

## **Notes of Consultation Event held on 26 June 2018 at Winterton Primary School – 6.00pm**

### **Present**

107 members of public (staff, parents and residents)

Martin White – Interim Headteacher

Richard Snowden – Independent Chair

John Organ, Chair of Winterton Primary School Interim Executive Board

NCC: Karen Hutchison, Neil Campbell, Caroline Money, Anne Isaacson (Note Taker)

Martin White welcomed everyone to the school. He welcomed Richard Snowden, Independent chair.

Richard Snowden explained that he had been asked to Chair this second consultation event as an independent Chair.

He introduced the Panel:-

**John Organ, Chair of the Intertim Executive Board**

**Caroline Money, School Organisation Manager**

**Karen Hutchison, Senior Adviser, Strategy and Partnership**

**Neil Campbell, Adviser, Quality Assurance and Intervention**

**Anne Isaacson (note taker on behalf of Norfolk County Council)**

**Karen Hutchison** welcomed everyone and explained the purpose of the meeting as per the initial meeting which took place on 15 June 2018. People should have had the list of frequently asked questions. If we cannot answer anything at this meeting, then we will log the questions and come back to you

**Caroline Money** introduced herself and explained the purpose of the meeting as per our initial meeting at the school on the 15 June - we are at the informal consultation stage on the proposal to close the school, which runs until 24 July 2018. Over the summer we will collate responses and write a report for the Executive Director of Children's Services. They will decide if we are to proceed to the statutory stage, which runs for 4 weeks. Only after that 4 weeks will a decision be made. This is the opportunity to have a say now and raise any further questions.

**John Organ** then went on to explain how we had reached this informal consultation as at previous meeting on 15 June 2018.

**Richard Snowden** then advised that the panel were ready to take questions. A member of the public advised that there was a spokesperson on behalf of the Committee to Save the School who would ask the questions – Diane Everett –

### **Please explain the detailed process undertaken in respect of the academy status of school**

**Karen Hutchison** – advised that we had received a response from the DfE and one of the Trusts involved – this solution had been rigorously explored but no practical solution had been secured. All MATs are approached through regular conversations held between themselves and the Department for Education to discuss capacity and growth plans. Trusts are then asked to undertake due diligence – Governance, leadership, finance and standards – and will

decide if they can take on a school if it can give quality sustainable education. Initially local schools were looked at. No solution had been found.

**Why did Ofsted not identify the issues of leadership governance and budget in their recent inspection.**

**Neil Campbell** explained his role at the Council as the appointed lead intervention officer in June 2017 when concerns were raised from school to school support. At that point the Local Authority risked the school as a school of concern and he was then appointed. Details are in the consultation document. Before formal intervention can take place we have to see if anything can be done – an early scoping audit had to be undertaken. This happened in October 2017. As a result of that, information was fed back to the Local Authority and they made a recommendation that we needed to escalate to formal intervention, so school improvement could move swiftly, and as part of that a warning notice was issued. It is a guide for things that need to improve for Winterton to be successful. In consultation with Governors, they worked with him on an improvement board to try to drive standards forward. There was a consultation between governors, himself and the authority but there was no capacity to drive things forward as fast as necessary. The Governors wanted to step aside and bring in the Interim Executive Board. The Ofsted inspection looked at 4 areas – leadership and management including governance and capacity to grow and move forward, teaching and learning, behaviour welfare and safety, and finally outcomes for pupils. At that stage it was believed that two MATs were interested. We knew there wasn't a partnership solution. However, with this prospect, we were able to suggest to the Inspector that although governance and leadership had not been consolidated yet, we felt that because of positively from the DfE and the academy chains, and the impact we were having, and the progress there was with raised standards, the capacity was there. Our argument was although we were an IEB, we were able to demonstrate the impact of raising standards and the next step was joining a MAT. The Inspector did not look at finances in detail.

**What measures did the IEB take to ensure future status of school,**

We were expected to consider a MAT solution. That was our role. We have to take the lead from the DfE who identifies the MATs to be considered in these circumstances. There was the potential for academisation and we had meetings with two MATs identified to us by the DfE. We then had to wait for the DfE's decision; which unfortunately was not positive.

**Why wasn't a special resources basis considered –**

This was looked at by the governing body before the IEB came in – but this means recruiting – and also has to go out to a tendering process. Between June 2017 and the IEB coming in, other things were much more pressing and not sure how it would benefit school. It is not a quick fix solution.

