

*Thank you for the opportunity to speak today regarding the future of Smannell and Enham Church of England Primary School. As the local county councillor for Andover North Division, I have represented this community for eight years, and this school, alongside the nearby church and pub opposite, are at the heart of village life in Smannell.*

*I recognise that pupil numbers have fallen to an unsustainably low level, I understand it is now down to 5 pupils, and my first priority continues to be the education of the remaining pupils who have been let down. Their attainment must come first, and if that means moving them to another setting, that should be facilitated with care and support.*

*I want to thank officers for including wording in the formal consultation that supports families seeking to continue with faith-based education. This is an important consideration for many in our community and reflects the school's historic role as a Church of England primary.*

*I previously encouraged the Executive Member to ask the Diocese to provide full details of the lengths they have gone to attract a faith multi-academy trust to take on the school. This assurance is vital to demonstrate that every possible option has been explored before closure is considered. I note there is reference to their efforts in the report and I understand that you may not wish to publish a list of Trusts who refused to take on the school, but I do think it is important to continue to hold their feet to the fire.*

*I want to thank officers who have been working with the school for many years now, I know that they turn up at work to turn things around, not seek a closure. I also want to thank senior officers who took time to meet parents alongside Cllr Phil North and myself, and the continued dialogue after the meeting with ongoing individual support. It was appreciated. I also understand Kit Malthouse MP hosted a similar meeting which again I am grateful for.*

*There has been significant dialogue between parents, past and present, and one outstanding concern is the cost of new school uniforms. I recently spoke to a parent who shared how difficult this transition has been for them. After investing in a full set of branded uniform for Smannell and Enham only months ago, they now face the expense of buying another complete set for a new school—shirts, jumpers, PE kit—all at a time when household budgets are already stretched. For some families, this is not just an inconvenience; it is a real financial burden. I would urge consideration of a discretionary payment to assist families during this transition, so that no child feels disadvantaged because of circumstances beyond their control.*

*Looking ahead, I believe the site still has much to offer. With further housing development*

*planned east of Andover, demand for primary education may rise. Additionally, given the growing need for specialist education and the increase in EHCPs, I asked for an assessment of the demand for SEND provision in the area. Converting the building into a special school could be a valuable opportunity and ensure this Grade II listed building continues to serve its intended purpose as an educational establishment. I trust this has been carried out.*

*I have continued to engage with the local community, and to date, 50 residents have signed my campaign card to keep the building open for educational use. I have had many conversations locally about the need for additional SEND provision and the way in which this could be brought forward to enable the school a new lease of life.*

*This is a difficult decision, but it is one that must balance immediate needs with long-term opportunities. I hope these suggestions help shape a solution that serves both our children and our community.*

*Finally, I thank you, Roz, for keeping me informed throughout this process and for considering these points carefully.*

Cllr Kirsty North

Andover North Division