

Birmingham City Council

Trust and Charities Committee

13th April 2022



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 agree to the Trust taking back the site following vacant possession. That Education Infrastructure will no longer manage the site but will transfer this over to BPS to manage on behalf of the Trust.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Trust c/o the Trust and Charities Committee (the Committee),
- Notes that the site will be “vacant possession” by 30th June 2022 (TBC).
 - Approves that upon achieving vacant possession the site will revert back to the Trust, from Education on 1st July 2022 and the Trust will manage the site via Birmingham Property Services thereafter.
 - Notes that where appropriate and sensible, buildings have been boarded up and made secure and partial decommissioning of utilities (electricity supply etc.) has been undertaken to various areas of the site for safety, security and financial reasons.
 - Notes that Education will continue to manage and secure the site until 1st July 2022 at which point Education will no longer be liable for the security or maintenance of the site as the management and costs of security will be for the Trust to then arrange and fund with support from Birmingham Property Services (BPS).

- Notes that Education will continue to support and provide to the Trust, upon request, any relevant information held by Education (e.g. previous surveys), noting that the Trust, via BPS, intend to commission independent surveys and external advice, for the Trust's consideration of the future of the site in accordance with the charitable scheme and objects of the Trust.

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 Birmingham City Council's 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'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 8th February 2021, Birmingham City Council determined to implement the proposal and close Hunters Hill College effective 31st 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 preceding 5 years on repairs and maintenance which is in addition to c.£180k invested from the School's budget over the preceding 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 decision, Education withdrew all services, secured and cleared the site of all education assets (furniture and equipment etc.) and has continued to maintain the site. As of 28th February 2022, the total cost of clearance, security and continual maintenance of the site was £140,089.
- 3.5 Education has progressed matters supported by Legal Services with former staff that occupied living accommodation on the site and will achieve vacant possession by 30th June 2022 as agreed previously at the Trust Committee.
- 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 it is for the Committee to determine the use of any income realised from 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 progressed by BPS.

4 Options considered and Recommended Proposal

- 4.1 Do nothing option is not available. Education has withdrawn 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 1st July 2022. 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