1. **Introduction**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Learning, and the Executive Head, People with the outcomes from the formal consultation on the permanent closure of Coulsdon Nursery School.

1.2 Coulsdon Nursery School is a 64 place community nursery school offering education and care for children of three and four years old. The school, which occupies rented premises on Linden Avenue, is led by the leadership team at Chipstead Valley Primary School and accountable to the governing bodies of Coulsdon Nursery School and Chipstead Valley Primary School.

1.3 The partnership with the primary school is exceptionally strong and is key to ongoing success. A senior teacher from Chipstead Valley Primary School has led the nursery school since August 2016. Through these arrangements the school have secured and maintained since 2013 an Ofsted judgement of Outstanding.

1.4 Coulsdon Nursery School currently occupies rented premises that are outdated and do not lend themselves to the delivery of Early Years provision in a cost effective way. The current offer is limited and only available for the year before the child is due to enter their reception year at school. There are no opportunities to further develop provision and no capacity to deliver places for eligible two year old children or the new 30hr childcare offer. The new facilities have been developed as part of the overall expansion of the primary school. This will facilitate a learning environment across a 2-11 age range, maximising the opportunities for children to achieve good outcomes.

1.5 This report is based on responses received during the representation (formal consultation) period following the publication of statutory proposal where anyone with an interest could object or comment on the proposal to permanently close Coulsdon Nursery School.

2. **Background**

2.1 This proposal aligns to the necessity to re-model maintained nursery school provision in Croydon in order to move to a more financial sustainable provision. It builds on opportunities to minimise duplication of roles through the alignment of back office and leadership functions and yields additional cost saving benefits achievable through a single site provision. The added value is realised through the increase in the number of places available to deliver the new 30 hour early education and childcare offer and will create places for eligible 2 year olds in an area where provision is currently limited.
2.2 The Council has a statutory duty for ensuring that a sufficient supply of early education and childcare places is available within its Borough for every three and four year old child from the term after their third birthday. It also has a duty to ensure that there are sufficient early years provision in its Borough and promote diversity and parental choice.

2.3 Nursery places to serve the local area will be re-provided within the newly created nursery classes at Chipstead Valley School. The new provision will offer comparable capacity with 63 places created. The provision offers greater flexibility and is able to deliver the range of early learning and childcare funded places for 2, 3 & 4 year old children including the governments new 30 hour initiative for eligible families.

3. Stakeholder Engagement

3.1 Engagement (informal consultation) on the proposed development of a nursery class at Chipstead Valley Primary School, including the change of age range to admit children from age two upwards, was undertaken by the school in the academic year 2016-17.

3.2 Overall, the responses received during this engagement period indicate that the majority of respondents support this change. The resulting changes in the Ofsted registration and the physical premises to accommodate the nursery class were in place from the start of the academic year 2017-18.

4. Publication / Representation (formal consultation)

4.1 For a proposal to permanently close a nursery school, the Council is required to follow a statutory process, including publication of statutory proposal; and a four week representation (formal consultation) period where anyone can comment on or object to the proposed expansion.

4.2 In accordance with statutory regulations for making significant changes to nursery schools, a statutory proposal was published, which started a 4 week representation period — 22 September 20 October 2017 — which invited anyone with an interest to make representations — comment or object to the proposal.

4.3 The statutory proposal was published in the local Croydon Guardian newspaper; on the Council’s and school’s websites; displayed on the nursery school gates; and in the local library. A copy of the statutory notice was sent to the Member of Parliament and Ward councillors.

5. Communication and Consultation activities

A consultation document, including a questionnaire was used as a basis of informing stakeholders, including parents/carers and local residents, about the rationale and inviting feedback on the proposed permanent closure of Coulsdon Nursery School.
4.5 A range of modes and methods of communication were used to inform and facilitate feedback from stakeholders on the proposed permanent closure of Coulsdon Nursery School. Stakeholders were given the opportunity to express their views in writing – via completion of questionnaire; email; and post – and verbally at the public meeting held at Coulsdon Community Centre on the 28 September 2017.

6.6 Communication activities included the circulation of the consultation document, including questionnaire and leaflet via:

- **Schools E-Bulletin**
  - Schools' E-bulletin to all schools within the borough

- **Email:**
  - Ward Councillors / MP
  - PVI providers within the borough, neighbouring and adjourning boroughs

- **Website:**
  - Consultation document including questionnaire published on the Croydon website
  - Online questionnaire

- **Printed documents**
  - Consultation document /questionnaire available at Chipstead Valley School and from Council
  - Document sent/given to parents/carers by Chipstead Valley School
  - Posters advertising consultation and public meeting date at Coulsdon Nursery School and Coulsdon Library

6.7 **Public meeting at Coulsdon Community Centre**
A public consultation meeting at Coulsdon Community Centre on 28 September 2017 where the rationale and consultation process for the proposed permanent closure were explained. Attendees were able to express their views and ask questions, raise concerns and offer suggestions.

