



Minutes

Name of Meeting	West Wight School Public Consultation Meeting	
Date and Time	Wednesday 22 May 2019, 6.00pm – 8.00pm	
Venue	Yarmouth CE Primary School, Mill Road, Yarmouth, Isle of Wight	
Panel	Richard Vaughan Natalie Smith Martin Goff Mark Saunders (Facilitator) Helen White (Minutes)	Deputy Head of Strategic Development, Hants CC School Improvement Manager IOW, Hants CC Head of Service – Information Transport & Admissions, Hants CC Strategic Development Officer, Hants CC Admin Officer, Children’s Services, IWC

Introduction

Mark Saunders set-out how the evening would be managed, the Panel introduced themselves and a presentation from Richard Vaughan, Martin Goff and Natalie Smith regarding the latest option of West Wight school places was given.

Option: The closure of All Saints CE Primary School on 31 December 2019, and the expansion of Yarmouth CE Primary School to 30 pupils per year group and future relocation to the All Saints site.

Representatives

1) Helen Jones – parent of a child at Yarmouth School and several children that have previously been through the school. 10 years ago the school was threatened with closure, but was saved by the federation with Shalfleet. What makes this small school so special is its close community links. There are so many resources nearby such as SSI (Site of Scientific Interest), life boats, crabbing etc. These cannot be replaced anywhere else. The community does not want to lose their education from Yarmouth. The first step of the proposal will involve children from All Saints School temporarily coming to Yarmouth School, where children will be accommodated in mobile classrooms. This will be the temporary arrangement for approximately 18 months to 2 years and then all children will be transferred to the Freshwater site. This will put the children under stress particularly those having to transfer twice. The proposal will drive down standards and not drive them up. Trying to poach a school rated as good and moving it will ‘kill the goose that laid the golden egg’. It will affect the staff and governing bodies. The first option proposed (closure of All Saints School and transfer to St Saviours School) would result in a net reduction of 140 surplus places. All Saints children would also move to a large school that has the room to accommodate them. Although we do not want any children to have to transfer, the first option is the least disruptive to the children. It is no ok to take our school just because Freshwater is bigger and larger.

2) Jill Cowley – Former teacher - teacher during the IOW education reorganisation from a 2 tier system to a 3 tier system. West Wight children have already had their education disturbed during the closure of Weston Primary School. A cohort of children at Yarmouth makes up the change at Weston Primary and were able to be integrated with support. Moving these children again before their SATS is not putting the children first. A lot of children did not make it in the last integration as they could not settle and were distressed. Presently any family whose child does not turn up for school, they are not given support but receive a fine by the Local Authority. Yarmouth School is support by dozens of volunteers who give up their time. This cannot continue in Freshwater. It will not be Yarmouth School in Freshwater.

3) Carly Wyre Nock – talking on behalf of All Saints parents.

Firstly, on behalf of All Saints' parents, can we express how sad we feel at losing our school, because as a body of parents, we are proud of our school – every part of it, and wish our campaign could have been successful in saving all of it not just the site.

However, that being said, we understand that there are too many schools in West Wight and acknowledge your previous information that one, possibly two, may have to close in the near future. By accepting the facts and realising that All Saints cannot stay as it is, then we feel the new proposal is a sound idea, as it keeps the fantastic features of the All Saints location and provides, not just us, but future children of West Wight opportunity to be educated in a state of the art, modern primary school with facilities which will better prepare our children for secondary education and beyond.

