

PRIMARY SCHOOL ORGANISATION CONSULTATION

NOTES OF A MEETING HELD FOR MOUNT PLEASANT INFANT AND JUNIOR SCHOOL HELD AT THE INFANT SCHOOL ON 17 MARCH 2008

COMMUNITY/PARENTS' MEETING HELD AT 6.30pm

Present:

Community Representatives	Officers/Members
Cllr Joyce Allaway (MPI) H Baldwin (Parent MPI&J) P Baldwin (Parent MPI&J) Carolyn Barratt (Deputy Headteacher MPI) CA Bond (Parent MPJ) Alan Brannen (Headteacher MPJ) Miss Evans (Parent MPI&J) Mrs Evans (Parent MPI&J) Mr and Mrs Harrill (Parents MPI) N Lewis (Parent MPI) Linda Mckeown (MPI) Cllr Alan Moseley (SCC) SD Muller (Parent MPJ) Mrs Nagington (Parent MPI&J & Nursery) Mrs Organ (Parent MPI) Mrs Owen (Parent MPJ) Mrs Preen (Parent MPJ) Malcolm Price (Chair MPI) Mark Ramsey (MPJ) Cllr Eileen Sandford (MPJ) Gail Shields (MPI&J) Neil Thomas (MPI) Janet Weston (Headteacher MPI)	Mr John Rowley Cllr Karen Calder Mr Norrie Porter Simon Alton (Press Officer) Mrs Helen Woodbridge (Note Taker)

John Rowley opened the meeting and introduced those present. He explained:

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

Mr Harrill asked if the decision had already been made.

John Rowley and Cllr Karen Calder confirmed that this was definitely not the case – it is a genuine consultation. Cllr Karen Calder said that an earlier question in the governors' meeting could not be answered because it would pre-empt the outcome of the consultation.

John Rowley went on to say that eight pairs of schools were being considered for amalgamation and that decisions would be taken on each of the eight on an individual basis.

John Rowley said that it was also about gathering new ideas – for example, at a similar evening a suggestion had been made for an age 3-16 school which had not been considered before. He advised that if either of the schools had received an unsatisfactory outcome from an Ofsted inspection then that would be taken into account – but this was not the case here. The falling rolls is a key driver for primary school organisation, but here the number on roll is relatively stable - currently 200 dropping to 190 by 2012. He confirmed that there was however spare capacity at the schools which had room for 330 pupils.

Cllr Alan Moseley asked if the new developments eg at the MEB depot had been factored into the numbers.

Norrie Porter advised that they had been but that you could never be absolutely sure on anticipated numbers – there is always some movement due to local popularity too.

Cllr Eileen Sandford asked about the other well known potential area for development.

Norrie Porter advised that if it was developed, it would probably be large enough to have its own school.

John Rowley stressed that there needed to be a large number of houses to produce a significant number of children.

John Rowley advised that there had been an earlier staff meeting. From the parents' point of view, the staffing would be largely the same, with the exception of the headteacher. The buildings too would be largely the same in the first instance. Neither building would be large enough to house the whole school. The governing body would make decisions about the use of the buildings. Minor amendments – eg staff rooms/offices could be made in the first instance.

Cllr Alan Moseley asked about the availability of funding through the Primary Capital Programme.

Norrie Porter explained that between 2009-2011 there would be around £8.5 million for Shropshire and £2 million per year thereafter for 12 years. As a complete rebuild of a school would cost around £3.5 million then only 10 projects could be undertaken if they were all rebuilds. Therefore it is the intention to refurbish properly to extend the life of schools until 2050. He confirmed that there would be funding available for Mount Pleasant.

John Rowley explained some of the benefits of primary schools. Nationally infant and junior schools are amalgamating. One of the reasons is that there are recognised dips in performance (and socially) at transition stages and continuity in education reduces this. Children with special educational needs are particularly affected at any transition stage. However, this infant and junior school both do an excellent job.

Cllr Karen Calder said that Shropshire, as an excellent authority, would not want to do anything to jeopardise children in terms of their education. The Local Authority is constantly trying to improve performance.

Cllr Alan Moseley declared an interest as he had voted for the School Organisation Policy.

Mark Ramsey asked if the process of amalgamation could cause a dip.

Cllr Karen Calder thought it would depend how it was done.

Cllr Eileen Sandford suggested that it was most important for teachers, parents and governors to agree (subject to natural differences) and then focus on transition for the sake of the children, particularly the vulnerable ones.

John Rowley confirmed that the objective is to reach a consensus and to make the change as soon as possible. What matters most to the children is their teacher in their classroom.

Cllr Eileen Sandford pointed out that if parents are worried then that will affect the children.

Neil Thomas asked about the dip in Year 7 and if it made any difference if children came from a junior or primary school.

John Rowley advised that any dip could be reduced by better collaboration, joint projects etc. There is also some evidence that when a teaching assistant moves with children then this reduces the dip.

John Rowley repeated that all views are encouraged whether they are individual or collective. They would all be presented to councillors.

Cllr Eileen Sandford highlighted the last three lines of the 'making your views known' section.

John Rowley talked about the possibility of outside bodies, eg a religious group, bidding to run any new school but stressed that it was unlikely to happen.

Mrs Nagington asked if it did become a church school would the children be admitted.

John Rowley advised that in the very unlikely circumstances that the school was run by an outside body, they would be required to come up with an acceptable admissions policy. It would not be acceptable not to allow local children to attend.

Cllr Alan Moseley said that it would be better to amalgamate keeping the same system ie being run by the Local Authority.

Cllr Karen Calder pointed out the great opportunities.

Mrs Evans asked what would happen if there was a spare building.

John Rowley said that this could be made available for suitable use eg providing a base for a community service eg Sure Start.

Norrie Porter confirmed that there were no plans to sell off one of the buildings.

Mrs C Evans asked about the nursery.

Norrie Porter confirmed that this would remain as it is.

Cllr Karen Calder said that there would be great difficulty in developing the land and referred people to the aerial photograph which demonstrated this.

Cllr Eileen Sandford stressed the need for school playing fields to be protected.

John Rowley said that if the schools were amalgamated there would still be the need for separate play areas.

Cllr Karen Calder suggested that members of the governing bodies could visit Albrighton Primary School which had just undergone the same process.

John Rowley thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.