

Notice of Meeting

Leader Decisions – Supplementary Agenda

**Date & time**

Tuesday, 17 July
2018 at 11.00 am

Place

County Hall, Kingston
upon Thames, KT1
2DN

Contact

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Chief Executive

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This meeting will be held in public. If you would like to attend and you have any special requirements, please contact Emma O'Donnell on 020 8541 8987

Leader

Mr David Hodge CBE (Leader of the Council)

AGENDA

3 PROPOSAL TO CLOSE RIPLEY COFE PRIMARY SCHOOL

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The Leader is asked to review the evidence regarding the option raised at the meeting which took place on 9 July 2018, as set out below, and determine whether to proceed with the proposal to close the school.

Subject to due diligence, the governors of Shere CofE Infant School (Aided) have offered to collaborate with Ripley CofE Primary School to secure its future. In order to assess whether this is a viable option to progress further, the Leader will review whether Shere has the capacity and capability to take on and turn around Ripley together with input from the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Diocese of Guildford.

This report includes an Addendum which was marked 'to follow' on the original agenda.

Joanna Killian
Chief Executive

Published: Monday, 16 July 2018

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ADDENDUM**PROPOSAL TO CLOSE RIPLEY COFE PRIMARY SCHOOL****Summary of issue**

Before the Leader made a decision on 9 July 2018, the head teacher of Shere CofE Infant and Nursery School came forward during the meeting expressing interest on behalf of governors to collaborate with Ripley CofE Primary School. Due to this information being in addition to the considerations in the report, after consultation with the Cabinet Member and officers, the Leader decided to postpone the decision for a further week to review the viability of the proposal.

Recognising that Shere is not a multi-academy-trust, at the meeting on 17 July 2018 the Leader will review the evidence regarding the potential collaboration in line with three of the four criteria set out in paragraph 7 of the Leader's Report:

- Established track record of turning around underperforming schools.
- A strong plan and immediate capacity to effect a turnaround in the school.
- Able to safeguard the religious character of the school, with appropriate church representation on the board of the MAT and on the local governing body.

Response from the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC)

The Council asked the RSC for their view on the potential collaboration following the meeting. The RSC responded to the Council on 9 July 2018, stating the following:

Whilst Shere CofE Aided Infant is a church school, it is neither an academy nor an academy sponsor. I therefore cannot consider Shere as an option to sponsor Ripley.

Were the governing body of Shere to make an application to become an academy and a sponsor, I would need to assess this. However, I would examine closely whether, as a standalone infant school, Shere has the necessary capacity to sponsor Ripley.

Response from the Diocese of Guildford

The Council asked the Diocese of Guildford for their view on the potential collaboration following the meeting. The Diocese responded to the Council on 9 July 2018 setting out its position on the proposed collaboration:

Dear Councillor Hodge

Ripley Church of England Primary School – Proposed Collaboration with Shere CE Infant School

I write on behalf of the Diocesan Board of Education for the Diocese of Guildford, to set out the position of the diocese in relation to this proposed collaboration between two Church of England schools in our diocese.

Throughout the formal and informal consultation process regarding the Local Authority's proposals to close Ripley, the diocese has been consistent in its view that the position of Ripley CE Primary school is now unviable.

This view is based on our assessment of a number of factors including the decline in school standards in the school, the very small number of pupils attending the school and the unsustainable financial position of this school based on the lack of demand for school places within the local planning area.

In the view of the diocese, a proposal for a collaboration between Shere CE Infant school and Ripley CE Primary would not address these fundamental issues nor would they meet the requirement by the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) for Ripley CE Primary school to become an academy and join a Multi-Academy Trust.

