



***Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Children,  
Education & Families***

***Monday, 5 January 2015 at 12.00 pm  
Meeting Room 1, County Hall, Oxford***

***Items for Decision***

The items for decision under individual Cabinet Members' delegated powers are listed overleaf, with indicative timings, and the related reports are attached. Decisions taken will become effective at the end of the working day on 13 January 2015 unless called in by that date for review by the appropriate Scrutiny Committee.

Copies of the reports are circulated (by e-mail) to all members of the County Council.

**These proceedings are open to the public**

*Peter G. Clark.*

Peter G. Clark  
County Solicitor

December 2014

Contact Officer: **Deborah Miller**  
Tel: (01865) 815384; EMail: [deborah.miller@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:deborah.miller@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

Note: Date of next meeting: 9 February 2015

**If you have any special requirements (such as a large print version of these papers or special access facilities) please contact the officer named on the front page, but please give as much notice as possible before the meeting.**

## Items for Decision

### 1. Declarations of Interest

### 2. Questions from County Councillors

Any county councillor may, by giving notice to the Proper Officer by 9 am two working days before the meeting, ask a question on any matter in respect of the Cabinet Member's delegated powers.

The number of questions which may be asked by any councillor at any one meeting is limited to two (or one question with notice and a supplementary question at the meeting) and the time for questions will be limited to 30 minutes in total. As with questions at Council, any questions which remain unanswered at the end of this item will receive a written response.

Questions submitted prior to the agenda being despatched are shown below and will be the subject of a response from the appropriate Cabinet Member or such other councillor or officer as is determined by the Cabinet Member, and shall not be the subject of further debate at this meeting. Questions received after the despatch of the agenda, but before the deadline, will be shown on the Schedule of Addenda circulated at the meeting, together with any written response which is available at that time.

### 3. Petitions and Public Address

### 4. Closure of Hearing Impairment Resource Base at Rush Common School, Abingdon (Pages 1 - 18)

*Forward Plan Ref:* 2014/171

*Contact:* Diane Cameron, School Organisation Planning Officer Tel: (01865) 816445/Sue Edwards, Service Manager – SENSS Tel: (01865) 323391

Report by Director for Children's Services (**CMDCEF4**).

The proposal is to formally close the Hearing Impairment Resource Base at Rush Common School in Abingdon. From September 2014 there are no children attending this resource base.

This forms part of strategic changes to the services the Oxfordshire SENSS team are carrying out. The provision required as altered as technological and medical developments have progressed, and therefore the service provided will not remain the same. There will not be a reduction in support for future pupils that require it, but rather it will be delivered in more appropriate ways. There is no cut to funding related to this proposal in terms of the work SENSS carries out.

***The Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Families is RECOMMENDED to approve the proposal to close the Hearing Impairment Resource Base at Rush Common School.***

**Division:** Abingdon North  
Also of interest across South and Vale Districts.

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION & FAMILIES - 5 JANUARY 2015**

### **FINAL REPORT ON THE PROPOSED CLOSURE OF THE HEARING IMPAIRMENT RESOURCE BASE AT RUSH COMMON SCHOOL, ABINGDON**

**Report by Director for Children's Services**

#### **Introduction**

1. This report follows a local consultation and a subsequent statutory notice period relating to the county council's proposal to close the Hearing Impairment Resource Base at Rush Common School.
2. The local consultation ran from 23 June 2014 – 20 July 2014. The consultation leaflet is attached at Annex 1 and was circulated to all parents of pupils at the school, county council teams, SEN workers and other groups.
3. The statutory notice (attached at Annex 2) was published by the Local Authority, in the Abingdon Herald on 12 November 2014 and expired following 4 weeks of formal consultation on 10 December 2014. In accordance with legislation the notice was also posted at the school entrances and sent to the local library. A copy of the full proposal (attached at Annex 3) and the notices were sent to the governing body, local councillors, Headteachers and the local Library. They were also made available on the Oxfordshire County Council website.
4. The decision-making power in terms of determining the notice lies with the Cabinet or can be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Families. In meeting as 'decision-maker' the Cabinet or Cabinet Member must have regard to government guidance and statutory timescales otherwise a decision can be referred to the independent Schools' Adjudicator for reconsideration. The decision must be made within 2 months of the close of the notice period; as a consequence, it is necessary for the Chairman of the Council to determine that the decision cannot be subject to 'call-in' as this would, in most cases, prevent a decision being finalised within the required timescale and mean that the Cabinet's role would be negated by referral to the Schools' Adjudicator.

#### **The Proposal**

5. The proposal is to formally close the Hearing Impairment Resource Base at Rush Common School. From September 2014 there are no children attending this resource base.

