



Committee and date
Cabinet
20 July 2011

Item No
7A

Public

Proposals to Close Maesbury Primary School – Report on DfE Stage 3 Statutory Period for Representations

Responsible Officer David Taylor Corporate Director – People's Services
Email: David.Taylor@shropshire.gov.uk Telephone: (01743) 252402

Summary

This paper reports the outcomes from the Statutory Period of Representations on the proposal to close Maesbury Primary School and offer continuing pupils places in Kinnerley CE Primary School or at the catchment area school for their home address. This paper follows an extensive period of consultation on school organisation in Shropshire. The recommendations brought forward follow significant efforts on the part of the Local Authority, the schools and their communities, to find alternative long term and viable solutions to the challenges faced. The report also sets out the statement of case and information for decision makers.

Recommendation

That cabinet:

- (1) note the recommendation of the Corporate Director - People's Services that Cabinet should determine to close Maesbury Primary School, and offer continuing pupils a place in Kinnerley CE Primary School or at the catchment area school for their address;
- (2) approve the proposal to close Maesbury Primary School;
- (3) ask the Corporate Director – People's Services to review the catchment area arrangements for the combined catchments of Maesbury and Kinnerley CE primary schools.

1. Background

Over the past two years Shropshire Council has worked with Schools, Governors, Elected Members and local communities to review education provision for Shropshire. As part of the process, Shropshire Council consulted with those groups on a new Vision for Shropshire Learners and a set of principles and criteria for school organisation which had been developed by a Cross Party Task and Finish Group of Members representing the main political groups on the Council. This period of consultation included area meetings and a website consultation. The Vision, principles and criteria for school organisation were adopted as Council policy by full Council on 11 November 2010.

- In December 2010 and January 2011 the council consulted with school headteachers and chairs of governors on potential changes to school organisation arising from the

school organisation criteria. These meetings were held across the county on an area basis.

- The information arising from these meetings, along with a dataset that had been checked and verified by schools was considered. The outcomes were then presented to Cabinet on 15 February 2011 in the form of a report which proposed consultation on the future of a number of schools in Shropshire.
- On 15 February, Cabinet approved pre-statutory consultation on the future of Maesbury Primary School – ‘In Your Hands’. This was in line with the Vision for Shropshire Learners and the School Organisation Principles and Criteria.
- On 4 May 2011, the Cabinet received a report on the outcomes from the pre-statutory consultation (DfE Stage 1) and agreed to proceed to publication of Statutory Notices and statutory consultation on proposals to close Maesbury Primary School and offer continuing pupils places in Kinnerley CE Primary School or at the catchment area school for their home address.

This report sets out the recommendation of the Corporate Director - People's Services (see (1) above) and the information to be considered by decision makers as required by the Statutory Guidance on proposals to close schools issued by the Secretary of State.

2. Validity of Statutory Notice

A Statutory Notice setting out the proposals of Shropshire Council was published in the Shropshire Star and displayed in the Shirehall and at the schools on 16 May 2011. The notice was constructed using the DfE “Notice Builder” website and has been checked to ensure its validity. The Notice was also published on the Shropshire Council website and widely distributed. Details are included at Appendix A, which also includes a copy of the notice.

3 Pre-Statutory Consultation

The report to Cabinet on 4 May 2011 following the pre-statutory consultation stage is attached at Appendix B. The pre-statutory consultation included meetings with staff, governors and the local community at the school, and consultation with the relevant Dioceses and other relevant bodies. The pre-statutory consultation was wide ranging and included consideration of alternatives to closure.

4 Responses Received During the Statutory Consultation

One objection was received during the statutory period of representations, which ran from 16 May to 24 June 2011. The issues raised in the additional response are addressed in Appendix C. The main issue raised was regarding a pupil becoming ill during the school day if they are not near their home. While it is clear that this has caused some anxiety for the respondent, almost every school in the rural areas of Shropshire has pupils in the position where they do not live within walking distance and their parent or carer does not drive. Schools in this position employ several strategies to safeguard pupils which include members of staff taking children home.

In addition to the representation referenced above, the Governors of the school have informed the Council that they have applied for Academy status, and have forwarded a letter from the Rt Hon Owen Paterson MP in support of their application.

The report to Cabinet on 4 May also contains comments on responses from earlier phases of consultation, which were made available to elected Members in the Member's Library at the time. These responses have been made available to Members again during the period of consideration of the report on the statutory notices.

5 Information for Decision Makers

There has been no further Ofsted assessment of Maesbury Primary School or Kinnerley CE Primary School since the last report.

The Department for Education's document "Closing a Maintained Mainstream School: A Guide for Local Authorities and Governing Bodies" summarises the factors which Decision Makers on School Organisation Proposals are required to take into account in reaching a decision. The Decision Maker for this proposal is the Local Authority. Cabinet exercises this function, as the body charged with making decisions arising from policy decided by Council.

Appendix D sets out the information for decision makers, drawn from local authority information and from the consultation process.

6 Financial Implications

Revenue

As detailed in the report to Cabinet on 4 May 2011, the closure of Maesbury Primary School will result in funding being redistributed to other Shropshire schools. Net of an allowance for any additional provision which would have to be made for funding home to school transport, the proposals would result in £120,192 in additional funding to schools receiving pupils from Maesbury, and £49,878 being available for redistribution through the Dedicated Schools Budget.

Capital

The Maesbury Primary School site is owned by Shropshire Council. Were the school to close, it is likely that the Council would dispose of the site. The receipt from this sale would be used to invest in the Shropshire schools' estate.

7 Conclusion

The information above and in the appendices shows that:

- (1) There are no overriding educational or social reasons to retain Maesbury Primary School.
- (2) The circumstances of the school have shown that there is no suitable federation arrangement which could continue to maintain the school or the site as a viable part of the schools network, despite the willingness and experience of the school in taking part in collaborative arrangements with other schools.
- (3) Maesbury Primary School meets the criteria set out in the school organisation policy and criteria as a school which, due to changing circumstances, is no longer cost effective in the current network of schools in the prevailing economic climate.

It is therefore recommended that Cabinet approve the proposal to close the school and offer continuing pupils places at Kinnerley CE Primary School or the catchment area school for their home address.

The Council will consult on catchment area boundaries in Autumn 2011 and early Spring 2012. The consultation will be a two step process, with a pre-statutory stage of discussions with the schools and their communities from 18 September to 4 November 2011, with a report to the Local Admissions Forum in November. The second stage would be a statutory consultation in December 2011 and January 2012, with a report to Cabinet in February 2012.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Report to Cabinet – 10 November 2010

Report to Council – 11 November 2011

Report to Cabinet – 4 May 2011

Closing a Maintained School A guide for Local Authorities and Governing Bodies (Department for Children, Schools and Families)

Education and Inspections Act 2006

Responses to Pre-Statutory and Statutory Consultations (filed in Member's Library)

Human Rights Act Appraisal

The Human Rights Act 1998 states (Article 2 of the First Protocol) that no person shall be denied the right to education. However, there is no requirement on the Council to provide a school of a particular type or character (including religious character) or a right to a place within a specific maintained school. A proposed closure or amalgamation of a school does not, therefore, affect an individual pupil or parent's human rights.

Environmental Appraisal

An environmental impact appraisal was conducted through the pre-statutory consultation phase and reported to Cabinet on 4 May. Further information is included in the information for decision makers. There are no environmental reasons why the proposals should not proceed.

Risk Management Appraisal

If the Council takes no action on school organisation matters, there is a risk that educational improvement in Shropshire will slow or reverse as too much of the available resources will be spent on maintaining the inefficient use of buildings and subsidising unfilled places.

Community / Consultations Appraisal

The Independent Policy Commission undertook a public consultation in coming to its recommendations, which included producing a new educational vision, school organisation policy and criteria. The Council developed a draft vision, policy and criteria in consultation with schools and through the mechanism of a Cross Party Task and Finish Group. The council then consulted on the draft vision, policy and criteria which underpins this report during Summer 2010. The vision, policy and criteria were approved by Cabinet and Council on 10 and 11 November 2010.

The Council then undertook a series of local review meetings during December 2010 and January 2011, which provided evidence and suggestions for the Cabinet paper on 15 February which led to the current consultation. The current consultation is Stage 1 (pre-statutory consultation) in the DfE process for school organisation changes, and has been undertaken in accordance with statutory and non-statutory guidance. The evidence underpinning the proposals was published in the Cabinet report of 15 February. The official consultation period was from 28 February until the 8 April. A supplementary consultation document for parents and carers was produced just after the start of the official six week consultation period of consultation, and at the same time updated data was circulated to schools. School were asked to gather the views of their parents through their normal consultation arrangements. Meetings were held at each directly affected school with school staff, governors and interested members of the community (including, particularly,

parents).

On 4 May, Cabinet considered the outcomes from the pre-statutory consultation and agreed to proceed to publish Statutory Notices. Notices were published in the Shropshire Star, and displayed on the school premises and in the Shirehall between 16 May and 24 June 2011.

At each stage, the Council has publicised the email address, postal address and telephone numbers for responses through the local press and broadcast media, on the Council website, at the meetings and in the supplementary consultation document.

Cabinet Member

Cllr. Aggie Caesar Homden

Local Members

Cllr. Joyce Barrow

Appendices

- A. Copy of Statutory Notice to close Maesbury Primary School
- B. Copy of Consultation Document and report on Consultation (Report to Cabinet – 4 May 2011)
- C. Summary of responses to Statutory Consultation and Commentary by Local Authority
- D. Information for Decision Makers as prescribed by Statutory and Non Statutory Guidance
- E. Information Prescribed by Section 7, 8 and 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.



Discontinuance of Maesbury Primary School

Notice is given in accordance with section 15(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 that Shropshire Council, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ intends to discontinue Maesbury Primary School, Maesbury, Oswestry, SY10 8HD on 31 August 2012.

Pupils will be offered places at Kinnerley CE (Controlled) Primary School, School Road, Kinnerley, Oswestry, SY10 8DF. Expansion of this school is not necessary in order to receive the displaced pupils.

Pupils will be entitled to transport provision in line with the terms of the Shropshire Council school transport policy. Shropshire Council endeavours to minimise the use of low occupancy vehicles for home to school transport, and encourages the use of sustainable modes of travel including walking, cycling and school buses.

This Notice is an extract from the complete proposal. Copies of the complete proposal can be obtained from: Corporate Director – People’s Services (ref CB/Maesbury), Shropshire Council, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ.

Within six weeks from the date of publication of this proposal, any person may object to or make comments on the proposal by sending them to the Corporate Director – People’s Services (ref CB/Maesbury), Shropshire Council, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. M. J. Taylor".

David Taylor, Corporate Director – People’s Services, Shropshire Council

Dated: 16 May 2011

Notes: Parents should be aware

- (i) that alternative places are likely to be available, but not guaranteed, in other nearby primary schools. However, parents would be responsible for their own travel arrangements.
- (ii) there are no proposals to change the secondary school admissions arrangements in the area.

