

# Birmingham City Council

## Trust and Charities Committee

16th June 2021



**Subject:** Hunters Hill College Closure - Education withdrawal from the Cropwood Estate.

**Report of:** Head of Service – Education Infrastructure

**Report author:** Capital Programme Manager – Education Infrastructure

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If relevant, state which appendix is exempt, and provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential:

### 1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 To note the decision to close Hunters Hill College (the School) and the withdrawal of education provision from the Cropwood Estate land (the Site) and the implications for Birmingham City Council Education Infrastructure (Education) and the Cropwood Estate Trust (the Trust) (registered charity no.1085296).

### 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Trust c/o the Trust and Charities Committee (the Committee),
- Notes that Education are withdrawing all provision and services from the Site effective 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021.
  - Notes that the Trust, through Birmingham Property Services (BPS), will commission surveys and independent external advice, for the Trust's consideration of the future of the Site in accordance with the charitable scheme and objects of the Trust.
  - Notes that Education will continue to support and provide to the Trust, upon request, any relevant information held by Education (e.g. previous surveys).
  - Notes that Education can support the Trust, upon reasonable request, with upfront costs (such as ongoing security) for an agreed period of time while the Trust determine the future of the Site and on the understanding that any such costs are returned to the Education budget from any capital receipt realised from the sale / income of the site.

- After closure (31<sup>st</sup> August 2021) the site revert back to the Trust and be managed via Birmingham Property Services. All unused buildings will be boarded up and made secure.

### **3 Background**

3.1 Hunters Hill College is located on land which is part of the Cropwood Estate in Worcestershire. The freehold interest of the land is held by the Cropwood Estate Trust and for which the Birmingham City Council Trusts and Charities Committee has the delegated day to day decision making and responsibility for ensuring the proper governance of the Trust in accordance with the objects of the Trust and charity law.

3.2 School Organisation Closure Decision: In accordance with statutory requirements, guidance and best practice for the closure of schools, Birmingham City Council published and publicly consulted on a proposal to close Hunters Hill College (statutory publication and representation period was 12<sup>th</sup> November – 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020). Consultation included notification to all Birmingham Councillors, which included the members on the Trusts and Charities Committee.

Birmingham City Council's Cabinet approved the proposal to close the School and, following consideration by the Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee, on 8<sup>th</sup> February, Birmingham City Council determined to implement the proposal and close Hunters Hill College effective 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021.

3.3 The condition and suitability of the buildings at the Site had reached the end of their life for educational purposes. Education invested in excess of £670k over the last 5 years on repairs and maintenance which is in addition to c.£180k invested from the School's budget over the last 2 years. This ensured statutory maintenance was in place and that the School buildings remained warm, safe and dry for the education of pupils. Some buildings which were no longer required or fit for education purposes were boarded up for health, safety and security reasons.

3.4 Following the determination to close the school and with consideration to the suitability of the Site, pupils are transitioning to other education provision that meets their needs.

3.5 Education are in the process of withdrawing all provision and services from the Site and will continue to maintain and secure the School until 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021.

An inventory of the Education assets is being compiled (i.e. classroom and office furniture and equipment) and, where reusable, such items are being provided to other schools, settings and organisations.

Education are arranging for the removal of any and all remaining items and waste and are in the process of engaging the preferred contractor to clear the School by 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021.

3.6 The Trust have the freehold interest for the Site with the day to day management of Trust by the Committee. Any decision about the future of the Site will be made by

the Committee, which is independent of Education. Education will forward to the Trust, c/o BPS, any requests from parties interested in the use of the Site.

- 3.7 Any income realised from the Site is received to the Trust's accounts and is for the Committee to determine the use of any income realised by the Site in accordance with the objects of the Trust's charitable scheme and charity law.
- 3.8 Education acknowledges that BPS are initiating activity to consider immediate options for the agricultural land that forms a significant proportion of the Site; and that procurement of an independent site appraisal is being procured by BPS.

#### **4 Options considered and Recommended Proposal**

- 4.1 Do nothing option is not available. Education are withdrawing all provision and services from the Site, as it is no longer fit for the purpose of education, and as The Trust are the freeholder and accountable body for the Site and governing the objects of the charitable scheme.
- 4.2 The Trust, with the support of BPS, relieve Education of the Site on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021. The Committee will commission surveys and independent external advice, for the Trust's consideration of the future use and management of the Site in accordance with the charitable scheme and objects of the Trust.

#### **5 Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Cropwood Estate Plan – use and holdings

Appendix 2 – School Organisation Update to Committee - 18<sup>th</sup> Feb 2021