric Euteneuer 07925 637558
https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/our-key-themes/children-and-young-people/education-and-school-places/managing-surplus-school-places		
Pupil Places Planning Report 2022, Southwark Council, October 2022	Education Directorate 4 th Floor, Children and Adult Services, 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Ric Euteneuer 07925 637558
https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s109543/Report%20Annual%20School%20Place%20Planning.pdf		

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Keeping Education Strong Strategy - Strategy for future proofing primary schools and protecting the quality of education in Southwark	Education Directorate 4 th Floor, Children and Adult Services, 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Ric Euteneuer 07925 637558
https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s110486/Appendix%201%20Place%20planning%20across%20Southwarks%20Primary%20Schools%20A%20strategy%20for%20future-%20proofing%20quali.pdf		

APPENDICES

Number	Title
Appendix 1	Map showing the location of Cobourg Primary School
Appendix 2	Statutory Notice for Closure
Appendix 3	Statutory Proposal
Appendix 4	Decision Flow Chart
Appendix 5	Equality Impact and Needs Assessment

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Councillor Jasmine Ali, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children, Young People, Education and Refugees
Lead Officer	David Quirke-Thornton, Strategic Director of Children and Adult Services
Report Author	Nina Dohel, Director of Education
Version	Final
Key Decision?	Yes

CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS/DIRECTORATES/CABINET MEMBER

Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Assistant Chief Executive – Governance & Assurance	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	19 May 2023	