

**SEN Review Consultation Meeting with Governors – 15 October 2008  
at Heathside School at 5.55pm.**

**Present:** Ian Brown, Head of Infrastructure  
Odran Doran, Headteacher Heathside School  
Gary Nethercott, Strategic Commissioner  
Sandy Ranson, Senior Adviser, Inclusion and Additional Needs  
Cheryl Sharland, Head of Integrated Services  
Kate Thomas, Programme Manager for the SEN Review  
Nicky Fisk, note-taker

The purpose of the meeting was to present stage 2 of the Consultation of the SEN Review to Governors and other stakeholders in the Southern Area of the County. A presentation was given including:

- Why the local authority is reorganising schools
- The local context/background
- The proposal/options for the school and the area.
- How stakeholders can have a say during the consultation period

The consultation process started on the 22 September and finishes on 15 December 2008.

**Why Now?**

- The next phase of Building Schools for the Future Programme would enable us to improve facilities at Special Schools.
- We would be able to build on the successful models we have in place.
- Learning is at the core of integrated services.

There are three options for the Southern Area plus options for county wide resources for pupils with severe dyslexia, high level autism and significant social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

**Q. Three options although the third one in the consultation is not the preferred option.**

A. The third option would lead to competition and would lengthen the timescale by nine months and we are looking to try and complete in the BSF timeframe. Competition opens up the option of a new school to bidders. Anyone could bid for the school and there are uncertainties about who this might be. We are not adverse to the idea of competition but in terms of this project it adds a layer of complexity and uncertainty.

The LA would prefer option one or two as either of the two schools would have a sound basis for extending their age range.

**Q. What about time impact with option three, could the process get hijacked by someone else.**

A. We do not know. Open competition has happened in Lowestoft and some of the bidders operated in other parts of the country and Europe. The LA would control the process so that it could not be hijacked and would set parameters, principles and outcomes of what we want to achieve and anyone who did bid would be tested against these principles.

**Q. Statutory Processes. In order to be part of the SWISS partnership Belstead school has to decide how they want to move forward as a foundation/trust status. Belstead governors will be deciding this term whether to go into a full partnership. How do the statutory processes impact on the process for the merger of the two schools and do they clash with each other.**

A. This could be a lawyer's question.

If Belstead are thinking about Foundation status it does not mean to say that in the longer term that as a new special school that the school could not be part of SWISS trust depending on how that trust is set up. The LA would need to ensure that governors are given the opportunity to make this decision appropriately within the most appropriate time frame.

Open/closing schools. The LA has statutory powers and can close or open schools, according to time scales, no delay is currently envisaged with this process.

**Q. How do we set up a system to ensure a voice for inclusion in SWISS? People in this room to be signed up to the trust and governors of SWISS. Need to make sure that if a change of leadership that things go differently.**

**Co-location and trust status. Westbourne High School is looking to form pyramid trust status themselves. Where would the new special school sit in this?**

A. We need to ensure that the jigsaw fits together, which trust the special school would sit on and a clear understanding between the schools on the site about who has responsibility for which part of the site. It is an issue of timing, for example if Westbourne becomes a Foundation School before all negotiations are finalised.

***Q. If the trust was set up and the new special school was not part of the trust they could want everyone integrated.***

A. Decisions need to be made by the governors as to whether to apply for part of trust that Westbourne is considering or whether they should apply to become part of the trust of SWISS.

Governors would not be able to have full membership on both, but they could become associate partners on one or the other of the Trusts.

***Q. Decision for the new school whether direct or associate partner.***

A. The two sets of governors for Heathside/Belstead need to be having these discussions. SCC cannot do this, as governors you need to determine your future, even though no decisions have been made regarding the two schools.

This is a very important point. Governors need to decide how to lock in needs and requirements of children and young people that the two schools deal with. Once this is clear take this to the governors of Westbourne High School and SWISS and question them about how they will deliver.

If we co-locate the special school on Westbourne High School site that forms a trust with SWISS – Westbourne foundation owns the land. The implications for the new school in terms of the land rights are ones that the LA will need to investigate.

Governors need to be very clear about what they want.

The overall site at Westbourne High School includes Whitehouse and we need to have a master plan for the site and engage schools in the process. If all agreed on the overall approach then it will be easier to handle the process.

***Q. SWISS has additional representation from Belstead and Beacon Hill. The LA panel have been advised to increase the governing body. The temporary governing body have not decided whether they are going for trust or foundation status ultimately.***

***There is potential to get other partners on board as part of the Trust.***

A. Governors need to get together collaboratively with other schools and discuss the issues. It does not have to be in a formal way. The Head of Belstead could invite the temporary governing body chair of SWISS.

The SWISS school does have to be a foundation school.

Once the governing bodies are clear then the LA can help with technicalities.

***Q. The three additional areas of provision, dyslexia etc, what will these look like in reality.***

A. Dyslexia model will be based on one that has been piloted in the Western Area. For example, a centre has been developed at Wickhambrook Primary School where groups of children stay on the roll of their local school and attend Wickhambrook for up to two days a week to follow an intensive programme of support for their reading and writing.

Behaviour model – currently we place some children out of the county. We could invest resources locally rather than spending it on out of county placements which are not always of the best quality. Day provision is being considered with access to specialist small group environment, possibly small units for 30-40 young people.

Autism – children with the very highest level of needs. These children have cognitive ability but autism prevents them from being in a mainstream setting. We need to provide a service beyond what Beacon Hill can offer at the moment in conjunction with Health, Social Care and schools.

***Q. There will need to be a degree of flexibility about how the Westbourne High School site is used.***

A. Westbourne High School was chosen as the LA's preferred option due to the BSF implications of funding. The area is large enough for opportunities to be created for various age ranges and needs. The intention is to ensure that the design is efficient including parking requirements and the provision to integrate the schools.