

APPENDIX 5C: PRIMARY SCHOOL REORGANISATION CONSULTATION EVENING

Venue: Meole Brace Secondary School
Date: Thursday 18th October 2007
Time: 4.30 pm

Presenters: Carol Tiddy, Acting Director of CYPS
 Ian Budd, Assistant Director
 Ann Hartley, Education Service

Note-taker: John Baxter, CYPS

Present:

Name	HT / Gov	School
Wendy Taylor	Headteacher	Albrighton
Mr E H Roberts	Headteacher	Bayston Hill Long Meadow
Terry Seston	Chair	Bayston Hill Long Meadow
Sue Brook	Teacher	Bayston Hill Oakland
Ann Gibson	Headteacher	Bayston Hill Oakland
Jane Bishop	Headteacher	Bitterley
Thyrle Bird	Chair	Bitterley
Rachel Stokes	Headteacher	Bridgnorth Castlefields
Bob Bibby	Chair	Bridgnorth Castlefields
Keith Rendell	Chair	Broseley John Wilkinson
Anna Cook	Headteacher	Bucknell
Helen Whittaker	Headteacher	Buildwas
Sally Grant	Headteacher	Buildwas
Stuart King	Headteacher	Cheswardine
David Howse	Chair	Cheswardine
T J Roberts	Headteacher	Chirbury
Heather Smith	Headteacher	Clun St George's
Rev Shaw	Chair	Clun St George's
Mr A Davis	Headteacher	Clunbury
Heather Kidd	Chair	Clunbury
Heather Dawson	Headteacher	Cockshutt
John Dickin	Chair	Cockshutt
Terry Hunt	Headteacher	Community College, Bishop's Castle
Rita Baker	Governor	Community College, Bishop's Castle
Donovan Suddell	Chair / Governor	Community College, Bishop's Castle
Jill Watt	Headteacher	Cressage
Karen Robinson	Chair	Cressage
John Roberts	Headteacher	Criftins
T Williams	Governor	Dorrington
Kate Budd	Headteacher	Hanwood
Jane Siddons	Headteacher	Hodnet
Yetta Littlehales	Chair	Hope
David Dodge (Check)	Governor	Hope
Penny Knight	Staff rep	Hopton Wafers
Sian Hawes	Headteacher	Hopton Wafers
Chris Tay	Headteacher	Longden
Dr N Howell	Chair	Lydbury North
Rosemary Finney	Headteacher	Maesbury
Fiona Hendry	Governor	Maesbury
Karen Morris	Act Headteacher	Meole Brace Jun
Clive Roe	Headteacher	Minsterley
Linda Jeffery	Headteacher	Myddle
T Beesley	Chair	Newcastle
Sue Cooke	Governor	Norbury

Philip Dale	Headteacher	Onny
Rev James Stewart	Chair	Onny
Mr N J Turner	Headteacher	Oswestry Beech Grove Junior
Neil Phillips	Vice-Chair	Oswestry Infant
Heather Russell	Headteacher	Oswestry Infant
Mrs Mansford	Chair	Oswestry Infant
Jane Mosford	Chair	Oswestry Infant
Nicola Morrow	Asst Head	Priory
Jo Humphreys	Chair	Shawbury St Mary's
Mrs B Humphrey	Staff Governor	Shifnal
Dr J Turnock	Headteacher	Shifnal
Marie Sibley	Headteacher	Shrewsbury Grange Infant
Lawrence Gittins	Headteacher	Shrewsbury Grange Junior
Nicky Hey	Headteacher	Shrewsbury Greenacres
Simon Hey	Headteacher	Shrewsbury Greenacres
Tim Harding	Chair	Shrewsbury Greenacres
David Fowlkes	Chair	Shrewsbury Holy Cross Junior
Malcolm Price	Governor	Shrewsbury Mount Pleasant Infant
Alan Brannen	Headteacher	Shrewsbury Mount Pleasant Junior
Judith Clowes	Governor	Shrewsbury Mount Pleasant Junior
Wanda Wheeler	Headteacher	Shrewsbury Springfield Infant
Arthur Mounterfield	Governor	Shrewsbury Springfield Infant
Chris Huss	Headteacher	Shrewsbury Wilfred Owen
Sue Young	Headteacher	Shrewsbury Woodfield Infant
Caroline Garner	Headteacher	Stiperstones
Penny Thornton	Chair	Stiperstones
Tony Morris	Headteacher	Stokesay
Mr Alan Derry	Headteacher	Sundorne Infant
Mrs Emily Wada	Chair	Sundorne Infant
Dr A Haworth	Chair	Tilstock Primary
Samantha Bray	Chair / Governor	West Felton
Mrs C Burgan	Headteacher	Westbury St Mary's
Col. Robin Rees-Webbe	Chair	Weston Lullingfields
Jane White	Acting Head	Weston Lullingfields
Richard Hines	Headteacher	Weston Rhyn
Nicola Maddocks	Chair / Governor	Weston Rhyn
Christine Hughes	Chair / Governor	Weston Rhyn
Rev D Baldwin	Chair	Whixall
B Townley	Teacher	Wistanstow
C Reynolds	Headteacher	Wistanstow

Carol Tiddy welcomed everyone and introduced those presenting and facilitating the meeting. Ian Budd provided a comprehensive presentation on Primary School Reorganisation, after which he invited questions and comments from the floor.