Appendix B



| <u>Committee and date</u> | <u>Item No</u> |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| Cabinet 4 May 2011 | |
| | Public |

Proposals to Close Maesbury Primary School – Report on DfE Stage 1 (Pre-Statutory) Consultation

Responsible Officer David Taylor Corporate Director – People's Services

Email: David.Taylor@shropshire.gov.uk Telephone: (01743) 252402

Summary

On 15 February 2011, Cabinet commissioned pre-statutory consultation on proposals for the closure of Maesbury Primary School. This report details out the outcomes from the consultation; the recommendation of the Corporate Director for People's Services and asks Members to consider whether to proceed with formal (statutory) proposals.

Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- (1) note the outcomes from the pre-statutory consultation;
- (2) to proceed to formal proposals to close Maesbury Primary School with effect from 31 August 2012 and offer places to pupils on roll at the school and living in the Maesbury catchment area, at Kinnerley Church of England Primary School in line with the recommendation of the Corporate Director for People's Services.

1. Background

On 15 February 2011, Cabinet considered a report on the future organisation of Shropshire schools. At the meeting, Cabinet resolved to consult on 10 proposals to

alter the organisation of schools in Shropshire. The consultation period ran from 28 February to 8 April 2011. A number of strategies were used to inform stakeholders and collect views. The outcomes are attached to this report. The report followed an extensive consultation on the vision and criteria which were to underpin school organisation. Area review meetings were also held gaining objective data to determine which proposals were appropriate to each area.

2. Proposals

Following the area review of area 1 (Oswestry), officers considered the available responses and data and, after considering a range of possible options, proposed that Maesbury Primary School should be closed, with the pupils attending at the time being offered places at Kinnerley Primary School.

Cabinet is asked to decide whether to proceed with formal statutory proposals to close Maesbury Primary School.

3. Consultation

The proposals were published on 8 February. Cabinet approved consultation on the proposals on 15 February. The Secretary of State provided non-statutory guidance that the consultation period should last for at least six weeks and should avoid school holidays. For this reason, the consultation was formally scheduled to open on 28 February, following the half term holiday and end on 8 April. Following the Cabinet meeting on 15 February, the consultation was widely publicised in the media and on the Council's website.

Details of the proposals and the data underpinning them were included in the report to Cabinet. Before the launch of the formal consultation period, updated information became available from the 2011 Annual School Census. This detailed pupil numbers and the publication of school performance data by the DfE. The updated data for each were distributed to all schools in the area and the local Members. A consultation document was prepared using the updated data and distributed to all parents, governors and staff of the schools (see Appendix 1). A special section of the Council's website provided more information.

Officers, accompanied by the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services, have held consultation meetings with each school included in the proposals. The notes of the meetings for Maesbury School are attached at Appendices 2a and 2b. Responses to the consultation were received by post, e-mail, via the Customer Service Centre and via the Council's website. A number of respondents raised questions or asked for additional information. These were responded to as promptly as possible. A file containing all responses received is available to Members.

Formal responses to the consultation were received from the school Governing Body and Oswestry Rural Parish Council. These are included at Appendix 3.

The response from the governing body of Maesbury Primary School proposes collaborations with Marches School, Morda School and Newbridge Nursery in order to reduce costs and states that the Governing Body believes that pupil numbers in the school will rise.

The response from Oswestry Rural Parish Council argues that the school is the lifeblood of the village and that pupil numbers are set to rise in the area.

Between 8 February and 8 April 2011, 50 individual responses and requests for information were received. The main comments contained in the individual letters are referred to in Section 4 of this report, whilst the balance of individual comments and concerns and the responses to these can be found in Appendix 4.

Cabinet members visited Maesbury Primary School on 6 April 2011.

4. Key Issues and Factors for Consideration

The key issues are the effect on:

- standards of education
- local communities
- equal opportunities and community cohesion
- diversity of provision
- financial implications
- staffing.

4.1 Effect on Standards of Achievement

4.1.1 The last full Ofsted inspection of Maesbury Primary School was on the 23-24 September 2009. There were three summative judgements. The overall effectiveness of the school was judged to be satisfactory. Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils were judged to be satisfactory. The school's capacity for sustained improvement was judged to be satisfactory. 10 of the 24 contributory judgements towards the overall conclusions were good with the remainder satisfactory. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage was judged to be satisfactory. The school was identified as one of the 40% of satisfactory schools which may receive a monitoring visit from Ofsted as they may not be demonstrating a good capacity to sustain improvement.

As the school has very small year groups, the key indicators for standards of achievement can vary from year to year. Taking recent years together, the attainment and the progress pupils make from their different starting points are in line with those in other Shropshire schools.

4.1.2 The last full Ofsted inspection of Kinnerley CE Primary School was on the 22-23 November 2010. There were three summative judgements. The overall effectiveness of the school was judged to be good. Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils were judged to be good. The school's capacity for sustained improvement was judged to be good. 20 of the 24 contributory judgements towards the overall conclusions were good with the remainder satisfactory. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage was judged to be good.

As the school has relatively small year groups, the key indicators for standards of achievement can vary from year to year. Taking recent years together, the attainment and the progress pupils make from their different starting points are in line with other schools in Shropshire.

4.1.3 During the consultation process, attention was drawn to the effectiveness of Maesbury Primary School in supporting pupils with additional educational needs and the impact that these pupils have on some of the key indicators for standards of achievement. The effectiveness of the school in supporting those with additional needs was

recognised and is celebrated. However, it was noted that the quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress is judged good at Kinnerley CE Primary School. Attention was also drawn to the most recent outcomes in Key Stage 2 assessments at Maesbury Primary School and whether or not this represented an upward trend in performance. As there were only two pupils in this year group, this does not make a significant difference to the average for recent years.

- 4.1.4 The additional funding available to Kinnerley CE Primary School resulting from extra pupils from Maesbury School, together with Kinnerley's record of providing good value for money, will provide more resources and flexibility to further improve teaching and learning for pupils in the community. As Kinnerley CE Primary School is at least as good as Maesbury Primary School on all indicators of performance and better on many, and has a good capacity for sustained improvement, there are no educational reasons for not taking forward the proposal.

4.2 Effect on the Local Community and the Environment

4.2.1 Issues Raised During Consultation

During the consultation, it was stated that if the school were to close there would be significant effects on the local community, and that the local church would suffer.

It was also noted that the proposed receiving school (Kinnerley Primary) was in the secondary catchment area of the Corbet School which has an outstanding Ofsted judgement.

4.2.2 Effect on Early Years and Extended School Provision

The school organises a number of community events, but there is only limited use of the school buildings by the community outside these events. The Parish Council meet in the school.

The school operates a programme of extended schools activities, as do other schools in the area. The school operates a breakfast club, although take-up is limited at present.

4.2.3 Effect on local facilities and services

The school provides accommodation for a mother and toddlers group. There are no local services provided at the school.

4.2.4 Effect on local employment

Of the 11 staff employed at the school, 2 non-teaching staff (18%) live in the catchment area. Note that this analysis is based on numbers of posts, not FTEs.

4.2.5 Home to School Travel

In January 2011, the school reported that 21 pupils walked to school and 3 cycled. During the consultation meetings, it was reported that one pupil arrived on horseback. There are 23 pupils in the Maesbury catchment area. However, 4 pupils live outside the area but closer to the school than some of the in-area children.

It is likely that these pupils would be transported to school if Maesbury School were to close. Allowance has been made in the financial estimates for the cost of at least 47 home to school travel places in up to three vehicles (to ensure that journey times are well below the 45 minute recommended maximum). Although this will reduce the sustainability of the home to school journey, the savings in carbon emissions arising from maintain one less site will more than compensate for this (see below).

4.2.6 Local Environmental Issues

The school maintains a small playing field. However the school sits at some distance from the main centre of habitation in the catchment area.

Maesbury Primary School produces 18,000kg CO₂ per annum. The additional home to school transport which would be required is estimated to produce 5,000kgCO₂ per annum. The additional CO₂ produced at the receiving schools would be negligible, as the pupils would occupy existing accommodation.

4.2.7 Discussion

Although the school organises events which are well supported by the village, there is no obvious evidence that the village community would be severely affected should the school close. Although some pupils who currently walk or cycle to school would probably have to travel to an alternative school by bus if the school were to close, there would be little or no affect on congestion and a net decrease in carbon

emissions. Indeed, if all eligible pupils travelled by provided transport, there could be a net decrease in the number of vehicles on the road.

It is correct that Kinnerley Primary School is situated in the catchment area of The Corbet School. However, there are several rural schools in Shropshire which send pupils to more than one secondary school, so this need not be a barrier to the proposals.

4.3 Effects on Equal Opportunities and Community Cohesion

4.3.1 Issues Raised During Consultation

During the consultation, it was stated that the school was particularly effective in dealing with pupils with special educational needs.

4.3.2 Effects on Equal Opportunities

In the section on educational standards of achievement above, it is noted that the school deals effectively with pupils with special education needs. However, it is also noted that nearby schools, including the proposed receiving school for children living in the catchment also deal at least as effectively with the special educational needs of pupils. In Jan 2011, Maesbury Primary School had two pupils with Statements and five pupils eligible for free school meals.

The proposal would not impact unfairly on disadvantaged groups.

4.3.3 Effects on Community Cohesion

There would be no effect on race relations or racial equality

4.3.4 Discussion

Although Maesbury Primary School is effective in addressing the special educational needs of children, they are not alone in Shropshire in doing so. The proposal would have no adverse effect on equal opportunities or social cohesion

4.4 Effect on Diversity of Provision

4.4.1 Issues Raised During Consultation

It was noted during the consultation that Maesbury was a community school and the majority of schools in the area, including the named alternative school at Kinnerley have a Church of England character.

4.4.2 Effect on diversity of governance

Maesbury Primary School is a community school. In Shropshire, Church of England Aided and Controlled schools as well as community schools all teach RE from the same Agreed Syllabus. In the consultation, it was stated that Maesbury Primary School has strong links with the local church.

4.4.3 Effect on faith places

Taken together, the current proposals would reduce the proportion of faith school places from 55.9% to 53.7%. However, much of this reduction consists of unfilled places, and the relevant guidance states “The Decision Maker **should not** normally approve the closure of a school with a religious character where the proposal would result in a reduction in the proportion of denominational places in the area. This guidance does not however apply in cases where the school concerned is severely under-subscribed”.

4.5 Demography and Population

4.5.1 Issues Raised During Consultation

During the consultation, it was stated that:

- (i) the low numbers in the school were due to the proposals in 2008;
- (ii) area 1 should not be included in the proposals due to the overall low number of surplus places;
- (iii) extra housing in the area would mean that schools would be overcrowded;
- (iv) there would be insufficient places in receiving schools for displaced pupils.

4.5.2 Projections of pupil numbers in the area, including proposed receiving schools

Area 1 (Oswestry) has a relatively low number of unfilled places. However, closer examination of this shows that the Oswestry Town schools are mainly full, while the schools in the rural hinterland have a number of unfilled places.

