

# Brighton & Hove City Council

## Children, Young People & Skills Committee

## Agenda Item 25

**Subject:** Proposal to relocate the Primary Pupil Referral Unit provision to the former West Hove Infant School, Connaught Road site

**Date of meeting:** 7 November 2022

**Report of:** Executive Director Families, Children & Learning

**Contact Officer:** Name: Richard Barker, Head of School Organisation  
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**Ward(s) affected:** All

**For general release**

### **1. Purpose of the report and policy context**

1.1 The report provides a summary of the recent consultation undertaken between 14 September and 16 October 2022 about the proposal to relocate the Primary Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) provision to the former West Hove Infant School site at Connaught Road.

### **2. Recommendations**

2.1 That Committee agrees to the relocation of the Primary PRU provision to the former West Hove Infant School site at Connaught Road with effect from Easter 2023, subject to minor capital works being concluded.

### **3. Context and background information**

3.1 The city is experiencing a reduction in the number of pupils needing school places across the city. As a result of this reduction in the need for primary school places the decision was taken for the West Hove Infant School pupils to co-locate with the pupils from Hove Junior School at the Holland Road site. This took place in January 2022 and since then the Connaught Road building has been empty.

3.2 The Council is seeking to re-locate the primary aged provision of the PRU to the Connaught Road site with effect from Easter 2023. The Council wishes to enhance the educational experience and environment of the primary aged pupils who attend the Central Hub and consider this can be most effectively achieved by re-locating the provision to the Connaught Road site and using a proportion of the front building to do so.

3.3 In Brighton & Hove, the Pupil Referral Unit is called the Central Hub and the primary aged provision is currently located at Lynchet Close. The Pupil

Referral Unit is a type of council-run school specifically set up to provide education for children who are unable to attend mainstream school. Pupils are often referred to a PRU if they need a higher level of support than a mainstream school can provide. They are sometimes called alternative provision.

- 3.4 Pupils who attend a PRU might be experiencing social, emotional or behavioural difficulties, including problems with mental health issues. They may have been permanently excluded from their mainstream school or they may be at risk of permanent exclusion. The primary section of the Central Hub has a maximum of 24 places for pupils aged between 5 and 11 years old. Some pupils will have all their lessons at the Central Hub while others split their time between the mainstream school where they're registered and the Central Hub. The majority of pupils are transported to and from the Central Hub by taxi.
- 3.5 Should the proposal be agreed, it would mean that the space vacated by the primary provision of the Central Hub at its Lynchet Close location can be remodelled to enhance and co-locate all of the secondary aged provision of the Central Hub in one place. Currently there is a PRU at Dyke Road and at Lynchet Close providing education to secondary aged pupils. Another specific provision for Year 11 pupils only, called The Connected Hub is located separately at Florence Place, Brighton.
- 3.6 To achieve the relocation to the Connaught Road site, it is anticipated that the minor internal and external building work will commence in January 2023. The likely works include modifications to some of the room layouts and existing partial height room dividers, the creation of a specific cooking area for pupils and an additional reception space at the rear of the building which already includes an external door. Externally it is proposed that the scooter parking and some sheds in the playground are removed. Some new fencing to demarcate outside space and covers for external drainpipes is also proposed.
- 3.7 A consultation was undertaken between 14 September and 16 October 2022 the council received 6 responses via its consultation portal, 4 emails sent directly to the council and 5 members of the public, all local residents, attended a public meeting held on 27 September 2022.
- 3.8 The responses received to the online consultation were broadly supportive with 50% of responses strongly agreeing, 33.33% neither agreeing or disagreeing and 16.67% tending to disagree. A more detailed summary can be found in Appendix 1.
- 3.9 Concerns have been expressed about the impact of noise levels on surrounding homes and the impact of vehicle movements in the proximity, should the proposed change be agreed. There was also concern that should the age range of the PRU extend in future years the proximity of a narrow, partially unlit, dog-legged pathway where anti-social behaviour had previously taken place, would be an additional risk for staff to manage.

- 3.10 An offer to visit the existing Pupil Referral Unit was extended to local residents to understand more about the way in which the PRU operates and the support offered to pupils and it was agreed that if the proposal was agreed then more work with the local community by staff at the PRU would follow.

