

From: Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director for Education, Learning and Skills

To: Education and Young People Services Cabinet Committee – 22 April 2014

Subject: Decision Number: 14/00039 **Proposed Closure of Chaucer Technology School**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Past Pathway of Paper: Education Cabinet Committee – 14 March 2014 – Cabinet Member verbal update

Future Pathway of Paper: Cabinet Member decision

Electoral Division: Canterbury

Summary: It is proposed to close Chaucer Technology School for all year groups except the current Year 10 from 31 August 2014. Part of the school would remain operational until August 2015 to enable year 10 pupils to complete their GCSE courses.

Recommendation(s):

The Education and Young People Services Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform on the decision to:

- (i) Issue a public notice to close Chaucer Technology School for all year groups except the current Year 10 from 31 August 2014 and to close the school permanently from 31 August 2015.

And, following the issuing of the Public Notice and subject to consideration of objections:

- (ii) Close the School for all year groups except the current Year 10 from 31 August 2014 and to close the school permanently from 31 August 2015. .

Should objections, not already considered by the cabinet member when taking this decision, be received during the notice period a separate decision will be required in order to continue the proposal and to allow for proper consideration of the points raised.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Chaucer Technology School is a non-selective co-educational Foundation School in Canterbury with a Published Admission Number of 150 pupils in each year group for September 2014

- 1.2 The school has become less popular with parents and following a poor Ofsted inspection there has been a significant reduction in the number of pupils attending Chaucer Technology School. The number of pupils entering the school has been decreasing each year - with 77 pupils currently in Year 8, 56 in Year 7 and only 41 pupils offered places at the school for Year 7 in September 2014 (see table below). Therefore there would only be approximately 442 pupils on roll in September 2014 in Years 7 to 11.

	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Total
2013-14	56	77	112	156	135	536
2014-15	41	56	77	112	156	442

- 1.3 The school has an admission capacity of 1090 pupils for Years 7-11 and therefore would be operating with 61% surplus capacity in September 2014 if it were to remain open.
- 1.4 Schools receive funding based on pupil numbers and the decline in numbers at Chaucer Technology School has resulted in a corresponding decline in funds available to the school. The school has a sizeable budget deficit of £350,000 and this is projected to rise to £600,000 next year. This deficit has arisen despite significant action during the past year to reduce costs. The declining school budget will be insufficient to sustain the current staffing levels, and the necessary reductions in staffing will impact on the curriculum and the quality of education provided to the pupils. Therefore a viable secondary school curriculum could not be provided for pupils in future.
- 1.5 Some of the school buildings are in a poor condition and although Kent County Council has allocated large sums of money for improving the buildings, much more is required to make the accommodation suitable. It is also the case that the benefit of such investment for pupils would be minimal if a viable curriculum could not be sustained. Some work will be undertaken to address Health and Safety issues and ensure the site can operate for the current Year 10 pupils from September 2014 to August 2015
- 1.6 If Chaucer Technology School closes from September 2014, apart from provision for the current Year 10 pupils, there will still be sufficient school places for all pupils in the Canterbury District. There will be 1,138 Year 7 places available at non-selective schools in the Canterbury District for the 1082 Year 7 pupils forecast for September 2014. This includes the additional capacity being provided by Canterbury Academy, giving sufficient operating capacity of 5% surplus school places in the district for 2014/15. The number of Year 7 pupils in the Canterbury District is forecast to rise slightly from 1082 in 2014 to 1151 in 2020. If Chaucer Technology School is closed, sufficient capacity can be created in other schools in the district until at least the year 2022.
- 1.7 The school was inspected by Ofsted in March 2013 and was judged to be 'inadequate' and requiring 'special measures'. The Local Authority commissioned the Swale Academies Trust in July 2013 to assume responsibility for leading the improvements at the school. Recent GCSE results

show that there has been an improvement in attainment. Her Majesty's School Inspectors and the Local Authority have recognised that the school has been improving well and making good progress under the leadership of the Swale Academies Trust over recent months and these improvements are projected to continue.