Pupil numbers in Maesbury have been variable throughout the last decade. The current reduction is due to a reduction in the number of pupils in the catchment area in

recent years. Numbers in the school will rise in 2011/12 because a small Year 6 group will leave in the Summer. There is no indication that there is a sustained increase in in-catchment pupils and there is little prospect of significant further development in the current Maesbury school catchment area. Any increase in pupil numbers would have to result in more unfilled places elsewhere in the system and so does not add to the sustainability of the network.

Pupil numbers in Kinnerley Primary School, the proposed receiving school for pupils from the Maesbury catchment area, are forecast to reduce after 2012. Kinnerley will have a small amount of development between now and 2026, but the school should be able to accommodate pupil numbers from both catchment areas.

Pupil numbers in Oswestry are likely to rise steeply between now and 2026, as the town is a centre for development (see below).

4.5.3 Future Housing Development

Future housing development in area 1 includes a Sustainable Urban Extension between the Mile End roundabout and the new sports centre, as well as other development in Oswestry Town. The rapid pace of expansion means that there is likely to be the need for a new primary school in Oswestry town outside of the Maesbury catchment area before 2020.

4.5.4 Discussion

Both the school and Parish Council suggest that pupil numbers are set to rise. The school believes that more pupils will attend the school from outside the area if there were no prospect of school organisation changes. There is no clear evidence of this and, even should it happen, the Council would still be paying to subsidise unfilled places in one or other school. The Parish Council believe the growth will come from increased birth rates in the area. There is no evidence that birth rates in the Maesbury area have risen, and the number of resident children below school age are 5, 6, 9 and 3 for the next four years, respectively.

4.6 Financial Implications

4.6.1 Issues Raised During Consultation

During the consultation, concerns were raised about the potential cost of transport, and the costs to receiving schools.

4.6.2 Effect on funding to other schools

If Maesbury Primary School were to close, £208,070 would be available for redistribution through the education budget. £120,192 is pupil related funding and would transfer with pupils to their new schools. This includes £7,706 in specific SEN funding. Some of the balance would be likely to go to open up new classes at receiving schools, and this would result in opportunities for continuing employment. However, some pupils would take up unfilled places in existing classes and this would free additional resources for SEN support and development in the receiving schools.

£87,878 would be available from non-pupil related funding. As noted below, £38,000 would be set aside against potential additional costs of home to school transport, leaving £49,878 for redistribution through the funding formula.

4.6.3 Home to School Travel

As noted above, a number of pupils would become eligible for free home to school transport. An estimated £38,000 has been set aside from the proposed savings against this additional cost, but the actual cost could be lower depending on factors such as parental preferences and decisions on modes of home to school transport as well as whether the transport is procured at current modal prices rather than the figure set, which is based on higher than average costs.

4.6.4 Financial Implications for Maesbury Primary School of New Funding Formula

On 1 April 2011 the Council implemented a new local funding formula for distributing Dedicated Schools Grant across all Shropshire's primary, secondary and special schools in line with Shropshire's new policy on school organisation and the vision for education in Shropshire. A much simpler and more transparent formula has been developed with more of an emphasis on pupil-led funding. A key focus was on reducing the current per pupil funding variation between schools in Shropshire.

On 15 February 2011 Shropshire Council's Cabinet, having considered the outcomes of an eight week consultation period with schools and School Forum, elected to phase the implementation of a new funding formula beginning 1st April 2011. Subsequent to this decision the Government directed that no school should lose more than 1.5% of pupil led funding in financial year 2011/12 following the mainstreaming of grants into dedicated schools grant. If the funding formula were to be implemented in full

Maesbury Primary School remained open it would lose £23,670 (11.4%) of their budget over a period of years.

4.6.5 Discussion

Maesbury Primary School will come under severe financial pressure as the new funding formula comes fully into effect. If it were to close now, the receiving schools would benefit from additional pupil-related funding and all schools would benefit from a significant addition to the total distributed through the funding formula.

4.7 Effect on Staffing

4.7.1 Current Staffing

The school currently employs 5.96 FTE, that is 2.14 FTE teaching and 3.84 FTE non-teaching staff. Two of the non-teaching staff live in the catchment area.

4.7.2 Efforts to Maximise Continuing Employment

The Council has negotiated an agreement with the recognised unions, and is seeking governing bodies' agreement to a staffing protocol to maximise continuing employment. This would be accomplished by giving first preference or guaranteed interviews to teaching and non-teaching staff members at threat of redundancy as a result of any continuing proposals. Individual staff members would be given support with seeking continuing employment. It should be noted that the last round of school amalgamations did not result in any compulsory redundancies

4.8 Consideration of Alternatives and Conclusion

4.8.1 Make no change

Maesbury Primary School will come under severe financial pressure as a result of changes to the funding formula. There appears to be no prospect of significant housing development in the current Maesbury school catchment area, or other sign that pupil numbers from within the catchment will increase. This means that, as at present, a significant minority of pupils will come from outside the catchment, and the only way to reduce surplus places would be to create them elsewhere. It would appear that no change is not an option.

4.8.2 Other proposals.

- Federation

The Council considered whether federation was a sustainable alternative for Maesbury Primary School before bringing forward the current proposals. The Council could identify no likely sustainable partner for Federation.

The school has proposed collaborations with Morda Primary and Marches secondary schools, as well as a local private nursery, but has as yet been unable to agree federation with other schools in the area.

- Alternative Uses

The Council considered whether using part of the school building for another purpose would make Maesbury Primary School more sustainable. A local mother and toddlers group already uses the school. However, the Council was unable to identify any potential uses or users which would generate enough income, or provide sufficient priority community services, to make the current levels of expenditure on the school sustainable in the future.

- Changes to catchment

The Council considered whether changes to the school's catchment area would make the school sustainable in the long term. While there are a few small hamlets, there are no substantial settlements near to the boundaries of the catchment area which could be included in the catchment area. In addition, the number of unfilled places in the school has meant that for some time it has been possible for parents who want places in the school to apply for admission and have their child admitted without changing the catchment area.

4.8.3 Continue with proposal to close Maesbury Primary School.

The current proposal would address the issues facing the school in terms of financial challenge and the low number of pupils in the catchment area. Although there would undoubtedly be some disturbance to the local community, there is no evidence that it would be severe enough to prove an absolute barrier to the proposals.

4.8.4 Conclusion

The current proposals would safeguard the future of education in village schools for pupils living in the rural area south of Oswestry by strengthening other primary schools in the area. There would be a substantial sum to be redistributed to all schools at a time of financial stringency. The named alternative school is judged by Ofsted to be Good and educational outcomes are also good. There are no factors related to community, environment, demography or finance which would prove absolute barriers to the proposals.

5 Recommendation of the Corporate Director - People's Services

The Corporate Director - People's Services recommends that Cabinet agree to proceed to publish formal notices to close Maesbury School and offer places to children living in the catchment area at Kinnerley Primary School and to other children at their catchment area schools.

6 Next Steps

If Cabinet accepts the recommendation of the Corporate Director - People's Services to close Maesbury Primary School, the next step would be to publish Statutory Proposals to give effect to this decision.

Publication of proposals would be followed by a six week consultation period during which comments would be invited from interested parties. It is intended to bring a report back to Cabinet on this phase of consultation on 20 July 2011.

School Organisation Remaining Stages

Introduction

The report to Cabinet on 15 February contained a detailed timetable of the future school organisation consultation. Expected dates are included for illustrative purposes for any proposals which are agreed by cabinet on 4 May. Stage 1 (28 February to date) has been undertaken.

Stage 2 (16 May if proposals are taken forward)

Stage 2 is the act of formal publication of proposals. The proposals are published in two defined formats. The first, short format is published in a newspaper which circulates in the area served by the school and is displayed at the school on the boundary and in the school office. The longer format is available on the Council's website and is made available to the main consultees. It includes a number of items of defined information about the proposals, including the name of the alternative provision in the case of a school closure.

Stage 3 (16 May to 24 June)

Stage 3 is a period of Representations on the proposals. Its six calendar weeks duration is defined in Regulations and cannot be shortened or extended, even for school or public holidays. Representations can either be in favour or opposed to the proposals, but cannot be about amending the current proposals in any substantial way. This would involve the Council withdrawing its current proposals and then returning to stage 1 with a new set of proposals.

Stage 4

Stage 4 is the decision making stage. For Foundation, Voluntary Aided or Voluntary Controlled schools, Stage 4 can have 2 parts.

Stage 4a (20 July) relates to the Cabinet's decision on the statutory proposals. The decision must be taken within two months of the end of Stage 3. The Cabinet can decide to agree or reject the proposals but can only modify them in minor ways.

Stage 4b applies if the Diocese (and in the case of Foundation or Voluntary Aided schools, the Governing Body), exercises their right to appeal the Council's decision to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator. Appeals must be made within four weeks of the decision, and if an appeal is made the Council must pass information to the Adjudicator within one week. The Adjudicator is supposed to make a decision within six weeks, but previous experience suggests that this stage would not start until after the summer break.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Primary School Organisation – Report to Cabinet 15 February 2011

Report of the Independent Policy Commission on Primary School Organisation in Shropshire

Human Rights Act Appraisal

The Human Rights Act 1998 states (Article 2 of the First Protocol) that no person shall be denied the right to education. However, there is no requirement on the Council to provide a school of a particular type or character (including religious character) or a right to a place within a specific maintained school.

A proposed closure or amalgamation of a school does not, therefore, affect an individual pupil or parent's human rights

Environmental Appraisal

There are no major environmental issues to be considered. See section 4.2 of the main report, and appendix 4.

Risk Management Appraisal

If the Council do not take action, there is a risk that the financial challenges faced by the school will lead to its failure. If the Council takes no action on school organisation matters, there is a risk that educational improvement in Shropshire will slow or reverse as too much of the available resources will be spent on maintaining the inefficient use of buildings and subsidising unfilled places.

Community / Consultations Appraisal

The Independent Policy Commission undertook public consultation in coming to its recommendations, which included producing a new educational vision, school organisation policy and criteria. The Council developed a draft vision, policy and criteria in consultation with schools and through the mechanism of a Cross Party Task and Finish Group. The council then consulted on the draft vision, policy and criteria which underpins this report during Summer 2010. The vision, policy and criteria were approved by Cabinet and Council on 10 and 11 November 2010.

The Council then undertook a series of local area review meetings during December 2010 and January 2011, which provided evidence and suggestions for the Cabinet paper on 15 February which led to the current consultation. The current consultation is Stage 1 (pre-statutory consultation) in the DfE process for school organisation changes, and has been undertaken in accordance with statutory and non-statutory guidance. The evidence underpinning the proposals was published in the Cabinet report of 15 February. The official consultation period was from 28 February until the 8 April. A supplementary consultation document for parents and carers was produced just after the start of the official six week consultation period of consultation, and at the same time updated data was circulated to schools. Schools were asked to gather the views of their parents through their normal consultation arrangements. Meetings were held at each directly affected school with school staff, governors and interested members of the community (including, particularly, parents). The Council has publicised the email address, postal address and telephone numbers for responses through the local press and broadcast media, on the Council website, at the meetings and in the supplementary consultation document.