The current consultation document clearly lays out all of the logical, practical and financial reasons for the change, however, it does not give parents from either of the affected schools enough information on how you plan to implement the proposal, should Cllr Brading decide to proceed with the IOW Council's preferred option. There are many concerns from both communities, some similar, however on behalf of All Saints' parents, I wish to log our concerns as follows:

- a) Being located on the much smaller Yarmouth site whilst work is carried out. We feel it would be less disruptive for children, families and staff if the modular buildings were located on the All Saints' site. It is our understanding that the original development plans drawn up for the use of the Department of Education grant do keep the children on site whilst work continued. If the suggested temporary move is for financial reasons, then we feel that money is already being saved with the loss of our Head and some staff, and it would mean that the Local Authority would not have to provide transport. We feel that due to the closeness of the 3 sites within the federation, it is entirely possible for this to be managed if Yarmouth do not wish to move yet. There are concerns about how children will get to Yarmouth every day and about how an additional 70 children would be able to be safely and comfortably accommodated on the current Yarmouth site. We understand that the outstanding Early Years Centre will remain open and steps will be taken to ensure their safety whilst work is carried out, so therefore, we ask that All Saints children are also accommodated on the site with their current teaching staff.
- b) A further concern is the teaching of the curriculum from September. Both schools currently have mixed year groups and under the new proposal, Yarmouth will go to a one form entry and therefore have single year groups. The decision date is late on the academic year and we have concerns about the teaching not being synchronised so when all the children are being taught together, some may end up repeating what they have already learnt and missing out on other topics. We would like to know how the Local Authority plan to ensure this does not happen.
- c) There are concerns about the financial implications of the proposal, some to do with transport as previously mentioned, but many about school uniform. Already parents are in a predicament as the two uniforms are entirely different colours, so anything brought new now for All Saints will be no good as of January. Also if the name of the school changes then everyone from both schools would need new uniforms to match with a new logo. Does the Local Authority have the means to financially assist parents?
- d) We feel very strongly about our teaching staff and wish for it be noted that we have excellent staff who help our children learn, thrive and achieve daily. We are an improving school and there have been significant changes over the past two years. We feel for the benefit of continuity for the All Saints' children that any vacancies within Yarmouth School from January 2020, should be filled by All Saints' teachers.

Finally, I would like to close our representation by listing some benefits of the new proposal:

- a) That a primary school is retained in the largest, most populated village in the Isle of Wight where the majority of school age children live.
- b) The significant investment being given by the Department for Education for the school means we will get an outstanding primary school building on a perfectly located site, close to amenities, which offers geographical longevity.
- c) The two schools in the new proposal are both CofE.
- d) Sustainable travel will be able to continue, therefore, positive benefits to our children's health, fitness and of course the carbon footprint reduction.
- e) The opportunity for two communities to work together and embrace each other's celebrations, for example, being able to all participate in the annual duck and pancake races held in Yarmouth Town.
- f) Year groups being taught individually as opposed to mixed. This also benefits staff.
- g) Keeping the excellent outdoor facilities that are already at the All Saints' site: The Secret Garden, The Forest School area and the large playing field which is perfect for sports day and other events.
- h) Keeping a school site in Freshwater means that children continue to benefit from being within close and safe walking distance of the library, sports centre, churches and nature trails, as well as the newly refurbished park and outdoor gym, and the skate park.
- i) Financial benefits, firstly to the Local Authority by reducing overhead costs of having excess school buildings and staff, but also in funds available to the school as schools are paid per pupil. Therefore, having a more lucrative school means there is a bigger budget available to ensure extra-curricular activities can happen and that our children benefit from the latest resources.

In conclusion, we are excited about the new educational opportunity for our children and look forward to working with the Local Authority, Education Department and our Yarmouth peers to establish an outstanding primary school in a prime location, which future proofs the children of West Wight's education. In order to minimise the disruption to all children across both sites, we are hopeful that Cllr Brading and the Education Authority will continue to listen to parents and members of the community who genuinely want a better future, and that the points of concern that I have raised this evening will be addressed.

4) Kevin Shaw – local resident and former Chair of Governors when Yarmouth School was threatened with closure previously and then federated. Finds it extraordinary that a successful school could be taken away and moved to another school site – to a site where a school has not been functioning as it should be. This requires careful thought. There is a concern that staff cannot sustain the same levels with an integrated school and what is to follow in the future. If the proposal goes through, Kevin does not see how governors are going to manage it. How are staff going to be able to cope? It will not bring the rise in standards that is not occurring at All Saints. It would be a tragedy moving to a new site. It would lose teachers and governors and urges those making the decision to think again. It is nonsensical and unbelievable.