6.8 **Equality and Diversity Monitoring**
As part of the consultation process, respondents were asked to complete an equality and diversity questionnaire, looking at Gender, Age, Ethnicity and Disability. The information collected will help identify any special requirements; promote equality; and improve choice and diversity.

6.9 **Equalities Impact Assessment**
An Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) has been undertaken for the proposed permanent closure of Coulsdon Nursery School. The Equality analysis enables the Council to target its services, and budgets, more effectively and understand how they affect all our communities.

6.11 The conclusion of the EQIA is that the permanent closure of this nursery school will either have a positive or neutral impact on protected groups,
including children, disability, ethnicity / race. The full EQIA is attached to the Delegated Decision Notice dated 20 November 2017

7. Summary of representations

7.1 Consultation questionnaire
A total of 16 completed questionnaires have been received. Of the respondents who completed the questionnaire during the representation period:

• 3 “Strongly affected”
• 1 “Fairly affected”
• 8 “Not affected”
• 3 “Don’t know if affected”
• 1 “Did not comment”

7.2 Public consultation meeting
A total of 5 people attended the public meeting that was held at Coulsdon Community Centre on 28 September 2017. The Council representatives: explained the rationale for the proposed permanent closure of the school; sought views on the proposal; and responded to questions.

Email responses
7.3 The Council did not receive any representations via email.

7.4 Overall the responses received during the representation period indicate that the proposal to permanently close Coulsdon Nursery School is supported.

8 Key issues raised during the representation period

8.1 The main comments/concerns cited on the questionnaire and mentioned at the public meeting fall under the following broad themes:

• Potential threat of further closures of nursery schools
• Loss of quality early years provision
• Future use of the building
• Better integration of early years provision within Chipstead Valley School
• Reduction in impact on local residents affected by the current location of the nursery school.

8.2 A detailed analysis of responses, including equality and diversity monitoring is attached at Annex A below.

9 Response to concerns

9.1 Potential threat of closure of other nursery schools
The Council is currently undertaking a review of the Maintained Nursery Schools in the borough with a view to ensuring a sustainable high quality provision for the future.

9.2 **Loss of quality early years provision**
We are confident that the strong leadership and excellent teaching staff at Chipstead Valley School will maintain the outstanding quality of provision and will ensure that the ethos of the nursery school is embedded in the new nursery class provision.

9.3 There are also benefits to be derived from the relocation of provision. The new provision will offer a range of early learning and childcare funded places for 2, 3 & 4 year old children including the governments new 30 hour initiative for eligible families.

9.4 There is sufficient early years provision within the local area for parents to exercise choice in respect of accessing their Free Early Years Entitlement

9.5 **Future use of the building**
The building is owned by Coulsdon & District Day Nursery Fund who are a registered charity. The Council rent the premises from them and as such the building will be returned to the trustees who will make decisions on the future use.

9.6 **Better integration of early year's provision within Chipstead Valley School**
Chipstead Valley Primary School is recognised as a centre of excellence by the local authority. As a result, staff from other schools and private, voluntary or independent nurseries regularly visit to observe practice. Consistently high-quality teaching from all staff ensures excellent progress for children from all groups.

9.7 **Reduction in impact on local residents affected by the current location of the nursery school**
Closure of the nursery school has resulted in positive changes for local residents who were previously affected by drop off and collection times. Residents are clearly concerned as to the future use of the building and the impact that this will have. These concerns have been shared with the Trustees of Coulsdon & District Day Nursery Fund.

10 **General points**

10.1 If the proposal is approved, the Council will work with Chipstead Valley School to finalise arrangements for the interim changes to be made permanent.

11 **Next steps**

11.1 Following the representation period, the Council's lead Member for Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning, under delegated authority, will decide whether the proposal to permanently close Coulsdon Nursery School should be implemented. This will be
based on responses received which will be balanced against the needs for a dedicated nursery school provision.

11.2 In line with the Department for Education School Organisation guidance, decisions must be made within a period of two months, by 20 December 2017, of the end of the representation period or they must be referred to the Schools Adjudicator.

11.3 If approval is given to proceed with the permanent closure of Coulsdon Nursery School steps will be taken to finalise the changes with Chipstead Valley School and to hand back the building to the Coulsdon & District Day Nursery Fund

Annexes

Annex A - A detailed analysis of responses, including equality and diversity monitoring is attached below.

Consultation Responses_Coulsdon Nursery_24.10.17.xlsx