Cabinet Member

Cllr. Aggie Caesar Homden

Local Member

Cllr Joyce Barrow

Appendices

- 1 Consultation document – as originally sent out (information contained in the original report was updated for the consultation document and has been updated again for this report).
- 2a Notes of meeting with Governors
- 2b Notes of meeting with Parents and Other Members of the Community
- 3 Formal responses from the Governing Body and Oswestry Parish Council
- 4 Key points from responses and commentary by officers

Appendix 1

Appendix 1 is the Consultation Document as originally sent out (information contained in the 15 February Cabinet Report original report was updated for the Consultation Document and has been updated again for this report).

Proposal to Close Maesbury Primary School: Consultation Document

Introduction

The Council is seeking the views of parents, pupils, staff, governors and other interested parties on the proposal that Maesbury Primary School should close, in order to help Members make a full and informed decision regarding the future of the school. It is important to recognise that at this stage in the process no decisions have been taken and the responses to the consultation will be taken on their merit.

This consultation document sets out the key facts of the proposal and the ways in which you can express your views. There will also be a meeting with senior Council officers at which the proposals will be explained in more detail and you will be able to ask questions. This document cannot set out all the facts which could be relevant. Other information is likely to be published during the consultation process, and the Council welcomes your views on what information would be useful. All the information in the document is believed to be correct at the time of publication but if you do have questions or comments, or would like clarification of the process please let us know.

The results of the consultation, including notes of the meetings and all written submissions, will be set out for Cabinet Members on 4 May when they come to consider whether to take the proposal on to the next stage. In making responses, it is important to remember that the purpose of the consultation is to inform Members and that one well formed argument could carry as much weight as all other responses combined.

Description of Proposals

The Council is consulting on a proposal to close Maesbury Primary School with effect from 31 August 2012.

Pupils attending the school in July 2012 and living in the catchment area of Maesbury School will be guaranteed a place at Kinnerley Primary School. Other pupils will be offered places at their catchment area school. However, parents will be able to apply for a place in any other Shropshire school, and, if a place is available, to transfer their child to that school. The Council is seeking views as to whether there are parts of the current Maesbury catchment area which would more naturally link to other schools than to Kinnerley Primary should the school in Maesbury close. Any proposals regarding this aspect of future arrangements would be part of a consultation on admissions arrangement from 2013 onwards which would be undertaken in autumn 2011 should there be a decision to close the school.

Background to the Proposals

This consultation was authorised on 15 February 2011 by the Council's Cabinet. The report to Cabinet is available at www.shropshire.gov.uk/educationforshropshire .

The Cabinet report was the result of an extended process of consultation and joint working which began in early 2008, when Shropshire County Council agreed to set up an Independent Policy Commission (IPC) to look at the future organisation of primary and secondary schools in Shropshire. The new Shropshire Council accepted the recommendations of the IPC to set up a Cross (political) Party Working Group to oversee the development of a new Education Vision and school organisation criteria. The Cross Party Task and Finish Group asked officers to undertake consultation in summer 2010 to inform the new Vision and Criteria. These were adopted by Cabinet, and then Council, on 10 and 11 November 2010 respectively. There was then a further consultation in late 2010 and early 2011, including meetings with head teachers and chairs of governors, which resulted in a report which was accepted by the Task and Finish Group, and then the current set of proposals were prepared by officers for consideration by Cabinet.

Links to the report of the IPC and to the Vision for Shropshire Learners can be found on the Education for Shropshire webpage (see above).

Why has this proposal been brought forward?

The proposal set out above links to the approved criteria for school organisation as set out below.

Maesbury School has 40 pupils on roll (Jan 2011 School Census) in a building with 56 places. Kinnerley School has 86 pupils in a building with 112 places. 17 pupils at Maesbury School currently come from outside the catchment area. These 17 pupils will be offered places in their home catchment area school but their parents will be free to seek a place elsewhere should they wish.

Projected pupil numbers indicate that the total number of pupils in the main receiving school (Kinnerley School) will be 80 in 2012/13, which is the highest total currently foreseeable. The projections include housing development which already has planning permission. Draft site allocations to form part of the Local Development Framework to be adopted from 2013 are expected to be published for consultation in the near future. The principles included in the LDF, which have already been agreed, indicate that the additional development will be approved around Shrewsbury, Oswestry and other major settlements. Discussion with planning officers suggests that the prospect of significant additional development in the area around Maesbury and Kinnerley schools is negligible. There is potential for a large development in the south east of Oswestry. This development will be located in the same civil parish as Maesbury School, but is some distance away, on the other side of the A5 trunk road and physical connected to the Oswestry built up area. In addition, the scale of the development and its location suggests that the best way to serve the needs of the new community would be to develop a school within the new community at the time of its development.

Criteria

The proposal set out above links to the approved criteria for school organisation as follows:

Quality of Education

Maesbury School was last inspected by Ofsted on 23/9/09. At that time, the school was judged to be Satisfactory. Pupil level achievement data show the school to be performing significantly below Shropshire averages. Kinnerley School was inspected on 22/11/10 and was judged to be Good.

Use of Resources - Efficient use Buildings

Maesbury School has 16 unfilled places out of 56 (29%). Condition data is currently being updated.

Revenue Effects

Closing the school would save £66,197 in fixed costs. If all the pupils transfer to their designated schools, there would be a further saving of £13,331. In the worst case, additional transport could cost up to £38,000, but the actual cost could be much lower depending on the ability to utilise existing vehicles and routes and the effect of parental choice on admissions and travel patterns. The net change in revenue resources which would occur from a closure is therefore at least £41,528.

Capital Requirements

There would be no need for capital investment. There would be likely to be a one-off capital receipt arising from the sale of the Council's interest in the school site.

Access

42.5% of pupils at Maesbury School come from outside the designated catchment area. 52.5% of pupils currently walk to Maesbury School. If the proposal was implemented, these pupils would be most likely to travel to an alternative school by school bus, while a number of those from outside the catchment area will be within walking distance of their catchment school. Maesbury School is 4.1 miles (6.6km) away from the site of Kinnerley School, and all the pupils from within the catchment area would be able to reach the school within the 45 minute journey time.

What Would The Proposal Mean For The Staff Of the Schools?

Pupils, parents and governors are rightly concerned about the future of staff affected by proposals such as these. If Maesbury School were to close, the staff would be declared redundant. The Council would work with trade unions and the governing bodies of other Shropshire schools to find alternative employment for all the staff of the school. Some staff might choose to take voluntary redundancy. Others may be at a stage in their life where they are ready to retire. If a significant number of pupils transfer to one of the local schools, it is possible that one or more of the staff might be employed by the receiving school. Staff will have their own consultation meeting where they will be provided with further information and will have the opportunity to ask further questions. At a later date, if it is decided that the school should close, then staff will be given additional information and personal support.

What Will Happen To The School Buildings?

If, at the end of the consultation process, the school closes the Council will declare the school building and grounds redundant. The premises would then most likely be considered for disposal. The ultimate use would depend on the new owner. Any money which was raised by the Council through the sale of assets would be used to invest in Shropshire schools.

What Home to School Transport Arrangements Would There Be?

If the school closes, pupils who live in the catchment area and transfer in July 2012 from Maesbury to Kinnerley Primary School, or to a school which is closer to their home than Kinnerley, will be eligible for free home to school transport. Other pupils will be assessed for free transport eligibility in line with policy with effect at the time. The maximum costs of additional transport have been estimated as part of the revenue implications above. The actual costs will be determined in part by patterns of parental preference. Although the Council encourages parents to use shared transport where it is available, there might also be some parents who choose to transport some children themselves.

Community and Environmental Appraisal

Maesbury and Kinnerley schools are 4.1 miles (6.6km) apart although the main settlements in the catchment area are somewhat closer. The village of Maesbury is 3.3 miles (5.3km) from Kinnerley and 3.5 miles (5.6km) from Oswestry.

There are no local facilities close to Maesbury School which could be affected by the proposal to close the school.

The principles of the Local Development Framework suggest that there might only be limited development in the area around Maesbury School. Oswestry Rural Parish Council has not put any of the settlements within the catchment forward as local development hubs or parts of rural development clusters.

Further Information

Further information on the Council's Education for Shropshire initiative can be found at www.shropshire.gov.uk/educationforshropshire.

Next Steps

No decisions to close schools have been taken at this stage of the consultation process. The consultation is intended to provide Councillors with the information they need to decide whether or not to take this proposal on to the next stage, which would be the publication of Statutory Proposals to close the school. Cabinet will take that decision based on the information in a report prepared by officers following the closure of this round of consultation. The report will include notes of meeting and all consultation responses. The timetable for the next steps is set out below.

| | |
|--|---|
| 8 April | The current round of consultation ends. |
| 27 April | The report to Cabinet is published. |
| 4 May | Cabinet considers the report. |
| Only if Cabinet decide to continue the proposal: | |
| 16 May | Statutory Proposals published for representations |

24 June Period of representations ends
13 July Cabinet report on representations published
20 July Cabinet to take final decision on proposal

Making your views known

The council wants to hear your views. You can submit your response by:

Email educationforshropshire@shropshire.gov.uk
Website www.shropshire.gov.uk/educationforshropshire
Telephone Customer Service Centre 0345 678 9008
Mail Education for Shropshire
Guildhall
Frankwell Quay
Shrewsbury
SY3 8HQ

Meetings for staff, governors, and parents and other interested members of the community will be held on **Thursday March 17 2011 at 4.30, 5.30, and 6.30 p.m.** respectively.

Appendix 2A

NOTES OF A MEETING HELD AT THURSDAY 17 MARCH 2011 SCHOOL HELD WITH GOVERNORS AT MAESBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL AT 5.30pm

Recorded as present:

Governors: 10

Officers present: David Taylor, Aggie Caesar-Homden, Karen Bradshaw, John Rowley, Norrie Porter, Helen Whiteley.

1. Welcome and Introduction

David Taylor introduced the LA officers to governors present and explained the purpose of the meeting. David also introduced Aggie Caesar-Homden who explained that as a cabinet member she was at the meeting to hear the views of those present and to feed back to the other members.

2. Agenda

Governors were given a preview of the PowerPoint presentation "Education for Shropshire ...it's in your hands, Consultation Meeting at Maesbury Primary School", which was to be provided for parents and community immediately following this meeting. The agenda included:-

- Shropshire education context
- Proposals affecting the Onny area
- Questions and discussion
- Next steps.

3. Shropshire Education context

Reference was made to the graph which showed the fluctuations in pupil numbers and depicted a steady downward trend from 2002-2011.

DT confirmed that data had been refreshed to take into account the new School Census information and any locally developed ideas received from the local area review meetings.

4. Proposals affecting the Maesbury area

The Council was consulting on a proposal to close Maesbury Primary School with effect from 31 August 2012. Pupils attending the school in July 2012 and living in the catchment area of Maesbury School would be guaranteed a place at Kinnerley School. Other pupils would be offered places at their catchment area school.