- 1.8 However there is a significant risk to school standards and pupil outcomes if the school remains open. As the number of pupils and the level of funding reduce, further cuts in staffing will be required, which in turn will result in severe restrictions on curriculum delivery and the quality of education. The school is not viable in the future.
- 1.9 The decline in pupil numbers and the corresponding reduction in funding available to the school will make it impossible to sustain the improvements recognised in recent monitoring visits by HMI and the Local Authority.
- 1.10 Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 have been offered alternative school places and almost all 236 have accepted a place in an alternative school. There are 2 pupils who have not accepted the place offered and are looking at alternative provision. Pupils are being provided with new uniforms free of charge by the local authority and transport to their new school will be allocated where appropriate. Nearly all the pupils have either already started at alternative schools or will do so on the 22nd April 2014.
- 1.11 Action has been taken to secure the staff required to operate the school and provide a good quality curriculum for the current Year 10 students to enable them to complete their GCSE courses next year on the Chaucer site. Of the 157 pupils on roll at the start of the academic year 19 pupils have moved to alternative schools with 138 remaining in Year 10.
- 1.12 Chaucer Technology School has been working with all Year 11 students to ensure they are able to continue their post 16 education in a local school or college. Some students are still considering their options which may be subject to their GCSE results.
- 1.13 There are 39 Year 12 students and also 12 Year 13 students studying AS and A levels. The Local Authority carried out a matching exercise with post 16 providers locally and has identified suitable alternative providers who can deliver the relevant courses for all these students. Some of the students will have a choice of providers that match their current studies. A parent and student evening was held and attended by the potential receiving schools, where students/parents had the opportunity to discuss and agree continued study with potential providers. All Year 12 students from Chaucer Technology School have been offered suitable courses in alternative schools or colleges for September 2014.
- 1.14 A summary of placements by year group is attached in Appendix 1.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 The national changes to school funding that were implemented in April 2013 reduced all local authority funding formula to a very limited number of factors (10 in our case) and moved the funding to the position where more than 90% of

a school budget is now based upon pupil numbers compared to an average of 71% in 2012/13. The significant decline in pupil numbers at Chaucer Technology School has therefore resulted in a more significant decline in its revenue funding as a result. More than ever before the financial viability of a school hinges on its pupil numbers.

- 2.2 The budget for Chaucer Technology School (excluding Post 16) is £3.7m in 2013/14 and that falls to £2.7m in 2014/15 because of the reduction in pupil numbers. If closure was not being considered we would face a major issue in 2015/16 where the budget for the school is likely to fall below £1m. The school is currently forecast to end 2013/14 with a deficit of over £0.3m (revenue and capital) which is expected to grow to over £0.6m in 2014/15 rising to more than £2m in 2015/16. This, coupled with the continuing fall in the roll, is not a financially viable position for any school. That level of funding and deficit would not allow the school to deliver the required curriculum and quality of education.
- 2.3 In January 2013 the Acting Principal of Chaucer Technology School took appropriate action to address the budget pressures through a significant reduction in staffing. This is likely to have brought the budget back under control on the basis of what was known about pupil numbers at that time. What could not have been anticipated when those savings measures were implemented was the scale of the continuing fall in the roll which has now resulted in an untenable financial position.

Revenue

- 2.4 The financial implications of closure are set out below. Most of the costs will have to be met from the Schools Block of the DSG (Dedicated Schools Grant) so the majority of additional costs (most of which are one-off in nature) will not fall to KCC but it will put some pressure on our DSG funding in 2014/15 and 2015/16. The DSG will have to absorb the one-off cost of the deficit left when the school closes. We are currently developing a model budget to take the school through to closure in August 2015 so a definitive figure is not available. However, with all the changes taking place from September 2014 we anticipate being able to reduce the projected 2015/16 deficit so the likely cost will be in the region of £1.5m.
- 2.5 It should be noted that had the school proceeded with the planned Academy conversion proposed by the DfE in 2013, we would still have incurred the cost of the deficit. Schools converting under the sponsored Academy model leave their deficit behind with the local authority. The Schools Block of the DSG will also have to meet some one-off costs that will be incurred by those schools taking on the current Chaucer Technology School pupils from September 2014. This is still to be quantified with the schools concerned but we anticipate the cost will be in the region of £1m. The schools will get additional funding in future years for those pupils through the normal formula budget process. There will be costs in respect of staffing, primarily redundancy payments as well as some additional cost on Home to School Transport. Again, it is unlikely that these costs can be quantified until later. There will also be costs relating to closing of parts of the site during the academic year 2014/15 and securing the site following closure in August 2015.

Capital

- 2.6 As with revenue there will be a capital deficit to be absorbed but this is much smaller than the revenue and may be less than £0.1m at the point of closure. The major capital issue relates to the future of the 22 acre site. At this stage there are no plans for the site as our focus is on providing support for the existing pupils and staff through to closure in August 2015. There are clearly a range of options that can be explored as to the future use of the site but until options are developed it is not possible to quantify the scale of any potential costs or receipts.

3 Human Resources Implications

- 3.1 A 30 day formal consultation period for staff commenced on 24 March 2014. This was opened with a consultation meeting attended by staff, Trade Unions, LA Representative, the Executive Principal and HR. Staff were provided with a copy of the indicative Redundancy Timeline, Public Consultation document on the proposal to close the Chaucer Technology School and a Question and Answer sheet in response to queries that had been raised at earlier staff meetings. As part of the consultation process formal one to one meetings with staff have started and will be completed by 4 April 2014. Responses to the formal consultation process are to be received by 24 April 2014.
- 3.2 A number of staff have been selected to cover the curriculum for Year 11 in 2014/2015, subject to the proposal for closure being approved. They will therefore have their redundancy deferred. A retention allowance will be paid to ensure that Year 11 students receive continuity of education and secure the best possible outcomes with their GCSE courses. A number of the remaining staff members have secured alternative employment and others are being supported in looking for other positions. Those that do not secure other posts will be made redundant on 31 August 2014, subject to the proposal being agreed.

