

Subject: Petitions
Date of Meeting: 8 March 2021
Report of: Monitoring Officer
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Wards Affected: Various

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 To receive any petitions submitted directly to Democratic Services or any e-Petition submitted via the council's website.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.2 That the Committee responds to the petition either by noting it or where it is considered more appropriate, calls for an officer report on the matter.

3. PETITIONS

3. (i) School Allocation Dorothy Stringer and Varndean Secondary Schools – Ms A Hyland

To receive the following petition:

There are 62 children in the Dorothy Stringer/Varndean catchment area who couldn't be offered a catchment area school this year. These children have already missed many months of school and contact with their friends over the past twelve months. The impact of the pandemic and a national lockdown has been huge. Their emotional resilience is at a low. Instead of being able to look forward to the next stage in their education with excitement, they are now having to contend with extreme disappointment and anxiety, as they have been offered places far from their homes and their local community.

In previous years, Dorothy Stringer and Varndean have taken additional students to reduce the impact of students being deprived of local school places. It seems that this year, neither school is being asked to provide any additional capacity. Indeed, capacity at Dorothy Stringer has been reduced by 30 spaces. This is despite the fact that in 2018, the Council decided not to go ahead with plans for a new secondary school on the basis of additional capacity being provided by existing schools, notably

Dorothy Stringer and Varndean School, with funding being freed up to support this.

The council's data would have shown that there would be additional demand for secondary school places for September 2021. As a consequence of reducing the school spaces available, children are not able to go on to attend a secondary school in an area they have grown up and where they are part of their local community. There is a ripple effect of this reduced intake which is negatively impacting on families in other catchments areas too.

We call on the Council to review the places available at Dorothy Stringer and Varndean School. Children have suffered enough over the past year, the Council cannot champion the importance of young people's mental health and well-being and then deprive this group of the opportunity to attend a local school for this next significant chapter of their lives.