

Motion to Council pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 12 submitted by Councillor Carlo Guglielmi in relation to Mistley Norman Primary School

“This Council –

- (a) is aware that Mistley Norman Primary School shut its doors to its pupils at the end of the Easter Term just gone;
- (b) is also aware that the Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust took the decision to close this school when Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete was discovered. This is a lightweight material used in the 1960s primarily because it was a cheap way to provide buildings such as schools, but sadly it can collapse without warning, and to repair the problem the necessary works have been estimated to cost £1.9million, a staggering amount of money;
- (c) notes that arrangements were made to transport pupils by bus to nearby Lawford Church of England Primary School, only three miles away from Mistley which fortunately has spare capacity following an extension of seven new classrooms last year;
- (d) notes that very unfortunately on Tuesday 13th June, the CEO of the Vine Schools Trust, took the decision to write to all parents, without consulting with Essex CC, to inform them that as: **“There are no funds available to undertake the necessary repairs, the school building cannot be used for the foreseeable future, and quite possibly, ever again”**. She further stated that: **“Unfortunately, the school is no longer able to finance the free bus. Therefore, parents and carers will have to transport their own children to and from Lawford if they wish to keep them with us”**;
- (e) is conscious that the CEO, following a huge backlash from parents, sent a second letter out on Thursday 15th June, again with no consultation with ECC’s Education Team, which said: **“Mistley Norman will not be closing at the end of this term, and we expect children to return in the Autumn term. We will be arranging for the school to continue, but in another setting”**. Sadly, there was no mention of transport to the alternative setting;
- (f) is informed that a parents’ meeting was organised on the following evening Friday 16th June where disappointingly, Councillor Terry Barrett and Councillor Carlo Guglielmi as Ward Councillors were refused entry but it is understood that the CEO told parents that this setting was 10 miles away in Ramsey and that the free bus would continue;
- (g) struggles to understand how driving children an extra 20 miles each day, five days per week would be better than the current 6 miles;

- (h) is concerned that, so far, the CEO has not provided this Council with an opportunity to support the dozens of extremely worried parents whose children's future education was hanging in the balance;
- (i) is further concerned that, going by the information provided to us, the CEO seems to have completely dismissed the possibility of securing the necessary funding and that Mistley will be deprived of its much valued and much needed Primary School, especially when there are still well over 700 new family homes yet to be built;
- (j) is greatly concerned that, in view of all these uncertainties, the Vine School Trust has already made up its mind to shut the school for good;
- (k) therefore requests the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Partnerships and the Council's Chief Executive to work alongside our colleagues at Essex County Council, the Regional Director (formerly School Commissioner), and the MP for Harwich and North Essex to ensure that the Vine School Trust secures funding to carry out the necessary repairs, or to demolish the current building and replace it with a fit for purpose sustainable new structure; and
- (l) further requests that its Officers work with Essex County Council to ensure that the future of the nearby newly built Pre-School is safeguarded, given the chronic shortage of Early Years places, and identify an alternative operator, should the Trust choose not to run the setting any longer."