DT acknowledged the upset caused by the proposals. He confirmed that he was aware of the issue of pastoral care. ML had distributed a staffing protocol document which would be further considered by governors' as part of their summer term meeting agenda.

5. Questions and discussion

5.1 Question: Are LA officers under political pressure?

DT explained that he was not under any political pressure. He had not been involved in the 2008 proposals, but had looked at the data from a fresh point of view. The pressure being faced was to lead the current review within the set legal timescales. He took responsibility for the proposals and acknowledged that they were challenging and emotive, but confirmed that no decision had yet been taken.

5.2 Timescales were lean, should a longer time frame been allowed?

DT explained that the process had been started from the summer of last year in an open and methodical way. He was keen for schools to submit their own proposals and to engage in discussions.

5.3 From the Scrutiny Committee, it was claimed that some data had been wrong.

It was acknowledged that some data had been wrong; however some of this was opinion rather than fact. Overall this made no significance to the actual proposal under consideration. The proposal was not wrong. There was **no** "hit list"; a decision would be taken based on the criteria. The Number on Roll (NOR) and achievement data were all validated data and in the public domain. Confidence was held in the rest of the process. DT gave his absolute assurance that the same criteria and feasibility had been applied to every school.

5.4 In the letter to parents reference was made that "no facilities were affected". This was claimed to be wrong, as the local church would be affected. There were very close connections within Maesbury with the church, including the choir. The school was a close recruiting ground for the church and had good connections in the community.

The statement was acknowledged.

5.5 Oswestry Rural Council for development had opposed development in the area, yet two landowners were willing to sell land.

The statement was acknowledged

5.6 Former Maesbury pupils and ex pupils at the Marches School had been former head girls at the school and had received a very good education; absolutely refute the statement that bigger schools are better.

They were thanked for their statement.

5.7 In the letter, the school was judged as “Satisfactory” in the OfSTED report. This was incorrect, as the school had numerous examples of additional “good” comments as reported by the SIP, Chris Gajewski.

The above statement was understood not to be accurate, but was acknowledged.

5.8 Why was the portfolio holder not answering any questions?

DT replied that as Chief Officer, they were his proposals and that he was leading the work to gather and verify information to present to the Cabinet. Members would be voting on that information in Cabinet.

5.9 Had Aggie Caesar Homden already made up her mind?

ACH explained that the best way to understand the issues and feedback was to be there in person. It would be up to herself, as Portfolio Holder, to explain and answer any questions from the Members in Cabinet, before any decision could be made by them. Only then would DT and officers be able to take proposals to the next stage of the consultation process, if that were the decision taken. It was understood to be the best way to check that equal and balanced consideration was given to all issues in a fair and transparent process.

5.10 Concern was raised that the recommendations from the Policy Commission 2008 were before the change in the economic climate. The concern was in particular over the correlation of building houses and the net effect on pupil numbers. Property development over the next 20 years may be delayed or changed. It was a changing situation.

Cottages currently housing elderly people in Maesbury, which were currently for sale and not selling, may be put up for rent. If rented these could be taken up by younger parents with children. The demographics in the county may well change. It was requested that the situation is looked into very closely.

The community had been a very busy industrial one in the 1790’s, especially around the canal developments. All that had changed. Why not now?

DT acknowledged the above as a very interesting point.

5.11 Why was the proposal to close chosen, and not the option to federate?

The option to federate had been brought forward where schools had come up with the idea themselves. Some had raised the prospect of federation and had visited DT for discussions, prior to any announcement on the current round of proposals had been made. DT was keen and interested to hear from schools about sustainable, viable proposals and where savings could be made.

5.12 Local schools in Oswestry do not have spare places.

NP explained that unfilled spaces were available, with 2 exceptions for two children. One in the catchment area for West Felton was over capacity and may need some expansion before any additional children can be admitted. All other schools in the area had some places.

5.13 What about the loss of friendship groups?

NP explained that any parent can express a preference, and this would be allowed, if places were available. Where places were not available, admissions “surgeries” will be held and discussions would take place with parents. Class organisation can sometimes be changed to have a successful outcome, despite being above admissions number, due to year group anomalies. For example, a school may be deemed “full” at 56 spaces, yet have 4 spare places and not have classes above 30. The maximum of 30 pupils in a class was a legal requirement for KS1 children. The pressures at Morda were understood.

DT also acknowledged the good work being done in the school for SEN; all the efforts were much appreciated. But SEN excellence was not confined to small schools, it was the ethos that was most important for the children to make as much progress as possible. It was also explained that Severndale specialist school was running at near on capacity and this helped with marginal costs, not average costs as had been quoted in the local press.

5.14 What information will convince you that our school will stay open?

DT:

1. If the forecasting and projected pupil numbers were wrong and/or change;
2. Issues around sustainability – how to implement federation and the positive outcomes with reduction in costs;
3. If all the calculations were wrong – i.e. that the feasibility was proven wrong.

5.15 Concern was raised at the impact on the community; it was re-emphasised that Maesbury was an active community.

5.15 Playschool/ Pre-School – if the school future was secure, more young children would come to Maesbury.

5.16 The school had been on the closure list 2 years ago and again now. Has the threat of School Closure been quantified as an effect on a Primary school?

DT responded that the impact on the community had already been raised. The impact of falling NOR was understood, but what the constant threat of closure was on infants, was not specified.

5.17 Maesbury was being offered up as a scapegoat.

5.18 How long into the future before the school would be secure?

As time was limited, the above were acknowledged and governors were encouraged to send in any further questions they may have, for further consideration to be given to the issues raised.

6. Next Steps

Responses were requested to be made by email, website, in writing or telephone:-

educationforshropshire@shropshire.gov.uk

Education for Shropshire
Guildhall
Frankwell Quay
Shrewsbury
SY3 8HQ

Tel 0345 678 9008

The deadline for responses to be received was by 8 April 2011.

The Cabinet Report was to be published on **27 April 2011**.

A Cabinet Meeting was to be held on **4 May 2011** for the consideration of each individual proposal.

Governors were thanked for their attendance.

The meeting closed at 6.25 pm.

Appendix 2B

NOTES OF A MEETING HELD AT THURSDAY 17 MARCH 2011 SCHOOL HELD AT MAESBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL - COMMUNITY/PARENTS' AT 6.30pm

Recorded as present

Community/Parents: 65

Officers present: David Taylor, Aggie Caesar-Homden, Karen Bradshaw, John Rowley, Norrie Porter, Helen Whiteley.

David Taylor introduced the LA officers to parents and the community present and explained the purpose of the meeting. David also introduced Aggie Caesar-Homden who explained that as a cabinet member she was at the meeting to hear the views of those present and to feed back to the other members. David delivered the presentation.

At the staff meeting the proposal had already been discussed and it had been explained that compulsory redundancies were to be avoided wherever possible. A staff protocol policy document had been distributed to staff and was to be considered further by the governing body. David Taylor gave his personal commitment to read each and every letter, email or response sent in regarding the consultation. If viable alternatives were proposed, these would be given serious consideration. The floor was opened to questions.

How much would be saved by closing this school?

NP replied that approximately £46k or potentially more, dependant upon transport costs which had been factored in at maximum level, but may well become slightly less in practice.

What were the costs to the other (receiving) school?

Where places are already available £0. Extra revenue would be generated as the money follows the child. Fixed costs on the existing school would be saved. It was acknowledged that there would be spending in the region of £38k on transport, even though this was likely to be less. If the children were to move as expected, if the proposal were to go ahead, the net saving would be £41,528.

Class sizes of more than 30 children have a detrimental effect.

It was explained that there was a legal requirement for class sizes of not more than 30 children *in any school* for Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 classes.

NP explained that there would be discussions held with each individual family, if the proposal were accepted, on where they were to send their child. This would be with effect from 31 August 2012. In Oswestry it was possible that, with additional children in schools, there would be some class reorganisation, or at a later stage another class may be opened.

Why had Maesbury been picked on for closure, with only 7½ % surplus places?

DT explained that 1 "extra" class teacher did not cover the running costs of Maesbury School and that there were budget demands within the area for other pupils.

Will there be a new school built in Oswestry?

Due to future organisation changes that may become a possibility much later, but was not in the current planning.

Re Money saved being ploughed back into education, why was £38k to be spent on transport, which was not “education”.

Where less money was being spent on maintaining premises, more generous allowances were fed into front line education. DT acknowledged that some transitional costs would inevitably be incurred, to ensure a long term sustainable position was reached.

Maesbury School has links with The Marches School, it is not relevant to send Maesbury children to Kinnerley, where the primary link is with The Corbet School.

JR explained that there were no fixed links with any secondary school, there are no set feeder schools to specified secondary schools, the key criterion is where the child lives. There was no reason not to have a link with the Marches. An offer of an alternative school has to be proposed, which in this case was Kinnerley, but this does not necessarily have to be taken up.

Does Kinnerley have a link with the Marches?

JR replied that at present this was not yet known, however it could become an expectation and be developed.

T Milner: **Was Kinnerley chosen because places were available?**

NP replied in the negative, that it was chosen because it was a broadly similar type of school, in a rural area, serving children in the settlement and so was more likely to provide a similar educational experience to the Maesbury catchment.

How much consultation had been done with Kinnerley School?

NP responded that no strong objections had been received.

It was explained that Maesbury School had worked very hard on transition work from Y5 and especially Y6. If the school has to build and work on 2 secondary school links this would be additional burden on the existing headteacher.

Response by headteacher at Morda School (John Eglin)

It was acknowledged that this was a fair comment.

In the last round of school organisation Morda had been listed, why not now and have the criteria changed?

Last time there were surplus places in Morda. West Felton could have been expanded at that time. Since then there has been development. Then the formal consultation was from rural to urban area; now a rural alternative has been sought and Kinnerley has been offered. Officers requested to be informed of where the known links from Maesbury actually function within the area. Any alternative proposal would be looked into.

What if Maesbury were to federate with Morda?

This would be dependant upon what would be achieved by federation. If some of the underlying issues could be addressed by federation, then DT was prepared to listen to a proposal.

What other pupil places were there available, besides Kinnerley?

There were some in Oswestry and other areas, but this would cause dispersal, not concentrated as a group in one particular area.

Concern was raised over large classes

Where physical capacity was a problem, subject to space, another classroom could be arranged. The key was to use admission numbers which related to the capacity of school buildings and using available resources as wisely as possible. It was acknowledged that there was housing growth due in Oswestry, which had already been taken into account.

In 2012, if Maesbury children need to go elsewhere, they will be dispersed?

DT confirmed that it was a matter of individual choice; some would stay as a group others may chose to go elsewhere. It was too soon in consultation process to talk individually to families as yet.

NP confirmed that the proposal was to combine with Kinnerley. However, if there were other links which may be better, they needed to be informed. If required, additional space could be arranged at Holy Trinity, if this was requested. Alternatively, there could be a north/south split of the catchment area, not applicable for those already attending this school, but for future admissions from 2013 onwards. Community links were known in public, need to be specified to officers. Comments on the proposals were requested.

