

RIVERSIDE BUSINESS AND ENTERPRISE COLLEGE: BUSINESS CASE FOR CLOSURE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What options did the Council consider and what did the school governors and staff say about these?

- a) Maintain status quo with the probability that the School will continue to decline, become unviable and be categorised as failing by OfSTED.
- b) Provide continued increased financial and other support to the School to ensure it remains viable and achieves sufficient improvements.
- c) Federate with a school that is judged to be good or better on the basis of an OfSTED inspection and pupil performance and implement revised governance, leadership and management arrangements.
- d) Establish flexible collaborative arrangements amongst other local authority maintained schools.
- e) Continue to explore the option of Riverside becoming part of a collaborative Academy and other potential Academies in the City.
- f) Consult upon phased school closure.

- (a) was not supported by any stakeholder
- (b), (c) and (d) was supported by school governors, staff and trades unions
- (e) was supported by the school governing body but opposed by staff and unions
- (f) was not supported by any stakeholder

2. Where can I read the Options Review report?

The findings of the options review are contained within the Riverside Business Case for Closure.

3. What does the law say about closing a school?

The relevant guidance on this matter can be found at www.dcsf.gov.uk/schoolorg under “Closing a Maintained Mainstream School: A Guide for Local Authorities and Governing Bodies”. This guidance is framed for all publishing proposals to close a school under Section 15 of the Education and Inspections, Act 2006. *At the time of writing Riverside had 35% of places unfilled overall and 85% unfilled capacity in Yr 7.*

4. Are there any exceptions to national closure procedures?

Procedures differ depending upon whether or not a school is in an official category or whether or not there is an intention to close a weak school and open a new school on the same site.

If a school is deemed to require special measures however the Secretary of State may direct closure under Section 68 of the Education and Inspections Act, 2006. Closure under this route does not require publication of statutory proposals.

5. What steps are involved in closing a school and what would the Council need to do?

Section 22 of the Guidance cited at 5.4.5 above provides an overview of a five stage process entailing:

- Consultation
- Publication
- Representations
- Decision
- Appeal

6. Who must be consulted, how and when?

The conduct of consultation is not prescribed in regulation. Formal consultation with interested parties is however required (Section 16 Education and Inspection Act, 2006). Statutory guidance is available.

Adequate time is a pre-requisite, as is consultation with the existing governing body, families of pupils, teachers and other staff at the School and other schools who may be affected. There is a requirement to consult with trades unions, MPs and any other LA likely to be affected by such a Proposal. Section 176 of the Education 2002 Act also places a duty to consult with pupils too.

7. How will local people and ward councillors be able to have their say?

The City Council must ensure during any consultation stage that *families of pupils, teachers and other staff at the School and other schools who may be affected have an opportunity to comment upon the proposed closure.*

It is likely that a series of public meetings and a web site will be set up to hear views

8. At what point must the City Council publish its final detailed proposals for closure?

This occurs at the point of the publication of a statutory notice. Any proposals must contain the information specified in the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuation of Maintained Schools (England) Regulations (SI2007 No.1288). This takes the form of a statutory notice and a more complete proposal. Proposers are recommended to use the DCSF online statutory Notice Builder tool which can be found at www.dcsf.gov.uk/schoolorg This also automatically generates a more

complete proposal template for population. Attention to detail at this stage is absolutely essential.

9. What factors must be considered?

There are a wide range of factors that must be considered. It is important to pay due regard to the impact of change upon community cohesion, the local area and travel and accessibility issues for the affected children. For example proposals should not have the effect of unreasonably extending journey times or increasing transport costs.

A clear statement of all alternative provision is required within the more complete proposal.

10. How can members of the public/ staff and parents make representations about any statutory proposal?

Following the publication of the statutory proposals there is a mandatory 6 week statutory period.

11. Who would take the final decision and can people appeal?

Any decision would most likely be taken by Cabinet. If objections were received then any proposal must be determined under Para 8 of Schedule 2 to the Education and Inspections Act, 2006.

12. If Riverside were to close what would happen to the pupils and staff?

The City Council would offer alternative places in City schools in accordance with the detailed proposals published at the time of the Statutory Notice. Parents would continue to be able to express a choice for alternative City schools within the terms of the City's published Admissions Arrangements.

The City Council would seek to broker alternative recruitment/employment opportunities within City schools wherever possible.

13. If Riverside were to close how would the City Council help parents meet any increased costs incurred in moving their child/children to another City School?

Typically any local authority would look to provide some form of assistance or contribution to parents to help them meet costs incurred such as school uniforms or transport. This would usually be for a set period of time determined by the local authority.

14. If a decision was taken to close the School how would the City Council seek to retain sufficient skilled staff to deliver the curriculum?

Typically local authorities explore such issues with their trades unions and professional associations and identify a range of retention and staff development measures and opportunities that secure continuity and assist with transition. These may include salary enhancements, secondment opportunities and the brokerage of

alternative employment opportunities. The City Council will explore all avenues and would wish of course to retain all suitably qualified, experienced and committed staff.

15. Would the school close immediately?

If agreed, the School would be closed in accordance with the detailed proposal accompanying the Statutory Notice. In many instances school closures happen in a phased fashion to allow for pupil transition and examination programme completion etc.

16. What is being done to improve educational opportunities in West Leicester?

The City Council has invested heavily in educational provision in West Leicester, e.g. Fullhurst remodelling, opening of Queensmead Primary etc and will seek to ensure that a strong educational offer is provided to learners in their preferred setting.