Questions and Answers

Question: Yarmouth School Parent – Where is the money coming from if there is potential to expand? If the 'keep Yarmouth School open' petition reaches 2000 signatures, does this mean Cllr Brading will have to pass it to the cabinet for a decision?

Answer: It will be Cllr Brading's decision, but he can choose to take it to the cabinet for a decision.

Question: Forecast for the future – some of the information given this evening does not correlate with the information received in the past today. There is a huge influx of people coming into the community – has this been taken into consideration? There are 2 schools that are failing in the West Wight area – has reducing the PAN or a federation been considered for these schools? It was mentioned earlier in the meeting that Brighstone Primary have had a recent Ofsted monitoring visit and the results will be published shortly. It would have been more appropriate if the Local Authority had all the information collated together before disrupting communities, i.e. what is going to happen with Brighstone School after the Ofsted report?

Answer: Funding for the site comes from the Department for Education (DfE) as part of the Priority Schools Building Programme (PSBP). The All Saints site falls within the programme. The site is to receive the funding regardless of the name of the school. PSBP projects are going on throughout the Isle of Wight in schools.

Brighstone School is a voluntary aided school whilst maintained by the Local Authority. It would require the governing body to consult on the point of PAN reduction. Brighstone cannot be sustained with their current admission numbers. All Saints engaged very actively with their admission numbers and accordingly it is being reduced from 2020 to 15 going forward. A failing school does take time to turn around.

It is possible to get 4 forms of intake reduced to 3 in the West Wight area, but it does not reduce the number of schools. Five schools are more expensive than 4 schools – 5 schools with reduced admission numbers does not have the same effect as 4 schools. To answer the point on timing of the consultation, there will never be a good time to do this consultation. A different time could have been chosen, but not necessarily a better time.

Question: This question was directed at Natalie Smith, School Improvements Officer. All Saints have had 3 Ofsted Requires Improvement notices. What is your accountability? What support are you going to be giving schools when you have not been giving All Saints the support in the last 9-10 years?

Answer: My team and I have put a lot of hard work in supporting the school. We go along as a team and give support to the school. Ofsted have published comments that the School Improvements Team had put in effective support – this can be viewed online. In some cases, the support does not always work to give the required outcomes despite all the things suggested. Sometimes it does not happen because of logistical reasons, i.e. staff sickness. The support to school has been good, but it has not had the desired effect. The School Improvements Team are continuing to give their absolute support to the school and will continue to do so. The SATS exams results when they are known will be another measure that can be looked at.

Question: Former parent governor of a non-IOW school – How are you going to do the transfer to the new site? Is it true you are expecting staff of Yarmouth School to move to the new site?

Answer: The Local Authority has faith in the governors and leadership of Yarmouth School. Yarmouth School is not closing but moving. The audience disagreed with this statement.

Question: With the expectation that the Head at Yarmouth is to become the Head at the All Saints' site, this is putting an awful lot on her. She is also the Head at Shalfleet Primary School too. The number of children in the new establishment will be double. This will not work. The Head will want to know what the facilities are and what staff she will be getting. With having the post as Head at Shalfleet, she will have less time for the new school. The move to a new site will be a disaster with the added problems of settling everyone in.

Question: Hannah Byers – parent of children at Yarmouth School, resident at Freshwater and specialist teaching advisor. If there is a question of surplus places, is it an issue of removing surplus places and reducing schools? Transitions are very disruptive for children – there needs to be an improved outcome.

Answer: The achievement would be to remove surplus places and reduce the number of schools.

Question: Mary Henderson – Grandmother. Has concerns regarding the affect this will have on the children by up-routing them, transferring them to another site and then transferring them back to the first site. What about younger siblings of children that have already moved – will they have to go to Shalfleet or will they go elsewhere?