6. Since the introduction of the Newborn Hearing Screening Programme (NHSP) to Oxfordshire in 2001 the confirmation of hearing loss in infants has happened at a much earlier age. This has allowed for earlier intervention, including the provision of new technologies such as digital hearing aids and cochlear implants.
7. These advances have meant that children with severe and profound hearing loss are generally developing much better communication and language skills than previously. This in turn means many more children can attend their local school rather than specialist provision elsewhere. Local provision generally supports the children's wellbeing as they maintain closer links with their community. Where they have siblings they are often able to follow the same educational pathway. A greater number of children and people become familiar with the adjustments needed for children with hearing impairment within the local school and wider community. This has longer term benefits for society, as well as the children with hearing impairment who will meet friends they are familiar with from school at after school clubs and other social activities. The child also avoids what can often be a tiring taxi journey at either end of the school day. Empowering local schools to meet the needs of children with more severe and profound hearing impairment skills up the educational setting to more effectively meet the needs of children with smaller levels of hearing impairment. The expertise of the specialist teachers have greater impact as more schools become 'deaf friendly'.
8. Additionally, the Special Educational Needs Support Services (SENSS) Hearing Impairment Team has developed a strong outreach programme, helping schools and other settings to provide effective learning environments, thus empowering local settings to meet the needs of children and young people with hearing impairment.
9. The proposal has no effect on the Published Admission Number for Rush Common School.
10. Teaching and advisory support from qualified teachers of the deaf will continue to be available in a wide range of local educational provision across south Oxfordshire including home visits, pre-school settings, maintained schools, academies, free schools and colleges. There will be no change to the support provided by the SENSS Hearing Impairment Team for children and young people aged 0-25 years, with all levels of hearing impairment, mild to profound continuing to be supported.
11. Children with hearing impairment at Rush Common School will continue to receive teaching and advisory support, as appropriate, from the SENSS Hearing Impairment Team with no change to their current provision. This will include provision and maintenance of specialist equipment such as radio aids and training to mainstream staff.
12. The demand for places for Oxfordshire children with more severe and profound hearing losses, requiring additional specialist support, has decreased over the period that Rush Common School has hosted a resource base. The school will have no children on roll who need a resource base placement in

September 2014. As such, there is no evidence of a strong parental preference for such provision to be made in a resource base.

13. This continues a trend as the number of pupils attending the resource base at Rush Common School has reduced over recent years:

<b>Academic Year</b>	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
<b>Number pupils in resource base</b>	3	3	4	2	1	1	0

14. There are no children of early years age, currently supported by SENSS (Hearing Impairment Team) in the south area of Oxfordshire that have the level of need that would make them eligible for a resource base placement at Rush Common School. In the event of such children moving in to Oxfordshire, alternative provision can be made either in a local school e.g. Rush Common School if the child was in the catchment area, or in the primary resource base hosted by New Marston Primary School in Oxford.
15. Projections suggest that the resource base at New Marston Primary School will have viable numbers of children with hearing impairment, who meet the admissions criteria for a primary resource base without becoming oversubscribed.
16. One of the functions of a resource base for hearing impaired children is to provide a peer group of children with similar experiences of hearing loss. SENSS anticipates that this will continue to be available at the resource base at New Marston Primary School which is centrally placed within the county in Oxford, whereas it hasn't been available at Rush Common recently.
17. In light of the above, a flexible range of provision and support will continue to be provided in response to the needs of individual pupils and parental preferences in the area. The Local Authority as proposer can demonstrate that the alternative arrangements are likely to lead to improvements in the standard and quality of educational provision for hearing impaired children ("the SEN Improvement Test")

## **Representations**

18. During the earlier local consultation three responses were received. All agreeing with the principles behind the proposed closure of the base. Respondents included an ex-governor and a previous Head of the Service for Children with Sensory Impairment.
19. One respondent raised a concern about potential for future lack of provision but agreed with the principle of closure, given the falling roll. This respondent was replied to by the SENSS team.
20. During the statutory notice period no representations were received.

## Legal background

21. The closure of SEN provision is subject to statutory procedures, as set out in “School Organisation: Maintained Schools. Guidance for proposers and decision-makers” (The Guidance) published January 2014. When reaching a decision, Cabinet Member must have regard to The Guidance.
22. In terms of reaching a decision all proposals should be considered on their merits but the following factors should be borne in mind but are not considered to be exhaustive. The Decision Maker should consider the views of all those affected. Details of the consultation should be included in the proposals. The Decision Maker must be satisfied that the consultation meets statutory requirements. If the requirements have not been met, the Decision Maker may judge the proposals to be invalid and should consider whether they can make a decision on the proposals. Alternatively the Decision Maker may take into account the sufficiency and quality of the consultation as part of their overall judgement of the proposals as a whole.

