

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL****CABINET MEMBER FOR SCHOOLS, SKILLS AND  
EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT****DATE: 14 DECEMBER 2015****LEAD OFFICER: JULIE FISHER, DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE****SUBJECT: PROPOSED EXPANSION OF THE PRIORY CHURCH OF  
ENGLAND (VA) SCHOOL****SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

The Governing Body of The Priory Church of England (VA) School, in partnership with Surrey County Council (SCC) and the Diocese of Guildford, has consulted on a proposal to expand the school by one form of entry from September 2017 and a further one form of entry in September 2019 (making a two form entry expansion in total). The education consultation was conducted between 28 September 2015 and 26 October 2015.

On the basis of the education rationale for the expansion and, in view of the comments received during the consultation period, the Governing Body of the school voted to proceed with the expansion project. The Cabinet Member is asked to review the summary of the consultation process provided within this report and associated Annexes and, on that basis, determine whether to ratify the decision made by the school from Surrey County Council's perspective.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

It is recommended that the formal decision of the Governing Body of The Priory Church of England (VA) School to expand by 2 Forms of Entry (2FE) be ratified by the Cabinet Member.

**REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

There is an increasing demand for primary school places around the Dorking area which reflects a rise in the primary-age population over recent years that is beginning to transition into the secondary sector. In order to meet this demand, Surrey County Council (SCC) is overseeing an ongoing school expansion programme designed to increase the capacity of the school estate. The proposal to expand the capacity of The Priory Church of England (VA) School by 2FE is a core element of SCC's strategy to deliver additional places in this area. In line with this, the Governing Body of the school have undertaken the requisite statutory consultation process and, on this basis, have made the formal education decision to expand the school. For these reasons, it is recommended that the Cabinet Member formally ratify the decision of the school in this respect so as to provide the necessary platform on which to proceed with the project.

## **DETAILS:**

### **The Proposal**

1. On 28 September 2015, the Governing Body of The Priory Church of England (VA) School, in cooperation with the Diocese of Guildford and SCC, published a proposal to:
  - Enlarge The Priory Church of England (VA) School from five forms of entry (5FE) at Year 7 to seven forms of entry (7FE) at Year 7, to allow for a roll of 1,050, comprising seven classes of 30 pupils in each year group.
  - Build additional permanent classrooms and ancillary space to facilitate this.
2. It is proposed that the above enlargement would be split into two phases. The first expansion of 1FE would be enacted from 1 September 2017. Following this, in September 2019, a second one form entry expansion would be enacted. It is proposed that the school would grow incrementally, year-on-year, as the higher intake works its way progressively through the age range. As such, the school would effectively reach its new capacity of 1,050 places in September 2023. The incremental expansion in capacity is shown in the table below:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Y7</b>	<b>Y8</b>	<b>Y9</b>	<b>Y10</b>	<b>Y11</b>	<b>Total</b>
2017/18	180	150	150	150	150	<b>780</b>
2018/19	180	180	150	150	150	<b>810</b>
2019/20	210	180	180	150	150	<b>870</b>
2020/21	210	210	180	180	150	<b>930</b>
2021/22	210	210	210	180	180	<b>990</b>
2022/23	210	210	210	210	180	<b>1,020</b>
2023/24	210	210	210	210	210	<b>1,050</b>

### **Reasons for the Proposal**

3. Mole Valley is experiencing a significant increase in demand for school places, reflecting both a rise in birth rate and increased house building and migration within the area. Births in Mole Valley in 2013 were 6.4% higher than births in 2002. The increased pupil cohort is now starting to make the transition into the secondary sector. As such, there is now the need to accommodate increased demand, via the expansion of local secondary provision.
4. Within the Dorking Planning Area there is presently provision for 390 places per year in Year 7, composed of the following:
  - The Ashcombe School (offering 240 Year 7 places per annum); and
  - The Priory Church of England (VA) School (offering 150 Year 7 places per annum).
5. Demand for secondary school places in Dorking is projected to rise over the coming years, in line with the general increase across the whole of the Mole Valley District. Projections of future demand for school places are presented in the below table:

