

**PRIMARY SCHOOL ORGANISATION CONSULTATION**  
**NOTES OF A MEETING HELD AT GRANGE INFANT SCHOOL**  
**HELD ON 13 MARCH 2008**

**GOVERNORS' MEETING HELD AT 5.00pm**

Present: Cllr. Karen Calder (Shropshire County Council – Cabinet Member), John Rowley (Acting Assistant Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Services), Norrie Porter (Head of Premises and Planning), Marie Sibley (Headteacher Grange Infant School). Governors: Mr. V. Bushell, Mrs. G. Cheshire, Mrs. C. Davies, Mr. M. Davies-Friend (Chair of Governors), Mrs. C. Downes, Mrs. P. Gwilliam-Bennett, Miss J. Hughes, Mr. C. Kinsey, Mrs. K. Romasiuk, Mr. K. Smith, Mr. M. Youens.

Apologies were received from Mr. I. Jones and Miss. H. Pryce.

Also in attendance: David Owen (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

The following comments and questions were raised.

1. Would it not be a better option to decide on the principle of whether the two schools should be merged before discussing the three options as to how the merger would be effected?

A. Karen Calder explained that County Council policy was now in favour of all through schools and that this was the presumption unless there were size or location difficulties.

2. As the Junior school was currently in "special measures", governors asked of the position if this was still the situation at the time of the proposed merger.

A. John Rowley told the meeting that the local authority fully expected the Junior School to be out of special measures within that time. If not, however, the status would not be transferred to any new school created under bullet points 1 and 3. The County Council would continue to provide support. As a result of the status, the local authority was required to review the Junior School. The information would be available to Cabinet members but would "drive" the decision.

3. How would the budget for one primary school compare with the two existing schools?

A. Norrie Porter explained that the biggest element in budget calculation was the number of children on role although there were other factors e.g. Special Educational Needs, Floor Area etc. Although the overall allocation would be less, funding of teaching and support staff and teaching related items would not be affected.

4. If the third option i.e. a competition was adopted, was the County Council likely to be a bidder?

A. John Rowley felt that, although this was “new territory” and no formal decision had been made, it would be highly likely that the County Council would wish to be involved. Following the meeting the previous evening he confirmed that the Junior school governors were interested in all the options. Although governors were not being asked to come to a view at the meeting, one member confirmed her preference for the merger to proceed in line with bullet point 2 on page 2 of the consultation paper i.e. the Infant School to remain open.

5. Following a merger, what would be the position of reserves held by the existing schools?

Norrie Porter confirmed the County Council’s view was that “today’s money is for today’s children”. Technically, balances would return to the local authority but the practice was to make a one off grant to the new school of the balance. In the instance of a deficit, individual circumstances would be taken into consideration. Private school funds, if registered as a charity, could be combined through the Charity Commission.

6. Governors noted that, although staff would be reappointed to the new school, one head teacher would become redundant in the process and requested further clarification.

John Rowley confirmed that with either the Infant or Junior school remaining open (bullet points 1&2) the existing headteacher would automatically become head of the new school. The new foundation would be responsible of appointing the Head if a new school was established (bullet point 3); if a Community School, the County Council would appoint a new governing body from within the existing governors of each school. Governors felt that it would be essential to maintain a 50/50 balance to prevent bias. It was noted that the County Council had a shortage of head teachers and appointed between about 10 or 12 per term. Governors were advised to be conscious of the position regarding the existing heads when expressing their views.

7. Both heads were currently working to their capacity. What additional support would be available in an enlarged school?

A. It would be a matter for the governors to establish a new staffing structure. Typically a large primary school would have Head of Junior and Head of Infant reporting to the Head.

8. A governor expressed concern that the existing community spirit in both schools could be lost in a larger entity.

A. John Rowley felt that it was important to that the core spirit of the existing schools remained. Norrie Porter noted that a similar sized primary school existed at Coleham which was well managed and successful.

9. Governors asked for information on the proposed building element of the scheme.

A. Norrie Porter explained that, in the long term, money was available for a major programme and that the amalgamated schools would be seen as a priority. The Authority would look to make a substantial link between the two buildings. In the short term improvements would be made prior to the major programme.

10. A governor asked what arguments existed against amalgamation.

A. John Rowley believed that the only argument would be the size of the new school although he emphasized that it would not be large in national terms.

11. A governor expressed concern that focus in a through school might be on older children preparing for year 5 SATs. Mrs. Sibley felt however that any head would recognize the importance of investing in young children. John Rowley also believed that the “dip” in performance at transfer stage would be eliminated.

John Rowley thanked governors for their attendance and looked forward to hearing their comments. Karen Calder expressed her thanks also and encouraged governors to get in touch if there were any queries.

The meeting closed at 18.20.