

Full Council – 22 February 2023

Written question from Mr S Cowley to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills

Why and when did the previous Chief Executive, with agreement of which Councillors, sign off the sale of Yarmouth School site, to the highest bidder, without any discussion with 'wider Yarmouth Community' referred to in the Cabinet meeting minutes of March 2020, bearing in mind the money raised will return to the mainland giving no benefit to either Yarmouth or the Isle of Wight Council?

<https://www.iow.gov.uk/Meetings/committees/cabinet/9-1-20/PAPER%20B%20-%20West%20Wight%20Report.pdf> Section 59

Response

The Department for Education (DfE) required as part of the funding agreement for the new school, that the Council would dispose of and commit the funds received from the sale of the Yarmouth Primary School at Mill Road, Yarmouth, to the project. This decision was taken in August 2021 by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Lifelong Skills in discussion with and advice from the then Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer.

For most families living within the Yarmouth area the new school building, of which the capital receipt will contribute towards, remains the nearest school, and therefore the IWC are satisfied that they have benefitted from this significant investment providing modern, fit for purpose teaching accommodation.

The Isle of Wight Council is currently and will continue to engage with the community of Yarmouth during both the S77 process to dispose of the site, and through the marketing process that is due to commence shortly. You will also be aware that the Council approved the Asset of Community Value application made by the Town Council on 15th December 2022 which will allow the community to have a fair chance to bid to buy the site on the open market. I would also highlight that the ACV application only precludes the Local Authority from exchanging contracts during the following 6 month period, however we have made a commitment not to conclude the marketing process until the community has had the full time period to submit a bid (6 months).

Following the decision taken by the Governing Body to relocate the school to the new Freshwater site the IWC has always been open and transparent that the Mill Road site would need to be disposed of. This was confirmed within the press release issued on 17th November 2021 that explicitly confirmed that the Department for Education (DfE) funding agreement included the value of the land that formed Yarmouth CE Primary School site. A link to this press release is below:

[Work to start on new primary school \(iow.gov.uk\)](https://www.iow.gov.uk/Work-to-start-on-new-primary-school)