

Appendix 2: St Andrew's CE Primary School Public Meeting Notes

Meeting date 21st May 2014 at 19.00Hrs
Attendees Michael Nix, Gillian Churchill from the Local Authority (LA),
Christine Bartley Chair of Governors and Trevor Cristin Head Teacher St Andrews CE Primary School
Sally Collins from the Diocese of Chichester
Councillors Wealls and Hawtree
Approx 30 members of the public

Trevor Cristin gave introductions and stated that the governors recognise the need for additional places but want to be sure that the ethos and education offered by the school is not lost. They have agreed to undertaking the consultation process because they believe that the situation is sufficiently compelling. The Governors will finalise their views at the end of the consultation period. They have not yet made their final decision on whether to support the proposal. They are holding a school community only meeting on 9th June to seek the views of the school community.

Michael Nix gave a short presentation outlining the process and why the LA was making the proposal. He also stated that this is a genuine consultation, no decision has yet been made and that the final decision will be made by elected members, not by officers. As St Andrew's is a Voluntary Aided School the views of the governing body and the Diocese are very important.

All responses to the consultation will be seen by members before the decision is made. The decision is made on balance, bearing in mind the responses to the consultation about the need to provide additional school places. The governors of the school and the Diocese have the right of appeal to the Schools Adjudicator if they do not agree with the decision made by Committee.

The floor was then opened to questions

You are consulting on something that is very vague, there are no plans of the school for people to comment on.

The LA and the school are working closely together on feasibility proposals for any resultant extension. The school has made their requirements very clear, minimum impact on the outside space, year group clusters and the ability to hold whole school assemblies. There will be an opportunity for the public to view the plans prior to any planning application being submitted.

Will the governing body share the plans with the school community prior to 30th June which is the end date of this consultation?

Yes. The governing body are meeting with the LA at the end of this week to finalise the feasibility stage of the project. The governing body will be in a position then to share these plans with the school community.

The head teacher of West Hove Infant School, Connaught Annex read out a statement (attached). She raised the point that her school is not full and that if the proposed expansion of St Andrew's was to go ahead there could be a negative impact on her school. Please could the LA consider this when deciding about the proposal for St Andrews.

It was agreed that the LA would look into this matter prior to any decision being made (this was done and the response that was sent out the following day, is also attached).

What will the council do if the proposal is ultimately rejected in October?

We would need to consider putting in more bulge classes if possible but ultimately the only other option open to the LA would be to make use of the surplus capacity on the periphery of the city. This could mean pupils travelling over 3 miles to school. This needs to be taken into account when the decision is made as we have to consider the impact on families as well as schools.

Sally Collins from the Diocese said that the Diocese has 159 schools across their areas and the situation with increasing pupil numbers is not peculiar to Brighton & Hove. She also urged the meeting to consider the position of the school in its parish and community as a whole.

There is much evidence that suggests that a 2 form entry primary school is the ideal size for a school. What is the diocese view on this?

Sally Collins said that the diocese have schools from 50 up to 4 form entry schools (840 pupils). In her experience the success of a school is not linked to the size of the school.

If there was a change in government next year, would this alter the ability of the Local Authority to open and operate new schools?

The problem for the LA is not that it cannot open new schools; it is much more that there are no sites available in the area of need which could be used to develop a new school. This is something that has also been accepted by central government who are having trouble locating sites for the two free schools in the city, both of which are currently located at temporary sites while a permanent home is sought.

The Bilingual Primary School is looking to move to the Hove Park Depot site. Will this improve the situation in this part of the city in terms of number of school places available?

The Bilingual School offers a bilingual Spanish curriculum which is not something that every parent will want for their child and is therefore deemed to be a city wide provision. In the event of over subscription, the school uses random allocation to determine who gets a place and not proximity to the school. As a consequence of this is thought to be largely irrelevant where in the city the Bilingual Primary School is located.

Is this need caused by a 'demand bubble' that could fall away in the future and what will happen if it does?

This is something that the LA always has to consider when proposing additional school places. It is necessary to strike a balance between providing additional school places or asking parents with very young children to travel considerable distances to access a school place. With the forecasts we have available, it appears that there will be sufficient pupils to fill these additional places for the foreseeable future.

Will the admission priorities for the school change as a result of this proposal?

No, the admission priorities will remain the same for the school.

Are Reception year places full in most local infant schools?

West Hove Infant School, Connaught Annex has no spare places in Reception although it does have some spare capacity in Year 1. The school also has a full allocation for September with a waiting list, should any of the initial allocations drop out.

Will the proposal result in additional staff being employed?

Yes the school will need to engage additional staff as it expands. As a result of this, the staff accommodation will be included in the extension proposals.

The impact of the proposal on traffic and pedestrian movements will need to be considered. Might it be possible to open up an entrance on Haddington Street?

As part of developing the scheme prior to submitting a planning application, the council will engage a traffic consultant to look specifically at this. If it is possible, we will provide another entrance. We will liaise with the planning and highways officers to see if this can be achieved.

There is nothing positive in this proposal for St Andrew's School, the governors should say no.

What would happen in the event that the committee making a decision that was against the wishes of the school and the diocese?

The diocese and school's response to the consultation will play an important part in the decision made by the committee. In the unlikely event that the Committee make a decision that is against the wishes of the school and the diocese, they both have the right to refer the decision to the Schools Adjudicator who will review the reasons for the LA decision and, if necessary, change the outcome.

Meeting ended.