The diocese has clearly set out its position in relation to the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) four requirements for this school namely:

- **An approved academy sponsor by the Department for Education**
- **Established track record of turning around underperforming schools**
- **A strong plan and immediate capacity to effect a turnaround in the school**
- **The ability to safeguard the religious character of the school, with appropriate church representation on the board of the MAT and the local governing body of the school**

Shere Church of England Infant school is a Voluntary-Aided (VA) Church school within the Diocese of Guildford. The school is not part of a Multi-Academy Trust or converted to academy status. The Governing Body have not asked the Diocesan Board of Education to convert to academy status and the school is not an academy sponsor.

As the school is not an academy trust, the Governing Body cannot provide the appropriate representation required to provide Member and Director level representation of a Church MAT to sponsor Ripley. The Governing Body is not a Church Corporate body and is not an academy sponsor approved by the Regional Schools Commissioner or the Department of Education.

For these reasons, the Diocesan Board of Education cannot support any proposal for a collaboration between these two Church schools in our diocese and would apply the same conditions to any other proposals put forward by another Church school in the diocese.

I hope this clarifies the position of the Diocesan Board of Education in this matter.

Response from Shere CofE Infant and Nursery School

On 13 July 2018, the Council received the following statement from the Governing Body of Shere CofE Infant and Nursery School:

Statement from the Governing Board of Shere CE Infant and Nursery School

13th July 2018

In April, as part of reviewing its own strategic direction, representatives of the Governors of Shere School met with the Diocese, in the context of its own recently published strategy 'Shaping our Future'. We discussed different options for collaborations between Shere and other schools within the Diocese.

Shere School was approached verbally on Tuesday 3rd July by the Friends of Ripley to ask whether the school would consider a collaboration with Ripley Primary School. The Governing Body of Shere School has not been formally approached in this matter.

Since the SCC decision meeting on 9th July we have been sent a copy of the Regional School Commissioner's letter of 9th July, to Councillor Hodge, which restates the position of the Department of Education and as such we are unable to proceed with a plan for collaboration.

The position of the Governing Body then, and currently, is that the school will continue to work with the Diocese on options for collaboration with small rural schools.

Conclusion

The Council reviewed the expression of interest from Shere in keeping with the established criteria despite the fact that it was withdrawn, and had the following conclusions in respect of the collaboration:

- No evidence of an established track record of turning around underperforming schools.
- No evidence of a strong plan and immediate capacity to effect a turnaround in the school.

In addition, the RSC and the Diocese are not able to support such an arrangement. Therefore, it is not possible to progress the potential option of a collaboration between Ripley and Shere.

Note to Leader's Report, 9 July 2018

The Leader asked officers to clarify the figures in the table in paragraph 67 of the report. It had been brought to his attention during the meeting that the numbers in the report reflected the current capacity of schools including bulge classes in neighbouring education planning areas. The revised table below shows the published admission numbers:

Year	South Woking Area Reception places/PAN: 150		Byfleet and West Byfleet Area Reception places/PAN: 300		Total vacancies	Deficit in Ripley & Send	Projected overall vacancies across all three areas
	Projected number of places needed	Difference between projections and available places	Projected number of places needed	Difference between projections and available places			
2018	149	1	279	21	22	-17	5
2019	157	-7	286	14	7	-14	-7
2020	158	-8	282	18	10	-15	-5
2021	160	-10	287	13	3	-12	-9
2022	160	-10	288	12	2	-10	-8
2023	161	-11	289	11	0	-12	-12
2024	161	-11	290	10	-1	-15	-16
2025	162	-12	290	10	-2	-15	-17

Whilst the revised figures forecast a small deficit of places, in the context of wider primary planning areas it is reasonable to anticipate these numbers can be managed in the medium term.

It was also brought to the Leader's attention that new, increased housing development figures for Lovelace ward were discussed as part of Guildford Borough Council's Local Plan examination.

If there is significant demand in the future over the capacity in the education planning areas, in line with its statutory duties, the Council would ensure a sufficient number of places are provided.

The Equality Impact Assessment in this regard has been reviewed and there is no change.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Leader of the Council approves the proposal to close Ripley CofE Primary School. This recommendation remains unchanged from the original report.