

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL****LOCAL COMMITTEE (REIGATE & BANSTEAD) DATE: 22 September 2014****SUBJECT: WRITTEN MEMBER QUESTIONS****DIVISION: Earlswood and South Reigate****1. Question from Councillor Barbara Thomson**

"Can I have an update on the position of Dovers Green Playgroup, i.e. helping and supporting them to find new premises and the reasons for the closure?"

**Answer from Chairman on behalf of the committee:**

Dovers Green Playgroup were issued with six months notice to terminate the lease for the building on the site of Dovers Green Primary School, in June 2014. The decision rose partly as a result of an Ofsted investigation of an incident at the playgroup, and partly due to the school's governing body considering the future of the school and all the provision on its site. Whilst the outcome of the incident was "unfounded", the current owner found the whole matter very distressing and decided that she no longer wanted to continue to own and manage the playgroup. At this time, the governors became concerned about the impact that the investigation was having within the community and within the school.

In consultation with the county council, the governing body took the view that the playgroup is located in an outdated portakabin which does not reflect the high standard of other facilities on the school site. Therefore, the governing body took the opportunity to plan for the future and gave notice on the lease, which was issued by Surrey County Council (SCC). The governing body acknowledged it was a difficult decision, but believed it to be the best way to meet the needs of an expanding school and for the local community.

The current position is that, whilst there were initially two members of staff who indicated a willingness to take on the ownership of the pre-school, only Miss Rebecca McSorely is going to take this forward and is in the process of setting up a limited company. A new location has been identified at Mead Vale Village Hall, which Miss McSorely considers as being suitable premises.

Staff from SCC's Early Years and Childcare Service (EYCS) are visiting the hall in order to look at whether any refurbishment is required. A lease is being arranged with the hall committee and the new provision will be registered with Ofsted.

Miss McSorely will carry on operating the playgroup on the existing site until the lease expires on 6 December 2014 and EYCS will be liaising with the school and SCC's property services, to agree an extension of the lease until the end of the autumn term so that children and their families have no disruption to their early education. There is also a requirement for the existing building to be returned to its original condition on the termination of the lease and a suitable time period for this to take place will be negotiated as part of the agreement on the extension of the lease.

At this point in time, there are strong indications that everything will be in place for the playgroup to move to new premises in readiness to open for the spring term in January 2014 and children will be able to continue to attend at Dovers Green until the end of this term.

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