

**WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES**

**Notes of formal consultation meeting for the co-location of Edinbarnet Primary School with St Joseph's Primary School
Held on Monday 30 November 2009 at 7.00 pm in St Joseph's Primary School**

Front table members: Councillor May Smillie, Terry Lanagan, Dave Clarke, Craig Jardine

(Also in attendance were Councillors Brown, Finn, W McLaughlin, Casey, McAllister and McGlinchey together with church representative Ellen McBride and union rep Stewart Paterson)

Attendance at the meeting including teaching staff equal 50

Terry introduced the meeting giving background regarding consultations, reports, working groups and the Council decision that we carry out formal consultation on the Faifley groups on co-location. It should be noted that the proposal for the Faifley schools was not rejected at Council but rather that we should re-consult to gather more public opinion. Terry then gave presentation showing the various locations of Edinbarnet Primary, St Joseph's Primary and Skypoint and delivered details of pro's and con's of separate and co-located schools. The status of a co-located school was explained at some length and it was pointed out that a similar meeting to this one had already taken place on 18 November 2009 at Edinbarnet Primary School. A report to Council will be given at the end of February on the responses from the formal consultations as well as the officers recommendations.

Question: What are the implications of the proposals with regard to the nurseries?

Answer: If we were in a position to build a new co-located school we would like to include the nursery provision within that.

Statement: The Chair of the Parent Council stated that a questionnaire had been sent out to parents and 85% of the respondents stated that they did not wish a co-located school. There were 88 responses in total.

Question: Is it not cheaper to refurbish 2 schools which would mean that the difference between that total cost and the cost of a co-located school could be used for other educational purposes?

Answer: A refurbishment of existing schools in Faifley doesn't deliver the kind of educational establishments that we wish e.g. sustainability, accessibility and appropriate breakout spaces.

Question: There is a problem at St Peter the Apostle's football pitch and plans don't seem to work. Will this not happen in any new build that we get in Faifley?

Answer: The issue regarding the football pitch has been misrepresented in the press. Delivery dates were always planned to be later than delivery of the school building.

Question: There is also a problem at St Peter the Apostle's dining hall and we can only go by Clydebank Post reports. How can we be sure a new school would be properly designed?

Answer: The reports in the newsletter are not true. There were problems only in the first week of the school opening.

Question: We think there will be problems in the 2 schools if they use the same dining space with reduced catering staff. Would this not be the case?

Answer: We could consider staggered lunch-breaks if necessary or bigger dining halls. Surplus staff would be redeployed elsewhere.

Question: Teachers work hard to create and build up the ethos of a school. This would be decimated with your proposals.

Answer: The existing ethos is indeed brilliant but we believe that that same ethos could move into any new school along with staff and pupils.

Question: We want a head teacher who would be in control. How can we be assured of that?

Answer: There are 2 separate schools sharing 1 site. There would be 2 head teachers who would work together, each being in control of his/her own school children's education.

The church representative also stated the fact that the Archdiocese feels that while it would be good to have separate schools on separate sites it is felt that in West Dunbartonshire there are 3 specific areas where the numbers of catholic children are falling and the church is pleased that the Council want to keep schools within their own area. The church is therefore not opposed to the possibility of co-location. The Archdiocese accepts that the buildings which were built in the 60s are in poor condition and the Archbishop wishes to, and indeed is pleased to, work with West Dunbartonshire Council on the understanding that St Joseph's would remain as a separate school albeit on a co-located site. He also feels happy that Faifley and the other 2 areas would have the best possible schools for educating catholic children. The co-located St Theresa's Primary School and Saracen Primary School in Possilpark is a good example of a co-location that works very well.

Question: I have worked in a co-located school and there are problems with space. Breakouts won't be used as breakouts but as preparation rooms.

Answer: Breakouts are there because teachers want them. Our teaching spaces and breakout spaces are larger than in most other local authorities. If we cannot re-build our schools we are preventing future generations of children from receiving an education that is suitable for the 21st century.

Question: Will these schools add or take away staff from the local authority?

Answer: Some staffing standards will apply and so therefore you would expect no change.

Question: If this new build proposal is 10 years away why are we debating these issues. Surely it would be subject to a debate for those involved in 10 years time?

Answer: That certainly is the case. Any further consultation including statutory consultation will only be carried out as and when projects become live. However it is important that the Council forms its desired strategy for today.

Contribution from the head teacher:

It is essential that St Joseph's continues to be located in its present site near the church. The suitability and condition of the school is better than ever before and we believe that the Curriculum for Excellence is delivering effective learning and teaching. We do not agree with the C rating at St Joseph's for suitability. The teaching at St Joseph's is second to none.

Answer: There is no doubt that the teaching at St Joseph's is excellent and this consultation does not relate to the actual teaching quality. There is however no question in our mind that delivery of a modern educational curriculum would be better delivered in a new building specifically designed to include delivery of modern teaching techniques, accessibility, health and safety and sustainability.

Question: The non accessibility is not a problem we could just use the ground floor.

Answer: It would not be efficient to block off an upper floor of a school. We would look to use the empty spaces by accommodating other Council services there. However introducing appropriate safety measures to separate the "new" service from the children could prove to be costly and may be difficult to achieve.

Question: With regard to a refurbishment or a new build have you considered health and safety issues and the build up of traffic in the mornings that can be seen around the area?

Answer: The old schools were built when there were fewer cars around. New schools are designed with traffic management high in design priority and this is always considered as part of the planning process.