4. Property Implications

- 4.1 The Chaucer school site will remain operational until August 2015. It will then revert to the Local Authority's ownership and will be held for educational purposes within KCC's Property portfolio. Further analysis of future need will be undertaken to inform whether any part of the site can be disposed of or made available for alternative use.
- 4.2 Work will be undertaken to ensure the site can operate safely until final closure in August 2015.
- 4.3 Consultation is taking place with other users of the site to inform decisions around longer term use.

5 Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework

- 5.1 These proposals will help to secure our ambition "to ensure every child will go to a good school where they make good progress and can have fair access to school places" as set out in 'Bold Steps for Kent'.

6. Consultation Outcomes

- 6.1 A total of 28 written responses were received: 25 objecting to the proposal and 3 respondents undecided.
- 6.2 A summary of the comments received at the time of writing is provided at Appendix 2.
- 6.3 A summary of the views and comments given at the public consultation meeting is attached at Appendix 3.
- 6.4 An e-petition was received stating “ this is important as the work that the teachers and students have put in to keep this school open is just phenomenal. This school does not deserve to close as it outperforms other schools, the education is very good and behaviour is incredible. Stop the council’s rampant behaviour and keep the school open. It could make a difference to all the students that know and love Chaucer and what it stands for”- it attracted 522 signatures.

7. Views

- 7.1 Having attended the recent public meeting and heard the School’s proposals, Local Member Michael Northey provided the following comments:

‘I was very sad to hear the proposal to close Chaucer Technology School and needed a lot of convincing that this is the correct way forward. However, with only 26 pupils choosing it as their first option for September 2014, and only just over 40 in total placing it as either first, second or third choices – with over 120 places available per year, it is hard to see how the school can remain viable. A secondary school needs at least 120 pupils per year to remain operational, and to give the students proper choices. The running deficit is now £600,000 per year, so it is with great reluctance, I find the case to close the school difficult to rebut. What matters is the good education for all pupils and the school can no longer provide this. I am glad to see that students currently in Year 10 will be able to finish their GCSE courses there, and that all older pupils have a personal plan for their future in other institutions. It is vital that each existing pupil is offered a local alternative school at least as good or better than the current Chaucer School is able to be.’

- 7.2 The Area Education Officer states that the current situation is sadly untenable, with Chaucer Technology School facing further challenge to make good enough provision for its students due to the financial pressures over the last few years. Many efforts have been made to secure the future of the school with robust action taken to address the budget situation and with the leadership of Swale Academy Trust making considerable improvements in pupil outcomes. However this has not translated into increased pupil numbers and the tipping-point for viability has now been reached.

8. Recommendation(s)

Recommendation(s): The Education and Young People Services Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform on the decision to:

- (iii) Issue a public notice to close Chaucer Technology School for all year groups except the current Year 10 from 31 August 2014 and to close the school permanently from 31 August 2015.

And, following the issuing of the Public Notice and subject to consideration of objections:

- (iv) Close the School for all year groups except the current Year 10 from 31 August 2014 and to close the school permanently from 31 August 2015.

Should objections, not already considered by the cabinet member when taking this decision, be received during the notice period a separate decision will be required in order to continue the proposal and to allow for proper consideration of the points raised.

10. Background Documents

10.1 Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework

http://www.kent.gov.uk/your_council/priorities_policies_and_plans/priorities_and_plans/bold_steps_for_kent.aspx

10.2 Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2013-2018

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s43253/ItemD3KentEducationCommissioningPlan20132018final.pdf>

10.3 Education Cabinet Committee report– 14 March Minutes – Cabinet Member and Corporate Director Verbal Update

10.4 Consultation Document and Equalities Impact Assessment

<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/Chaucer/consultationHome>

10.5 Education Cabinet Committee minutes: Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform Verbal Update – 14 March 2014

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=746&MId=5471&Ver=4>

10.6 County council questions (number 4)

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s45777/Question%20and%20Answers.pdf>

11. Contact details

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Chaucer School – Pupil allocations as at 7 April 2014

Yr 6 Pupils - 41 pupils were offered a place in Year 7 for September 2014 all will be offered places at alternative schools on 23 April 2014.

