



**MINUTES OF RYDE TOWN COUNCIL'S EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF FULL COUNCIL  
HELD ON TUESDAY 15 OCTOBER 2024 AT 7.15PM IN THE GEORGE STREET CENTRE,  
RYDE BAPTIST CHURCH, GEORGE STREET, RYDE.**

**Members Present:** Cllr Richard May (Mayor), Cllr Diana Conyers, Cllr Ian Dore, Cllr Pippa Hayward, Cllr Jess Higgins and Cllr Michael Lilley

**Also in Attendance:** Jonathan Baker (RTC Committees Coordinator), Cllr Jonathan Bacon (IWC Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Corporate Functions), Naomi Carter (IWC Service Director for Education, Access & Inclusion) Lisa Dyer (RTC Clerk), Jade Kennett (IWC Service Manager for Strategic Development) and Ilze Van Der Merwe (RTC Apprentice)

7 Members of the public attended.

---

**92/24 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllr Charles Chapman, Cllr Georgie Carter, Cllr Simon Cooke, Cllr Jo Elliott, Cllr Phil Jordan, Cllr Les Kirkby, Cllr Karen Lucioni, Cllr Malcolm Ross, Cllr Ian Stephens, and Cllr Jenna Sabine.

**93/24 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS**

None declared.

**94/24 REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION**

None requested.

**95/24 ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCILS SCHOOLS PLACE PLANNING**

Representatives from the Isle of Wight Council, including the Cabinet Member responsible for Children's Services, the Service Director for Education, Access & Inclusion and the Service Manager for Strategic Development attended the meeting to address the concerns around the proposed closures of six Island Schools which included one in Ryde (Oakfield Primary School).

The Isle of Wight Councils Cabinet had considered the proposals at its meeting on 12 September 2024 and agreed to a consultation process on the reduction of surplus places and the expansion of Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND) provision across the Island to support improved education standards within the context of the emerging Education Strategy. The consultation would end on 1 November 2024.

Members were advised that owing to the declining birth rates on the Island (which was also a nationwide issue), a School Place Planning Strategy was urgently required, meaning a reduction in the number of school places across the Island.

Members were also advised that the forecasting of places required is often complex with birth rate data and participation rates taken into account. Previously, forecasts had been accurate. Projections were always only a best estimate.

Regarding the prospect of upcoming housing developments, of which there were two major ones planned to affect the Oakfield and Elmfield area, the build rates from application to completion can be very slow. The IWC's Education Department worked closely with their Planning colleagues and all future projections of potential additional residents would be taken into account. Whilst there were over 800 houses being planned for development, this equated to around 220 primary children and it should be noted that this was across the board and not just reception. Projections for 2026-2027 were 19 for reception meaning 37% of surplus places. This would result in an inefficient use of the schools resources such as staffing and maintaining the school. It was also noted that Oakfield had a significant budget deficit, which would only increase if the school was to remain in its current status.

It was also noted that the houses planned for the Pennyfeathers site had not been taken into account because only applications that had been given Outline or Full Planning permission could be included. Pennyfeathers would be considered as a new application owing to the previous one being withdrawn. Members were also advised that even if Pennyfeathers were to be taken into account, it would still equate to a surplus of school places. The revised application would also have no plans for a school as opposed to the previous one which did.

Members of the public still however believed that as a town, Ryde was outgrowing Newport with regard to the population and was very family orientated.

Concerns were also raised by Members and the public around the mental wellbeing of children, parents and staff as a result of the proposals. The Island and in particular Ryde, had a high number of children receiving mental health treatment and many families in Ryde had been allocated a Social Worker. The school also had a high percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, and a considerable cohort with SEND. It was also noted that the school provided important access not only to education but also to vitally important community services such as the Food Pantry, a Family Hub, a Forest School, domestic violence support and family cooking lessons

The poor economic and social status of some families were also mentioned as being of great concern. Many parents who had no transport and little in the way of financial resources would struggle to take their children to a school such as Greenmount which would mean a three mile round trip or in some cases possibly more. This would lead to further concerns that some vulnerable children would fail to attend school, which would impact on their educational needs. Therefore, closing the school in such a deprived area could create further inequality and a worsening educational achievement gap.

Members were advised that an Equality Impact Needs Assessment would be undertaken for every proposal. All factors around the well-being of all those affected as well as any economic and social factors and any transport needs would be taken fully into account.

Whilst there was a projected fall in primary pupil numbers, there was increasing demand of children designated as SEND.

A strategic review of the Islands SEND provision would be carried out alongside the schools place planning proposals outlining how this could provide opportunities to create additional SEND places. A proposal to create a school specifically for SEND children at Oakfield was part of the proposals, making the school a satellite of Medina House in Newport. A large number of Ryde's SEND children would therefore still attend the newly created SEND school at Oakfield.

There were further concerns about the possibility of moving children into temporary accommodation at alternative schools, which could have a negative effect on pupil performance.

Members asked why Oakfield had been redeveloped, at great expense in 2016-2017 but had now been identified for closure.

It was noted that when the redevelopment of the Primary School was given approval, it had taken into account the place figures for 2015-2018. However, since then, Ryde had seen a sharp decline in places required and a radical change was necessary.

Members of the public and elected members present asked that as Oakfield was located on a large site with many playing fields, a considerable capacity and with further space to expand, could a confederated, multi faith provision with a neighbouring school at that location not be considered?

Other aspects of the proposals that raised questions from elected members and members of the public were around the uneven nature of the schools geographical locations with more schools serving the west of the town than those to the east side.

The Network Ryde Youth Manager asked a question about Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provision around what would happen to the sites identified for closure as there were concerns about the security of the site at Oakfield. In response to the question, it was noted that there would be an increase in the provision for SEND pupils at primary level and sites would be repurposed accordingly depending on the outcome of the consultation.

After the discussion, the mayor thanked those representing the Isle of Wight Council for attending and stated that the consultation was a good opportunity for the community and the Town Council to suggest any new ideas.

The Isle of Wight Council added that they would listen and take account of any comments, suggestions and ideas raised in the consultation process.

**96/24 LIFEGUARD STATION LEASE**

Members were required to agree to the lease pertaining to the Lifeguard Hut, North Walk by Ryde Beach, the landlord being the Isle of Wight Council with Ryde Town Council being the tenant.

Following a proposer, seconder and a vote via a show of hands, the following was:

**RESOLVED:**

**THAT the lease of the Lifeguard Hut (Station) at North Walk, Ryde Esplanade, between the Isle of Wight Council as the Landlord and Ryde Town Council, as the Tenant, be agreed.**

**97/24 DATE OF NEXT MEETING OF ORDINARY FULL COUNCIL**

Members noted that the next Ordinary meeting of the Ryde Town Council would be held on Tuesday, 19 November 2024.

Meeting closed at 7.15pm

Signed.....

Cllr Richard may  
Mayor of Ryde Town Council, 19 November 2024