

PRIMARY SCHOOL ORGANISATION CONSULTATION

NOTES OF A MEETING HELD AT LYDBURY NORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL ON 17 MARCH 2008

GOVERNORS' MEETING HELD AT 5.00pm

Present: Dr Nicholas Howell (Chair)
Rev Paul Collins
Mrs Jane Langton (Acting Headteacher)
Mr Clive Moore
Mrs Polly Peters
Mrs Nikki Pugh
Mrs Ruth Williams
Steffan Owen (Staff Gov)
Rev Ian Terry (Diocesan Board)
Peter Rowland (Diocesan Board)

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

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

Questions and Answers were as follows:

- Clive Moore Asked for clarification on who were the stakeholder groups.
- Ian Budd Schools Forum – elected body from Headteachers and Governors of Primary and Secondary Schools, representatives from Diocesan Directors, Unions, early years groups and the Learning and Skills Council. Schools Forum has responsibility for decision making in some areas and advisory on others in relation to school resources and demography.
Other groups are Trade Unions, Diocesan Authorities and Shropshire School Governors' Council.
- Nick Howells Is the Primary Capital Programme dependent on a plan for amalgamations going through?
- Ian Budd No, approval of the Primary Capital Programme submission will be a DCSF decision. The framework requires unfilled places to be addressed.
- Nick Howells One of our amendments has been put in which was the word 'possible' amalgamation. He asked that this word is also used in public consultation meetings.
- Paul Collins What do you mean by "improve buildings"?

- Ian Budd Referred to examples from the Building Bulletin Standards.
- Paul Collins Where a building is basically sound – you would not use Capital to replace would you? Is it appropriate to use word ‘improve’ or ‘replace’.
- Ian Budd It would depend where it was appropriate.
- Nikki Pugh Have you identified the 5% for rebuild in Shropshire?
- Ian Budd In terms of sustainability and state of buildings, we have looked at all schools. The information will be part of consideration in developing the PCP submission.
- With regard to reorganisation, we are still in a period of formative consultation. There may be other groups who wish to consult, eg early years and it is important that we listen to all views. These views are an important part of the formative consultation process. All will be reported back to Cabinet. There has been no decision made whether to commission statutory consultation. Cabinet can take up ideas on consultation paper or any other ideas can be adopted. Cabinet could ask for more formative consultation. There is no way Councillors would pre-determine the outcome of this stage of consultation.
- Councillors will be making sure any decision is in the best interests of education in the area.
- Ian Terry Said that the Diocese is fully committed to that view.
- Clive Moore Will it be based on policy / area criteria?
- Ian Budd It will be the best set of outcomes for the education of children in the area as well as sustainable/environmental considerations and community facilities.
- Ruth Williams Where was our voice on Schools Forum? There is overwhelming public opinion that it is an easier option to close. The policy was unable to be implemented because of public outcry. Referred to letter from Carol Tiddy.
- Ian Budd Councillors will not make a decision on all schools together. Each school will be considered individually.
- Ruth Williams Is this taking a step backwards? Policy should then go.
- Ian Budd Every local authority has a school organisation policy, it is a fundamental responsibility of the authority.
- Cabinet has recommended setting up a policy commission looking at how to address local issues. They will look at addressing falling pupil numbers as in other authorities.

- John Baxter If the approach had been flawed, Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel would not have agreed to consultation commencing.
- Polly Peters Why are there only 3 alternatives in the consultation paper ?
- Nick Howells There is a fourth option – to reject amalgamation.
- Ian Budd Explained 3 bullet points and temporary arrangements for governance representing both communities.
- Potentially subject to competition and tender exercise. Both schools are CE Aided schools, there would be a strong case to make to DCSF for a dispensation not to run a competition.
- In a formative consultation people can come with other ideas, eg how education can be improved/developed in other ways or federation.
- Nikki Pugh How is federation defined?
- Ian Budd Referred to earlier work with the school in 2002 on federation. Can be 'hard' or 'soft' federation model. Hard federation model would share governor/leadership arrangements.
- Paul Collins As rural Dean, I have noticed very different approaches from Lydbury and Clunbury. Lydbury feels threatened and Clunbury feels safe. Can you offer an explanation for this? Are we still on a level?
- Nick Howells The Headteacher from Clunbury has sent a letter to parents reassuring them that their school is safe.
- Ian Budd Reiterated that Councillors cannot pre-determine any decision. I will be saying exactly the same things at Clunbury tomorrow evening, as in all other consultation meetings.
- Nick Howells Why did you choose Lydbury/Clunbury and not other schools?
- Ian Budd We have been consistent in applying policy across the County.
- Ann Hartley Explained the Scrutiny process.
- Jane Langton I had a meeting with Norrie Porter who stated that "we tend to prefer Clunbury".
- Ian Budd There are issues with both existing school sites when put against required building bulletins. Clunbury is slightly better on site issues.
- Jane Langton So this has not been pre-determined?
- Ian Budd No, this has not been pre-determined.
- Peter Rowland Commented that money has been spent improving both schools.

