



# Minutes

Name of Meeting	West Wight School Public Consultation Meeting	
Date and Time	Wednesday 13 March 2019, 6.00pm – 8.00pm	
Venue	All Saints Primary School, School Green Road, Freshwater, Isle of Wight	
Panel	Richard Vaughan Natalie Smith Martin Goff  Mark Saunders Rob Sanders Helen White (Minutes)	Deputy Head of Strategic Development, Hants CC School Improvement Manager IOW, Hants CC Head of Service – Information Transport & Admissions, Hants CC Facilitator Deputy Director for Education, Dioceses 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 a review of West Wight school places was given.

## Representatives

1) Mark Chiverton, Unison – representing support staff at both schools (All Saints & St Saviours). He was in attendance at the staff meeting last week and the third option recommending closure of All Saints is not their preferred solution. There is real feeling that there could be a move for a quick decision which is not acceptable. There is already concern where 2 schools in the West Wight area have been closed in the last 8 years – Weston Manor and West Wight Middle School. There is a danger around this decision where there will be less diversity in the area, i.e. All Saints is a C of E school and St Saviours is Catholic. There is a commitment to improving All Saints School and it requires adequate support and resources.

There is a lot of concern regarding children having to walk the distance from Freshwater to St Saviour’s particularly around safety, the walk up a hill and having to walk in the pouring rain. If All Saints’ does close and children are transferred to St Saviours, they do not want to be made to leave their current school building only to be educated in temporary classrooms. The closure of All Saints will be damaging to the community and the village. If a decision is rushed that turns out to be disastrous, it will wreck the community for years ahead.

Mark highlighted that Hampshire County Council had to come in and rescue the education system that was created in the last restructure, and believed that All Saints’ School should be kept open.

2) John Medland, Councillor for Freshwater South – disagrees with the school places in the consultation report. The consultation should be looking at all 5 schools in the West Wight area.

3) Christina Ring, former parent of children at All Saints – when she was a governor for the school, the school was not receiving any support. Due to lack of support, she moved her children out of the school. She would like to bring them back to All Saints’ provided that adequate support for the school is put in place. No one has dealt with the problems within the school, it has been left to get into this situation and now it is being threatened with closure. No one will help or support the school and Christina felt very upset when making the decision to pull her children out of the school, as she did not want to do this.

4) Penny Tilt – positive details from comments made in the Ofsted letter of 30 July 2018 have been ignored during this consultation. The comments were read out:

*‘The progress that pupils make in key stage 1 has significantly improved. This year, by the end of Year 2, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in reading is in line with the most recent national average. Although the proportion of pupils who achieve the expected level in mathematics and writing remains below the national average, it is considerably better than in 2017, when no pupils achieved the expected level in these two subjects.*

*New staff have been appointed to the school with good subject knowledge in phonics and mathematics. Their improved practice is evident across the school, with most pupils in Year 1 now achieving the required level in phonics. The teaching of phonics and spelling has been further strengthened by the effective use of additional help for the pupils who need it. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making better progress from their starting points’.*

5) Mike Hackleton, Freshwater Methodist Church – Mr Hackleton read out a letter from an 88 year old lady, Helen Mew, who was unable to attend the meeting. Helen considers that the potential closure of All Saints’ has not been talked through enough. The distance to walk to the alternative school is far too far for little ones and with new houses being built, there will be more young families moving to the area. All Saints’ may be a small school at the present time, but in a few years with more houses being built, it will be thriving. Small schools enable children to get the care and attention they need as opposed to larger schools with larger class sizes.

6) Carly Wyre-Nock , parent – pointed out that there is only 1 school in Freshwater and not 2. It is a designated rural school and this has not been considered. Why are there only 2 schools being looked at when there are 5 schools in the West Wight area? There is also criticism of the way parents found out about the possible closure of the school. They were not told directly but received the information via a leak to the County Press. Parents should not have found out in this way.

Choices of where to send children to school will be taken away from parents. The local authority will be offering a school that they do not want to go to. All Saints’ has been unfairly represented as a school. It is an improving school, but has been represented in a negative way and the decision to close is heavily weighted.

Counsellor Brading, the decision maker, lives in Lake and never visits the site. It is not a decision one person alone should be making and there is a feeling that All Saints is being picked on as a school. Catholic and Church of England schools are run differently, and some parents are not happy about their children being sent to a different faith school. There are also massive issues around safe walking routes to St Saviour’s.

If All Saints’ is to close in September 2019, then the notice period of just 3 weeks is not good enough. The process has not been done fairly. All Saints is on a site that does not touch any main roads and there is a crossing nearby. St Saviour’s has no safe routes to it and it will be putting children at risk. Will the All Saints’ children be segregated into portacabins in a field if moved to St Saviour’s? Portacabins are not acceptable accommodation for our children. There is also the implication of mental health when taking a child out of a school they love, making them walk to a school further away and then putting them in a portacabin when they get there.

