

Save Our School

Notes of the public meeting - 18th October 2006 at Stoney Middleton school

74 people attended - staff, governors, village residents and friends of the school attended apologies were received from 45 people

Peter Hobson, chair of governors, welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Councillor Nigel Allwood.

Sue Bettney - (SB) acting vice chair of governors chaired the meeting.

Sue Bettney outlined the agenda for the meeting -

- Background to the headteacher post
- We need a committee of volunteers for an action group
- Richard Jones had already offered to act as press secretary – 2 articles will appear in the Derbyshire Times and Matlock Mercury
- Radio Sheffield and Radio Derby interviews to be broadcast on the 19th October. Dulcie Jones to speak. High Peak Radio broadcast 23 October.
- Governors informed on the 17th October that we could ask 2 questions plus supplementary questions at the 1st November meeting of councillors

1 Background information regarding the post of headteacher

- B Ely had given notice of resignation in plenty of time for an appointment to be made.
- Governors met with Bob Ashford (from County) to set a timetable for an appointment
- Bob Ashford suggested three options for the future
 - A federated status where a headteacher of another school manages our school at the same time and we share resources.
 - Closure of the school.
 - Appoint a new head.

Governors had made it very clear to Bob Ashford at the start that closure was not an option we would ever consider. (There was no further discussion with the county about this option) Some discussion took place about a federated status as we were led to believe Curbar school had expressed an interest in such an arrangement. This information turned out to be quite false. (At the time Eyam school were also appointing a headteacher)

The appointment procedure went ahead and dates were set for advertising in the national press, short listing and interview dates. Governors were unable to appoint on this occasion and we agreed to advertise a second time and dates were set for the advertising, short listing and interview. In the meantime S Fitzpatrick had agreed to be the acting headteacher. At all stages parents were kept fully informed. Parents were happy about the acting head position.

2 SB stated that our school budget was robust at this stage and funds had been set aside for advertising for a new headteacher and for supporting the acting headteacher. Also the FPTA support the school by raising substantial funds through a variety of activities.

3 Some questions were asked about the costs per pupil, ownership of the building, and how surplus places are dealt with in primary schools

- The building is owned by the diocese
- Derbyshire support small schools with an extra allowance per pupil
- Forward projections by DCC of the numbers of children coming into the school is low. (Net figures for next year to rise)
- The report stated that it costs DCC £5,678 per pupil at our school and £2,640 at other schools. These figures are averages and do not compare other small school costs with ours.

4 Timetable

Cabinet agreed on the 17th October to begin informal public consultations about a possible closure of the school in July 2007. The consultation period is from 30th October to 27th November.

Cabinet will consider the responses on the 12 December

If cabinet decide to proceed with the proposed closure, the publication of the statutory notice is scheduled for early January 2007, the end of notice period is mid February and the School Organisation Committee meets in early March.

The full County Council meet on the 1st November and we can put forward 2 questions

5 We agreed to write letters to all county councillors - one letter from an individual could be sent to all the councillors. Village groups such as the WI, SMILE, Well Dressing etc agreed to write letters.

Volunteers are needed to put the 2 questions with supplementary questions to the cabinet

As the education of the children is paramount, it was stressed that the school will be fully supported to continue as usual throughout this time.

6 Nigel Allwood addressed the meeting

He had visited this school on many occasions.

He attended a meeting with Councillor Charles and D Humphreys (Head of Development) when he was given the report and asked to read it quickly. He had pre-empted some questions. He pointed out to the councillors that if the school closed it would be a significant loss to the village as it was the only place where village activities and meetings could take place. He noted in the Village Millenium book that the school is at the heart of village life.

Transport difficulties were noted. It was also stated to him that Curbar were not in favour of any federated status. Also any acting head teacher would need two years of training by which time the person concerned would be of retiring age.

N Allwood encouraged us to write letters as the number of letters received has to be declared. He gave some guidance on asking the questions at the meeting on the 1st November.

7 It was suggested past pupils wherever they are in the world could be contacted to write letters.

Further comments were made about the extended school day which is a government priority in education.

It was noted that Derbyshire consider itself an “excellent” authority and its logo is “improving life for local people”.