Answer: Admissions will continue to be allocated under the School Admissions policy and parental preference. The policy gives a higher preference to siblings of children already at a school. Shalfleet Primary did not fill their admissions quota this year so everyone who asked for Shalfleet as a first preference would have been offered it.

The proposal is one from the Local Authority for best outcomes for children now and those in the future. It is looking for a strategy that provides a configuration of schools that gives the best outcome. Yarmouth and Shalfleet's leadership are a strength in this school system. It is being suggested that they will have that level of success if they are relocated to the Freshwater site.

Question: Five years ago All Saints was a failing school. Natalie stated that her team went in and have put in a lot of work. The Head did not implement what the recommendations were. Get rid of the Head at All Saints and look at the governors also.

Answer: Natalie responded that there is not a teacher or Head in the West Wight area that does not work hard for their children. She made it clear that she did not link staff as the reason that All Saints has not worked. When the School Implementations Team have finished working with schools and it has not been successful, then they will discuss with the governors and governing bodies.

Question: Teachers are exceptional at Yarmouth School. Governors – will they move from Yarmouth to Freshwater?

Answer: Yarmouth School is a 2-11 primary school and if All Saints closes, Yarmouth School will take on the role from 1 January 2020 and will also be a 2-11 school. The same Yarmouth School governing body will be running the school on the Freshwater site.

Question: Parent of child at All Saints – the geography of the West Wight area does not seem to be coming into any of this. The school villages are not situated on top of each other in the area. There is an issue of transport to get from one school to another. The Council cannot expect to solve their financial pressures by picking on schools in this area. Why has money to renovate All Saints School been sat on? Why has this not been used? What is the proposal and how much money is there? Why has the geography not been investigated more? Why have other outcomes not been looked into?

Answer: The school's money has been given by the DfE. The Council has a part to play. Money is allocated to the schools individually and if the schools are largely full, you can generally get everything working perfectly. Geography has tried to be considered but it is not possible to consider all of it. Geography cannot be changed.

Question: Helen Jones – child at Yarmouth School. St Saviours' governors wrote a letter to their parents. They are of the opinion the proposed integration of Yarmouth School will endanger their school. The Yarmouth School proposal will give a reduction of 105 of surplus places, but the previous St Saviours proposal will reduce 140 surplus places.

Answer: The St Saviours proposal is still an option.

Question: Parent of children at Yarmouth School – has concerns for their education. There is superb management at this school. This is a numbers game and a better suggestion would work better. Removing the school would tear the heart out of the community and so many children from Freshwater attend

Yarmouth School. More effort has gone into All Saints School than any other school on the Island, and it is still not working for children and parents. Please keep Yarmouth School in Yarmouth.

Question: What will happen to Yarmouth Preschool, Littlestairs? This was not in the consultation and has not been thought about.

Answer: No one has suggested the closure of the preschool.

Question: Parent of daughter at Yarmouth School – have children who are going through their SATS been considered? The Council do not give a damn about the children. All they think about is money. All children have been successful at Yarmouth School and they are happy there. What happens to all the All Saints' teachers – are they all fired? Why move 2 schools and bundle them together? It is not going to work.

Question: Kevin Shaw – Concerned that this current option has not been thought through. There is a concern around the pre-school and what will happen to it. With regards to the Yarmouth site, there must have been some thought as to what to do with it.

Answer: The Local Authority will work with the community to get the best result.

Comment: It was felt that there were too many things that have not been answered.

Question: Yarmouth Resident – The current proposal is to be funded by a 'pot of gold'. It is not clear why they have got this funding when no other school has.

Answer: The money will be lost if it is not spent on the All Saints site. It is part of the government programme and it specifies what is the best solution for that particular school.

Date of Next Meeting

- Thursday 6 June 2019, 6pm-8pm – All Saints CE Primary School