

## **PRIMARY SCHOOL ORGANISATION CONSULTATION**

### **NOTES OF A MEETING HELD AT BEECH GROVE CE (CONTROLLED) JUNIOR SCHOOL**

#### **COMMUNITY/PARENTS' MEETING HELD AT 6.30pm**

Present: Cllr. Karen Calder (Shropshire County Council – Cabinet Member) Liz Nicholson (Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Services), Norrie Porter (Head of Premises and Planning), Steve Rayner (Lichfield Diocesan Education Authority) and 5 parents of children attending Beech Grove School.

Also in attendance: David Owen (Note taker).

Liz Nicholson opened the meeting and introduced those present. She explained:

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

A full discussion with parents was held and the following points raised and questions answered:

1. A parent asked if the third option i.e. inviting bids to form a new school, was chosen, was there a way of simplifying the process to avoid the notion of "take over" by one school over the other.

A. Norrie Porter explained that this was a relatively new process and that there was no experience in Shropshire. The final decision would be taken by the County Council Cabinet subject to a number of checks and balances. Liz Nicholson pointed out that if the third option were taken, it was possible that parents may be faced with a result that they did not want.

2. A parent asked if the governing body was aware of what the parents views were on the subject. Many used the school simply as the "local" school and not because of a faith connection.

A. Steve Rayner highlighted the difference between "faith" and worship" in schools emphasizing that the ethos in many Church and Community schools was the same.

3. A. parent asked of the mechanics of changing the name of a school..

Norrie Porter advised that it was done simply by resolution of the Governing body.

4. It was felt that many of the parents would see the change as only a “change of uniform” and the possibility of phasing in any change to spread the cost to parents was discussed.

5. The situation of the existing headteachers was raised.

A. Liz Nicholson confirmed that if option 1 or 2 was chosen, the post would be given to the head of the school not closing. All posts would be ring fenced and a staffing protocol was being agreed with the intention of avoiding compulsory redundancies. Shropshire did have a “turnover” of headteaching vacancies.

6. The position of other staff, including Teaching Assistants, was also causing concern and the possibility of major upheaval for the children not knowing staff.

A. Officers confirmed that the most likely changes would not be in the teaching and teaching support areas and the hope was that most children would still know the staff. Special Educational Needs support would not be affected by the proposals. It was foreseen that, under the current funding arrangements, the new school would receive approximately £100 per pupil more than a neighbouring school due to the nature of the catchment area. A staffing structure would be a priority of a new governing body.

7. A parent asked what proposals were in place with regard to the buildings.

It was confirmed that all buildings options would be explored with both schools and that both heads had already visited a primary school in Shropshire which had recently gone through a similar process. The two schools would need to get together to discuss priorities. It was possible that community facilities could be included, indeed as the land “footprint” was greater than was needed, this gave greater flexibility.

8. A parent felt that a successful merger would rely to a great extent on staff and how they put the message over to the children..

Liz Nicholson believed that the Governors would need to be inclusive and plan together. She cited the example of the merger of Bicton and Grafton schools which had been very successful. There was also the possibilities of joint assemblies and older children helping with paired reading etc.

9. A parent asked what feedback had been received so far.

A. Karen Calder felt that there had been a “sense of bewilderment” among some members of the community at the meeting at the Infant School on the previous evening and that the process was not, perhaps, as clear as it might have been. As the discussion had proceeded, however, she felt that there had been a positive step forward.

10. A parent commented that many parents could not understand why the two schools were separate and could not see why they had to reapply for a school place at the end of Key Stage 1 for their children to transfer.

11. A parent suggested that a joint meeting of both school communities would be beneficial.

Liz Nicholson thanked everyone for their attendance advising that officers would be happy to return if necessary to answer questions. She also encouraged parents to respond to the consultation process.

The meeting closed at 19.40.