

**PRIMARY SCHOOL ORGANISATION CONSULTATION**  
**NOTES OF A MEETING HELD AT GRANGE INFANT SCHOOL**  
**ON 13 MARCH 2008 AT 6.30pm**

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

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).  
30 parents and members of the public.

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. What assurances could be given that this was a genuine consultation and not a formality?

A. Karen Calder confirmed that all three options were there for full meaningful consultation and was to hear all views and possible proposals. The result was not predetermined. She encouraged everyone to express their views. John Rowley pointed out that other proposals had already changed recently as an early part of the process.

2. The meeting noted that if either of the first two bullet points on page 2 were chosen as the way to proceed, the headteacher of the school not closing would become head of the new all through school and the other would become redundant. If the bullet point 3 option was followed the post would be advertised.

Cllr. Eileen Sandford (local member) advised that she was in favour of the proposal and emphasized the need to appoint the best head for the children.

John Rowley explained that there was also a difference in status between the two schools with the Infant being Maintained and the Junior being Foundation. In practical terms, the difference between the two did not mean a great deal currently and the Junior governors did not see this as a particular obstacle.

3. A questioner asked why two schools already existed.

A. John Rowley explained that this was an historical situation which had been inherited and the policy had been changed recently.

4. What would be the difference in funding the new school as opposed to two individual schools?

A. The majority of the funding was determined by pupil numbers, there would be some savings on premises related costs but the same amount remained to spend on children.

5. Sharon Clews (parent) referred to a Shropshire Star article which stated that the County Council was rerunning its figures as a result of information received and she felt that it would be better to defer any action.

John Rowley confirmed that the purpose of a consultation was to test proposals, and this was what was happening in this case. These were the views of one individual which were not generally shared by others.

6. Mr. S. Morris asked what the status of the nursery and play school were under the proposals and expressed his view that they should have been included in the figures used in the consultation papers.

John Rowley confirmed that both the nursery and play school would continue unaffected by the proposals.

7. A questioner queried the fact that in 2007 the Local Authority had judged the Junior school as being satisfactory yet, shortly after, it had been ruled unsatisfactory by Ofsted.

John Rowley confirmed that SCC was disappointed with the Ofsted finding but was confident that the school would be out of the category quickly. He further explained that, due to this status, the Local Authority was required to review the Junior School's future. This was not, however, the background to the consultation process.

8. A questioner asked if any proposed amalgamation would take place in a September.

A. John Rowley confirmed that, under the current proposals, the schools would amalgamate in September 2009. If there was a "slippage" in the timing it would be preferable for the change to take place at the beginning of an educational year i.e. September.

9. A parent commented that, when a previous headteacher had left, the Infant school governors had been given the opportunity of discussing merging with the Junior School but had refused.

10. A questioner asked what “point” there was in the proposal.

A. John Rowley confirmed that there were considerable advantages and such amalgamations were occurring across the UK. In particular there was a drive to reduce the number of transition points where there was a perceived “dip” in performance. It was not a criticism of either of the schools involved.

11. A parent asked why centralising on the secondary school site was not being considered.

A. John Rowley explained that in some parts of the country 3 – 16 age schools were being developed but there were practical difficulties in doing this in Shropshire currently.

Keith Davies, Chair of the Grange School Governors, confirmed his belief that the proposed amalgamation would raise standards across the primary and secondary communities.

12. A parent commented on her disappointment that the consultation document did not offer any of the disadvantages for consideration and asked what these were.

A. John Rowley responded that there was not a “simple” answer. The principle argument against was if the amalgamation created an unmanageably large school. This would not be the case here. In answer to a question he said that, in his personal experience, 360 children were not too many to be remembered by a teacher

Karen Calder noted that the governors had asked the same question and emphasised that the Local Authority wished only to improve standards.

13. A questioner asked what would be the contributory factors in selecting the headteacher as both were currently doing a very “good job”.

A. John Rowley confirmed that, whatever process was adopted, the collective interest in the best leadership for the children would be the main motivating factor.

14. A parent stated that, if the overriding benefit was eradicating the perceived “dip”, she felt that the two existing schools had good enough relationships to work together on this.

15. A parent stated that years 7-9 at the Grange School appeared to be the worst performing in the county and he believed that there was a need to address this problem.

Keith Davies commented that the results of secondary schools depended on the standards achieved in the primary schools.

16. A parent felt that this meant that more money should be invested rather than looking at amalgamation.

A. John Rowley confirmed that no savings were to be made in areas which directly affected the children.

17. A parent asked how the process would proceed if the proposal was taken further and how long it would take?

A. John Rowley explained that it would become a formal legal process with a specific proposal published. There was a fine balance between ensuring everyone had a chance to contribute and drawing the matter out too long. The formal consultation process would be between the Cabinet Meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> May and the summer. It was planned to have a year long run in to the amalgamation in September 2009.

18. A parent asked if the effect on the children had been considered.

John Rowley confirmed that it had. Effectively, it would still be the same "journey" between the Key Stages.

19. A parent asked if improvements to buildings etc. would take place outside of term time?

Norrie Porter responded that it was not possible, at that time, to give a complete undertaking but the objective would be to minimize disruption to the life of the school.

20. A questioner asked if it would be possible to hold another public meeting in the Summer term if the proposals went further.

A. John Rowley said that it was possible but would be subject to a decision by County Councillors.

John Rowley thanked everyone for their attendance and looked forward to hearing their comments. He assured those present that there was no other motivation in the programme than to get the best provision for the children of Shropshire. It was the subject of legitimate debate and opinions, but the County Council felt that there were many benefits in bringing the two schools together.

Karen Calder expressed her thanks also and encouraged parents/the public to get in touch if there were any queries.

The meeting closed at 20.00