Jo Humphreys, Governor, Shawbury St. Marys

At a Let's Talk meeting she had attended yesterday there had been no C&YPS representatives to answer questions on the proposals. Are Parish Councils being contacted for their views?

Carol Tiddy: Yes they are. Let's Talk meetings were now coming to an end but individuals with any concerns can contact us via the website consultation, email or phone.

Sarah Talbot, Administrator, Newcastle

What is a geographically isolated community?

Ian Budd – this links to the proposed criterion of a school within six miles. If there is only one school within that criterion then that school would have to remain open and that will mean a continuing network of 2 and 3 class schools in some areas.

David Fowlkes, Chair of Governors, Shrewsbury Holy Cross Junior

What would be the situation where there is a CE school and Community school that area combined?

Ian Budd: we have a both a commitment and requirement to maintain the current balance of church and community school places across the county and this would play a part in determining what status any combined school might have.

Fiona Hendry, Governor, Maesbury

Is any consideration being given to a failing and a non failing school where size is not relevant?

Carol Tiddy: It is important that everyone understands that whether a school is failing or not has nothing whatsoever to do with parental perceptions or preferences – the only definition of a failing school is where Ofsted have placed it in that category or the local authority has concerns based on regular review. No consideration is being given because we do not have any failing schools.

Laurence Gittins, Headteacher, Grange Junior

How will you deal with amalgamation of a Foundation and Community school?

Ian Budd: We would deal with each of these case by case as they arise.

There will be concerns over 6 miles and 45 minutes travelling time as, in some rural areas, that 45 minutes could be over a lesser distance.

Ian Budd: This could be the case but we would look at each individual school situation and use the expertise in our Integrated Transport Unit to help in the determination of distance v time travelled.

Andrew Davis, Governor, Clunbury

Are we dealing solely with Shropshire or does the review cover other surrounding counties, e.g. Herefordshire in the light of parental preferences from out county.

Ian Budd: Solely provision of primary education in Shropshire.

Heather Kidd, Chair, Clunbury

Primary schools are embedded in their local community and are linked to other rural facilities such as the local shop/post office.

Carol Tiddy: Members will need to know precisely what the links are as there are many villages in Shropshire where there is no school and yet there is still a community feeling. We need some “flesh on the bones” information, anecdotal as well as factual to enable members to make a judgement.

Fiona Hendry, Chair, Maesbury

What is being done when dealing with new builds in an area?

Ian Budd: Two projections are provided for schools, one without and one with potential new housing – county wide estimates made five years ago by the Premises & Planning Team were only 10 out from the 2007 actual so our forecasting technique looks to be sound. The problem with new housing is where it might be built and timescales for completion and despite all the house building since 2002, numbers have still declined. Even with migration from Eastern Europe and the new housing we are not predicting a significant change in patterns. Where larger housing allocations are made, the County would enter into an S106 with the developers should there be the need for further classes or even a new school but the latter needs a significant number of houses to sustain it over time.

Allan Brennan – Headteacher – Mount Pleasant Junior

Are there any benefits in wanting to be first to amalgamate?

Carol Tiddy – that would be a positive move under the existing primary policies and we would deal with this as we did with the merger of Albrighton Infant and Junior into Albrighton Primary. This suggestion came direct from the two schools and not from the LA and the merger proposals went through very smoothly.

Judith Clowes – Governor – Mount Pleasant Junior

What guarantees are there for the Headteacher not offered the post of Head of the newly formed primary and would a displaced Head be offered the same salary?

Ian Budd – we will have a very specific protocol for any amalgamations and we would work with both Governing bodies and trade unions. We would always seek to redeploy first. As for salary that would be a matter for discussion by the governing bodies concerned.

Rev David Baldwin – Chair, Whixall and Governor, Tilstock

Why should we not believe that this consultation is a sham before local government reorganisation?

Anne Hartley: I can assure you all that this is not the case. This is all about dealing with a problem of surplus places and reductions in Dedicated Schools Budget. It is not a problem that has arisen overnight and there is no linkage with unitary authority status, which does not affect our schools as Districts and Boroughs do not have that responsibility. I can also assure you that we have spent many years lobbying central government for a better settlement in conjunction with similar LAs including asking for a greater weighting for sparsity. It would be irresponsible not to face the problem and deal with it now and if there are ideas from the floor that we can investigate that would reduce the potential impact then please send them to us.

David Fowlkes – Chair – Shrewsbury Holy Cross

What about school maintenance – will that not suffer for blighted schools?