#### **4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options**

- 4.1 The alternative option would be for the PRU not to relocate or be sited on another school site. Not making a move to a new location would mean pupils did not have the opportunity of an enhanced educational experience and environment.
- 4.2 Neither would it provide an opportunity to consider the move away from the Dyke Road site and ensuring all secondary aged pupils attending the PRU, excluding the Connected Hub, being located on one site in the future.
- 4.3 Running a PRU on the site of a maintained school site requires a number of logistical issues to be resolved. Whilst not insurmountable it is not considered to be a viable option in this case. In addition, there is not a vacant school site other than that at Connaught Road.

#### **5. Community engagement and consultation**

- 5.1 A consultation was undertaken between 14 September and 16 October 2022. This consisted of key questions to consider (further details of these questions and the consultation responses can be found at Appendix 1).
- 5.2 The consultation was promoted through:
- The Council's consultation website
  - Letter to residents in Connaught Road area
- 5.3 Feedback was invited:
- Via the Council's consultation portal
  - By email
  - Via a face-to-face resident event that was organised on 27 September 2022 at The Central Hub, Lynchet Close and offered an opportunity for residents to talk through proposals with representatives from Families, Children & Learning Directorate and The Central Hub Leadership Team.
  - Residents in the surrounding area to the Connaught Road site received a letter informing them of the consultation and explained how they could comment.
- 5.4 A more detailed analysis of the consultation can be found at Appendix 1.

#### **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 The results of the consultation concluded that 50% of respondents strongly/tended to agree with the proposal to move the Primary PRU (Central Hub) from Lynchet Close to the former West Hove Infant School site at Connaught Road.

## **7. Financial implications**

- 7.1 The capital cost of the project will be met from the Basic Need capital grant funding provided to the council from central government. The yearly capital report to CYPS and P&R committees in March 2022 showed that there is £8,311,917 Basic Need available. The cost of the project is not yet known but it is not expected to exceed £500,000. Once the work has been specified and an estimate has been produced for the scheme this will be added to the capital programme via the TBM process and approved at P&R Committee.
- 7.2 In terms of revenue implications, the increased number of primary PRU places that will be in operation will be funded from the high needs block of the Dedicated Schools Grant. Provision has already been allowed for this in the high needs budget. There will also be relatively modest costs linked to the physical move and provision will need to be made for this. This type of cost is usually met by the local authority.

Name of finance officer consulted: Steve Williams Date consulted: 15.09.22

## **8. Legal implications**

- 8.1 Unlike maintained schools, PRUs are not covered by the school organisation legislation. However even where there is no obligation to have regard to statutory guidance any proposal to relocate the PRU should abide by the principles of good practice and public law. Accordingly, a consultation exercise has been carried out with affected parties, including staff, parents and local residents. Due consideration should be given to the outcome of that consultation when the final decision is made on the proposal.

Name of lawyer consulted: Serena Kynaston Date consulted 26.09.2022

## **9. Equalities implications**

- 9.1 The proposals are based on a vision for improving the provision and outcomes for the children and young people requiring an alternative provision education for children who are unable to attend mainstream school.

## **10. Sustainability implications**

- 10.1 Brighton & Hove City Council is committed to taking responsibility for its own Impact on the environment. Sustainability considerations and benefits will form part of the evaluation of bids for the contract in line with the Council's Sustainable Procurement Policy and Climate Change Strategy.
- 10.2 Contractors have demonstrated how they will achieve best practice, value for money, and innovations. This includes minimizing non-recyclable waste and promoting recycling.

10.3 The council is seeking to rationalise its accommodation used for Pupil Referral Units over time and these proposals form part of those plans.

### **Supporting Documentation**

#### **Appendices:**

1. Analysis of the consultation feedback to relocate the Primary Pupil Referral Unit provision from Lynchet Close to the former West Hove Infant School Site at Connaught Road.

## **Analysis of the consultation feedback to relocate the Primary Pupil Referral Unit provision from Lynchet Close to the former West Hove Infant School Site at Connaught Road.**

### **1. Overview offered as part of the consultation process**

The City is experiencing a reduction in the number of pupils needing school places across the city. As a result of this reduction in the need for primary school places the decision was taken for the West Hove Infant School pupils to co-locate with the pupils from Hove Junior School at the Holland Road site. This took place in January 2022 and since then the Connaught Road building has been empty.