**The effect on standards, school improvement and diversity.** In making a decision on a proposal to remove SEN provision from a school that is not closing, the decision-maker must be satisfied that the “SEN improvement test” has been met , as set out in sections 39 to 40 of the “School Organisation Maintained Schools, Annex B: Guidance for Decision-makers” (January 2014)

23. **Equal Opportunities, Community Cohesion, Travel and accessibility.** The Decision Maker should consider whether there are any sex, race or disability discrimination issues that arise and whether there is supporting evidence. The Decision Maker needs to consider the accessibility of provision for disadvantaged groups as the provision should not unduly extend journey times or cost.
24. **Need for places.** The Decision Maker should consider whether there is a need for the proposal and should consider the evidence presented for the proposal.
25. **Funding and land.** The Decision Maker should be satisfied that any land, premises and capital required to implement the proposals will be available.

## Financial and Staff Implications

26. There will be no financial impact on Rush Common School, as the SENSS support is funded by the Local Authority. The accommodation currently leased by the SENSS team for the operation of the base will in future be available to Rush Common School for daily use in the context of rising primary school pupil numbers across Abingdon.

## Equality and Inclusion Implications

27. As set out under the section above headed The Proposal, the proposed closure of the Hearing Impairment Resource Base forms part of strategic changes to the services the Oxfordshire SENSS team are carrying out. The provision required as altered as technological and medical developments have progressed, and therefore the service provided will not remain the same.

There will not be a reduction in support for future pupils that require it, but rather it will be delivered in more appropriate ways. There is no cut to funding related to this proposal in terms of the work SENSS carries out.

## **Decision**

27. In considering the proposals for a school expansion, the Decision Maker can decide to:
- Reject the proposals;
  - Approve the proposals;
  - Approve the proposals with a modification (e.g. the implementation date);  
or
  - Approve the proposals subject to them meeting a specific condition (see the Guidance).

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- 28. The Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Families is RECOMMENDED to approve the proposal to close the Hearing Impairment Resource Base at Rush Common School.**

### **JIM LEIVERS**

Director for Children's Services

Annexes:                   Annex 1: Consultation leaflet  
                                  Annex 2: Statutory proposal  
                                  Annex 3: Full proposal document

Contact Officer:         Diane Cameron – School Organisation Officer, School  
                                  Organisation & Planning, CEF. Tel: 01865 816445

December 2014

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## **Consultation on the proposal to close the resource base for children with hearing impairment located at Rush Common School**

**23 June 2014 – 20 July 2014**

Produced by Oxfordshire County Council in partnership with  
Rush Common Academy Trust ("RCAT") 2013-14  
and SENSS Hearing Impairment Team

### **Background**

Rush Common School is an academy in Abingdon. Since 1989 it has hosted the primary resource base for children with hearing impairment for the south area of Oxfordshire.

Since the introduction of the Newborn Hearing Screening Programme (NHSP) to Oxfordshire in 2001 the confirmation of hearing loss in infants has happened at a much earlier age. This has allowed for earlier intervention, including the provision of new technologies such as digital hearing aids and cochlear implants.

These advances have meant that children with severe and profound hearing loss are generally developing much better communication and language skills than previously. This in turn means many more children can attend their local school rather than specialist provision elsewhere.

Additionally, the Special Educational Needs Support Services (SENSS) Hearing Impairment Team has developed a strong outreach programme, helping schools and other settings to provide effective learning environments for children and young people with hearing impairment.

Teaching and advisory support from qualified teachers of the deaf will continue to be available in a wide range of local educational provision across south Oxfordshire including home visits, pre-school settings, maintained schools, academies, free schools and colleges. There will be no change to the support provided by the SENSS Hearing Impairment Team for children and young people aged 0-25 years, with all levels of hearing impairment, mild to profound continuing to be supported. Children with hearing impairment at Rush Common School will continue to receive teaching and advisory support, as appropriate, from the SENSS Hearing Impairment Team with no change to their current provision. This will include provision and maintenance of specialist equipment such as radio aids and training to mainstream staff.

### **Why are we consulting?**

As a consequence of the above, the demand for places for Oxfordshire children with more severe and profound hearing losses, requiring additional specialist support, has decreased over the period that Rush Common School has hosted a resource base. The school will have no children on roll who need a resource base placement in September 2014.