8 Richard Jones addressed the meeting with several points about :

Importance of the school. Quality of education. Transport difficulties. School Organisation Plan

- Publicity needed to keep us in the public eye
- Procedure - some errors in the consultation document need correction
- Travel to Curbar - dangers of the road - ask DCC for supporting documentation on environmental impact
Curbar schools travel plan accepted by DCC “aims to reduce congestion”
- Sustainability of village life important to consider eg if no school then not attractive to families coming in to the village
- Finance - Need accurate figures that costs could be reduced - transport costs could increase overall budget
What are the costs per pupil at Curbar school now and with an extra 20 children?

- Definition of isolated school 2 miles for nearest alternative school for infants 3 miles for junior age children - where is the documentary evidence for this definition?
- Check number of small schools in this category - other small schools could also be threatened
- Consult with Curbar to see if they were informed of the possibility of our school closure. A letter strongly suggest “Curbar would not support federation as they had the space to accommodate our pupils”
- Freedom of Information
Any documentary evidence to support assertions can be asked for

9 M Miller proposed the 2 questions

Mr Griffiths noted that the governments current agenda is Every Child Matters which has 5 strands (see below) and that we could ask questions around these criteria.

B Ely informed us that apart from one other school in the area, our school, because of the quality of its education, had been offered Beacon Status on two occasions in the past. We had not accepted as it would mean extra visitors to the school and teachers being out supporting other schools which would have a significant impact on the children’s education.

10 We need to write letters to councillors and we agreed to have a letter writing session in school for anyone who requires it on -

Monday 6th November between 3.30 and 7.30 pm

Please bring any letters already written and we will ensure they are photocopied and put in envelopes and delivered. Governors will be there to assist or please contact them earlier if necessary. Address letters to Dear Councillor

Governors will also help with typing letters either before or at the session on the 6th November.

Any letters need to be at the school by the end of the day on the **9th November**. B Ely offered to deliver all the letters to the County Office on the 10th November. S Holt offered to set up a web site and buy all the required envelopes. S Holt will email the notes of this meeting to everyone who has an email address. Those without an email will receive a hand delivered copy.

M Nicholson is keeping the MEP informed of developments. The PTA is pricing banners etc.

B Ely has started a prayer group - contact Beth for further details

The action group is to meet on Saturday **21** and Monday **23 October 7pm**.

Sue Bettney - chair

Dulcie and Richard Jones - publicity/press secretary

Jayne Hobson Marija Nicholson Lyn Holyoake

Sue Bettney was thanked for chairing the meeting so effectively.

Peter Hobson informed the meeting that there were two vacancies for parent governors. Two parents had already expressed an interest and would be co-opted onto the governing body.

Date of Next Meeting. 2nd November 6.30pm

Councillor Charles and another county representative will meet with all parents and residents on the 2nd November at 6.30 pm at the school.

Please would at least one parent from each family be there.

Councillor Charles will meet staff at 3.30pm governors at 5pm and. the public at 6.30pm

Some possible points to assist when drafting letters

- The school delivers a good quality education. Our children fit in well when they go on to a large secondary school. Lots of success stories from former pupils
- The school budget is robust
- The school is at the heart of village life. Closure would tear out the heart of the village
- The ownership of the building
- Closing the school would mean children having to travel along a very heavily used major road with limited footpaths
- Governors were not consulted about any possible closure proposals
- Council states it is an “excellent” council and “improves life for local people”
- The Every Child Matters agenda
- The extended school day is a government priority

Our website is www.friendsofstoneymiddletonschool.org.uk

Relevant websites

www.derbyshire.gov.uk for full report

click on your council
meetings and decisions
cabinet meeting
17th October 2006 Item 10

Report of the Strategic Director for children and younger adults - consideration of the future of Stoney Middleton (C of E) Primary School

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk more information about Every Child Matters

Every Child Matters

The governments’ aim is for every child whatever their background or their circumstances to have the support they need within the 5 criteria :

- Being healthy - enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle
- Staying safe - being protected from harm and neglect and working in a safe environment
- Enjoying and achieving - through learning - getting the most out of life and developing skills for adulthood
- Making a positive contribution to society - being involved in a positive and active way with the community.
- Achieving Economic Wellbeing - not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving their full potential in life

OfSTED Inspectors now make judgements about all these aspects of a school based on questions such as - How much do children enjoy learning? Are they working in a safe and healthy environment? .

This government initiative now gives children more say about issues that affect them.

At all stages of a child and/or young person’s school life the children need to be involved.

These aims are also important aspects of other areas of children’s services such as the care services.