

## PRIMARY SCHOOL ORGANISATION CONSULTATION

### NOTES OF A MEETING HELD AT ASHFORD CARBONELL CE PRIMARY SCHOOL HELD ON 10 MARCH 2008

#### GOVERNORS' MEETING HELD AT 5.00pm

**Present:**

Mrs M Cooper	Headteacher
Mrs G Hall	Chair of Governors
Mrs T Poyntz	Governor
Miss S Hall	Governor
Mr J Meredith	Governor
Mrs B Coldwell	Governor
Mrs S Froggatt	Governor
Mrs C Stinton	Governor
Mrs T Toogood	Governor
Ms S Yapp	Governor
Mrs M Cooper	Governor
Mrs C Woodbridge	Governor
Ann Hartley	County Councillor
Ian Budd (IB)	Assistant Director
John Baxter (JB)	Education Places Manager
Val Hawley (Note taker)	Admissions Manager

Ian Budd opened the meeting and introduced those present. He explained:

- the reasons for the review;
- the review process; and
- possible next steps

Name	Comments/questions
S Froggatt	What was meant by new school buildings and sites?
G Hall	Is there an option of remaining two separate schools and what is the process and the timetable involved?
IB	Gave an explanation of the established process. Currently in the formative or informal consultation stage which runs up to 2 May, at which point all comments and communications received will be reported back to the County Council at their meeting on 19 May. The County Council will then have to decide whether to commission a formal consultation on a proposal. That proposal could either be the amalgamation of the two schools or an alternative/better idea. The County Council could either ask for more work to be done or stop the process. If there were to be a formal consultation this would be carried out before the summer holidays and Cabinet would make their decision at the start of the summer holidays. The earliest that changes could be implemented would be September 2009.
G Hall	Still asking for clarity on the timetable of actual amalgamation and the sites.

IB	A definite proposal has to be put to the DCSF in order to access the Primary Capital Programme. Neither school site was best in terms of the recommendations of the Building Bulletin. The County Council and the Diocese had not been able to identify any available land. Any suggestions for possible sites would be welcomed, then the County Council would undertake a full feasibility exercise. Proposals would be brought back to both schools for consultation.
S Froggatt	Which Head would become the Head of the new school.
IB	IB explained the implications of the three options for headteachers. He then outlined the staffing protocols. The Trade Unions insist that any staff should be able to volunteer for redundancy. However, keeping as many of the current staff is of benefit to the children in achieving a smooth transition. There is a 15% turnover in headships in Shropshire so work would go into placing all Heads.
G Hall	Who will make the final decision on reorganisation?
IB	Clear consensus at the end of the informal stage will make everything much easier, but all communications will be placed before the Council's Cabinet.
G Hall	The preferred option would be a new school on a new site.
IB	If no new site can be found then the Governing Bodies would have to be consulted again on the choice of school site.
C Stinton	Is it the Governing Body's responsibility to find a suitable site. Does the Local Authority advertise?
IB	It's a collective process. It is hoped that local people may have better information of possible suitable sites. The Local Authority doesn't advertise and prefers not to use Compulsory Purchase Orders.
S Froggatt	Is there an option to remain as they are?
IB	It is but it would be a missed opportunity given the suitability of the buildings.
S Froggatt	Will parents be consulted on the building?
IB	Children, staff, parents and governors will all be involved.
J Meredith	What about the wider community being given a chance of not wanting to lose the local amenity that the school offers, e.g. Early Years provision.
IB	Different options can be addressed. For instance it may be possible to have separate pre-schools in each community. The experience of active communities is that they can remain active where the people in the community retain their commitment.
G Hall	Concerned that if the amalgamation route is not taken there may not be a school at all in Ashford Carbonell or in Caynham in another 5 – 10 years.
J Meredith	It should not be assumed that there will be a financial saving. In his opinion there will be more bureaucracy.
IB	It would be good to meet with those communities which have experienced amalgamations. It was suggested that a group of governors/parents should visit Bicton or Brown Clee or request their Heads to come and talk to parents in Ashford Carbonell. Clearly there will be some anxieties.
G Hall	How could either of the current sites be used?
IB	Neither site was perfect, therefore a need to try and find a more suitable site.
G Hall	So why consider this site?

IB	Stressed again the request for possible suggestions, otherwise the Local Authority would have to find a solution on one of the sites. It was agreed that the new school would still remain a Church school and to be a school which served rural communities.
JB	Transport would have to be provided for children from a distance of 2 miles. Consideration would be given to the Carbon Footprint. As pupil numbers drop across the county, bureaucratic costs have to be reduced. Education is not paid for out local Council taxes, but is all pupil-led and paid directly from central government via a grant.
G Hall	There's a church in both villages and a new school should still be within walking distance of a church.
B Coldwell	Is Local Authority is aware that the school makes use of the village hall?
JB	A new school will have its own school hall. If the same vicar covers both parishes then a good link for both school groups is already in place.
S Froggatt	The parents' concern is about the children's education. Will the standard of education continue with the coming together of the two school groups?
IB	The amalgamation is not about a takeover. It's about two communities planning together and taking advantage of modern facilities. It should not be just the view of one headteacher. A lot of consultative work will be carried out on coming up with a design statement.
G Hall	Is the Local Authority confident that a suitable site will be found.
IB	The Local Authority will look for something suitable. For certain reasons one site will prove to be more preferable to the other.
T Poyntz	What is the lead in time?
IB	The earliest that a decision can be made will be this summer. Development work could then commence in autumn. Most realistic time for opening of a new building would be September 2010. Admissions would be worked out with parents. Any transition has to be seamless. It would not be in anyone's interests to rush things.
T Toogood	The Pre-school is quite keen on the idea of a new school, but what will happen to them?
IB	If required it might be possible to deliver pre-school facilities more locally than the new school. This would require a separate meeting with the pre-school providers in order to work out the issues.
C Stinton	When a new school is built will the numbers increase.
IB	New schools will often become an attractive proposition, but the Local Authority would not want to see it overfilled with out of area applicants.
JB	The key is local children first. No change to the combined catchment areas is envisaged. Catchment areas are not changed lightly, although suggestions of any merit can be considered. Siblings would also get a high priority. All the current children in the two schools would be placed first in the new school.
G Hall	What should the governing bodies do now?
IB	Firstly make your views clear. Inform the Local Authority of any possible sites as soon as possible. Get talks started between the Local Authority and Pre-school providers. Another meeting with Governors of both schools near the end of the consultation about the proposed site.
S Froggatt	Will a new Governing Body be formed to take this forward?

IB	<p>If opening a new school creation of a temporary governing body would be necessary . Otherwise governance arrangements of a school would be adapted to be inclusive of the other communities. This would include members from both the current Governing Bodies. This would be arranged later on in the process. The Local Authority would apply for a dispensation from the Government to allow the school to be a Church school and not to have any competition over its status.</p> <p>Finally, everyone was encouraged to put forward their views.</p>
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