

Report to:	Cabinet	Date of meeting:	1 November 2018
Subject:	Sand Dunes Nursery School – outcome of the consultation on the proposal to close the school because it is not financially viable.		
Report of:	Head of Schools & Families	Wards Affected:	Linacre and neighbouring wards where pupils reside
Is this a Key Decision	Yes	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

## Summary

The Governing body of Sand Dunes Nursery School have written to the local authority stating that they are unable to set a budget and are unable to produce a plan which will bring the school back into budget. They are no longer financially viable and have, therefore, requested that the local authority commence a statutory consultation on a proposal to close the school.

The current financial position indicates that the school is currently overspending by approximately £140,000 a year and has now exhausted its available balances. The projected financial position for 2018/19 is a deficit of £275,000. Should the school close in July 2019 the closing school deficit budget is predicted to be -£360,000 and this will need to be picked up by the local authority. There will also be closure costs that will need to be factored into the final deficit position but these are unknown at this time and so cannot be quantified.

Cabinet on 26 July agreed to undertake a statutory consultation and the purpose of this report is for Cabinet to consider, the outcome of the consultation on the proposed closure of Sand Dunes Nursery School, the current financial position of the school and seek approval to publish a Statutory Notice relating to the proposal. All consultation responses are available and the issues raised are detailed in the body of the report.

## Recommendation(s):

Cabinet are recommended to:

- 1) Consider the responses to the statutory consultation process;
- 2) Consider the other information regarding the quality and availability of other providers in the local area;
- 3) Consider the financial position of the school in terms of its significant

deficit and the fact there are no viable proposals to address this;

- 4) With deep regret approve the publication of the Statutory Notice on the closure of Sand Dunes Nursery School.
- 5) Request officers continue to explore suggestions put forward by the School, in the meeting with Councillors, for alternatives and include the outcome in the determination report.

### **Reasons for the Recommendation(s):**

The local authority has the statutory power to close a maintained school following the statutory process detailed in the report.

### **Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:** (including any Risk Implications)

All alternative options have been explored by the governing body with support from Officers prior to the governing body making their request. No viable alternative options to address the financial viability of the school have come from the consultation process.

### **What will it cost and how will it be financed?**

#### **(A) Revenue Costs**

The current financial position indicates that the school is currently overspending by approximately £140,000 a year and has now exhausted its available balances. The projected financial position for 2018/19 is a deficit of £275,000. Should the school close in July 2019 the closing school deficit budget is predicted to be -£360,000 and this will need to be picked up by the local authority. There will also be closure costs that will need to be factored into the final deficit position but these are unknown at this time and so cannot be quantified.

Any budget shortfall by the end of the closure period is the responsibility of the Council and cannot be charged to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Therefore, the Council will need to identify additional resources from its reserves and balances to support the final closing deficit position. Any budget shortfall by the end of the closure period is the responsibility of the Council and cannot be charged to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Therefore, the Council will need to identify additional resources from its reserves and balances to support the final closing deficit position. The funding implications of this are detailed in the body of the report.

Any mothballing costs related to the building may be met from specific funding within the DSG which is held centrally for this purpose. However, this funding is under review by the DfE as part of the national review of school funding and may not be available after 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.

**(B) Capital Costs**

N/A

**Implications of the Proposals:**

<b>Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):</b> Capacity exists to take forward the proposed closure
<b>Legal Implications:</b> The proposal to close the school will follow the requirements of the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013.
<b>Equality Implications:</b> There are no equality implications.

**Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:**

Protect the most vulnerable:
Facilitate confident and resilient communities:
Commission, broker and provide core services:
Place – leadership and influencer:
Drivers of change and reform:
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity
Greater income for social investment:
Cleaner Greener:

**What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?**

**(A) Internal Consultations**

The Head of Corporate Resources (FD5325 /18) and Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD4550 /18) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

**(B) External Consultations**

Public consultation on the proposal has taken place in accordance with statutory requirements. As part of the consultation process meetings were held with staff in the school and their trade union representatives.

