Appendix 3 - Emails from Save Winterton School Committee to Sara Tough, Executive Director of Children’s Services, Norfolk County Council

 03/07/2018

Dear Ms Tough

We are writing in connection with the proposed closure of Winterton-On-Sea Primary School and Nursery and to ask that key dates in the timeline are changed.

We believe the published dates are far too aggressive and do not give the school the best chance of remaining open.

The end of the initial consultation period is just six weeks after the announcement of closure was first made. This coincides with the start of the summer holidays (the longest continuous holiday period in the school year) and gives too little time for the school and community to mobilize and formulate a response to the proposed closure. According to the Department for Education document regarding statutory guidelines for opening and closing maintained schools, the time window for the consultation period is defined as ‘Recommended to last a minimum of 6 weeks’ so we believe asking for an extension is not an unreasonable request.

More important than this however is the actual proposed date of closure, currently defined as December 31st 2018. This is halfway through the school year and will cause maximum disruption to those pupils switching school. Having the closure at this time also means that many parents have felt pressurized into securing a place at an alternative school for the entire academic year therefore removing their children from Winterton after the summer holiday. This appears to have been specifically designed to further reduce the viability of the school, leading to a fear that the entire process has been designed from the beginning to end in a pre-ordained state of closure.

Further to this it became apparent at the public meeting held at the school on the 26th June that contrary to all previous assurances the IEB has not pursued every option for keeping the school open. Members of the public identified two options that if successful, could mean the school is viable on an on-going basis. Given additional time further opportunities may be found. The fact that these had not been considered previously by the IEB brings their professionalism and expertise into doubt and again, further supports the theory that there is a hidden agenda at work to close the school. Based on the importance of the school for both current and future children of the village and indeed the entire community this is simply not good enough.

Given the reasons identified above we feel justified in asking for both an extension to the consultation period and the proposed closure date and request a decision is made on this at the earliest opportunity.

Yours Sincerely

Save Winterton School Committee

18 July 2018

Dear Ms Tough

Please find attached details of a meeting held with NCC representatives on the 16th July at County Hall following the Children's Services Committee meeting of the 10th July.

As you will see this has highlighted serious concerns regarding the proposal for closure for Winterton School. We believe this should be sufficient evidence for the proposal to be withdrawn or at the very least the key dates in the closure timeline to be extended as we originally requested on our email to you of the 4th July.

As we have not yet received your promised feedback on that email and we are now only a matter of a few days to the end of the initial consultation period (24th July) we ask that you give this matter the urgent attention it deserves.

Thankyou

The Save Winterton School Committee

Sent from Save Winterton Primary School Committee.

19 July 2018

Dear Ms Tough

As a result of the contacts we have made with Academy trusts in the area we have received initial expressions of interest from three of them and we await feedback from others. We have also canvassed parents to ascertain if they would keep their children at Winterton School if it was to remain open for the full academic year and we have had some positive responses.

Both of these items add weight to our request for an extension to the closure timeline which would give the school the best chance of long-term survival. An early decision on this matter is now vital with end of term rapidly approaching.

Can I also ask for your feedback on the following article from the EDP today: <http://www.edp24.co.uk/news/education/three-norfolk-schools-set-to-work-more-closely-together-in-new-partnership-1-5614197> This covers the creation of a new federation (the Dragonfly federation) maintained by the Local Authority (which I assume is the NCC) comprising of a partnership of three junior schools (one of which is smaller than Winterton) in the Stalham area . This is literally just down the road from Winterton - how can this happen while Winterton is threatened with closure, why were we not considered as another partner school?

The Save Winterton Primary School Committee.

22 July 2018

Dear Ms Tough

Can you please provide an update as to when we will receive your promised reply to our email of the 4th July regarding the proposed closure of Winterton School. This was acknowledged by your office on the 5th July stating you would “be in touch shortly with a full response”. To date, nothing has been received.

We are hoping for a reply before the end of term on Tuesday so we can update parents prior to the summer break therefore your attention to this matter would be appreciated. While we have asked questions that are potentially awkward or embarrassing (for example the misinformation regarding pupil attainment in an attempt to justify the closure) this is a subject of critical importance for the pupils, staff and parents at the school, and indeed the wider village community.

Further to this and in support of the campaign for the school remaining open please find attached a planning proposal from May last year for 93 residential dwellings in Hemsby, an extract from which is included below:

“Although there is some spare capacity at Early Education, Primary and High School levels there are a number of other developments within the area (see table 3 not included in this report, see full comments on file). Taking into account the pending planning application at Hemsby in table 3 (not included in this report, see full comments on file), a total of 293 dwellings (including the Yarmouth Road, Hemsby site) would generate an additional 28 Early Education age children and an additional 76 Primary age children. In addition, from September 2017, additional places will be needed at Early Education level, due to the introduction of 30 Hours Free Entitlement for eligible families. These places will need planning for now so nursery provision is being sought in this instance. ***There would therefore be insufficient places at Early Education and Primary levels and Norfolk County Council Children’s Services will be seeking education contributions for Early Education and Primary School provision as set out in table 2 above.***”

This was written prior to the proposal of closure of Winterton school which would only put further pressure on school places. Why therefore is the NCC attempting to close Winterton school by stating there are sufficient places in the surrounding schools when this is clearly not the case?

We are doing all we can to keep the school open while the NCC seem intent on closure regardless of the validity of the reasons given and we are struggling to identify the motivation behind this proposal.

The Save Winterton Primary School Committee.