**Could this be a possibility for the school – there are a high number of SEN children and there are hardly any facilities in the local area – can it be looked into?**

It wasn't explored because had to ensure the quality of provision was rapidly improved. To set up something would have taken time away from other things that had to be looked at urgently. We are not sure of timescales for setting up a SRB. We are not SEN advisers. We can get some information from our SEN team and they can give us guidance on this. **Action – we will speak to SEN Team.**

**Why did DfE give a final decision of not to become academy –**

The DfE looked at the 4 areas and a decision was made. The Trust which made a statement gave reasons why they wouldn't. With small schools this can be difficult. They thought this would be the case with Winterton. They needed a balance of the 4 areas.

**An extract from the DfE guidance on the information concerning Closure of Rural Schools - have the following points been considered.**

**Can you outline the impact assessment on the community**

The impact assessment is carried out at the next stage as part of the statutory consultation. No decision has been made on closure yet. It is just a proposal at this stage. Whenever we take a decision to consult it is not done lightly and therefore we need your views

**Where does the closure date of 31 December 2018 come from? Who decided it?**

This is the timescale in the proposal and it is best practice to be clear about the timing. An officer group of the County Council decided on the timescale, given that there is no long term governance, leadership or sustainable budget.

**Cant the children finish the school year first?** – If you are concerned about the timescale, please feed this into the consultation. The decision for 31 December is because there is no long term governance, headteacher and the budget is not sustainable. Your views on this will be fed back into the consultation.

**You are not giving the parents and children a chance – why has it to be 31 December. Why cant it be July 2019? Give them a chance to keep the school going.**

**If children move half way through the year, they are not in a friends group –**  
**This point is noted.**

**Richard Snowden** said from the responses given it is clearly a strong view that 31 December causes significant problems for the children, particularly year 6 children.

**Comment - no parent is going to have children here in September. You have told us we have to move our children and then justify it when only a small amount of children are left.**

**What is the plan to sustain the school to support the children – if they move to Hemsby?**  
It will be up to Hemsby if they have the capacity.

**What if there is no space and what about special needs children?** This is a fair point to go to the consultation – **Action.**

**In the document you mention the Caister Flegg cluster area in the list of consultees, why do you consult with them, is it because the children may not necessarily go to Hemsby – is there a wider area? Why did Hemsby parents get their letters a day later than Winterton? Please clarify**

The list of people consulted is best practice and we would always inform other schools in the area of any school organisation change. All letters went out at the same time in both schools.

**Have educational standards been taken into account and the aggressive house building which will put schools under enormous pressure?**

We are aware of the number of houses in the area with full planning and emerging. Prediction is that there is enough capacity for schools in the local area.

**How big is local area? -**

In this case we are including Hemsby, Winterton, Ormesby and Martham. Admission to the schools is about catchment area and parental choice. Currently a third of Winterton children go out of the catchment area.

**Do we have to find places for our children if the school closes?**

If a decision is made, there would be an admissions process, where parents are invited to select 3 schools. This would be when the decision is made.

**Will we get free school transport?**

We discussed free school transport at the last meeting. An assessment on walking routes has been undertaken and there is a public footpath available. However the County Council will be looking at providing free school transport to Hemsby, for children on the school roll at the time of a school closure decision. If a child attends a different school, this will be assessed on a case by case basis. There is a clear transport policy.

**Housing – why is the Headteacher at Hemsby not supporting Pontins housing?**

**We will note the comment**

**7b) Availability and likely cost of transport to other schools and how long will it go on for?**

As mentioned earlier, this is part of the information needed for the statutory stage of the process and will therefore be addressed as part of that stage.

**On basis it is part of the statutory process – will you carry forward to the statutory group what has been said – Yes it will be fed back.**

**What do we do to work with you to save the school?**

We need a partner – a suitable MAT who will be able to help the school financially go forward – some of you might be able to convince and identify someone to talk to. If we cannot find a partner, we will have to look at the budget and move the school down to a 2 class structure and this will not provide an acceptable level of education. We cannot force anyone to join us. We are still having regular conversations and we are open to talks.

**Can we not revisit it now?**

It has constantly been monitored.

**Have DNEAT been contacted**

All have been contacted through the regular conversations held between themselves and the DfE to discuss capacity and growth. There were discussions at the time and we are in constant conversations with the DfE. We would welcome discussions from any other schools. The governing body of another school and IEB would need to start discussions.