- Ian Terry This is the first time I have heard about a letter being sent by the Headteacher of Clunbury. We are supporting both schools and both sets of governors to provide better education for the children in the area. We do not want to set one community against another
- Paul Collins Clunbury have not wanted a joint meeting.
- Clive Moore Why did you decide on Lydbury and Clunbury?
- Ian Budd It is important when talking to small rural schools to consider natural partnerings. We want to hear local views on partnering work.
- John Baxter We know that villages are all different. When looking at another pair of schools, both are working together although they are very different.
- Ruth Williams What happens if we want to stay as we are? You have not listened to us. There is no natural affinity with Clunbury. Parents want their children to come to this village. Policy says it has to be four classes – why?
- John Baxter Policy does not say that there has to be four classes at every school.
- Ruth Williams This is being forced upon us for no good educational reason.
- Steffan Owen At the heart of education is our children – there is no reason to close this school – it had an excellent Ofsted and a thriving community. There is no sound educational reason.
- Ruth Williams We should not be spending capital at the expense of this school.
- Ian Budd Explained that this is Capital Funding rather than Revenue funding. Issues are focused on high quality education for children, staff and beyond these issues, school environments. The Vision does not say it is best delivered in one size or another. Visions in other areas, eg Shrewsbury, may be different from rural area such as this. Any change has to be sustainable long term.
- Steffan Owen And better.
- Ian Budd Overall in Shropshire, small and large schools have similar in value added but could be different ways of going about this.
- Nikki Pugh We have been hampered in that officer advice has been that other schools do not need to work with us. She commented that the vision is good.
- Ian Terry We at the Diocesan Board want to support what is best for all children, how it can be cost effective, how we can work collaboratively, how you look after staff. This school has shown itself to be robust on all issues.
- Ian Budd All schools have aspirations for the future and this is what we want to see developed during the consultation.

- Nikki Pugh Will the decision come to be considered by the same Members who support the policy?
- Ann Hartley The policy is for the whole of Shropshire but each school is different and Members will look at each individually. I have been listening to all your points and questions and will continue to do so.
- Nick Howells Despite some figures about CO2 emissions for transport, we have been told that CO2 emissions to Clunbury would be 8/10 tonnes.
- Ian Budd The County Council takes environmental issues very seriously and will look carefully at these issues.
- Polly Peters Challenged the numbers of pupils walking to school – she thought the figure was higher.
- John Baxter We will look again at figures for pupils walking to school.
- Nikki Pugh Asked how long the process would take, if a formal consultation is agreed.
- Ian Budd Compared to current Childs Ercall which was started in summer of 2007 – would be approximately one year. Implementation would only be at a start of a school year to allow for smooth transition. However, this process would only begin if there was a decision to commission.
- John Baxter All documentation, including questions and comments from the earlier consultation period, will be carried forward.
- Nikki Pugh Will this carried forward documentation be made available to Members?
- John Baxter A copy of all documentation is placed in the Members' Library.
- Ann Hartley I can assure you that I, along with other Members, have looked at existing and will look at all further consultation documentation.
- Clive Moore What is the next stage?
- Ian Budd Formative consultation period continues until 2 May. Any further questions can be sent in. If any other groups would like to meet, this can be arranged.
- Nick Howells We would like answers to our questions as soon as possible.
- It was also agreed to hold another Governors' Meeting – a date to be arranged.

Nick Howells Thanked Ian Budd and staff for attending and reiterated that Governors at Lydbury are very concerned. I'm sure this will be reiterated in public meeting later

Meeting closed at 6.30pm