Year 3 is larger than other year groups and not all Year 3 children will be able to go to St Saviours. What will happen if a parent has one child in Year 3 who cannot get into St Saviour’s and has to transfer to another school, and one child in another year group who is allocated St Saviour’s?

There are 200 homes planned in the area, so how is closing the school going to work? There are cost implications in getting children to other schools. How are we going to get children to Brighstone Primary if parents do not want St Saviour’s? Not all information has been provided to parents, so how are they to make suitable decisions without all the facts?

7) Rachel Dunleavy – recently emailed Councillor Brading regarding the consultation and he responded that he would want an early decision made and will put pupils first. This was felt by residents that this will not be the case.

8) Becky Powell – interested in the statistics to justify the third option. Believes this to be a work of fiction as it cannot be forecasted what is going to happen in 3 -7 years' time. No one knows what is going to happen with Brexit in the near future, so how can the local authority predict so far ahead?

All Saints' requested to reduce their PAN per year group to 20. Why was a figure of 30 used? Is it easier to close the school than to manage the school and deal with the issues, which is so clearly needed? What options were discounted before the consultation and why?

9) Allie Martin, parent of a child in Year 3 – there is concern about the lack of actual planning. Parents have yet to see any form of details or plans. There is only a proposal which is not detailing how this is going to work. All Saints' has got the capacity to deal with numbers of children and extra capacity to expand. It is very difficult to believe what is going to happen in the next few years. Is there an alternative plan for this that the public do not know about? Common sense suggests All Saints' is the least likely school that should be closed. There is a need to look forward and things cannot stay the same, but the school does need help and to work out what has caused people to leave. The school needs support to enable it to do this.

10) Cath Powell, Chair of Governors – the governing body are developing a direction of travel and considered opinions. The decision needs to be the best option and it needs to be right for the community of Freshwater. Freshwater is the largest village on the Island and it is inconceivable that there is not a school there. There is to be development in housing and development in employment opportunities. This site is fabulous and close to all facilities in Freshwater, i.e. sports centre, library. Children and families can walk, scooter or cycle to school. There is much emphasis in the written report giving the notion that All Saints' is a failing school. Our report will readdress the balance. Key Stage 2 data 2018 gave a 10% increase in children exceeding age related expectations. This is an improvement, not a failure. DfE data in overall performance – the school came 2<sup>nd</sup> out of the West Wight schools and 9<sup>th</sup> out of 44 schools on the Isle of Wight.

11) Angela Griffith – from an education point of view, she is impressed with the school, the atmosphere and the way the children are well behaved. As we are expecting growth in this area, any decision should be postponed by 12-18 months to see how it grows.

12) Resident – this is a really important decision and needs to be an effective decision that works in the long term. There is a need to look at long term education and quality education for the whole of West Wight. Looking from a geographic perspective, it makes no sense to position a school somewhere else. This is the best location as it has facilities, transport facilities, growing room, a growing social and economic climate. If the location is spot on, you can work and address it. There is a willing group of people and the governors that can help improve the school's performance to a greater degree. Although there is a higher elderly population in West Wight, this still requires younger people to service their needs and this brings younger families into the area. There is a plan to bring new houses here and employment opportunities - the school will be needed. It would be stupid to 'cut your nose off to spite your face'. It is not satisfactory that one person is to make the decision on the consultation. If IoW policy is to bring younger people to the Island, then we need schools, GPs, dentists and other professional services. The proposal does not make sense long term.

#### **Rob Saunders, Deputy Director for Education – Dioceses**

Rob stated that to add to the balance, the SIAMS School Inspection (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) for All Saints' Primary School was good. This accounts for the work that the school does. It is worth mentioning that the school has been promoted in that respect.

The Dioceses' position at present is to listen and absorb the information from both the local authority and the

community. The Dioceses is open to looking at and exploring alternative options other than the third option. The Dioceses will need to spend time listening to the local authority and community, and is to wait for all facts to come to the table before it responds.

### **Questions and Answers**

**Question:** Parent of children at Brighstone Primary School – why are the local authority not supporting or putting the spot light on Brighstone? Very clearly there are issues at other schools and the options listed are all about All Saints. There is a need for it to be considered on a much bigger scale. It is supposed to be a West Wight Schools Consultation, yet the options are far too narrow. Brighstone was not on any of the options to consult. As a Parish Councillor for the area, this is not just an education issue for the area but a regeneration issue. West Wight has been abandoned for far too long. There are repercussions from the closure of the middle school and the demographics have changed in the last 8 years; this is a symptom of the lack of investment, support and employment opportunities in West Wight. How is the local authority working with other cabinet portfolios, other areas of Health, Social Care, Housing, employment and a forward strategy on planning and development?