Current year 7 – 9 pupils - Please see schedule below which gives details of places offered

School	Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Total
Abbey	3	6	2	11
Archbishops	3	1	11	15
Astor			1	1
Brockhill	1	1	2	4
Canterbury Academy	3	7	7	17
Clarendon			1	1
Comm Coll Whitstable	8	5	9	22
Dover Christchurch	1	6	1	8
Folkestone Academy			1	1
Fulston Manor		1		1
Herne Bay High		5		5
King Ethelbert			2	2
Maplesden Noakes			1	1
North		1	1	2
Pent Valley	1		1	2
Pru Placement			1	1
Sandwich Tech	1		2	3
Simon Langton Girls	1			1
Sittingbourne Community College			1	1
Spires	19	31	37	87
St Anselms	11	9	20	40
Towers	1	2	4	7
Westlands	1			1
Not accepted/appeals lodged	0	1	1	2
Total	54	76	106	236

Current Year 10 pupils - 138 pupils are remaining at the school to complete their GCSE course in YR11, 19 pupils have moved to alternative schools

Current Year 11 Pupils - Chaucer Technology School have been working with all Years 11 students to ensure they are able, to continue their education in a local school or college. Some students are still considering their options which may be subject to their GCSE results

Current Year 12/13 Pupils – There are 39 Year 12 and 12 Year 13 students, all of whom have been found a possible solution in Canterbury Schools and some will have a choice of providers that match their current studies.

Appendix 2

Proposed Closure of Chaucer Technology School Summary of written responses

Consultation documents (hard copies) distributed: 500
Responses received: 28

	Support	Against	Undecided	Total
Parents/Carers		17	1	18
Governors				
Pupils		2		2
Members of Staff				
Interested Parties		6	2	8
Total		25	3	28

Against the proposal

- Parents need a firm commitment in writing on proposals for year 10 pupils, with a guarantee on staff, subjects, streaming, environment, library, ICT, behaviour management and canteen facilities.
- Closure damaging to years 10/11 pupils and will reflect in GCSE results. KCC should compensate them.
- Concern about alternative schools offered, siblings must be allocated places at the same school. Allocated schools must be local to home address and parents offered support in finding places. KCC proposals to limit bus pass travel means it is essential schools should be near the home address. Allocations should have been made on educational grounds reflecting a child's current streaming. Split 60% schools where performance below that of Chaucer, 30% to equally performing schools and 10% to local grammar schools
- School has good mid table level results, allocated schools have lower results. Children's continued education will be hindered and damaged by the move to a school with poorer results
- Devastated that school is closing, support given to eldest child has been fantastic and she has flourished in a good honest school. Pastoral care very good and classes not unruly, school supportive to pupils both educationally and emotionally.
- With the right management, policies and good governance the school could perform a vital role in local education provision.
- Closure process appalling. Own children doing brilliantly academically and they are distraught school is closing. Happy with school, and friends. Transport is too costly so will have to drive children to school
- Children who are settled are being forced to move schools and attend schools parents did not choose for them. The move will be detrimental to their child's education
- Chaucer is the best and most suitable place to continue A Level studies. Closure will cause disruption to A level course, do not want to move to another establishment. How will KCC facilitate completion of A Level courses, resources must be made available. It is unfair that Yr 10 pupils are staying to complete their GCSE courses. The move will cause stress and could mean that A level students have to retake year 12. Situation could be avoided if students are allowed to continue their education at the school.

- School has always played an important role in educating Canterbury children, providing good education.
- School let down by previous leadership and management, action should have been taken sooner.
- There has been significant recent improvement and standards are now good and the school is on track to have good exam results. The school should be allowed to continue with progress being made and then confidence and popularity would return.
- Choice of schools limited because of faith and grammar schools. The birth rate is rising and future housing could mean there are not enough places in Canterbury in the future children may be bussed out of Canterbury.
- SEN support is good, school has inclusive policies and SEN staff are committed to the children
- Will the site be sold and if so building developments will mean school places are needed where will all the children go?
- New housing will mean more schools are needed in the future.
- Closure would be disruptive for local families and could lead to isolation of vulnerable families; it has been a safe haven for young people.
- Moves to alternative school will mean new uniform which is expensive
- Sorry for the staff
- Why close when improvements to the roof have already cost £300K and will cost more than helping with the budget deficit.
- A federation with another school should be considered.
- Alternative provision will result in increase transport costs.
- Other schools should not have been able to take additional pupils.
- Site provides accommodation for community projects, can KCC offer support, when do they have to leave?
- The school should have the best staff at all times so that improvement can continue and the general public made aware of improvements that have been made
- The decision is already made and the school will close no matter what evidence is presented to support keeping it open. The site should be retained as a school with improved facilities and where necessary improved and re-built prior to re-opening in the very near future when it will undoubtedly be needed to serve the growing local community.
- While I understand the pure economics of the current situation it is my belief that the school on the existing site in one format or another is well worth saving and that the increasing and proposed growth of the community will without doubt need the school. Chaucer Technology has the potential to once again be an excellent school
- It is a very short sighted decision that fails to take into consideration local secondary school requirements beyond the next 5 years. It does not appear to take into consideration the numbers of new homes planned for the Howe Barracks site (up to 500 homes), the Canterbury Local District Plan for South Canterbury (4,000 new homes) or the slightly longer term the proposals for the K&C Hospital site (up to 810 homes).
- Any budget would be better spent improving the school to service the needs of the increased population rather than closing it. If Chaucer does permanently close then this will leave the south of the city where the majority of the new homes will be located with only one non-selective option, pupils will have to travel across the city leading to even more congestion in an already grid-locked city.