### **Implementation Date for the Decision**

Immediately following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting

<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Mike McSorley
Telephone Number:	0151 934 3428
Email Address:	<a href="mailto:mike.mcsorley@sefton.gov.uk">mike.mcsorley@sefton.gov.uk</a>

### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1 – Consultation leaflet  
Appendix 2 – Draft Statutory Notice

### **Background Papers:**

Consultation responses.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 Sand Dunes Nursery has had financial challenges for a number of years but the head teacher and governing body have been able to restructure and reorganise the school to ensure that the school's budget was balanced. Unfortunately, because of increasing costs and static pupil numbers they are no longer able to set a balanced budget. The school is currently only half full and numbers are unlikely to increase.
- 1.2 During the consultation on children and family centres a number of issues were raised about the current numbers of children attending Sand Dunes Nursery School and its consequential impact on the Centre.
- 1.3 Governing Bodies have a duty to set a balanced budget each year and the Governing Body of Sand Dunes Nursery School has worked very hard over the last few years to reduce costs and set a balanced budget. This has been against a backdrop of a funding freeze, falling pupil numbers and increasing cost.
- 1.4 The Governing Body of Sand Dunes Nursery School met on 26 June 2018 to consider the financial position of the school going forward in the light of no foreseeable increase in pupil numbers and increasing cost. The Governing Body consider that they could not reduce costs to the level required to set a balanced budget due to statutory requirements around staff/pupil ratios. Following this meeting the Chair of Governors wrote to the Head of Schools and Families on 27 June saying, "as a Governing body we cannot by law set a deficit budget and at a full Governors' meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> June it was agreed that there was no alternative but write to yourself stating that the school is no longer financially viable and asking you to consider undertaking a consultation on proposed closure."
- 1.5 The above was considered by Cabinet on 26 June 2018. Cabinet agreed to commence a statutory consultation on a proposal to close Sand Dunes Nursery School at the end of the 2018/19 academic year because it is no longer financially viable.

## **2. Consultation Process**

- 2.1 In accordance with section 16(3) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 a proposer of a school closure must have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State. The following bodies and individuals were consulted –
  - Parents/carers of pupils at the Sand Dunes Nursery
  - Staff at Sand Dunes Nursery
  - Governors of Sand Dunes Nursery
  - Trade Union Reps
  - Ward Councillors
  - Directors of Neighbouring LAs
  - Local MPs
  - General consultation invites on Sefton Council's Website.

- 2.2 The consultation process was presented to the Public Engagement and Consultation Panel on 16 August 2018.
- 2.3 All parents received a letter and a copy of the consultation leaflet. The consultation leaflet is attached to this report for information at Annex A. The consultation also consisted of meetings with staff, governors and families, and provided the opportunity for discussion and written representation.

### **3. Outcome of the Consultation**

- 3.1 During the consultation period meetings have been held with interested parties, the following is a synopsis of the outcomes as a result of those meetings. The consultation period ran from 25 August until 19 October (the end date was extended at the request of consultees because there was a delay setting up the online form).

#### **3.2 Consultation Meetings with Parents and Carers 18 September 2018**

Two meetings were held to provide as much opportunity for parents to attend although only a small number of parents/carers were present (11 in total).

At the meetings, the background to the proposal was explained. Reference was made to the informal pre-consultation meetings that had been held with parents in July. Some of the parents/carers who were present had attended this. The reason for the proposal was due to the school being in financial difficulties and it was explained that in the past the school has restructured and made savings, but they are no longer able to do this. At the end of 2017/18 the school had a deficit of -£136,500 and by the end of 2018/19 this is predicted to be -£275,150. Schools must be able to set a balanced budget.

Following receipt of a letter from the governing body, a report was submitted to Cabinet on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2018 and a consultation on a proposal to close the schools was approved. The Council must follow a legal process which has several stages and the meeting was part of the consultation stage. Once the consultation period ends a report will go back to Cabinet on 1<sup>st</sup> November to decide whether to proceed to the next stage. The report will be in the public domain and will be available a week before the meeting. If this is agreed the proposal will be published and there is a 4-week representation period to allow people to submit their written responses. The final report will be submitted to Cabinet in January for them to make the final decision to close or not.

Responses to the consultation can be in any format. There is a form attached to the consultation document and the forms can be handed in to the school to be collected. Comments can also be submitted by email, via the webform on the Sefton website, by letter or via the Sand Dunes Facebook page.

If the decision is made to close, parents were informed that the local authority will arrange to have more detailed conversations with parents/carers about places. This will be arranged via the school and Early Years Team.

If the school does close it will happen at the end of the summer term so there is no need for parents/carers to move their child especially those who are moving to Reception in September.

It was explained that the Children's Centre is not part of the school and will not be affected by a closure.

### **3.3 Consultation Meeting with Staff and Governors on 18 September 2018**

At the meeting, the background to the proposal was explained. Reference was made to the informal pre-consultation meetings that had been held with staff in July which most staff had attended. The reason for the proposal was due to the school being in financial difficulties and it was explained that in the past the school has restructured and made savings, but they are no longer able to do this. At the end of 2017/18 the school had a deficit of- £136,500 and by the end of 2018/19 this is predicted to be - £275,150. Schools must be able to set a balanced budget.