HT RF Maesbury is not a church school; what provision is being made for those not wanting a church place school?

DT replied that it is recognised that there is parental choice for the type of school. These choices are accommodated wherever church or non-church school places are readily available. Overall a balance is provided within the county, but not necessarily within a specific area. Non church school places are provided locally at Woodside School, Oswestry. DT confirmed that no decision has yet been made and any alternative proposals would be considered.

Maesbury a Community School - It was confirmed that events held at the school involved the entire community. Events included the summer fête, festivals, duck races, car boot sales, Maesbury Tots, Before and After School Clubs which were all helping to keep the village alive.

Sale of Land - If the school were to be closed, the land sold could provide 20 new houses. There would be no school to send children to.

DT explained that overall new housing developments over 10 years had provided 12,000 new houses yet despite these developments the total school population in Shropshire had been reduced by 3,000 children. New houses did not necessarily provide new children.

HT RF replied that the right type of housing was needed to be provided. Maesbury was too expensive and had no social housing, only executive homes. Morda developments had provided a good estate which had provided children at the school.

It was acknowledged that this had been taken into account.

Concern was raised whether bus drivers and taxi drivers were subjected to full Police Checks?

It was clarified that CRB checks were carried out as normal.

A plea was made to keep open this and all other small Shropshire schools. It was explained that in a small school, where a child was not coping with their subjects, with voluntary reading and other helpers available, outstanding results had been achieved. There would not be the same consideration in a larger school.

The above statement and contribution was acknowledged.

In 2008 schools mergers took place and new schools were built - Why could that not happen here? Also, concern was raised that the school was being closed in response to short-term funding needs, but the long-term viewpoint was not being considered.

Why close down the school when the children love the school?

Logic was applied as follows:

Shortfall in budget of £10m per year. Shortfall per year is less than in 2003. £15m in 2011. There have been 10 statutory school closures proposed and 20 schools strongly recommended for Federation and some others to amalgamate. If the land is sold and 20 houses built = £11m, 20 schools = £20m. The budget would be fixed in 2 years.

DT acknowledged that the logic was understandable, but not correct. The sale of school land would achieve capital savings; however revenue savings were required for long-term savings. Reference was made to the Kinghan Review in which schools were encouraged to implement collaborative and federated ways of working together. This applies to every school in Shropshire. Some surplus places were available, but these need to become more sustainable. There was a need to have fewer buildings but more pupil-based flexible places. Schools working together needed to be achieved.

We need to lobby the government for more money.

Cabinet Members, including Aggie Caesar Homden as portfolio holder and Keith Barrow as the leader of the Council, were already lobbying for more money.

The school chosen was the worst case scenario. Due to social activities and connections already in place it was hoped that Maesbury could federate with Morda.

Why remove such a good asset as Maesbury and not use the same budget? Inform us of ways to improve.

DT explained that all Shropshire schools are under budgetary pressures. As raised in the local area meetings held across the county earlier in the process,

no change was **not** an option. A number of schools are running deficit budgets and funds from frontline education are being diverted to support them. There has to be a more efficient use of valuable limited resources. Tough decisions have to be made and some headteachers (the majority) are already commenting that change is not happening fast enough and that more change is needed. Reference was also made to the OfSTED letter to the Corporate Director stating that Shropshire schools were not improving but that education results are static.

If Maesbury School were a business, the school would be in surplus.

DT clarified that the Schools Formula funding had protected some small schools in the past. Headteachers and governors all tried to work their best together, but new changes were coming.

Was the annual £4k funding per child the same in the 90's?

It was explained that funding per child per annum had been £3,300 in the 90's. The inner city rate was £6,500 per child.

A request was made for more money to be spent on education in rural schools.

Every effort was being made in pursuing and lobbying the government to that effect. If more funding was available from central government then all provision could be kept open. However, falling rolls lead to falling revenues. This is impacting on the education for all children and was a long-term problem.

Are there any figures which quantify the value of education and the positive social effects achieved? Not only good education, but long-term Maesbury convert good children into good adults.

The corporate director agreed that broader issues than just the delivery of education were key. It was important to weigh up all the issues. Not every issue could be measured by statistics.

Maesbury is like a big family, with old and young working effectively side by side.

The contribution was acknowledged.

Numbers of children at the school had dipped to 28 some 25 years ago, but it is a good school now.

The forecast of future numbers used go up to 30 years ahead.

Why not include Oswestry into the catchment area?

Ultimately it is the issue of the school being able to attract children to it.

If the threat of closure were removed, the pupil numbers would increase.

Please keep our school open and the community together, it would keep the children very happy.

The Corporate director thanked all for attending and their contributions to the meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm.

Responses from Governing Body and Parish Council

Parish Council Response

Cllr David V Jones
Ashfield, Maesbury. Oswestry.

4th April 2011.

Maesbury School Consultation/organisation.

David Taylor.

One again the ORPC find themselves defending the existence of our local primary schools in the face of the Schools Organization Programme.

Local village schools are the life blood of the community.

Schools in villages were built because that is where they were needed.

Nothing has changed.

Maesbury School plays a great part in the social structure of our village and community.

The Parish Council monitors the progress of schools within the parish. We see they provide our children with a good all round education. In fact some of the ORPC monthly meetings are held in Maesbury School which is also well used as a community venue. Maesbury School already works very well within its school cluster in area 1.

It is obvious that the child derives a sense of place which is a vital part of a young person's development. A child educated in its own locality develops a strong feeling of ownership to that community. This should be encouraged.

Central Government is actively promoting de-centralization.

The say we should embrace localism.

This will never be achieved when Shropshire Council are willing to see children in rural schools leave there village and be made to travel out of area for their education. Remember these are tots, of 4 and 5 years of age.

ORPC strongly support the continuation of Maesbury and all rural schools. The Cabinet should be aware there is good evidence that the birth rate is on the rise and within a very short time Shropshire Council may find themselves embarrassed by the lack of our village school if this programme goes ahead.

Yours sincerely, on behalf of the Oswestry Rural Parish Council.

David V Jones.

Response to Proposal to close Maesbury Primary School

Governors would like cabinet to consider the importance of keeping Maesbury Primary School open as we believe that the school has a long and economically sustainable future as a high achieving school and is an important feature of the rural provision for schools in the Oswestry area.

Governors believe that better cost savings can be made and better educational standards for children achieved, through formal collaborative work with its neighbouring schools, rather than closing the school and transporting the children elsewhere.

The vision we have for Maesbury School is to create a new model of educational leadership and support that reflects the needs of 21st Century rural schools.

Maesbury Governors and staff wish to propose Formal Collaboration with the Marches School and Technology College, Oswestry, already an outstanding secondary education provider in the UK.

We recognise the outstanding strengths that The Marches School and Technology College has and following discussion with the Chair of Governors and the Head Teacher, we all believe that this is a long term, viable solution for Maesbury School and as a new model for future education in rural Shropshire.

As a solid learning partnership for the 21st Century, together, we can revolutionise the way we deliver education from reception to year 11 and aim to make our schools the best places for young people to learn, develop and work by:

- Working together to deliver a new model of learning for Shropshire that reflects our unique communities, the people who live in them and the children of our times
- Inspiring and sharing innovation for students, parents and our staff
- Drawing upon local, national and international thinking
- Leading and communicating excellence to raise and sustain high standards of attainment
- Valuing the partnership with families and children and their communities
- Providing opportunities for leadership development
- Being actively involved and accountable to our partners

Together we will be:

- a school where confident children can work, play, learn and grow whatever their age.
- a challenging and rigorous educational learning community that is dedicated to the preparation of students to be life-long learners and contributing members in a rapidly changing world.
- an outstanding learning environment that unlocks learning potential from an early age and actively nurtures it through the years.
- a learning programme that is collaboratively crafted using the expertise and dedication of school communities, community stakeholders, advisors, technology companies, business partners, and teaching professionals.

We are very excited about our future and know that working together, with The Marches School; we can deliver our ambitious new proposals and achieve our vision.

In addition to this we will continue the collaborative work with neighbouring schools to raise educational standards and make financial savings over the next and following years:

- Formal Collaboration with Morda CE Primary and possibly other local small schools to raise standards and explore cost savings
- Collaboration with Newbridge Nursery to extend the child care facilities for Maesbury and the surrounding community and facilitate transition from nursery to primary school

(See supporting statements for the above Appendix A, B and C)

In support of the proposal to keep Maesbury Primary School, we would like you to also consider the following statements for keeping Maesbury Primary open:

- **Community Impact**

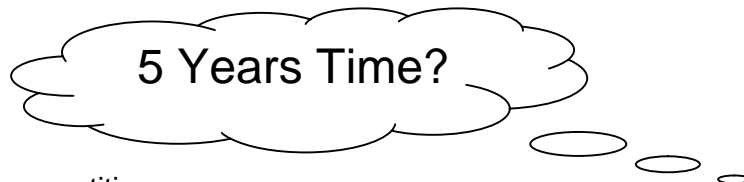
It is the view of the Governors, that if the proposal was accepted that the broad community around the Maesbury area would benefit greatly. The economic impact of stabilising the future of the school would encourage economic growth for the village and surrounding area. The school is already an integral part of village life and would continue to be an important community hub. (See Appendix E)

- **Non church school**

Some of our parents have chosen Maesbury Primary School because it is not a church school and the school works closely with them to ensure their particular beliefs are respected.

Maesbury Appendix A

I.L.C



- Collaboration not competition.
- Working together effectively to improve outcomes for Oswestry children – shared responsibility.
- Sharing staff expertise – coaching and mentoring across schools.

- Joint activities for the children – working on the same project – sharing outcomes.
- Shared training opportunities – governors and staff. Particularly compulsory update training i.e. Child Protection, Safer Recruitment, First Aid etc.
- Shared personnel i.e. Business Manager, Health & Safety Manager.

Maesbury Appendix B

Collaborative work between Morda and Maesbury

Maesbury Governors believe that there is a strong working relationship between the two Headteachers of Maesbury and Morda, which is a good basis for a Formal Collaboration between the two schools and possibly one or two other neighbouring schools. This would benefit all schools as they work together to achieve the recognition of “Outstanding” in raising pupil outcomes by sharing resources and expertise through formal collaborative work between Governors, Staff and children.

Maesbury work very closely with Morda, together and as part of the North West Shropshire Educational Improvement Partnership (EIP) and The Marches Integrated Learning Community (ILC).

We have had joint staff meetings, particularly on Assessing Pupil Progress in writing and mathematics

Have visited London together

Worked together on several joint projects

Shared governor training

Joint PD day

Shared expertise: Maesbury shared their expertise and working documents to help Morda with their FMISS last year and this year Morda have helped our new administrator with advice and support, since she started in September 2010.

Morda Governors have agreed to forming a Governor Committee to explore Formal Collaboration with neighbouring schools.

