

## **SOUTH TYNESIDE COUNCIL**

### **THE FUTURE OF SOUTH SHIELDS SCHOOL - CONSULTATION MEETING FOR PARENTS/CARERS OF PUPILS IN YEARS 7, 8 &9**

**LOCATION:** Temple Park Leisure Centre, South Shields

**DATE:** 20 September 2018

**TIME:** 5.00pm – 6:15pm

**PRESENT:** John Pearce - Corporate Director of Children, Adults and Health  
Beverley Scanlon - Head of Learning & Early Help  
Val Thompson - School Place Planning Manager  
Enid Fairbrother - Service Manager Education and Standards  
Mrs G Hodgson - Minute Taker  
Ms J Pickering - Signer

Mr Pearce welcomed parents to the meeting and introduced himself, Ms Scanlon and other officers from the Local Authority.

Attendees were informed that this was the first day of the statutory consultation on the future of South Shields School and that the purpose of this meeting was to provide parents with information and seek their views.

Attendees were informed that a PowerPoint presentation would be delivered, detailing the consultation timeline and other relevant information. It was requested that attendees ask questions at the end of the presentation because many would be answered by the information in the presentation.

Attendees were also told that notes were being taken of the meeting and would be included as part of the feedback on the consultation process.

### **The following notes capture questions, statements and responses from the meeting:**

#### **Question - Would the notes be made available?**

Reply - They would be made available at the end of the consultation process.

#### **Question - Which legislation did this come under?**

Reply - The relevant legislation is the Academies Act 2010.

#### **Statement - The pupil numbers at the school are wrong.**

Reply - An explanation of pupil numbers would be given at the end of the presentation.

#### **Question - You are explaining the next steps if closure of the school goes ahead, so what if the school stays open?**

Reply - The school cannot stay open as a maintained school because of the Academy Order. It can only stay open as a sponsored academy and the timeline has been triggered by the Regional School Commissioner's (RSC) being unable to find a sponsor.

**Question - The academy order will be revoked if the decision is made to close? Is the decision made?**

Reply – The decision on the future of the school has not been made. Cabinet will decide on the closure proposal following the statutory consultation.

**Question - Will Ofsted be carrying out another inspection and has the Local Authority asked them to? Will it make a difference?**

Reply - The Local Authority cannot request Ofsted to carry out an inspection. If Ofsted carried out another inspection the outcome would not overturn the directive academy order.

**Question - Are you confident that all avenues have been exhausted?**

Reply - Yes. RSC explored all avenues to secure a sponsor and the Local Authority supported them in that. The ability to find a sponsor is not about standards but the financial viability of the school, which is linked to pupil numbers. Projections show that across South Tyneside there were 1,645 pupils in Year 6, which was a slight increase on last year, but there was no growth further down the year groups up to 2024-25. This made it very challenging in terms of the school attracting additional pupils.

**Statement - Moving Year 11 pupils was wrong.**

Reply - The section of the presentation detailing the proposed transition of year groups was highlighted, showing that there would be no plans to move Years 10 or 11 pupils. An error on the grid was verbally corrected

**Question - What about the teachers? What if they jump ship earlier as they have in other school mergers?**

Reply - The Local Authority would work with the school and staff to ensure as much stability as possible for the pupils in the school.

**Statement - Your prediction on pupil numbers is wrong.**

Reply – The pupil projections for the Borough are based on information from pupils currently in primary schools and on housing development information. \* **See note below**

**Question - There is no secondary school near the seafront. Why not change the boundaries and bring South Shields School further into those areas?**

Reply - The catchment area for the school borders three others in the area. Changing the catchment area would not necessarily increase the number of pupils at the school because neighbouring schools are also undersubscribed therefore parental preferences for other schools could be met.

**Question - Why did the Local Authority allow oversubscription into St Wilfrid's RC College and Harton Academy?**

Reply - This was based on parental preference. Under the Admissions Code parents can express a preference for a school and their preference can be agreed either because there are sufficient places or by an Appeals Panel, if not. The Council has no role in this and legal cannot prevent it.

**Statement - There are some areas that don't have a secondary school, so in the boundary plan/map there is an option area.**

Reply - This related to School Admissions and the Admissions Code was applied.

**Question - The FAQs don't answer all my questions. My son is in Year 9 and will have to go to Boldon School where they have already chosen their options, so he is going to suffer?**

Reply – The information on the phasing is in the presentation. We would work with receiving schools to support pupils in their transition.

**Statement - On safeguarding, my son's journey to school on a bike would be dangerous. The school bus is expensive and not there for after school clubs.**

Reply – Travelling routes and ways of travelling to alternative schools will be considered if the next stage of consultation goes ahead.

**Statement - My question is the safeguarding issue.**

Reply - As part of the consultation process the LA would be looking at the transport issues.

**Statement - That's why we chose South Shields School, for ease of travel.**

Reply - Travel and access will be considered as part of the consultation.

**Question - My daughter doesn't want Boldon or Mortimer so what do I do? Harton and others are oversubscribed?**

Reply – A preference can be expressed for any school. If the school is oversubscribed an appeal would be offered. It would be for the Appeals Panel to decide whether the preference can be agreed and a place offered.