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It was explained that if the decision was to close the schools formal staffing consultation would take place.

### **3.4 Online and written responses to consultation**

A total of 174 responses were received; 31 of these were from Sefton webforms, 6 from emails, 40 were written responses submitted on the form attached to the consultation document and 97 responses made as part of the online petition (Reason for Signing/Supporter Comment) were submitted by the school. The webforms captured who has responded and the postcode.

Who responded?

- |                   |    |
|-------------------|----|
| • Parent/Carer    | 16 |
| • Ex parent/carer | 5  |

- Resident living nearby 6
- Ex-Employee 1
- Student 1
- Grandparent 1
- Member of staff 1

Postcode of respondents

L21	13
L20	5
L23	3
L22	5
L30	2
PR8	1
No postcode	2

Key themes from all responses:

- All respondents supported the school and were against the closure
- Concern that a school in an area of deprivation that caters for vulnerable children is closing and the effects this may have on the child through the education system and later life
- Concern for vulnerable parents and families who receive support from the school which they feel will not be available from anywhere else
- Concern about lack of nursery places in the Seaforth area and the impact of the proposed closure on the local community
- Concern that closure of the nursery will have a knock-on effect on primary schools in the area as without this support pupils may not be “school ready”. Sand Dunes also provides advice and support for other schools in Sefton and respondents were of the opinion that that this level of early years expertise will be lost if the school closes
- A high proportion of children with SEN/additional needs attend the school, some children struggle with change and making friends and there is concern that there will not be a local nursery school that can cater, or will accept their child/children and provide the wrap-a-round provision for families in full-time employment
- If an alternative school is found, there is concern that families on low incomes will not be able to find the travel/transport costs to be able to get to the school
- The children like attending Sand Dunes Nursery School and the respondents praised the quality of teaching staff/practitioners and the specialist support they provide to both children and families and feel the staff have built up relationships with the children and given them the best start in life. Parents view Sand Dunes as part of the family and



described how their children were now thriving there after being given support for their specific needs. Others said their children were well prepared and confident to move on to Reception. Former parents described, after an excellent start at the nursery school, how their children had gone on to do well at primary school and beyond

- Concern about the staff and the loss of jobs and whether there is the possibility of joining up/merging with other schools, creating an Early Years Hub or using the tailor-made facilities at Sand Dunes as an Early Years SEN specialist provision, that may free up space in other local SEN schools
- Concern about what will happen to the building if the nursery does close

### **3.5 Petition**

An online petition entitled 'Keep Sand Dunes Nursery School Open' had over 900 signatures and this was supplemented by a written petition with just over 500 signatures, giving a total of over 1,400 signatures. The online petition can be viewed at <https://www.change.org/p/sefton-mbc-keep-sand-dunes-nursery-school-open>

### **3.6 Responses from other statutory consultees**

During the consultation period, no responses were received from other statutory consultees.

### **3.7 Summary of Issues Raised during the consultation**

#### **3.7.1 Main issues raised by staff**

Staff were concerned about being made redundant and finding an alternative job if the school closed. It was explained that there was no redeployment agreement with schools but the local authority would ask primary schools to give an interview to staff from Sand Dunes who met the essential criteria for jobs they applied for. The Head of Schools and Families raised this at a recent meeting of Primary Heads and this suggestion was agreed.

It was explained to staff that a range of additional support would be put in place to help with writing CVs and job applications, and with interview techniques.

Concern was expressed that private providers do not have the same terms and conditions as the local authority.

It was agreed that HR would meet with the staff group to discuss detailed individual personal issues.

It was agreed that the funding deficit was the reason for the school being in the situation it was in but no one could come up with viable ideas to resolve this issue. It was explained that there were no alternative sources of funding which could be identified. There was some frustration with the process as staff felt there were no alternatives to be put forward because of the budget issue.

Trade Unions encouraged staff to lobby through local councillors and MPs.

An Ofsted inspection is due for the school and staff were concerned about the stress this would cause. The local authority has written to Ofsted to notify them about what is happening at the school and Ofsted have acknowledged this and said they will take this into consideration but won't commit to say whether they will inspect or not.

Staff were concerned that other settings would not be able to support children to the same levels particularly those with additional needs. It was explained that other nurseries in the area are rated good or outstanding, and the Council's School Readiness Team have confirmed that other settings have the expertise to support children with additional needs.

It was explained that if the decision was to close the school some parents will make their own arrangements to find alternative provision with many of the current cohort of children due to move to Reception in September 2019. The SEN team and School Readiness Team will work with parents to help them access a place if necessary.