Maesbury Appendix C

Newbridge Day Nursery

(Bringing together Oswestry Day Nursery and See-Saw Montessori)

Maesbury Hall Mill
Newbridge
Oswestry
SY10 8BB
(01691) 670206

6th April 2011

Dear Sir or Madam

I write in reference to the proposed closure of Maesbury School. Our Nursery is the nearest childcare facility to Maesbury School and we have established good links with the school. We are looking at providing wrap around care and holiday care for the children as our Nursery has an after school and holiday club. Children from our Nursery feed into the school and as a concerned child carer I would like to express my concerns regarding the possible closure.

1. As the county is about to go to a 1 point entry into school in September, this will mean very young 4 year olds will be going into Maesbury School. If the school closes and the children are transported to Kinnerley School, as has been suggested, these very young children will be waiting at pick up points in all weathers, then they will be put on buses without an escort, no booster seats and in the company of much older children. Will the bus driver be able to secure seat belts for these children? Will these young children be escorted into the school and at the end of the day be escorted back onto the bus?

2. These children leaving our Nursery, where our parent partnership is very strong, will go from having the continuity of care that these very young children will still need, that would be provided by Maesbury School, to being put on the buses and delivered to school with no contact being made to their teacher, messages will not be passed and teachers and parents will have no direct contact.

There is also the fact that as a village Maesbury no longer has a village hall and therefore the school has become a focal point, offering the community a place to hold fetes, garden parties etc... There would be no where else to hold any of these events in the future. So I would strongly urge you to vote to keep the school open.

Yours sincerely


June Jones
(Proprietor)

Maesbury Appendix D

As you can see from the Reception intake to Maesbury Primary School, the numbers coming into the school were such that the school would have had no surplus places, had there not been a proposal to close the school. In fact, for the Autumn 2008 intake, I had to tell a parent, desperate for their child to attend Maesbury, that she would have to go to appeal because our admissions number of eight had been filled. She kept ringing school, but could not face appeal and so her child went to Nesscliffe. Prospective parents have told us they did not want their child to start at Maesbury because of "closure"

We have been seeing a recovery recently and now have 8 children starting at Maesbury September 2011, all from Maesbury.

Maesbury Appendix E

Community Impact

- The School opens its doors to the community of Maesbury many times each year. This includes summer fetes; cultural festivals; car boot sales; the annual duck race in the stream that runs through the village; community assemblies in the school hall; school church services in St John's Church in the village; including an annual Nativity play directed by a local resident; a Mother & Tots group; parish council meetings (the school has, in its grounds, a storage facility for tables and chairs for parish and community meetings). The School is also used as our local polling station as we have no village hall. We are currently organising a "street party" for the community, to be held on the Royal Wedding bank holiday in the School grounds.
- Parents meet every day at the School gates and this helps to keep our community vibrant and connected.
- Children have a strong identity with their village and their peers at the School. Parental role models are strong, as children know their friends parents and have respect for them.
- Children enjoy going to Maesbury school, older children nurture younger children, and younger children have positive role models. This is evidenced in our Ofsted reports and the high attendance at our after school clubs. Maesbury children learn to be confident and transfer well to secondary school. It is recognised by staff at The Marches, that "Maesbury children make good leaders" and have become Head children at The Marches School & Llanfyllin.

Governors believe that Kinnerley CE Primary School is not an appropriate alternative for children in the Maesbury community because:

- Maesbury is in the Oswestry area of schools and feeds primarily to The Marches Secondary School. Transition activities and strong staff relationships, have been developed over time, to ensure smooth transition for all year 6 pupils, and particularly more vulnerable children. This ensures that children's learning and achievement is continued from year 6 to 7. Kinnerley feeds to The Corbet School, and generally, The Corbet does not take children from out of catchment, so children may have to leave the friends they have made, to attend their catchment school, The Marches Secondary School.

- Kinnerley is not part of the network of Oswestry schools, so is not part of the work that Maesbury staff and children have been involved in when working with other schools.
- Maesbury has before and after school clubs to ensure parents who work have suitable child care and children have enriched learning opportunities outside of school hours. Maesbury governors are already working on plans to extend the offer of child care, particularly to include school holidays. Maesbury parents have enquired about before and after school clubs as they are worried about their work commitments. They have been told there are clubs on 2 days after school, and “there is not any call in Kinnerley, for any more than that.”
- Parents/carers would miss the close contact with staff on a daily basis, when information can easily be shared.
- Parents are not at all happy about children being bussed a distance from their home, from an early age and wonder how they will get their children during the day if they are ill.

Appendix 4

Consultation on Draft Proposal to Close Maesbury Primary School

Introduction

This Appendix selects and responds to the main points raised during the consultation, including at the meetings with staff, governors and the community. The minutes of the

meetings at each school are also attached to the report as appendices 2a and 2b. The actual responses received are available for inspection in the Members Library and will be available to Members at the Cabinet Meeting on 4 May 2011.

A. Points Raised and Response by Officers

| Ref | Point Raised | Response |
|-----|--|---|
| | How much would be saved by closing the school? | When the original report was published, this was estimated at approximately £46,000 but potentially more, dependent on transport costs which have been factored in at the maximum possible level but may well be less in practice. Now that the new funding formula has been agreed, this has been recalculated and is now £49,878 at current funding levels. |
| | What are the costs to the receiving school? | Receiving schools would have £120,192 redistributed to them in pupil-related funding. Some of this might be spent on setting up new classes (which would create opportunities for continuing employment) but some pupils would take up unfilled places in existing classes, making resources available to the receiving school for SEN support and development. |
| | Class sizes of more than 30 children have a detrimental effect. | class sizes over 30 create additional workload on teachers and make it difficult to give sufficient individual attention to every child. However, some schools manage large classes successful at KS 2, perhaps by having more than one adult in the class. All Foundation and Key Stage 1 classes are limited to 30 or below. |
| | How would we apply to another school if we don't want our child to go to Kinnerley | There will be discussions held with each individual family on where they want a place for their child if the proposal is accepted. |
| | Why has Maesbury been selected for closure, given it only has 7.5% surplus spaces? | Maesbury school has some surplus places, but also has relatively low number of pupils from within its catchment area. |

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| | Will there be a new school built within Oswestry? | Probably. If, as seems likely, the proposals for a major development in the town go ahead, there will be a need to work with the developers to provide a school to serve the development. |
| | Why is the £38k saved to be spent on transport, and not ploughed back into education? | Maesbury school receives non pupil-related funding of £87,878. At least £49,878 would be redistributed. However, some funding would be needed to provide transport. Without the transport funding the other savings would not be available, and a smaller proportion of funding would be used for front-line education. |
| | Maesbury School has links with the Marches School – it is not relevant to send children to Kinnerley, where the main links are with the Corbet School. | It is true that at present most children from Kinnerley go to Corbet. However, many schools have links with more than one secondary school and secondary schools are keen to develop links with all schools which transfer pupils to the in Y7. In fact, there are no fixed feeder schools in Shropshire, as admissions are decided by the catchment area of the child's home address and distance from the secondary school. |
| | Was Kinnerley chosen because it has extra places? | Kinnerley was chosen because it is a broadly similar type of school, in a rural area, serving children in the settlement and so is more likely to provide a similar educational experience to the Maesbury catchment. |
| | How much consultation has been done with Kinnerley School? | The Council has contacted the head teacher of Kinnerley School to make sure that the proposals were feasible, and has received no objections to the proposal from Kinnerley School, |
| | In the last round of proposals Morda was listed as potential for closure. Why is it not now – have the criteria been changed? | The previous criteria were based more on the size of schools than on the relative number of unfilled places. Morda was seen as being small and in a location where pupils could be dispersed. The school is now full, and does not meet the new criteria. In addition, other reorganisation has also taken place in Oswestry, reducing the number of unfilled places at Holy Trinity. |
| | What if Maesbury were to federate with Morda? | The federation proposals would have to show that it would be sustainable in financial and pupil |

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| | | number terms in the long run, and would result in a larger proportion of funding being spent on front-line education. |
| | In 2012, if Maesbury children need to go elsewhere, will they be dispersed? | Current forecasts are that there would not be enough places in Kinnerley for all the projected pupils at Maesbury in 2012. However, there are nought places at Holy Trinity School for any groups of pupils who want to stay together. The Council would consult on whether should be any changes to what would become the catchment area of Kinnerley School if the proposals were to go ahead. |
| | Maesbury is not a church school; what provision is being made for those that do not want a church school? | The Council recognises the value of a diverse range of school types. However, there is no requirement to offer places at a particular type of school. Overall, a balance is provided within the county, but not necessarily within a specific area. Non-church school places are provided locally at Woodside School, Oswestry. |
| | The sale of the school land could provide new houses, and then there would be no school to serve them. | New housing developments over the last 10 years have provided 12,000 new houses. Yet, despite these developments, the total school population in Shropshire had been reduced by 3,000 children. New houses do not necessarily provide new children. However, even if the did, the number of primary children at any one time from the size of development which the school site would allow would not have made any difference to the fortunes of the school. |
| | Concern was raised whether bus and taxi drivers are subjected to full police checks. | The LA can clarify that full checks will be carried out as normal. |
| | The atmosphere of a small school – the outstanding results it achieves – cannot be replicated in a larger | There is no evidence to suggest this; larger schools also have outstanding results and atmospheres. |

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| | one. | |
| | Concern was raised that the school is being closed to meet short-term financial needs and not considering the long-term viewpoint. | The current position is not sustainable. Although primary pupil numbers will recover to a small extent, particularly in larger built-up areas, the Council will still have £10m per year less in government grant in the long term. A reduction in grant of that extent requires adjustments to the school estate to ensure that funding is director to front line education services, not fixed costs of schools. |
| | Could the Council inform us of ways to improve? | No change is not an option. A number of schools are running deficit budgets and funds from frontline education are being diverted to support sites and fixed costs. There has to be a more efficient use of valuable limited resources. Tough decisions have to be made and some Headteachers (the majority) are already commenting that change is not happening fast enough and that more change is needed. |
| | Couldn't more money be spent on rural schools? | Every effort is being made in pursuing and lobbying the government to that effect. If more funding was available from central government then all provision could be kept open, although this would not be the most efficient option given the reduction in pupil numbers in the last decade. However, falling rolls lead to falling revenues. This is impacting on the education for all children and is a long-term problem in the county. |
| | What about the loss of friendship groups? | This requires a two part answer. With regard to the proposed transfer in 2012, Admissions "surgeries" will be held and discussions will take place with parents. Any parent can express a preference for a school, and this will be allowed, if places are available. Where places are not available there is the possibility of an appeal. With regard to transfer from primary to secondary, children often change friendship groupings at this point, because they find themselves spending more time with |

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| | | their peers in their teaching group in the new school. |
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Representations Received During Statutory Consultation Period