The Council is seeking to re-locate the primary aged provision of the Pupil Referral Unit to the Connaught Road site with effect from Easter 2023. In Brighton & Hove, the Pupil Referral Unit is called the Central Hub and the primary aged provision is currently located at Lynchet Close. The Pupil Referral Unit is a type of council-run school specifically set up to provide education for children who are unable to attend mainstream school. Pupils are often referred to a PRU if they need a higher level of support than a mainstream school can provide. They are sometimes called alternative provision.

Pupils who attend a PRU might be experiencing social, emotional or behavioural difficulties, including problems with mental health issues. They may have been permanently excluded from their mainstream school or they may be at risk of permanent exclusion. The primary section of the Central Hub has a maximum of 14 places for pupils aged between 5 and 11 years old. Some pupils will have all their lessons at the Central Hub while others split their time between the mainstream school where they're registered and the Central Hub. The majority of pupils are transported to and from the Central Hub by taxi.

The Council wishes to enhance the educational experience and environment of the primary aged pupils who attend the Central Hub and consider this can be most effectively achieved by re-locating the provision to the Connaught Road site and using the substantial front building to do so.

In addition, it means that the space vacated by the primary provision of the Central Hub at its Lynchet Close location can be re-modelled to enhance and co-locate all of the secondary aged provision of the Central Hub in one place. Currently there is a Pupil Referral Unit at Dyke Road and at Lynchet Close providing education to secondary aged pupils. Another specific provision for Year 11 pupils only, called The Connected Hub is located separately at Florence Place, Brighton BN1 7GU.

#### **Changes to Connaught Road Site**

If this proposal is agreed and taken forward, we anticipate that the minor internal and external building work will commence in late autumn 2022 with pupils attending the site from the start of the summer term 2023.

The likely works include modifications to some of the room layouts and existing partial height room dividers, the creation of a specific cooking area for pupils and an additional reception space at the rear of the building which already includes an external door.

Externally it is proposed that the scooter parking and some sheds in the playground are removed. Some new fencing to demarcate outside space and covers for external drainpipes is also proposed.

### Consultation Process

The formal consultation process began on 14<sup>th</sup> September and ran until 16<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

The consultation was promoted through:

- The Council's consultation website
- Letter to residents in Connaught Road area

Feedback was invited by:

- Using the Council's consultation portal
- Email
- An organised face-to-face resident event that took place on 27 September 2022 at The Central Hub, Lynchet Close and offered an opportunity for residents to talk through proposals with representatives from Families, Children & Learning Directorate and The Central Hub Leadership Team.
- A letter to those residents living in the surrounding area to the Connaught Road site informing them of the consultation and explaining how they could comment.

Respondents were asked 3 questions and were offered the opportunity to add any specific comments as to why they agreed/disagreed with the proposal. Throughout the consultation period the number and range of responses were reviewed to make sure that all groups were represented in the responses and to identify any further promotion required with stakeholders to ensure that they were aware of the consultation process.

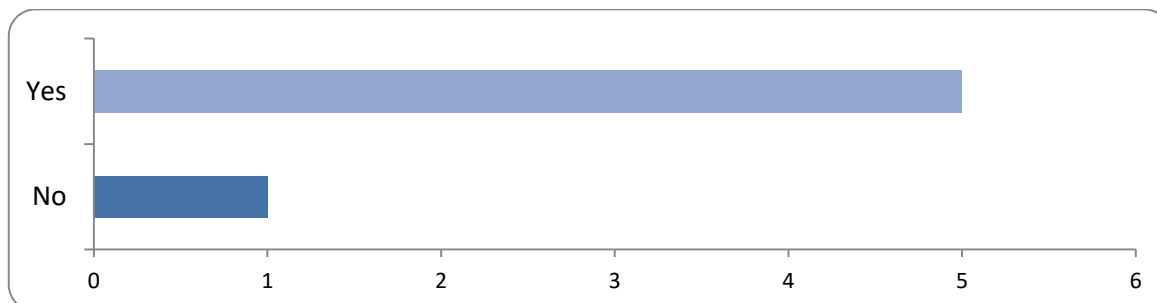
## **2. Process for analysing responses**

The responses from both the public meeting and the online consultation were collated and reviewed. The information provided as part of this analysis is in relation to the responses received via the Council's online consultation portal.