Year	Y7 PAN	Y7 Projection	Deficit
2015/16	390	405	15
2016/17	390	394	4
2017/18	390	419	29
2018/19	390	413	23
2019/20	390	461	71
2020/21	390	450	60
2021/22	390	462	72
2022/23	390	479	89
2023/24	390	458	68
2024/25	390	465	75
2025/26	390	460	70

6. As can be seen from the above, there is a sustained need for additional secondary places in the area. Whilst SCC has managed the immediate pressure for September 2015 in this and the wider area, the need for permanent expansions will remain. A core component of the strategy devised to meet this need is the proposed expansion of The Priory by two Forms of Entry which (if approved) would reduce all of the above projected deficits by 60 places.
7. Where possible, SCC's strategy is to expand high quality provision that meets parental demand whilst also ensuring that there is a diverse pattern of provision, so as to provide families with some element of choice. The most recent Ofsted report on the school, from November 2014, rates the school as 'Good'. In particular, this report noted that "Teaching of all subjects, including literacy, reading and mathematics, is good and is continuing to improve. It is characterised by strong relationships between teachers and students. Many students describe their teachers as 'awesome' and 'inspirational'". The evident quality of education provision at The Priory was a key reason underpinning the move to expand this school and thereby increase the provision of high-quality school places to the local community.

### **School Building Requirements**

8. The school site has sufficient capacity to enable expansion in its existing location. Naturally, though, a building programme will be required to provide the permanent facilities to allow for the increase in pupil intake. To this end, SCC has allowed for an appropriate capital sum for this project within the Basic Need Capital Programme element of its Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)
9. Should the decision be taken to proceed with the expansion, design workshops will be undertaken in partnership with the school to develop the building proposal, on the basis of which a planning application will be submitted and consulted upon separately.

<b>CONSULTATION:</b>
----------------------

10. As a Voluntary Aided school, the increase in admission number was the subject of a school-led consultation process which was held for a four week period between 28 September and 26 October 2015. This process engaged a

range of interested stakeholders, including the school community, local residents, local admissions authorities and the Surrey School Admissions Forum. On 19 October 2015, the Governing Body held a consultation evening at the school, to which all interested parties were invited. A summary of the feedback from the entire consultation process is appended to this report as Annex 2.

11. Ultimately, as The Priory Church of England (VA) School is a Voluntary Aided School, the statutory decision in respect of the expansion proposal rests with the school Governing Body. On the basis of the education rationale for the expansion and in view of the comments received during the consultation period, the Governing Body of the school voted to proceed with the expansion project and this decision was published on the school's website on 24 November 2015. The record of this decision is appended to this report as Annex 1.

### **RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:**

12. As the education consultation has been completed and the associated decision made, in compliance with the relevant legislation governing such decisions, there is no outstanding risk in this respect. However, it should be noted that there was a degree of opposition to the proposals that manifested in the feedback to the consultation process, with half of the responses received being opposed to the proposal. The largest section of these concerns, however, was related to the building project and highways issues. These matters are properly considered as part of the planning consultation process when firm proposals have been developed in relation to the building. That said, these concerns have been relayed to the Project Team and attention will be paid to mitigation measures as the project moves forward.
13. There are naturally risks associated with the building project required to facilitate this expansion. Ultimately, these are, in large part, related to cost and programme, i.e. the capacity to deliver the requisite project within the defined financial parameters, in line with the timeline for increased demand. A risk register is being maintained and updated on a regular basis by the Project Manager of the scheme and this should serve to both mitigate risk (in part) and to provide early foresight of any issues as they materialise. A contingency allowance appropriate to the scheme has been included within the project budget to mitigate for potential identified risks.

### **Financial and Value for Money Implications**

14. The building project associated with this proposal is included in SCC's Basic Need Capital Programme element of its 2015-20 MTFP. A scheme of works will be developed and agreed by Property Services and this will subsequently go to Cabinet for approval. All schemes are expected to remain within the funding that has been allocated to them in the MTFP.

### **Section 151 Officer Commentary**

15. The Section 151 Officer confirms that the basic need expansion scheme for this school is included in the 2015-20 MTFP.

### **Public Sector Equality Duty**

16. The public sector equality duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) applies to the decision to be made by the Cabinet Member in this report. There is a requirement when deciding upon the recommendations to have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity for people with protected characteristics, foster good relations between such groups and eliminate any unlawful discrimination. These matters are dealt with in the equalities paragraphs of the report.

