

PRIMARY REVIEW – RICHMOND HILL PLANNING AREA

Minutes of the consultation meeting with the Governing Body of Richmond Hill Primary School on Tuesday 20 January 2009 at 4.00pm, on options for changes to primary provision in the Richmond Hill planning area.

Present: 9 Governors incl HT, Clerk, Dave Wood EL, Sue Morgan EL, Lesley Savage EL, George Turnbull EL.

These minutes are not a verbatim account of the meeting, but do capture the key issues raised.

GT: Introduced officers and outlined the meeting. Described how we have an opportunity to build a new school at Richmond Hill (RH) through the PCP funding, and how this could be extended to accommodate the pupils of Mount St Mary's (MSM) school. Explained the Diocese have indicated they do not need the Catholic places provided by that school, but that if the school were to be closed those places would have to be reprovided as community places. Explained that 3 separate strands of the proposal require a statutory process: the enlargement of RH, the closure of MSM, and the addition of SEN provision at RH. Explained this meeting formed part of a consultation intended to ensure all foreseeable issues are addressed in order for the decision makers to make an informed view. Invited questions from the floor.

Gov: What accommodation would you use until the new building was available?

GT: The proposal is for a split site, using the existing RH and MSM buildings until the new building is ready.

Gov: Parents are concerned about the split site, it involves a busy road crossing and they are concerned about managing their trips to both sites.

GT: As the Governing Body (GB) of the school you will be responsible, with the leadership team, for managing the arrangements.

Gov: There are traffic concerns about the school as it is, we've asked for a crossing patrol but been turned down before. With the increased traffic and numbers of children involved with a larger school, will we be able to have a crossing patrol?

GT: At the design stage we would attempt to design in safe access and minimise these issues, however that is something we can record and support you in the process of applying for.

Gov: Will security be improved and adequate?

GT: The council will want to protect their investment in the new building as well as the welfare of pupils and staff, so good security will be included.

Gov: Are community facilities planned?

GT: This is a detail for the design stage. First we need to decide on the basic principle of the proposal. As we discussed with the children last week, we will gather views as part of this process and ensure they are fed into the design stages.

Gov: Why is SEN provision included in the proposal? Will it be integrated into the school or a separate unit?

SM: You can see from the data in the document that we have identified a need in the east of the city. Whatever the outcome of this proposal we will be creating some provision in the east of the

city, but this new build provides a funded opportunity to meet that need. The plan is for integrated provision, and not a separate block, but there may be some additional room in the school. The addition of these places will be part of the development of the school, building on the current expertise of managing children with challenging behaviours and additional needs. Children will be included in the mainstream classes where it is appropriate.

Gov: Would it be as per my previous experience of children being in a separate block and joining the main school at specific times, or would you have support teachers in the main classrooms?

SM: They would be in the main school as far as possible, just as you do with children with additional needs now. The GB and leadership team would need to manage the details, but would have support from EL. The physical resources would be available to all children in the school.

Gov: We welcome this proposal, and think it is a testament to the work of the HT and staff. Only a few years ago we thought MSM would get the new building and we would close. However, some parents from the community have mentioned a desire to go to a Catholic school. Once the decision is made are you confident you will consult us on all the details eg traffic?

GT: Yes we will consult you fully, and your engagement in that process is critical to making the new school work

LS: We can arrange visits to other new builds to provide ideas of what is possible.

Gov: Is there a budget and is it adequate?

GT: Yes there is a budget, which is reasonable, but clearly not absolutely everything can be provided. and ultimately the GB will need to work with the architects to cost and prioritise the options.

Gov: How green will we be able to be within this budget?

GT: There are sustainability and environmental impact guidelines for all new public buildings, which this would have to adhere to anyway. Again, you may get some ideas from other recent new build projects.

Gov: When the new building is complete will the old one be demolished or would you sell part of the site?

GT: There is no plan to sell any part of the site. The intention at this stage would be to demolish it, and use this space as part of the outdoor play area. Obviously this is subject to the appraisal of the site and the planning process.

GT: Please do send us your views in writing, if you support the proposals it is important you also express that view to ensure the decision makers hear a balanced representative view, as inevitably in proposals of this nature those making objections tend to be heard more. We (EL) would like to ask you how supportive you are to making the MSM community feel welcome, in particular to staff and governors joining your school.

Gov: We assume that governors would want to be involved and they would be welcome.

Gov: Is the diocese making this proposal?

GT: Effectively yes, they are bringing about the opportunity for the proposal by saying they do not need the Catholic places, but legally this is Education Leeds' proposal.

Gov: Children and staff of MSM would be made entirely welcome. We have a lot of experience at making children from all sorts of backgrounds welcome, eg migrant families and those with limited English, and we would extend that same welcome to MSM children. We would welcome their governors joining our governing body. We do not see this as a takeover.

Gov: Would there be a temporary governing body?

GT: No. The proposal is to close MSM, but Richmond Hill stays open with its GB and staff. The GB could be expanded dependant on its current size, or have associate members.

Govs: We would definitely want to consider expanding th GB to allow MSM community to join. We do have an immediate vacancy that could be taken up by them. As far as we are concerned, we are all the same community.

SM: Do we have places for the Catholic children in other Catholic provision?

GT: The diocese will support parents in finding alternative Catholic places for Catholic children. St Patricks and Corpus Christi are the nearest alternatives.

LS: Other suggestions made by the school council to help foster as sense of partnership and welcoming are changing the name of the school and changing the uniform. These are options the GB may wish to consider at a later date.

Gov: Could the public meeting affect this decision?

GT: Yes in as much as all the meetings are designed to gather views and may influence the proposal. We believe this is a positive proposal and so far have heard nothing that gives us concern that it isn't, but will listen and respond to all concerns raised.

GT: Closed the meeting by thanking everyone for their time and summarising the next steps of the process which currently envisage a decision at July Exec Board. After that the design team would commence work and we would currently envisage the new build being available for Easter 2012.