Staff were concerned about what might happen to the building but it was explained that no discussions would take place until after the decision on the closure proposal. It was explained that the children's centre would be unaffected by the proposal.

Staff suggested using Sand Dunes as a specialist Early Education provision for SEND where existing staff can use their expertise to support Nursery and Reception age children who require specialist support. It was requested that this be included in the SEND review later this term as staff feel there will be a gap if other settings are not able or willing to take children with additional needs. It is suggested that this will free up space in Rowan Park. It had been agreed that this suggestion can be fed into the SEND Review.

### 3.7.2 Main issues raised by parents/carers

Support for children with SEND appears to be the main issue of concern for parents contacting the Head teacher. It was explained that the SEN team will work individually with parents to ensure that their needs are met in moving to a new setting if the decision was to close the school.

Parents were concerned that other settings would not be able to support children to the same levels particularly those with additional needs. It was explained that other nurseries in the area are rated good or outstanding, and

the Council's School Readiness Team have confirmed that other settings have the expertise to support children with additional needs.

It was explained that if the decision was to close the school some parents will make their own arrangements to find alternative provision with many of the current cohort of children due to move to Reception in September 2019. The SEN team and School Readiness Team will work with parents to help them access a place if necessary.

Parents seemed to think that there was not much they could do to keep the nursery viable because of the scale of the funding issues. There are not many nurseries that are separate from a school. This nursery is completely different from a school nursery and if it closes it will be very sad. If the school is going to be closed Parents wanted to be told now and felt the process was being dragged out for month and months.

It was explained that the Council had to follow the statutory process. It was also explained that the local authority and the school had explored every available option before proposing closure. The Headteacher explained the options they had explored and previous restructure to reduce costs but stated there were no further budget reductions which could make the school viable.

Parents/carers were urged to complete the consultation forms so that local authority know what their concerns are. It was explained that meetings of the Council are public and anyone can go along to observe.

Parents spent a lot of time explaining how the school had helped their children to progress and were concerned about how they would tell them if the school closed.

Parents asked if the school could become a resourced nursery but it was explained that there was no funding available for this. Children who have complex SEND would have an EHCP which would name the provision for that child in the plan. An EHCP is needed to access a resourced nursery place.

Parents asked that if the nursery was full would it make a difference. The headteacher explained that the school was already in significant deficit and even if it was full this would not wipe out the deficit and ensure the school had a balanced budget going forward. There are further funding changes proposed by central government which will make the funding position even worse in future.

Parents were concerned about having to move to another nursery and how their child would cope with this. It was explained that if the decision was to close then the school and the local authority would work closely with parents and children to support them with the transition to an alternative setting.

Parents wanted to know the number of special needs places available and it was explained that the SEN team will be able to provide this. It was reiterated that the Council will work individually with parents who have children with additional needs.

Parents were sceptical that their views would be considered and that the closure was not a forgone conclusion. The statutory process was explained as well as the financial challenges set out in the consultation document. Because Sand Dunes is a school they have costs other settings don't have. Parents asked about alternative sources of funding and it was explained that the local authority were not aware of any alternative funding which could support the school.

Parents felt that some parents could not attend the meetings because of work. It was explained that the meetings were set up following consultation with the school on the best times for parents and that parents who could not attend should be encouraged to submit a consultation response so their views would be captured.

Parents asked questions about alternative provision and they were referred to the information in the consultation document about how to find nursery places in Sefton. Staff from Sefton's Early Years team will also work with parents to help them find an alternative place if required. It was stressed that if the decision was eventually to close the nursery it would not be before the end of the current school year and there was, therefore, no need to move at the moment.

### **3.8 Meeting with Ward Councillor, Lead Member of Children's Services and Director of Children's Services**

3.8.1 Representatives from the Parents and the School at the request of Ward Councillors met with the Cabinet Member, Director of Children's Services and head of Schools and Families to discuss first had their concerns around the closure proposal.

3.8.2 The issues discussed are captured above and Councillors felt it was very helpful to be able to hear the concerns directly from parents and have a discussion on the issues raised.

3.8.3 The school raised a number of potential options for the nursery including: specialist early years SEN provision; hub for early excellence education; combining maintained nursery provision under one roof; further exploring other sources of funding. These proposals had not been costed or worked up in detail and, subject to approval by Cabinet, it was agreed that officers would work with the school to do this and report the outcome to the determination meeting in January.

## **4. Financial Position**

4.1 Sand Dunes Nursery School has been struggling financially for a number of years and the Governing Body has worked hard to reduce costs and set a balanced budget.