### **General Decision-Making**

17. In coming to a decision on this issue the Cabinet Member needs to take account of all relevant matters. The weight to be given to each of the relevant matters is for the Cabinet Member to decide. Relevant matters in this context will include the statutory requirements, the policy considerations, the impacts of the options on service provision, the MTFP, the council's fiduciary duty, any relevant risks, the results of the consultation and the public sector equality duty.

### **Fiduciary Duty**

18. The council owes a fiduciary duty to its council Taxpayers, analogous to that owed by trustees responsible for looking after property belonging to other people. Accordingly in deciding to spend money a local authority must take account of the interests of council Tax payers who have contributed to the council's income and balance those interests against those who benefit from the expenditure. It will also need to act in a prudent way having regard to the short and long term consequences of the decision.

### **Best Value Duty**

19. The best value duty is contained in s3 of the Local Government Act 1999 as a result of which the council is under a duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The relevant guidance states that councils should consider overall value, including economic, environmental and social value when reviewing service provision.

### **School Expansion**

20. Section 13 of the Education Act 1996 places a general duty on the council to secure that efficient primary and secondary education is available to meet the needs of the population in its area. In doing so, the council is required to contribute to the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community. Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on the council to secure that sufficient schools for providing primary and secondary education are available in its area. There is a legal duty on the council, therefore, to secure the availability of efficient education in its area and sufficient schools to enable this.
21. The School Organisation (maintained schools) Guidance for Proposers and Decision-makers January 2014 and the School Admissions Code 2014 set

out the requirements for governing bodies of Voluntary Aided schools in school expansions where PAN will increase. As there was no actual requirement to consult, the governing body have gone over and above the duties set out under these statutory documents.

22. This report sets out how the Authority will meet its duties in response to the increasing demand for school places in Dorking.

#### **Equalities and Diversity**

23. The expansion of the school will not create any issues that would require the production of an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) as no group with protected characteristics will be adversely affected as a consequence of its approval, or otherwise.
24. The new school building will comply with Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) regulations.
25. The Admissions arrangements give the highest priority to Looked After Children (LAC), thus supporting provision for the county's most vulnerable children. Priority is then given (in order) to siblings; those who regularly attend a Church of England church; those who regularly attend another Christian church; those who regularly attend a place of another religious faith; and those with exceptional medical or social needs. Remaining applicants are then sorted on the basis of distance from home to school. There is no proposal to amend the admissions criteria, which are fully compliant with the School Admissions Code.

#### **Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children implications**

26. This proposal would provide increased provision for secondary places in the area which would be of benefit to the community served by the school. This would therefore also be of benefit to any Looked After Children who have the opportunity of attending the school with this grouping of children receiving the highest priority ranking within the school's admission arrangements.

#### **Climate change/carbon emissions implications**

27. The design philosophy is to create buildings that will support low energy consumption, reduce solar gain and promote natural ventilation. The school will be built to the local planning authority's adopted core planning strategy. In addition, the provision of additional school places to meet local demand is likely to have a positive impact on reducing journey times (and therefore carbon emissions), relative to the scenario of not so doing.

#### **WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:**

28. Subject to Cabinet Member approval of the recommendation of this report, the next steps are:
- To take a Business Case for the associated capital works scheme to SCC's Cabinet at a future date.
  - If approval to the above referenced Business Case is granted, the project will move to delivery with a view to having the expanded school facilities

ready to accommodate the new cohort in line with the timeline for increased demand.

---

**Contact Officer:**

Oliver Gill, School Commissioning Officer, Tel: 020 8541 7383

**Consulted:**

The Priory Church of England (VA) School Governing Body

Parents of pupils attending the school

Local residents

Diocese of Guildford

Local Headteachers

Peter-John Wilkinson, Assistant Director for Schools and Learning

Stephen Cooksey, Local County Council Member for Dorking South & the Holmwoods

Mole Valley District Council

Unions (NUT, NASUWT, ATL)

School Admissions Forum

**Annexes:**

Annex 1 – Governing Body Decision Letter

Annex 2 – Summary of Consultation Feedback

**Sources/background papers:**

- The Priory Church of England (VA) School Statutory Notice
  - The Priory Church of England (VA) School Consultation Document
-

This page is intentionally left blank