This continues a trend as the number of pupils attending the resource base at Rush Common School has reduced over recent years:

Academic Year	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Number pupils in resource base	3	3	4	2	1	1	0

There are no children of early years age, currently supported by SENSS (Hearing Impairment Team) in the south area that have the level of need that would make them eligible for a resource base placement at Rush Common School. In the event of such children moving in to Oxfordshire, alternative provision can be made either in a local school e.g. Rush Common School if the child was in the catchment area for the School or in the primary resource base hosted by New Marston Primary School in Oxford.

Projections suggest that the resource base at New Marston Primary School will have viable numbers of children with hearing impairment, who meet the admissions criteria for a primary resource base without becoming oversubscribed.

One of the functions of a resource base for hearing impaired children is to provide a peer group of children with similar experiences of hearing loss. SENSS anticipates that this will continue to be available at the resource base at New Marston Primary School whereas it hasn't been available at Rush Common recently.

### **What we want to do**

Oxfordshire County Council, supported by the Headteacher of Rush Common School, RCAT and the SENSS Hearing Impairment Team, wishes to close the resource base for children with hearing impairment at Rush Common School.

We think there is no longer a need for this type of provision in the south area of Oxfordshire. Should such a need arise in the future, it is anticipated that the need would be better met either in a local school or in the primary resource base for children with hearing impairment attached to New Marston Primary School for the reasons explained above.

The SENSS South Area Hearing Impairment Team will continue to outreach from Abingdon. The team will be based at Larkmead School where the resource base for children and young people with hearing impairment will also continue. There will be no change to the teaching and advisory outreach services provided by the SENSS South Area Hearing Impairment Team to children and young people with hearing impairment. Staff numbers within the SENSS Hearing Impairment Team will remain the same.

**We want to know your views about whether you are in agreement with the closure of the resource base for children with hearing impairment, hosted by Rush Common School.**

### **Your views**

Please take the time to tell us what you think. This consultation is about the principle of closing the resource base for children with hearing impairment at Rush Common School.

Public consultation is taking place until 20 July 2014. You have until midnight on that date to respond.

This consultation is to help inform the decision on this proposal. If, following this consultation, the proposal is taken forward, the next step would be to publish a Statutory Notice.

We currently expect the statutory notice period would be in September / October 2014. The county council Cabinet Member for Education will then make the final decision on this permanent change.

### **How you can respond to this consultation**

There are several ways to respond:

- complete the response form at the end of this document, or write your own response, and send it to the Freepost address shown on the form;
- respond using an online form on the OCC consultations webpages at <http://myconsultations.oxfordshire.gov.uk>;
- email your response to:  
[RushCommonHI-manager@myconsultations.oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:RushCommonHI-manager@myconsultations.oxfordshire.gov.uk)

Parents are asked to complete only one form, even if you have more than one child at the school or supported by the SENSS Hearing Impairment Team.

Please return your form as soon as possible, but by **20 July 2014** at the latest.

# Response Form

## ***Consultation on the proposal to close the resource base for children with hearing impairment at Rush Common School***

Alternative formats of this can be made available. These include other languages, large print, Braille, Easy Read, computer disc or email. Please telephone 01865 816445 or email [SchoolOrgPlan@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:SchoolOrgPlan@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

**I/we wish to make the following comments:**

Name.....

Address (optional)

.....

- Parent of a child at Rush Common School
- Parent of a child at another school (please specify)
- Parent of a child not yet at school
- Parent of a child with a hearing impairment
- Parent of a child with a hearing impairment at Rush Common School
- Parent of a child with a hearing impairment not yet at school
- Governor/staff at Rush Common School
- Local resident
- Other (specify)

.....

*Please tick all of the above that apply to you.*

**Please return by 20 July 2014 to:**

**Diane Cameron  
School Organisation & Planning**

**County Hall**  
**FREEPOST OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**  
(No stamp required)

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**OXFORDSHIRE  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

## **PUBLIC NOTICE**

### **Proposed closure of the Hearing Impairment Resource Base at Rush Common School, Abingdon**

Notice is given in accordance with The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 that Oxfordshire County Council intends to make a prescribed alteration to Rush Common School, Hendred Way, Abingdon OX14 2AW from 1 February 2015.

Oxfordshire County Council, with support from Rush Common Academy Trust and the county council SENSS Hearing Impairment Team, is proposing to close the Hearing Impairment Resource Base located within the school's buildings.

From September 2014 there are no children attending the resource base and projections suggest that this situation is unlikely to change. This is due to multiple factors such as the Newborn Hearing Screening Programme (NHSP), provision of new technologies such as digital hearing aids and cochlear implants and a strong SENSS team outreach programme.