4.2 The table below summarises the latest financial position of the school over the last two years and the projected financial position for 2018/19 to 2019/2.

Year	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
		**		
Total Expenditure	230,039	403,508	391,077	434,779
Total Funding	203,079	239,341	252,449	232,794
Budget surplus / deficit	- 26,960	-164,167	-138,628	-201,985
Balances / deficit B'fwd	54,620	27,660	-136,507	-275,135
Est. Balances / deficit C'fwd	27,660	-136,507	-275,135	-477,120

\*\* includes provision of the 2 year old offer from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 following staffing restructure and the closing of the child care provision in the Nursery School in March 2017

- 4.3 As stated above the Governing Body has worked hard to reduce costs each year. However, even with savings in expenditure, the school has had to use all of the its' balances and still closed last financial year with a deficit.
- 4.4 The current financial position indicates that the school is currently overspending by approximately £139,000 in the year and is carrying forward a financial deficit from 2017/18. The projected financial position for 2018/19 is a deficit of -£275,135.
- 4.5 As part of the consultation parents and staff asked if funding could be found to keep the school open. However, there is no funding available within the DSG to do this. There is also no unallocated funding within the Council's core budget to bridge the funding detailed above.
- 4.6 Should the school close in July 2019 the closing school deficit budget is predicted to be -£360,000 and this will need to be picked up by the local authority. There will also be closure costs that will need to be factored into the final deficit position but these are unknown at this time and so cannot be quantified

## **5. Standards**

- 5.1 Sand Dunes Nursery School was rated as good at its last Ofsted inspection. The majority of other settings in the area are also rated good or outstanding (100% of maintained nursery places and 97% of PVI Daycare).

## **6. Pupil Places**

- 6.1 Sand Dunes Nursery School is approximately 50% full (at the time of writing, 35 children against a capacity of 78 places). There is capacity in other settings in the local area (Based on the January 2018 sufficiency survey there are 29% vacant places in maintained nurseries and 31% in PVI Daycare).