- If Barton Court moves to Herne Bay it should be a satellite grammar to the existing school enabling a joint 6th form with Chaucer. Chaucer was once the Boys selective technical school if part of Barton Court moves could the remainder of the school and Chaucer join to become one school which could offer both selective and non-selective streams.
- A partnership between Chaucer school and the city council to fund a joint facility for the new home and training facilities for Canterbury City Football club should be considered.
- The decline of the school should have been spotted much sooner Why was the drop in pupil numbers not seen sooner and rectified? By 2008 the school was reported as satisfactory and went down from that point onwards, why was this not adequately addressed
- The whole process of the announcement of the proposed closure has been extremely distressing for the staff and much more importantly the pupils. It has been miss-managed and very poorly executed leaving many parents in despair
- The pupil achievement rates over the past 12 months were showing significant improvements with results now higher than a number of the schools where former Chaucer students are being re-assigned places. The school should be given the time, help, support and assistance to carry on with their good work in rectifying the problems
- The school has a sizeable budget deficit why was it sending out a message of great hope regarding the improvements and longer term stability of the school as recently as February 2014 following significant investment in heating systems, roof repairs and then a week later announcing the closure of the school
- The rumour Christchurch University has links with the KCC and it has already been agreed that they would take over elements of the site
- The school in one format or another is well worth saving and the community needs the school. The school most certainly does have the potential to once again be an excellent school and a flagship for the community. I only hope that the KCC listen to the local community and do not take the quick fix financial windfall to sell off the school assets to plug some other KCC financial shortfalls elsewhere

Undecided

- Concern that at closure resources of the music dept are not sold to cover the deficit. Some were donated by the public and they should move to the nearest Kent County Council school.
- Press article published before parents were told meant children were unprepared
- Not a simple yes or no. Needs clarification on commitment and guarantee of quality provision for Year 10 pupils. Has keeping one year at a school ever happened before

**Proposed Closure of Chaucer Technology School
Public Consultation Meeting – 17 March 2014**

Panel

Mr Leyland Ridings	Chair of Education Cabinet Committee
Mr Patrick Leeson	Corporate Director, ELS
Mr Kevin Shovelton	Director Education Planning & Access
Mr Jonathan Whitcombe	Executive Principal, Swale Academies Trust

In Attendance

Mrs Marisa White	Area Education Officer (East Kent)
Mrs Anne Davies	Public Meeting Recorder

The meeting was chaired by Mr Leyland Ridings and was attended by approximately 60 people including parents, pupils, staff and other interested parties. Mr Michael Northey the Local Member also attended the meeting

Kevin Shovelton gave a short presentation outlining the proposal for closure. Leyland Ridings explained that the purpose of the meeting was to explain the reasons for the closure of Chaucer Technology School and to give the audience an opportunity to ask questions about the proposals and to listen to views and opinions about the proposal.

The main points, views and comments are listed below:

Issues Raised	Responses from Patrick Leeson, Kevin Shovelton and Jonathan Whitcombe
There should have been a consultation so that parents could choose the alternative school they wanted. The majority of children want to stay at the school many do not want the school they have been offered. Parents are already pulling their children out because they are dissatisfied	KCC has to offer alternative places and spoke to local schools so that children could be allocated schools as near as possible to their home. Following individual discussions with parents if a place at a school didn't make sense and where possible we have made changes
Difficult position for Yr 10 students	We have set out to ensure that Y10 are protected in terms of completing their GCSE's and remain on the school site being taught by good teachers and under the control and direction of Swale Academies Trust to complete GCSE courses. I believe that is the best outcome for them
Why should we believe KCC about being committed to quality provision?	Every effort will be made to ensure that youngsters will have good outcomes with good GCSE results. They are being taught well and making good progress. The pupils will remain on site, we have entered into discussions with Swale Academies Trust about what is required,