**Statement - Cllr M Smith disclosed the closure of the school.**

Reply - The LA is consulting on the future of South Shields School and this meeting is part of that consultation.

**Question - Was there any point in this meeting? I don't want my child to be miserable.**

Reply - The meeting is to provide information to parents to ensure they have the relevant information. It is also to give an opportunity to ask questions.

**Question - What would happen if every child went to Boldon School?**

Reply – Parental preferences would be agreed if there were sufficient places. If the school is oversubscribed an Appeals Panel would decide whether the preference could be agreed and a place offered.

**Question - Segregation by Boldon and Mortimer? Parents view that South Shields pupils will be bullied.**

Reply - The schools will support the integration of pupils to prevent any issues.

**Statement - Both Boldon and Mortimer schools are not improving.**

Reply – Both schools are working hard to improve standards and results are improving.

**Question - You are saying that the issues of uniform and transport will be looked at. When are you going to ask the children?**

Reply - If the decision is to close the school there will be another stage of consultation and travel to school will be outlined at that stage. The issue of school uniform will also be considered.

**Statement - Pupils are seeing social media reports and getting upset.**

**Question - Is the LA going to pay money out on an empty school? Is a special school going into the site?**

Reply – The consultation is about the future of the school not the building. If the school does close the building must be used for community or educational purposes.

**Question - Why are other schools in this position still open? Emma Lewell-Buck MP said there were 23.**

Reply – There have been 4 secondary schools with academy orders that have been revoked in the last 7 years. They all had particular circumstances, none of which South Shields has.

**Statement - The school has been set up to fail, with newspaper articles but it's a good school.**

**Statement - It takes 3 years to turn a school around and the Head Teacher hasn't been there long enough. Exam results are better than Harton.**

Reply - The examination results will be confirmed in October but based on the available data that is not the case.

**Statement - We want the LA to approach government and ask them to revoke and fund the school.**

**Question - Why has South Shields School been crossed out on admission application forms?**

Reply - That is not the case.

**Question – Why was the Year 6 open evening not held?**

Reply - The school originally chose to cancel this and then reinstated it. The Council has been acting on the requests from the school.

**Statement - You are pushing pupils into other schools.**

Reply – This is not the case and the LA has proactively offered places in South Shields School for pupils when parents did not express any preferences or where they applied for oversubscribed schools.

**Question - My child is in Year 11 doing GCSE's. What help and support will there be? Should I put her into another school now?**

Reply – Year 11 pupils will continue their education at South Shields School and will not be affected by any proposals.

The proposed transition by year group was explained.

**Question - What about teachers leaving? Why not leave all year groups to progress through the school until they finish?**

Reply - This is a consultation and so views on the phasing of a potential closure are welcomed. You can include your views on this in your response to the proposal.

**Question - SEND provision? It has been said that there is a lack of it? Why not have half and half on the site? Would that be viable?**

Reply - This would not solve the issue with South Shields School, it would still remain unviable.

**Question - If halved you could send a viability report to the RSC and look for a new sponsor. We don't know if you were in support of the school with the RSC, we would like to see the report. As the LA you have the power to fight government, Emma Lewell-Buck said so.**

Reply - If there was a proposal that would ensure the viability of the school then the LA would pursue it. . There are two aspects to this suggestion – the school has 50% below the number of pupils it was built for so even using half of the school for other things it would still leave the same number of pupils which is not viable on a long term basis. There are also issues around locating specialist provision with secondary pupils, and a lack of compatibility between primary/secondary pupils.

**Question - The difference is that South Shields School and a primary would have different start times so there would be no overlap. The SEND/Special could be segregated. So money would be saved. What was the viability report to the RSC? You would have had to tell them how it was viable.**

Reply – The RSC asked for all relevant information about the school before seeking a sponsor. Potential sponsors felt that the school is not viable and therefore did not proceed.

**Statement - If, following consultation, Year 9 pupils would be the first to leave and if at Boldon School they would have missed a full year of GCSE work.**

Reply - The LA is talking to Boldon School about transition of Year9 pupils and GCSEs. When all the information is available it will be shared.

**Question - How can you say education has been taken into account?**

Reply - The proposal is about the current and long term future of education in the borough

**Question - You said the school takes 1100 pupils? What about a sixth form?**

Reply – The viability has been considered based on actual pupil numbers. The school has never been up to full capacity since it was built. There is no demand for additional sixth form provision in the area.

**Question - What are my options to move my child now?**

Reply – Parents can express a preference for any school and can contact School Admissions for advice.

**Question - What strategies are being used by the LA to improve Boldon School and Mortimer Community College?**

Reply - The Local Authority offers professional support to all schools where appropriate.

**Question - Why are there no Councillors here?**

Reply – This is an opportunity to find out the detail of the proposal from Local Authority officers and to ask any questions.

The meeting was closed and some attendees took the opportunity to ask individual questions of Local Authority staff.

***\* Note: Pupil projections were added to the information available on the consultation website in response to requests during the consultation.***