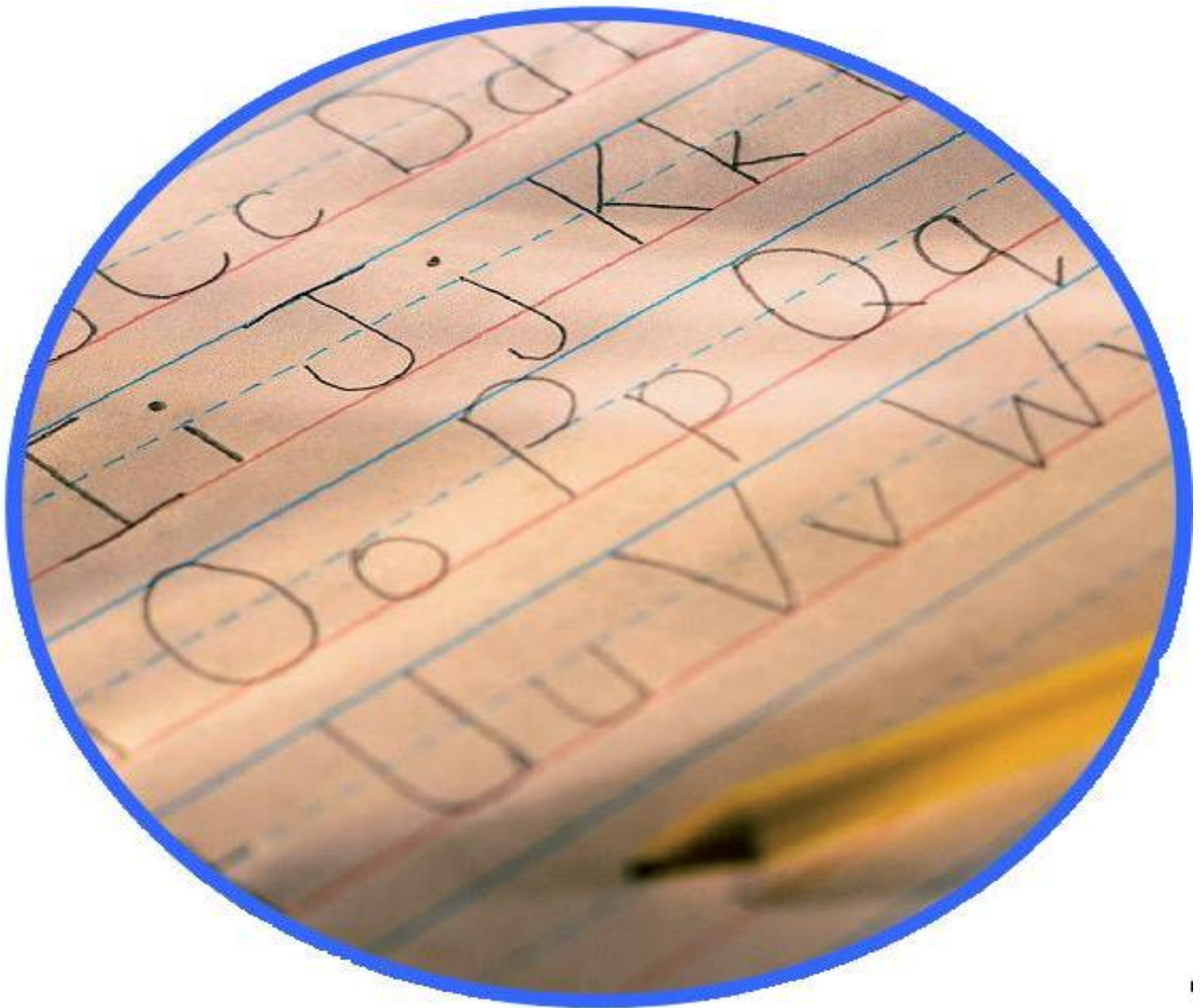
## **7. Statutory Notice**

- 7.1 A copy of the statutory notice and detailed proposal are attached to this report for information
- 7.2 Following publication of the notice, subject to Cabinet approval, there will be a 4 week statutory period for representations to be made.
- 7.3 Any representations regarding the proposal will be considered by Cabinet in January when a final decision on closure will be made.

## **8. Summary and Conclusion**

- 8.1 Following the proposal from the Governing Body to consult on the closure of Sand Dunes Nursery School consultation ran for 8 weeks from 24 August to 19 October. A range of stakeholders were directly engaged and public meetings were held with staff and parents.
- 8.2 A range of comments were made during the consultation process on the perceived impact of closing the school and a petition was received opposing the closure with over 1,400 signatories as well as over 170 other responses opposing the proposed closure.
- 8.3 During the consultation process there was a great deal of passion from parents and staff for the school to remain open and concern about what would happen to their children and the local community if the school closed. However, no viable and sustainable proposals to address the budget deficit and keep the school open were received.
- 8.4 The current financial position indicates that the school is currently overspending by approximately £140,000 a year and has now exhausted its available balances. The projected financial position for 2018/19 is a deficit of £275,000. By August 2019 the projected financial deficit of the school is £360,000 which will need to be picked up by the local authority along with the costs of closing the school in terms of redundancy costs etc. Any delay in closing the school will result in a significant increase in the deficit the Council would be responsible for.
- 8.5 There are sufficient places in other high quality local settings to accommodate all of the children pupils from Sand Dunes Nursery if the school closes.
- 8.6 The school suggested some options for the nursery but had not been able to provide costings or a business plan as to how these might work. It is suggested that, subject to approval, officers could work with the school to explore the viability of these options and report back as part of the determination report.
- 8.7 In conclusion the only realistic way forward is to proceed with the request from the Governing Body to close the school at the end of this academic year and proceed with the publication of the statutory notice. Any representations or

new options will be presented to the meeting in January which will determine the proposal.



## Proposal for the closure of Sand Dunes Nursery School

This leaflet provides background information about the proposal for closure of Sand Dunes Nursery School. It also answers some of the questions that parents, carers, pupils and members of the wider community might want to know.



## Background

At a meeting on the 26th July 2018 the Council's Cabinet agreed to proceed with the request from the Governing Body of Sand Dunes Nursery School to commence the statutory consultation process with regards to the proposal for the closure of Sand Dunes Nursery School, with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> August 2019. A copy of the report can be found via the following link:

<http://modgov.sefton.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s84381/Sand%20Dunes%20Nursery%20School%20proposal%20to%20commence%20statutory%20consultation.pdf>

**It is extremely important to note that at this point in time no definitive decision has been made about the future of the school.**

There will be a consultation period which will run from August 2018 – 12<sup>th</sup> October 2018.

As part of the consultation process for the proposal, we will be holding meetings with staff, governors, and parents/carers of pupils at the school. It is important that we hear the views and opinions of as many people as possible.

## Date and Time of Meetings:

Meetings for parents will be held at the Children's Centre, Caradoc Road, Seaforth on **Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2018 at 10.15am to 11.45am and again at 2pm to 3.30pm** to enable as many parents to attend as possible.

A meeting for staff and governors will be held on **Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2018 at 4pm to 5.30pm** at Sand Dunes Nursery School.