	financially and otherwise to maintain provision for the Y10 pupils and I give you my guarantee that the pupils will be taught on this site until they complete their GCSE courses.
What is the current status of Y6 parents? Children were allocated Chaucer, where are they going now?	The announcement and decision on closure coincided within 3 or 4 days of the allocation of Y6 pupils to start in secondary schools in 2014. It was impossible to offer alternative places right away. All parents have received separate letters explaining the situation the school was in and we will offer alternative places through the reallocation process
Y12 students who are coming to the end of the first year of their A levels should be allowed to stay in school like the first year GCSE students to protect continuity of their courses and the stability of their education for the second year of their course.	For the students to get the best possible provision, we have worked with other local partners to safeguard their chances. Discussions have taken place with local providers to make sure those students' needs are safeguarded. The students are better served being educated elsewhere. We will provide 1:1 discussions to ensure provision will continue.
Whilst first preference numbers for year 7 are low with 2nd preferences there would have been a significant increase in the number quoted	There is significant surplus capacity in other Canterbury schools proving. Even counting 1st and 2nd choices for this school, it doesn't make the school viable for the future
Previously this was an excellent school but went downhill from 2006. People have failed the community the staff and the students. Why did the school drop the grammar stream, this affected popularity who made the decision? Did you notice that these numbers had declined over the past few years	The history of the school is clearly one of a steady decline, which should have been responded to. I am unable to say why the grammar stream was dropped. When I came to Kent I noticed this school was declining and we took action with the governing body and current management to help bring about necessary improvements. Some improvements were made but the pace of improvements was not enough
It would cost £6M to close the school KCC should inject that money to develop the school. Are KCC going to make available the financial documents that support a recovery plan and the cost of actually closing the school? Will the financial projections be shared?	Yes, it costs money to close the school but it's a one-off cost. For the school to have a future is a year- on-year cost. I agree that these school buildings have needed attention for some time, but it's not possible to move capital funding into revenue funding to keep the school going. It is not sustainable to keep the school open. The financial projections for the school are incredibly bleak. The costs of closing the school are not comparable to the figures of continuing to run it. Yes the financial details will be shared in writing.
Why close an improving school the numbers would have improved next year. It is short sighted to close the school.	The school is expecting good exam results by the end of this year, however it does not guarantee the numbers, which are draining away, and finance to allow the school to continue to operate.

<p>The Ofsted monitoring letter from 14th November 2013 stated: "LA officers have committed to recommend to Members the underwriting of the schools budgetary deficit in order to expedite matters. At the time of this visit, officials from the DfE await confirmation of this commitment in writing".</p>	<p>That was true at the time of writing. Up until recently we were prepared to help the school forward with the deficit arrangement but the drop in pupil numbers is serious and we have no other option.</p>
<p>Why did KCC Ofsted inspectors take so long to establish that the school was failing when they should have done something about it sooner? Why was action not taken sooner by KCC.</p>	<p>Ofsted inspectors are not part of KCC. Ofsted inspected the school in 2011 and found it to be inadequate. The usual interval time is 3 years Ofsted makes its own decisions on inspections. When the school failed its inspection, the DfE wanted it to become an Academy sponsored by an external provider. The LA cannot take actions during this period.</p>
<p>This lack of action is historical. Concerns were apparent some years ago but no action taken. Why did nobody in KCC notice the decline in numbers over past 4/5 years?</p>	<p>The LA were raising concerns over leadership and standards in the school with the Governing Body and this should have been picked up earlier. The school was beginning to take action but they were not sufficient to bring about improvements before Ofsted arrived.</p>
<p>Why was Mr Whitcombe allowed to stand up 6-8 weeks ago and say the future of the school was rock solid? We were not told at any meeting that conversion to an Academy depended on numbers</p>	<p>Following our discussion with the DfE and possible academy sponsor, which didn't materialise, we asked Swale Academies Trust and JW to take over responsibility of the school. JW spent time in the school and he and his team made very significant improvements in the quality of teaching and the progress and achievements of the pupils. The school needed to be a viable school to transfer to become an academy.</p>
<p>Why aren't KCC allowing the transfer to Swale Academy Trust so they can take over the burden of this problem</p>	<p>KCC is not taking this action on its own, discussions have been held with the governors and Swale Academies Trust and all parties have agreed that the only option is closure. There isn't a contract with the Trust and although the Secretary of State said it would become an Academy some time ago, the situation has changed since that decision was taken.</p>
<p>Why couldn't KCC have done a capital loan with Swale Academy Trust and released the funding now to invest in the school?</p>	<p>It was viable and we were prepared to release some of the value of the assets but the numbers of pupils are not there to support this school.</p>
<p>Do you support the closure of the school or bringing it into the fold of the Academy Trust and the solid future of school as you said in January</p>	<p>John Whitcombe said; I believed the school had a rock solid future and expressed my opinion in the local press last week. When I made that comment I passionately believed the school had a strong and robust future but circumstances changed. Another local school decided to expand its number and it made the</p>