**Answer:** The Local Authority has met with all of the Headteachers of each school and offered support to all of them. To date those Heads have not asked for support specifically in their areas.

**Question:** The All Saints' site is the best site in West Wight. The pre-school on the site grounds has an outstanding Ofsted report. If All Saints' should close, where does that leave the pre-school?

**Answer:** The local authority are very conscious of the pre-school. Councillor Brading has indicated that he wants to keep the pre-school and there is a commitment to keep and protect it. The Council has a statutory duty around the provision of early years education and the pre-school on the All Saints' supports the meeting of that duty.

**Question:** Natalie Smith was asked to explain her role of School Improvements Officer and does All Saints'/West Wight have a particular School Improvements Officer? How much support has All Saints had compared to Chillerton & Rookley, who required improvement in September 2018 – small school with a PAN of 13? How many visits has All Saints had and what are the constraints that the local authority sees in this school? Is it about pace or turnover of staff? Hampshire Education Authority were contacted for more information on the School Improvements Team: how much support this school has had, what were the action points, how have staffing, pace, Ofsted reports affected the amount of support that our taxes have paid to put into this school. No one got back with a response.

**Answer:** Natalie is the School Improvements Officer for the whole of Isle of Wight. The way school improvement works is each school that is not an academy has a member of staff allocated called a Lead Learning Partner. They call upon advisors to pull together a package of support that is tailored to the school to assist the school and give them actions. The work that we do with schools is set up in conversation with the Head and Chair of Governors, and it works with what the most recent Ofsted report has said and what we identify to be the needs of the school. In terms of support, the Island schools have received an amount of support that is proportionate to their needs bearing in mind the willingness of the schools to engage with it. If we feel the support we are putting in is not appreciated, then we will have to look at the bigger picture before deciding how we are going to address it. All Saints' has had a lot of support and a significant amount of help, and because our support is scrutinised by Ofsted and our bosses, we are vigorously held to account for how schools do. All Saints' has not improved fast enough although the last 2 Ofsted reports did acknowledged some improvement in certain areas.

However, residents present at the meeting disagreed that there was fair representation of improvement in the consultation report. The school is not anti-help and are appreciative of support coming into the school. It was also highlighted that the Brighstone Primary School comments were equally selective. Natalie stated that her comment regarding schools willingness to engage was a general comment and was not applicable to this school.

It was Ofsted who judged that the school was not improving quickly enough. In that Ofsted report it does state that the school is receiving effective support from the local authority. Natalie stated that we come to schools and offer help and support, list actions and the school works through them with the support of the Governors at the fastest pace possible, dependant on capacity. The local authority has put in a lot of support in to All Saints' – a resident questioned how much was 'a lot'. Natalie felt uncomfortable at breaking down the level of support into detail at the meeting. When the next set of SATs results come through, we will see if working with the school has had the impact we require. The needs of Chillerton & Rookley and All Saints' have been met, and none of these schools has not gone short of support.

**Question:** My daughter went to All Saints' and now my grandson comes here. My other grandson will be going to the pre-school. Is the decision going to be a Council decision or a one person decision, i.e. Councillor Brading? If the building closes, what do they intend to do with it? Does support for the school include the building maintenance, as it is lacking in this school. The Council have let this building slide and decay. Where is the money Central Government gave this school, why has it been put on hold and not been allowed to be spent?

**Answer:** The local authority receives money and invests its money in all of its schools. It gets allocated on a priority basis. The potential investment that DfE gives to the local authority is for the Priority School Building Programme. The discussion with DfE is still progressing and the rate of progression is the same as all the other schemes, and is arranged and set by the DfE. It was queried that it has been progressing since 2015. The challenge is that it is government funding and they set the timeframes. Potential investment and the programme remain ongoing. It was queried why it is ok to spend a load of money expanding St Saviours instead of investing in All Saints.

The governance framework of the Council is set up so they have delegated cabinet members with portfolios. Many Councils are set up this way and they do not have committees like they used to. Councillor Brading could seek to get a collective decision from the Cabinet if he chooses to and Cabinet are prepared to, but the decision in relation to this consultation currently sit with him.

**Question:** Health and Safety – parts of the building are falling away. This needs to be addressed sooner rather than later. What is going to happen to the school if it does close?

**Answer:** This is an ownership issue. The Dioceses own the buildings and the local authority own the playing fields.

**Question:** Is this decision too big for one person to make? How can you convey the sheer weight of opinion from this meeting to the cabinet member? I believe that Councillor Brading is already under the impression that this is a failing school. In order to overturn that, you need the weight of opinions coming forward all the time. Why is Councillor Brading not present at this meeting?