This is your opportunity to make your views known so it is important that you attend if you can.

If you are unable to attend the meeting, you may wish to comment on the proposal via an online comment form at

[www.sefton.gov.uk/sanddunes](http://www.sefton.gov.uk/sanddunes)

This area of Sefton Council’s website, where comments can be submitted, will also be used as a dedicated web page to provide details about the proposal and will be used to keep members of the public fully informed about the consultation process.

Subject to the outcome of the consultation process, the Local Authority intends to publish a statutory notice setting out the proposals for Sand Dunes Nursery. It is the Local Authority’s intention to publish this notice in the local newspapers during November 2018, and this will be followed by a four-week representation period - during the period all interested parties will be invited to make their representations and comments in writing. At the end of the four-week period, the matter will be considered by the Council’s Cabinet, who will make the final decision on the proposal.

<b>Stage 1</b>	<b>Consultation August 2018 – 12<sup>th</sup> October 2018</b>	This is the start of the process when the Local Authority provides information about what is being proposed and gathers the views of interested parties to help them develop the proposals. This period usually lasts for a minimum of six weeks.
<b>Stage 2</b>	<b>Publication - November 2018</b>	A legal notice is published in the local paper (usually the Champion) and on the Council website which sets out brief details of the proposal for closure and where more information can be found. It also gives details of where objections and comments can be sent and the closing date for these. It marks the start of the representation period or formal consultation.
<b>Stage 3</b>	<b>Representation November – December 2018</b>	This is a four-week period from the date the notice is published to allow interested parties the final opportunity to send objections and comments to be taken into consideration by the decision maker. It is classed as the formal part of the consultation process.
<b>Stage 4</b>	<b>Decision Cabinet to make final decision –</b>	All the objections and comments gathered during the representation

	<b>January 2019</b>	period are provided to the decision maker to enable them to make the final decision to close or not.
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### **Parents and Staff Voice**

Initial informal meetings have been held with parents and staff to make them aware of the consultation proposal. The formal consultation process will provide parents and staff with the opportunity to respond to the proposal.

All parents and staff are actively encouraged to give their views during the consultation period.

### **Other Consultees**

Other organisations who must be consulted will be written to as part of the process and be invited to submit their views.

### **Reasons for the Proposal**

#### **Pupil Numbers**

- Pupil numbers have been falling over a number of years and this trend is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

#### **School Finances**

- School finances are highly dependent on pupil numbers for their funding and as pupil numbers fall schools are unable to maintain staffing levels and the funding available to support each pupil is reduced.
- There is a projected financial deficit of £293,000 for 2018/19.
- The school governing body and leadership have worked extremely hard to reduce costs and find savings, but are now at a stage where they are unable to address the increasing deficit. As a result, the school is not financially viable for the longer term.
- Schools are not legally allowed to set a deficit budget and the Governing Body had to write to the local authority asking us to commence a consultation on proposed closure of the school

due to not being able to set a balanced budget or put measures in place to be able to do so.

**The following questions are based on previous school closure proposals and the type of information and support that parents/carers, pupils, governors, staff, unions and the wider community might want to know.**

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **Q1**

#### **When will the school close?**

At the moment, the Local Authority is only consulting on a proposal to close the school. If the proposal is agreed the school would close with effect from 31 August 2019. The closure of schools is governed by the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 and following the statutory consultation which will end on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2018 the Local Authority will publish a statutory notice setting out the proposals for the school. The notice will be published during November 2018 and there is then a four-week representation period where all interested parties are invited to make representations and comments in writing to the Local Authority. At the end of the representation period the matter will be considered by the Council's Cabinet who will make the final decision on the proposal. This is likely to be in January 2019.

### **Q2**

#### **If the school does close, what are the alternative nursery schools in the area?**

There are other nursery providers in the area, which have available places. More information is available at:

[www.seftondirectory.com/childcare](http://www.seftondirectory.com/childcare) where there is a full list of all nursery providers in Sefton. You can also contact the information service by email at [fis@sefton.gov.uk](mailto:fis@sefton.gov.uk) or via the Sefton Council Contact Centre on **0345 100 0845**.

### **Q3**

#### **If the school closes, how do I get help and support in finding an alternative school?**

If the decision is to close the school Sefton will arrange for someone to be available at the school to provide details of alternative provision, provide support and answer any questions that you may have.

#### **Q4**

##### **How will you ensure the continuance of a good quality education for all pupils?**

The governing body and the leadership in the school have a duty to ensure the standards of education in the school are maintained whilst it is open. Although this is also a very difficult time for school staff, they are totally committed to ensuring that all pupils receive a good quality education.