Six responses were submitted via the online consultation portal, and the quantitative data in this report reflects these responses. Of the 6 respondents, 5 identified as being a Brighton & Hove resident and 1 identified as not being in this group (or not responding to this question). All respondents used the online consultation portal to give their views on the consultation questions posed, no additional responses were received by email. The email correspondence received separately referenced concerns associated with minimising noise, and possibilities of using the building for community/wellbeing groups.

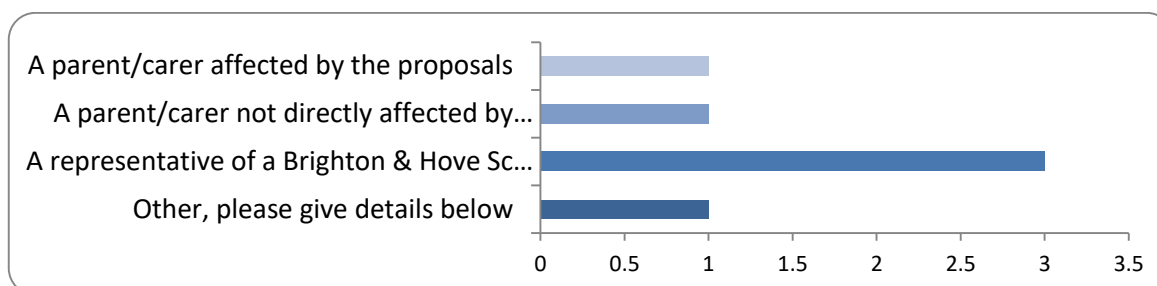
Collated responses to the consultation are detailed below.

**Q1: Are you a resident in Brighton and Hove?**



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	5	83.33%
No	1	16.67%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

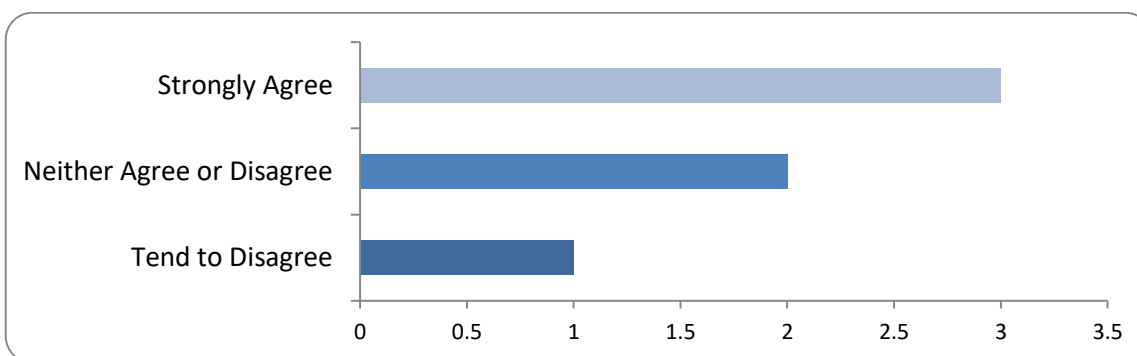
**Q2: How are you responding to these proposals?**



Option	Total	Percent
A parent/carer affected by the proposals	1	16.67%
A parent/carer not directly affected by the proposals	1	16.67%
Child, Young Person or Student not directly affected by the proposals	0	0.00%
A representative of a Brighton & Hove School	3	50.00%
Other, please give details below	1	16.67%
Not Answered	0	0.00%



**Q3: Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to move the primary Pupil Referral Unit (Central Hub) from Lynchet Close to the former West Hove Infant School site at Connaught Road?**



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly Agree	3	50.00%
Tend to Agree	0	0.00%
Neither Agree or Disagree	2	33.33%
Tend to Disagree	1	16.67%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%
Don't Know/Not Sure	0	0.00%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