**Could we start discussions with Freethorpe and Fleggburgh – yes we will explore this.**

**We have emailed DNEAT who own the main building – they say they have had no written involvement –**

The discussions between the Trust and the DfE are conversations we do not have information about. They decide between themselves about capacity and growth. The building is owned by Diocese Board of Finance, not DNEAT. **Can the IEB not contact them direct? Yes we can. We will initiate these conversations through the Partnership Team.**

**Can we find a reason to keep it open?**

The main function of the IEB is to secure a sound basis for future improvement in the school and it must consider options for the school to become an Academy. The IEB has been impressed with the staff and the school has improved greatly over the last 6/7 months. The Academy options are provided directly by the DfE. The IEB has gone to the ones provided from the DfE and had discussions with others. We do not want the school to close, but need a viable MAT to come forward to allow the school to have a sound basis. **We will consider how to approach the Diocese and the two schools.**

**The statement said we are judged as requiring improvement.**

The school is not eligible for formal intervention by the Department for Education. None of the Trusts were interested due to size and governance and financial implications.

If a School is judged in special measures - we have to submit a statement of action to Ofsted. We have to do a feasibility study to see if school should stay open or close. Potentially we could still end up closing. We still have to look at this.

**Why is it only now we are looking at other Trusts, partnerships and federations.**

We spent months looking at Hemsby and other schools.

**Why have alternatives not been looked at?**

All opportunities have been looked at over time – we have had exhaustive conversations – those discussions with Trusts and the DfE were based on capacity and growth.

**Budgetary considerations – how can we forecast a deficit if we can't forecast pupil numbers?**

We do forecast pupil numbers. We can provide the budgetary information on that. We are quite optimistic on the number of children, it could be worse than that. Numbers always change.

**If the Head stays on, could the school stay open for full academic year**

This has implications on the budget.

**Could parent and community governing body take over in December?**

This is not being considered.

**Can we get a decision before the end of term. –**

**This point will be noted.**

**What additional resources will be allocated to local schools, including transport costs?**

We can't answer the question as no decision made.

**When the school was extended, a contract was taken out to do the PFI funding – 25 year contract. Will this continue if the school closes?**

There is no PFI funding in the budget.

**Parents questions**

**Little Nippers why was it closed – mother and toddler group –**

We did have concerns on this as the school was open whilst it was used. The children and parents had free roam of school and it was not good from a safeguarding point of view. The IEB did an assessment when it came to their attention. There was concern about the insurance for the group and the IEB have a duty to ensure the safeguarding of the pupils. It was made clear that there were no accusations on the Little Nippers organisers or attendees.

**How many children need to return in September for school to remain open**

70-75 children for it to be financially viable was said at the previous meeting, but this is not the IEBs decision. It legally has to stay open though in September if there is no formal decision to close.

**Children are already been taken out** – this concern has been noted. They will be educated while they are here.

**Teacher question – If the school stays open for a year how many parents will stay – raising of hands.**

**Not enough time has been given. Not fair to parents, children or staff. Main concern is for the children.**

**What provision for staffing has been made in September for returning children – Exactly as now.**

**Will SENCO continue to work one day a week in September –**  
Yes.

**If Hemsby is full will Martham change its catchment to include Winterton –**  
We don't know – if you feel this should be different, please put it in your response to the consultation.

**Why have children been turned down for Winterton –**  
We are not aware that this has happened.

**Will all siblings be guaranteed to go to same school –**  
We will try to ensure this. We cannot guarantee this.

**Why wasn't this process started in May when it was discovered the academy route was not viable –**

16 May was the date we found out and quite a lot of work had to be done. We had to be sure of the facts. There was a process from that date until the date the letter went out. We cannot use the school holidays for the consultation period. We wanted to inform parents as soon as possible. We didn't want to leave it until the school holidays. The council cannot start a consultation during the school holidays.

We didn't want to see a new cohort starting in September and then having a consultation to close. There is never a good time.

**Is the curriculum identical in all the local schools –**

All schools follow the National Curriculum. Academies don't have to. No neighbouring schools have to teach it in a particular way or order. There are statutory elements. It depends on school. If the school is to close, Winterton would work with governing bodies and leadership of the other schools to have a really good transition.

**Can we change our catchment to a bigger area –**  
**This comment will be fed into the whole consultation.**

**Can you tell us that there are enough places for children in surrounding schools –**  
As part of place planning, we undertake a School Census on places available. There are 150 places per year group and there is capacity across all year groups for all the children.

**Question from a pupil; Do you want the school to close?**  
We do not want the school to close.

**Meeting closed at 7.35pm – with one to one questions if required.**

**Why was the HT advert pulled by NCC?**

The advert was withdrawn due to the vulnerability of the school as a standalone school both academically and financially. An Improvement Board was put in place to work with the governors of the school to seek a collaborative solution.