#### **Q5**

##### **Why doesn't the school have enough money?**

Funding for all schools in Sefton comes from central government and must be allocated mainly on the basis of pupil numbers. Pupil numbers at Sand Dunes Nursery School have been relatively static over the last few years and this has meant that the funding the school receives has not increased. In addition to this costs have been increasing and the funding the school receives is no longer sufficient to cover its cost.

#### **Q6**

##### **Can any more money be found for the school?**

The level of funding provided for nurseries is set by central government and will not increase.

#### **Q7**

##### **Will there be an increase in pupil numbers?**

The school have been trying to increase numbers over a number of years but have not been able to increase beyond the current number.

#### **Q8**

##### **Are there any alternatives to closure?**

The Governing Body has explored all the ways they can think of to reduce cost but have now come to the conclusion that it is not

possible to reduce cost further and still provide the good quality education they are required to deliver.

### **Q9**

#### **Can a plan be proposed to prevent the school from closing?**

Yes – we are currently in consultation and any proposals can be considered. If there is a proposal that would prevent the school from closing it should be presented to the Governing Body for them to consider in the first instance. For any plan to be seriously considered it would need to establish, in a sustainable way, an approach to setting a balanced budget.

### **Q10**

#### **What will happen to the staff?**

All staff will continue to deliver quality teaching and support to pupils. But if the decision is taken to close the school, the Local Authority will provide dedicated support and guidance to help them find alternative employment.

### **Q11**

#### **What will happen to the governing body?**

The governing body will remain in place and will continue to carry out their statutory duties and responsibilities. The governing body will continue to run the school as long as it is open. If the decision is made to close the school the governing body will be disbanded on the day the school closes.

### **Q12**

#### **What will happen to the school site and premises if the school closes?**

No decision can be made until the process has been concluded.

### **Q13**

#### **Will this affect the Children's Centre?**

No. The Children's Centre is run by the local authority and will not be affected by the proposal to close the school.

### **Q14**

### **Do I need to move my child now?**

No. There is no need to move to another nursery now. No decision has been taken to close the school and if this is the eventual outcome there will be plenty of time to move to another setting before September 2019 and there will be support available to help with this if required. We would particularly recommend children who are going to move into reception in September 2019 to remain at Sand Dunes.

### **Q15**

#### **No other nurseries are as good as Sand Dunes?**

All settings are different and have their own culture, feel and ethos, however, the majority of nursery provision in the area has been judged good or outstanding by Ofsted.

### **Q16**

#### **My child has Special Education Needs, (SEN) and the school is receiving extra funding from the Local Authority to support their needs. Will my child continue to receive this support if we move to another school?**

Yes. Any additional funding received by the school to meet the SEN of a pupil will transfer to their new setting to support their transition and help them settle into their new environment. This funding will then continue to be monitored and reviewed in the usual way.

The staff at Sand Dunes will ensure that any information regarding the SEN of pupils is shared with their potential new nursery so that transition planning can take place. Parents of pupils with SEN will be included in this process.

If you would like to speak to a member of the Special Education Needs and Inclusion Service, they can be contacted at:

[SENIS@sefton.gov.uk](mailto:SENIS@sefton.gov.uk) or 0151 934 2347.

For further information about the proposal, please go to [www.sefton.gov.uk/sanddunes](http://www.sefton.gov.uk/sanddunes)

Please tell us what you think about the proposal.



You can return the form with your comments to the School Organisation Team, Schools Regulatory Services, Town Hall, Oriel Road, Bootle, L20 7AE or to The Head teacher at Sand Dunes Nursery School.



## **Annex B – Draft Statutory Notice**

### **DRAFT PUBLIC NOTICE**

#### **Sand Dunes Nursery School, Caradoc Road, Seaforth L21 4NB**

Notice is given in accordance with Section 15(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 that Sefton Council intends to discontinue Sand Dunes Nursery School, Caradoc Road, Seaforth L21 4NB on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2019.

This notice is an extract from the complete proposal. Copies of the complete proposal can be obtained from School Organisation Team, Sefton Council, Town Hall, Bootle L20 7AE or at [www.sefton.gov.uk/sanddunes](http://www.sefton.gov.uk/sanddunes)

Within four weeks from the date of publication of this proposal, any person may object to or make comments on the proposal by sending them to School Organisation Team, Sefton Council, Town Hall, Oriel Road, Bootle L20 7AE or by emailing [school.organisation@sefton.gov.uk](mailto:school.organisation@sefton.gov.uk)

Signed: M. Carney, Chief Executive and Authorised Officer of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council.

Publication Date: 14<sup>th</sup> November 2018