Children with severe and profound hearing loss are generally developing much better communication and language skills than previously, so more children can attend their local school rather than specialist provision. Alternative specialist provision is available should it be needed in the future.

The proposal has no effect on the Published Admission Number for Rush Common School.

This Notice is an extract from the complete proposal. Copies of the complete proposal can be viewed at <http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/consultation>. Copies can also be obtained by contacting:

Diane Cameron  
School Organisation & Planning  
County Hall  
FREEPOST OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL.

Tel: 01865 816445

Email: [diane.cameron@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:diane.cameron@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

Within four weeks from the date of publication of these proposals, any person may object to or make comments on the proposal by sending them to the local authority using the online feedback form at <http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/consultation> or by using the above contact details.

**Signed: Jim Leivers, Director of Childrens Services**

**Publication Date: 12 November 2014**

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## STATUTORY PROPOSALS FOR PRESCRIBED ALTERATIONS

### The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013

#### **In respect of a Local Authority proposal: School and LA details**

1. The name, address and category of the school for which the Local Authority are publishing the proposals:

Rush Common School, Hendred Way, Abingdon OX14 2AW. This is an academy. The Local Authority is Oxfordshire County Council.

#### **Implementation and any proposed stages for implementation**

2. The date on which the proposals are planned to be implemented:

From 1 February 2015.

#### **Objections and comments**

3. A statement explaining the procedure for making representations:

Representations (responses) to the proposals can be made online using the feedback form at <http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/consultation>.

Alternatively any person may respond by email to [diane.cameron@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:diane.cameron@oxfordshire.gov.uk) putting **Rush Common HI Base** in the subject line, or in writing to: Diane Cameron, School Organisation & Planning, County Hall, FREEPOST OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL.

Representations must be received by midnight on 10 December 2014.

**Alteration description****4. A description of the proposed alteration**

Oxfordshire County Council proposes to close the Hearing Impairment Resource Base located within Rush Common School. The Resource Base is run by the county council.

**Objectives****5. The objectives of the proposals.**

Teaching and advisory support from qualified teachers of the deaf will continue to be available in a wide range of local educational provision across south Oxfordshire including home visits, pre-school settings, maintained schools, academies, free schools and colleges.

There will be no change to the support provided by the county council SENSS Hearing Impairment Team for children and young people aged 0-25 years, with all levels of hearing impairment, mild to profound, continuing to be supported.

Children with hearing impairment at Rush Common School will continue to receive teaching and advisory support, as appropriate, from the SENSS Hearing Impairment Team with no change to their current provision. This will include provision and maintenance of specialist equipment such as radio aids and training to mainstream staff.

The demand for places for Oxfordshire children with more severe and profound hearing losses, requiring additional specialist support, has decreased over the period that Rush Common School has hosted a resource base. The school had no children on roll who required a resource base placement in September 2014.

**Project costs**

**6. Project costs and how these will be met:**

There are no costs related to this proposal, and it is not the result of cuts to funding. The accommodation that has been used by the Resource Base will be made available for use by Rush Common School.

**7. Evidence of demand / support**

Since the introduction of the Newborn Hearing Screening Programme (NHSP) to Oxfordshire in 2001 the confirmation of hearing loss in infants has happened at a much earlier age. This has allowed for earlier intervention, including the provision of new technologies such as digital hearing aids and cochlear implants.

These advances have meant that children with severe and profound hearing loss are generally developing much better communication and language skills than previously. This in turn means many more children can attend their local school rather than specialist provision elsewhere.

Additionally, the Special Educational Needs Support Services (SENSS) Hearing Impairment Team has developed a strong outreach programme, helping schools and other settings to provide effective learning environments for children and young people with hearing impairment.

The school will have no children on roll who need a resource base placement in September 2014. This continues a trend as the number of pupils attending the resource base at Rush Common School has reduced over recent years:

Academic Year	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Number pupils in resource base	3	3	4	2	1	1	0

There are no children of early years age, currently supported by SENSS (Hearing

Impairment Team) in the south area of Oxfordshire that have the level of need that would make them eligible for a resource base placement at Rush Common School. In the event of such children moving in to Oxfordshire, alternative provision can be made either in a local school e.g. Rush Common School if the child was in the catchment area, or in the primary resource base hosted by New Marston Primary School in Oxford.

Projections suggest that the resource base at New Marston Primary School will have viable numbers of children with hearing impairment, who meet the admissions criteria for a primary resource base without becoming oversubscribed.

One of the functions of a resource base for hearing impaired children is to provide a peer group of children with similar experiences of hearing loss. SENSS anticipates that this will continue to be available at the resource base at New Marston Primary School whereas it hasn't been available at Rush Common recently.