

NOTIFICATION OF SPECIAL URGENCY DECISION

(Decision not included in the Forward Plan that can only be taken if the decision taker obtains the agreement of the Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee that the decision cannot be reasonably deferred)

ORIGINATOR'S DETAILS

Name & Contact details – Neil Gordon-Orr,
Acting Assistant Director of Education (Education Access)

DETAILS OF THE REPORT

Approval of Publication of Amalgamation Proposals for Cobourg and Camelot Primary Schools

- *Why has this decision been delayed until now?*

The decision has been delayed to enable the statutory consultation required for a school closure and amalgamation to complete. A previous decision was taken by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children, Young People, Education in March 2023 to launch a consultation on the proposal to amalgamate Camelot Primary School and Cobourg Primary School, entailing the closure of the latter. The consultation is required to last for a six week period but school holidays and bank holidays necessitated extending this until 19th May 2023.

- *Why can't the decision be reasonably deferred?*

A decision is required to move the statutory process on to the next stage, that is to publish a proposal and invite representations for a further four week period. At the end of this period a full report will be presented to Cabinet in July 2023 which will take into account results of consultation period before deciding whether to proceed with amalgamation of schools. If decision is not taken presently to move to the next stage it will not be possible to complete this in time for July Cabinet meeting. This would mean that the constitutional and statutory process would not be complete in time to allow for a closure of Cobourg Primary School by the 31st August 2023. Plans are being put in place for children to move on to other schools from September, so this would create the risk of having an empty school with teaching and non-teaching staff employed.

- *How long has the department known the decision was to be taken?*

Confirmation of the date of the closure of consultation was received in March 2023.

- *If scheduled on the forward plan for a particular period, what's changed to make it so urgent now?*

N/A

- *Why is it important that this decision is taken now?*

As outlined above, if the decision is not taken presently, the constitutional and statutory process will not complete in time to allow for a closure of Cobourg Primary School by the 31st August 2023. This would have financial and organisational implications for the Council. In addition it would create uncertainty for the school communities of Cobourg and Camelot Primary Schools who need to have clarity before the end of school year in July 2023. To be clear it is not a decision to proceed with amalgamation and closure that is being sought now – that will be a matter for Cabinet – only a decision to progress to the next stage of the consultation process.

- *What is the potential cost to the council if the decision is delayed?*

The operating deficit of Cobourg would be estimated to increase by at least £190k in the event of it remaining open for a further term, but actual cost to the Council could be significantly higher as some staff who might otherwise take redundancy in September could remain on the payroll for a further term. The total termly salary costs for Cobourg are in the region of £540k. In addition there could be an impact on future budgets for Camelot and other Primary Schools if there were to be any delay in children moving from Cobourg as school budgets are calculated on basis of children attending in Autumn term.

Please note that a final draft of the report should be included in the submission

A draft of the report is herewith attached

Please also note that this process should only be used in exceptional circumstances where there are compelling reasons for urgency.

Date decision to be taken on: 22 May 2023

Special Urgency Notice cleared by: , Director of Education	
Chief Officer / Director	Nina Dohel
Date	17 th May 2023

Declaration

I agree/~~disagree~~* with the Chief Officer/Head of Service that the proposed decision is reasonable and that it can be treated as a matter of urgency.

Signed.......... Dated.....22.5.23.....

Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee/~~Mayor/Deputy Mayor*~~

* delete as appropriate

Please note reasons for refusal, additional points or further action required (as appropriate)

Please return completed form to Chidilim Agada, Proper Constitutional Officer, 2nd Floor, Hub 2, 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH – tel: 020 7525 3310.
Email: constitutional.team@southwark.gov.uk