Question: We don't think Skypoint is a good site because there are access issues into and around that area.

Answer: Noted although it would be hoped that should we use Skypoint then appropriate access would be designed into and within the new campus.

Question: How will co-located schools deal with the big community programmes and projects which are going on at the same time of year eg school plays, concerts etc?

Answer: The 2 head teachers would be able to resolve these issues so that the programmes and projects could run at separate times or perhaps even together depending on what those projects are.

Question: What would happen to the vacated sites. Would you sell them for housing?

Answer: Yes that would probably be our intention.

Question: The current schools are not environmentally powered. Will the new schools be solar powered or powered by something else?

Answer: In our newly built PPP schools heating of the ground floor is via ground source heat pumps which draw up the natural heat within the earth's core. The schools also have double glazing, grey water systems and lighting that is controlled by movement within the areas. All of these sustainability issues would hopefully be designed into any other new builds that we embark upon. There may be other new initiatives available that could be considered once we have sufficient funding to build the schools.

Question: Would the heating be the same as that designed into St Peter the Apostle, because the first floor is extremely cold?

Answer: We are aware that there are some problems with the geothermal heating on the ground floor. We are also aware that the heating system needs to be balanced properly everywhere else throughout the school and the corrective action is still ongoing.

Question: Would school uniforms be the same?

Answer: That would be up to the pupils, parents and staff although we would advise that the uniforms be different.

Question: What would happen to the pupils if there was a new build going on?

Answer: The pupils would stay in the school until the new school is built and then transfer across. Goldenhill Primary School is currently going through this same process.

Question: How valuable is this consultation. Is it not a done deal? You've already decided where you will put the school.

Answer: That is not the case. There have been various consultations on school closures, school rationalisation, new builds etc, particularly since April 2005, an example being the various proposals to co-locate primaries within the Vale of Leven Academy campus. Public opinion was listened to and primary schools were not built on the Vale of Leven Academy campus.

Question: What about the pylons at the Edinbarnet site. Would they not stop building?

Answer: The wires overhead would certainly restrict the construction but would not prevent it from taking place.

Question: What part of the Schools' Estate Regeneration report did Council not like?

Answer: There were 2 items. The first one was the proposal to close St Martin's and we were instructed to re-consult for that and the second one was to reconsult on our proposal to co-locate St Joseph's and Edinbarnet with an Early Education and Childcare Centre – which is exactly what we are doing this evening.

Question: If there is to be a co-location we want it to be here, Edinbarnet has a swamp under the football park. Also, would there also be an opportunity to build a library, a swimming pool and additional football pitches?

Answer: There is probably not sufficient space and the funding would need to be considerably greater than what we would expect to get in the short to medium term future.

Question: If there is to be a co-location why can't each school have their own dining rooms and the gymnasium, etc?

Answer: If we designed the schools like that then there would be no point in co-location. Indeed if 2 gymnasiums were built within the co-located schools it would not necessarily mean that each gym would be dedicated to a specific school.

Question: Would catering, cleaning and janitorial staff reduce?

Answer: Yes but we are unable to comment by how much. Bear in mind also that the staff would be redeployed elsewhere.

Question: When will the first co-locations at Bellsmyre commence and be completed?

Answer: We don't know that. However we want to be in a position where we can commence as quickly as possible if and when sufficient funding is put in place.

Question: Will the co-location be like that at St Peter the Apostle High School between St Andrew's and St Columba's?

Answer: No this is not a co-location it's an amalgamation of 2 schools into one. A co-location is effectively 2 schools which keep separate identities.

Question: Does this mean that we would be the guinea pigs in West Dunbartonshire Council for a co-location?

Answer: No that is not the case. Faifley is the third priority co-location in West Dunbartonshire Council.

Question: Would there not be some animosity between the 2 sets of children attending the 2 types of schools, just like what has happened at St Peter the Apostle?

Answer: Edinbarnet and St Joseph's already have a close working relationship and we are confident that there would be no problems with the children. In any case the children mix when they are out of school.

There have been reported clashes between the 2 closing schools when they joined into St Peter the Apostle. However we would confirm that there have been no clashes between St Columba's children and St Andrew's children.

Question: Would there be separate playgrounds for the 2 schools?

Answer: Guidelines are currently being drawn up by the Archdiocese on co-location and the appropriate specifications. When completed and agreed these will become part of the Scottish National guidelines.

Question: What about job losses if the nurseries are re-located and amalgamated?

Answer: It is unlikely that there would be job losses as the number of staff relates to the number of children attending centres.

Question: Can you issue questionnaires for others who are not at this meeting?

Answer: It is not our intention to issue these questionnaires to others. However the public is free to submit their own observations and this would be taken into consideration on the Council report.

Question: If it is going to be 10 years before any building starts what good will tonight's comments do?

Answer: Tonight's consultation will inform the Council on the various issues considered by the public in order that a decision can be made for the best interests of children in the Faifley area as of today. It is recognised however that whenever the funding becomes available - say in 10 years - there would need to be re-consultation at that time.

There being no further questions Councillor Smillie advised that no decision had yet been made on the future of Edinbarnet Primary and St Joseph's Schools and that the Member Officer Working Group and Council would consider the points of view raised tonight as well as any comments made on the questionnaire which should be filled and submitted tonight or within one week. TL confirmed that if there are people absent from this meeting but who wish to comment they are at liberty to write in within the next week or so.

Dave Clarke
Head of Service (Resources)
23 December 2009