	viability of this school more difficult.
Do Swale Academy Trust want to make it an Academy?	We wanted to take it on to become an Academy but reality is that school has reached a tipping point and cannot return from that. Swale Academies Trust is not prepared to take it on. The Funding agreement has not been signed. The Academy Order has been signed by the Secretary, which informs the governors and KCC. Swale Academies Trust hasn't signed it.
Another local school should not have been allowed to increase their intake by 50-70 pupils that would have secured the position of Chaucer School. This increase is short sighted	Nobody here was in control of that decision. The arrangement for admission to schools has changed and individual schools can decide their own admissions numbers.
If Canterbury schools had taken a reduction in their PAN by 15%, we wouldn't be in this position. Why hasn't an interim step been put in to ensure all schools in Canterbury area have taken a reduction in birth rate rather than just one?	This is not possible. There is no way that the LA can control numbers when schools become Academies. Any money that Canterbury Academy has, they acquire via the DfE.
Are KCC aware of conspiracy theory going round that Christ Church is paying someone in KCC so that they can purchase yet another part of this side of Canterbury?	I'm not aware of any conspiracy theory about Canterbury Christ Church University. No decision been made about this site.
When the 4,000 home are built between Barton and Bridge, where will children go to school?	Forecasts used for school places in future for Canterbury take into account up to 500 houses in Canterbury. Canterbury District Council's plan has more than 4,000 up to 2031. The increase in housing from now until 2020 won't require us to have a school of this size. What we know is that by 2020 will need to make additional provision in schools but not enough for a whole school
Barton Court are going to Herne Bay and Simon Langton Boys being super-selective, Archbishops being a faith school it leaves Chaucer, Canterbury High and St. Anselm's as comprehensives and Canterbury High is bursting at the seams.	We looked at every option to keep the school open We looked carefully at housing projections and forecasts using data from Canterbury District Council's plans but numbers won't materialise until 2020
If Chaucer had become an Academy, they could have had the funding to provide the influx in 5 years' time; Canterbury will need further and larger accommodation and will need a school. This is an ideal school – it's what people see on the outside. It's a good school with good teaching. Canterbury will need a good school –	I understands the sentiments but it needed an Academy Trust to sponsor it to bring about improvements but the Academy chain would not take on the risk of the school and part of the arrangement of that Academy chain was that the LA would agree to sell a piece of land in order to produce resources to invest in capital improvements in this school. The Academy chain was not prepared to wait 2-3

let's spend money on it.	years for that to happen.
If commitment had been there and if school had a face-lift, more students would have come in. It would have been a viable, good school.	Oasis Academy Trust walked away as it wasn't viable. Capital improvements would not have seen light of day for couple of years
The school's deficit is £300K. There has been extensive works repairing heating and roofing – how much of that £300k does that account for? Is that wasted money?	Money for the improvements was paid for by LA and not out of deficits. The deficit had been built up over a number of years. This is in addition to the deficit.
If you refer to the slide and the dates of the 4-week public notice period if the Cabinet Member doesn't agree, we've got no children left most will have left. Are we putting the "cart before the horse" or has a decision already been made or is the proposal not a proposal but a done deal?	It is clear from our conversation this evening that if there was an alternative we would be pursuing it. There is always a legal decision when making a proposal of this kind.
How did information get leaked in the way that it did? The timing was awful and was an insult to the staff, pupils and parents.	Agreed and it was unhelpful. No way it could be stopped and we didn't know about it at the time

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Roger Gough,

Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform

DECISION NO:

14/00039

For publication

Subject: Proposed Closure of Chaucer Technology School

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform I agree to:

- (i) Issue a public notice to close Chaucer Technology School for all year groups except the current Year 10.

And, following the closure of the Public Notice and subject to no new objections not considered in this decision being received

- (ii) Close the School for all year groups except the current Year 10.

Should objections, not already considered by the cabinet member when taking this decision, be received during the notice period a separate decision will be required in order to continue the proposal and allow for proper consideration of the points raised.

1. Reason(s) for decision:

1.1 The very significant drop in pupil numbers, reflecting loss of parental confidence in the school, and the serious budget deficit coupled with future pupil number projections in the Canterbury area suggest closure of Chaucer Technology School as the most viable option.

1.2 The consultation period ran from 25 February to 8th April 2014 with a public meeting being held on 17 March 2014.

1.3 In reaching this decision I have taken into account:

- the views expressed by those attending the public consultation meeting on 17 March 2014, and those put in writing in response to the consultation;
- the views of the Local Member;
- the Equalities Impact Assessment and comments received regarding this; and
- the views of the Education Cabinet Committee which are set out below

2. Financial Implications:

2.1 The national changes to school funding that were implemented in April 2013 reduced all local authority funding formulas to a very limited number of factors (10 in our case) and moved the funding to the position where more than 90% of a school budget is now based upon pupil numbers compared to an average of 71% in 2012/13. The significant decline in pupil numbers at Chaucer Technology School has therefore resulted in a corresponding decline in its revenue funding. More than ever before the financial viability of a school hinges on its pupil numbers.