Ian Budd – we operate on the principle of “today’s funding is for today’s school children”. Devolved Formula Capital is in the school’s gift to spend not the LA. Redevelopment value is not one of the criteria that will be used to assess closure. Obviously were a school to appear on a future list that might mean major items deferred until a decision is known but it would only be at that stage and not at present.

Colin Snell – Teacher, Community College, Bishop’s Castle

Will we take into account the fact that some schools link to two different High schools?

Ian Budd: Yes, we would look at the effect on linked secondary schools.

Rev James Stewart – Chair- Onny

Schools draw a community into them by parental choice.

Carol Tiddy – this simply illustrates why there is a need to define community

David Dodge, Governor, Hope

Why state that 3 or 4 age groups in a class make for a ‘deficient’ school? That might be the view in the towns but not in rural areas.

Carol Tiddy – this was not meant to be pejorative of small schools because mixed age teaching is invariably the norm but, in urban schools there is an often an expectation from parents that pupils are taught in discrete age groups and if schools have to move to mixed teaching they regard this as deficient.

Philip Dale, Headteacher, Onny

What consideration is being given to all the other staff who are involved in running a school?

Ian Budd: the staffing protocol would cover all staff not just teachers.

Heather Russell, Headteacher, Oswestry Infant

Would any proposal to merge Infant and Junior result in them being placed in the one building?

Ian Budd: That is the case under current policy where the local authority would instigate a review. However, taking Albrighton, where the request came from the two schools, they still remain in the two buildings which are close to one another. It may be that all could be accommodated in one building but that would be a matter of consultation with the two schools as to their needs and those of the pupils alongside number forecasts and financial models. There is no one model to apply to such amalgamations.

Carol Tiddy: There is also strong evidence that the transition from Infant to Junior results in a significant dip in achievement although pupils do eventually recover – this was one of the arguments that Albrighton used in favour of amalgamation with the same ethos across all age groups.

Laurence Gittins, Headteacher, Shrewsbury Grange Junior

We should be looking across all age groups and not just primary as demography will affect both and we ought to be looking at amalgamations of primary and secondary schools as well.

Ian Budd: When Building Schools for the Future Secondary comes in at the end of this decade and the early part of the next, with BSF in Primary that will certainly enable us to look at these wider issues and campus style provision where appropriate.

Simon Hey, Teacher, Shrewsbury Greenacres

How soon would any reorganisation take place?

Ian Budd – some have erroneously assumed that closure would take place by summer 2008 but that is simply not statutorily possible so the earliest we would plan for would be summer 2009.

Tony Morris, Headteacher, Stokesay

Who will have the final decision – Cabinet or County Council? Will this decision be political or strategic?

Ian Budd: Changes to the existing policy will be a County Council decision – Cabinet then has the delegated responsibility to determine whether after pre-consultation a decision to move to public notices takes place and then the final decision on closure. Only the governing body of a Voluntary Aided or Foundation school or the Diocese can request that a closure decision be reviewed by the Schools Adjudicator.

Anne Hartley: I hope that all these decisions will be strategic and not political – if it was to become the latter that would be most unfortunate and has to be seen in the wider context of all schools not simply those affected by the decision. All three political groups have been kept in the loop. They will be aware that we have tried to do our best to alleviate an increasingly difficult situation and all county councillors have to be strong enough to make decisions that are for the good of the whole of Shropshire.

Tony Morris: My message to councillors is that this issue cannot be ducked.

Chris Huss, Headteacher, Wilfred Owen

There are two key drivers here – surplus places and the shortfall in funding. With these factors it will be impossible to go cap in hand to central government asking for more funding – it simply will not happen if we are forecasting a fifth of our school places unfilled. I welcome the fact that we are seeking principles and having this debate and whilst there will inevitably be an impact on local communities the end process has to be change as there is simply not enough money. Therefore, if the revised principles are applied across all our schools and there is still a funding shortfall, can we look at local funding for education to meet this shortfall?

Anne Hartley: Yes

Helen Whittaker, Headteacher, Buildwas

Clearly something has to be done and in particular over the next six months to help affected Headteachers workload. Parents, once a listing is known, may vote with their feet and that is hugely disruptive and demoralising.

Ian Budd: We will certainly do all we can over any transitional process for Heads, teachers, support staff, parents and pupils. This is what is already happening at Childs Erroll where there is a closure proposal already underway and in the case of staff they can speak personally to our HR team about any concerns they have. Any such planning has to be tailored to the individual schools concerned and managed by the local authority, Head and governing body. Things will not always go smoothly and that is where we will need to react quickly and sympathetically.

Dr A Howarth, Chair, Tilstock

It is essential that this process is managed so that one school is not perceived as the victim and one school as the victor.

Ian Budd: We would all agree with that sentiment.

John Turnock, Headteacher, Shifnal Primary

Our experience being close to the M54 and having been promised 800 houses which has now been drastically reduced in the local plan is that that level of housing would still not have fixed the problems we have with falling rolls.

The meeting closed at 6.15 pm