**Answer:** As things stand a decision can be taken by Cllr Brading. If residents think there is another way to get their views across, it is very important that they respond fully to the consultation.

**Question:** In schools where improvement is required, how long does the local authority give schools to turn around? On a scale of 1-10 (with 10 being clear), how clear would teachers be on the required progress on a 6 monthly basis? Also regarding the date on which measures and outcomes would need to be achieved, would the Head and senior leadership team of the school and the School Improvements Team have the same date?

**Answer:** Natalie responded that the average length of time is between 2-3 years for a supported school to move to good. That is the standard length of time it takes school teams to do that. Teachers would be very clear on required progress on a 6 monthly basis. The date of required achievements should be the same for both parties. When you plan for improvement and put a date in, if that does not happen, there are not always straight forward reasons why it has not happened. Clarity around actions and the timings of them is what we are trained to do when we work with schools.

**Question:** Needs of SEN children – every child is making progress at All Saints. It is a small school and they are learning in small groups. It is a nurturing school and is it fair to move these children? These children are all making progress, but may not meet the progress that Ofsted want.

**Answer:** No representation for SEN on the panel. This question will be forwarded to the relevant officers.

**Question:** The biggest concern with moving to St Saviours is the transport. I have 4 children with 1 in a buggy. I have asked Councillor Brading to come and have a look at the proposed walk to St Saviours, but he has declined to come. How are you going to represent and show what that travel is actually like? Is the report to be given to Councillor Brading what you want him to see rather than the actual situation?

**Answer:** The law states that children can walk up to 2 miles to school up until their 8<sup>th</sup> birthday. On their 8<sup>th</sup> birthday and onwards, they are able to walk 3 miles to school. This was first written in 1944 and restated in the 1996 Education Act. This is what the law dictates to all Councils. If the distance is more than 2 miles, then the Council have a duty to transport children to school. However, the distance from Freshwater to St Saviours is under the 2 mile limit. There are routes that take you to St Saviour's, but they need to be fully risk assessed. Some off road routes will be suitable during summer months, but may not be in winter months. In the event that the local authority takes the position that it believes a route to be safe, there is a further process which allows an appeal against that. This takes it back to elected members. It was queried if the residents will be able see the report going to Councillor Brading. The response was the report will be available in the public domain.

**Question:** The only option being offered is for children to move to St Saviour's if All Saints' closes. However, I do not want my children to go to St Saviour's. The next nearest school that they can go to is Brighstone within this consultation. As the Council are taking away my school, is it going to provide transport for my children to get to Brighstone?

**Answer:** By law, if the nearest suitable school is more than 2 miles away, then the local authority has a duty to transport. In this circumstance, the local authority cannot guarantee transport to Brighstone for those who do not wish to go to St Saviour's.

**Question:** There are rumours that have been circulating. Is there an underlying reason behind the consultation? This is not the first time that someone has attempted to close this school. Has it got anything to do with the land and has a deal been arranged for the land on the site?

**Answer:** This is a consultation focused on pupil numbers in West Wight. At this point in time we are not looking at the future of the site and as already stated the site is partly owned by the local authority and the diocese.

**Question:** Where is Councillor Brading? He is the one person who is making the final decision and he is not here.

**Answer:** It is not the norm for elected members to attend such meetings during the initial consultation phase. This is an opportunity for officers to listen, answer questions and collect feedback, all of which will be presented to Cllr Brading in a future report.

**Question:** What is the proposed expansion of St Saviour's? How is this going to work?

**Answer:** The intention is that in the event of this playing out, it will admit 30 children into Year R and be a one form entry school. It would have in its physical and organisational structure 7 classes and accommodation for classes of 30. The classes will be organised in a certain way.

Statement read out from Councillor George Cameron, Freshwater North, who was unable to attend the meeting: *'The people that are making this decision do not know this area and they have not been listening to*

*local knowledge. They are not aware of the facilities that are needed for our school. This will be the mistake of the century if All Saints closes'.*

**Question:** The practicalities of the children walking to school have not been dealt with. It involves walking to and from school with young children, toddlers and babies in a pram with no pavement. It is a crazy suggestion. Children who live in Edinburgh Road have twice the distance to walk.

**Answer:** The 2 miles limit is statutory and applies to families all across the Island. It is not the Isle of Wight Council's legislation, it comes from Central Government.

**Question:** There are more children in Year 3 than places available. What is going to happen to these children?

**Answer:** In the event of All Saints' closing, all children will get a school place via the admissions process. Preferences will be looked at and the local authority will try its best to place children according to preferences. It may fall short on meeting all preferences, but it will provide a school place for all children.

#### **Date of Next Meeting**

- West Wight School Places Drop-In/Public Meeting – Monday 1 April 2019, 6pm at St Saviours Primary.