2.2 The budget for Chaucer Technology School (excluding Post 16) is £3.7m in 2013/14 and

that falls to £2.7m in 2014/15 because of the reduction in pupil numbers. If closure was not being considered we would face a major issue in 2015/16 where the budget for the school is likely to fall below £1m. The school is currently forecast to end 2013/14 with a deficit of over £0.3m (revenue and capital) which is expected to grow to over £0.6m in 2014/15 rising to more than £2m in 2015/16. This, coupled with the continuing fall in the roll, is not a financially viable position for any school. That level of funding and deficit would not allow the school to deliver the required curriculum and quality of education.

- 2.3 In January 2013 the Acting Principal of Chaucer Technology School took appropriate action to address the budget pressures through a significant reduction in staffing. This is likely to have brought the budget back under control on the basis of what was known about pupil numbers at that time. What could not have been anticipated when those savings measures were implemented was the scale of the continuing fall in the roll which has now resulted in an untenable financial position.

Revenue

- 2.4 The financial implications of closure are set out below. Most of the costs will have to be met from the Schools Block of the DSG (Dedicated Schools Grant) so the majority of additional costs (most of which are one-off in nature) will not fall to KCC but it will put some pressure on our DSG funding in 2014/15 and 2015/16. The DSG will have to absorb the one-off cost of the deficit left when the school closes. We are currently developing a model budget to take the school through to closure in August 2015 so a definitive figure is not available. However, with all the changes taking place from September 2014 we anticipate being able to reduce the projected 2015/16 deficit so the likely cost will be in the region of £1.5m.
- 2.5 It should be noted that had the school proceeded with the planned Academy conversion proposed by the DfE in 2013, we would still have incurred the cost of the deficit. Schools converting under the sponsored Academy model leave their deficit behind with the local authority. The Schools Block of the DSG will also have to meet some one-off costs that will be incurred by those schools taking on the current Chaucer Technology School pupils from September 2014. This is still to be quantified with the schools concerned but we anticipate the cost will be in the region of £1m. The schools will get additional funding in future years for those pupils through the normal formula budget process. There will be costs in respect of staffing, primarily redundancy payments as well as some additional cost on Home to School Transport. Again, it is unlikely that these costs can be quantified until later. There will also be costs relating to closing of parts of the site during the academic year 2014/15 and securing the site following closure in August 2015.

Capital

- 2.6 As with revenue there will be a capital deficit to be absorbed but this is much smaller than the revenue and may be less than £0.1m at the point of closure. The major capital issue relates to the future of the 22 acre site. At this stage there are no plans for the site as our focus is on providing support for the existing pupils and staff through to closure in August 2015. There are clearly a range of options that can be explored as to the future use of the site but until options are developed it is not possible to quantify the scale of any potential

costs or receipts.

3 Human Resources Implications

- 3.1 A 30 day formal consultation period for staff commenced on 24 March 2014. This was opened with a consultation meeting attended by staff, Trade Unions, LA Representative, the Executive Principal and HR. Staff were provided with a copy of the indicative Redundancy Timeline, Public Consultation document on the proposal to close the Chaucer Technology School and a Question and Answer sheet in response to queries that had been raised at earlier staff meetings. As part of the consultation process formal one to one meetings with staff have started and will be completed by 4 April 2014. Responses to the formal consultation process are to be received by 24 April 2014.
- 3.2 A number of staff have been selected to cover the curriculum for Year 11 in 2014/2015, subject to the proposal for closure being approved. They will therefore have their redundancy deferred. A retention allowance will be paid to ensure that Year 11 students receive continuity of education and secure the best possible outcomes with their GCSE courses. A number of the remaining staff members have secured alternative employment and others are being supported in looking for other positions. Those that do not secure other posts will be made redundant on 31 August 2014, subject to the proposal being agreed.

4. Property Implications

- 4.1 The Chaucer school site will remain operational until August 2015. It will then revert to the Local Authority's ownership and will be held for educational purposes within KCC's Property portfolio. Further analysis of future need will be undertaken to inform whether any part of the site can be disposed of or made available for alternative use.
- 4.2 Work will be undertaken to ensure the site can operate safely until final closure in August 2015.
- 4.3 Consultation is taking place with other users of the site to inform decisions around longer term use.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

14 March 2014

The Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform in his verbal update explained the proposal to the Committee. The Committee agreed to discuss the proposal fully at its meeting on 22 April 2014.

22 April 2014

To be added after Committee meeting

Any alternatives considered:

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

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Signed

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Date