One comment was received during the Statutory Period of Representations

| Point Raised | Response |
|---|--|
| <p>Children are able to walk to school, not all parents drive. This will cause problems such as :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to art club • Access to computer club • Access to football • Parental involvement in sports day • if a child falls ill during the school day | <p>Many villages and settlements in Shropshire share a school with another area. In these villages parents often work together to ensure that access is maintained to out of school activities.</p> <p>Schools across Shropshire utilise a range of strategy to safeguard a child who falls ill during the school day which include a member of staff taking the child home.</p> |
| <p>Will children be safe on a bus with a driver that we do not know</p> | <p>Shropshire Council staff and contractors are all suitably screened before being allowed to operate school contracts. Their performance is monitored frequently. Shropshire Council transports a large number of children of primary school age safely to and from school each day.</p> |
| <p>Will teachers in a larger school have time for students in the same way as they do at Maesbury</p> | <p>Even with the addition of children from Maesbury, Kinnerley will hardly be a large school. Primary pupils spend most of their time with their class teacher. There is no reason why class sizes at Kinnerley CE Primary School should be larger than at Maesbury (indeed, KS1 classes are limited by law to 30 pupils in all schools).</p> |
| <p>There is concern over potential bullying at a larger school.</p> | <p>All Shropshire schools have robust anti-bullying policies. As noted above, primary school children relate mainly to their class, and this would be in the same order of size as at Maesbury. There is no correlation between reported incidents of bullying and size of school.</p> |
| <p>Maesbury has attempted to find a partner for Federation but has been unsuccessful</p> | <p>The Council is aware that the Governors of Maesbury school have attempted to find partners to build a Federation. Federation was one of the alternative strategies which the Council considered before reluctantly coming to the view that Maesbury school was not viable in terms of the current school network, and at that stage we were also unable to identify a natural prospective partner. The fact that Maesbury governors</p> |

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| | have similarly been unable to find a partner tends to reinforce the Council's view. |
| The school has applied for Academy Status | Applications for Academy status are decided by the Department for Education independently of any local decision on school organisation. |

Statement of Case and Information for Decision Makers

Statement of Case

Introduction

Shropshire Council's Cabinet agreed on 4 May 2011 to publish Statutory proposals to close Maesbury Primary School. After publication, there is a period for representations lasting six weeks, followed by a further report to Council. This final report will be accompanied by the statement of case which, should Council agree to proceed with the proposal, would be submitted to the Secretary of State. The draft Statement of Case, in the form specified by Department for Education guidance, is set out below.

The Statement of Case should be read along with the Report to Cabinet on 4 May, the Statutory Notice and the Section 15 or 19 information which accompanies the Notice. The Statement of Case consists of a number of factors to be considered by decision makers in coming to their decision. These are reproduced in full along with comments by officers on each paragraph. Comments by Shropshire Council are in **bold type**.

D1

Statutory Guidance – Factors to be Considered by Decision Makers

4.15 Paragraphs 8(6) and 17 of Schedule 2 to the EIA 2006 provides that both the LA and schools adjudicator are required to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State when they take a decision on proposals. Paragraphs 4.16 to 4.62 below contain the statutory guidance on considering proposals for school closure.

4.16 The following factors should not be taken to be exhaustive. Their importance will vary, depending on the type and circumstances of the proposals. All proposals should be considered on their individual merits.

EFFECT ON STANDARDS AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

A System Shaped by Parents

4.17 The Government's aim, as set out in the Five Year Strategy for Education and

Learners and the Schools White Paper *Higher Standards, Better Schools For All*, is to create a school system shaped by parents which delivers excellence and equity. In particular, the Government wishes to see a dynamic system in which:

- weak schools that need to be closed are closed quickly and replaced by new ones where necessary;
- the best schools are able to expand and spread their ethos and success; and
- new providers have the opportunity to share their energy and talents by establishing new schools - whether as voluntary schools, Trust schools or Academies - and forming Trusts for existing schools.

4.18 The EIA 2006 amends the Education Act 1996 to place new duties on LAs to secure diversity in the provision of schools and to increase opportunities for parental choice when planning the provision of schools in their areas. In addition, LAs are under a specific **duty** to respond to representations from parents about the provision of schools, including requests to establish new schools or make changes to existing schools. The Government's aim is to secure a more diverse and dynamic schools system which is shaped by parents. The Decision Maker should take into account the extent to which the proposals are consistent with the new duties on LAs.

Standards

4.19 The Government wishes to encourage changes to local school provision which will boost standards and opportunities for young people, while matching school place supply as closely as possible to pupils' and parents' needs and wishes.

4.20 Decision Makers should be satisfied that proposals for a school closure will contribute to raising local standards of provision, and will lead to improved achievement for children and young people. They should pay particular attention to the effects on groups that tend to under-perform including children from certain ethnic groups, children from deprived backgrounds and children in care, with the aim of narrowing achievement gaps.

Maesbury CE Primary School was judged to be “Satisfactory” following its last Ofsted inspection. The named alternative school, Kinnerley CE Primary School, was judged to be “Good”.

Maesbury School has a number of unfilled places. This, and its small total capacity,

means that it is expensive to maintain. Closing the school will release pupil-related funding of £120,192 which will increase the resources available to schools which receive displaced pupils. In addition, the closure will release £49,878 (net of estimated additional transport costs) in allocations for fixed costs, which will be recycled through the dedicated schools budget to increase the funding available to raise standards in all Shropshire schools.

4.21 Decision Makers should be satisfied that when proposals lead to children being displaced, any alternative provision will meet the statutory SEN improvement test (see paragraphs 4.55 to 4.61).

The named alternative school is known to provide effectively for pupils with special education needs. The school will be in a position to improve their provision using reallocated funding (see above).

Paragraphs 4.22 to 4.27 are not applicable to these proposals.

Diversity

4.28 The Government's aim is to transform our school system so that every child receives an excellent education – whatever their background and wherever they live. A vital part of the Government's vision is to create a more diverse school system offering excellence and choice, where each school develops its own ethos, sense of mission and a centre of excellence or specialist provision.

4.29 Decision Makers should consider how proposals will impact on local diversity. They should consider the range of schools in the relevant area of the LA and how they will ultimately impact on the aspirations of parents and help raise local standards and narrow achievement gaps.

4.30 In deciding proposals to close a school with a religious character, the Decision Maker should consider the effect that this will have on the balance of denominational provision in the area.

4.31 The Decision Maker should not normally approve the closure of a school with a religious character where the proposal would result in a reduction in the proportion of denominational places in the area. This guidance does not however apply in cases where the school concerned is severely under-subscribed, standards have been consistently low or

where an infant and junior school (at least one of which has a religious character) are to be replaced by a new all-through primary school with the same religious character on the site of one on the predecessor schools.

Maesbury Primary School is a community primary school with no religious character. 29% of the school's places are unfilled. Closing the school would increase the proportion of CE places in Shropshire by 1.2%.

The named alternative school, Kinnerley CE Primary School has a Church of England religious character.

4.32 The Decision Maker should consider how the proposals will help every child and young person achieve their potential in accordance with Every Child Matters' principles which are: to be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution to the community and society and achieve economic well-being. This should include considering how displaced pupils will continue to have access to extended services, opportunities for personal development, access to academic and vocational training, measures to address barriers to participation and support for children and young people with particular needs e.g. looked after children or children with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities.

The named alternative school also offers extended services. The named alternative school, Kinnerley CE Primary School, was judged "Good" at its last Ofsted inspection. The school is known to provide effective services to Looked After pupils and pupils with Special Educational Needs.

NEED FOR PLACES

4.33 The Decision Maker should be satisfied that there is sufficient capacity to accommodate displaced pupils in the area, taking into account the overall supply and likely future demand for places. The Decision Maker should consider the quality and popularity with parents of the schools in which spare capacity exists and any evidence of parents' aspirations for those schools.

42.5% of pupils at Maesbury come from outside the catchment area. Sufficient unfilled places exist currently in the named alternative school and are forecast to be available at the date of implementation of the proposal. Shropshire Council has considered future development in the Kinnerley area and is convinced that there is sufficient capacity in the remaining schools to cope the levels of development currently

envisaged. There is no prospect of significant development in the area around Maesbury school.

Surplus Places

4.34 It is important that education is provided as cost-effectively as possible. Empty places can represent a poor use of resources - resources that can often be used more effectively to support schools in raising standards. The Secretary of State wishes to encourage LAs to organise provision in order to ensure that places are located where parents want them. LAs should take action to remove empty places at schools that are unpopular with parents and which do little to raise standards or improve choice. The removal of surplus places should always support the core agenda of raising standards and respect parents' wishes by seeking to match school places with parental choices.

4.35 The Decision Maker should normally approve proposals to close schools in order to remove surplus places where the school proposed for closure has a quarter or more places unfilled, and at least 30 surplus places, and where standards are low compared to standards across the LA. The Decision Maker should consider all other proposals to close schools in order to remove surplus places carefully. Where the rationale for the closure of a school is based on the removal of surplus places, standards at the school(s) in question should be taken into account, as well as geographical and social factors, such as population sparsity in rural areas, and the effect on any community use of the premises.

Maesbury School has 29% surplus places (16). The named alternative school, Kinnerley CE Primary, has a higher Ofsted rating (Good) than Maesbury (Satisfactory).

IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY AND TRAVEL

4.36 Some schools may already be a focal point for family and community activity, providing extended services for a range of users, and its closure may have wider social ramifications. In considering proposals for the closure of such schools, the effect on families and the community should be considered. Where the school was providing access to extended services, some provision should be made for the pupils and their families to access similar services through their new schools or other means.

Maesbury is located just outside a small village. Many of the pupils come from outside the village. A wide range of extended services is available at the alternative school.

4.37 The information presented by those bringing forward proposals to close such schools, particularly when they are in receipt of funding as part of regeneration activity, should therefore include evidence that options for maintaining access to extended services in the area have been addressed. The views of other relevant agencies and partnerships with responsibility for community and family services should be taken into account, alongside those of the local police, Government Offices and Regional Development Agencies having responsibility for the New Deal for Communities.

Not applicable.

4.38 When considering proposals to close a school the Decision Maker should consider the impact of the proposals on community cohesion. This will need to be considered on a case by case basis, taking account of the community served by the school and the views of different sections within the community. In considering the impact of the proposals on community cohesion the Decision Maker will need to take account of the nature of the alternative provision to be made for pupils displaced by the closure and the effects of any other changes to the provision of schools in the area.

Community cohesion was considered during the pre-statutory consultation period (see report on pre-statutory consultation). It was considered that there would be no effect on community cohesion.

4.39 In considering proposals for the reorganisation of schools, Decision Makers should satisfy themselves that accessibility planning has been properly taken into account. Facilities are to be accessible by those concerned, by being located close to those who will use them, and the proposed changes should not adversely impact on disadvantaged groups.

The site of the named alternative school is 4.1 miles from the site of Maesbury school. 52.5% of pupils walk to Maesbury School at present. There would be no disproportionate effect on disadvantaged groups.

4.40 In deciding statutory proposals, the Decision Maker should bear in mind that proposals should not have the effect of unreasonably extending journey times or increasing transport costs, or result in too many children being prevented from travelling sustainably due to unsuitable routes e.g. for walking, cycling etc. The EIA 2006 provides extended free transport rights for low income groups – see Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance ref 00373 – 2007BKT-EN at www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications. Proposals should also be considered on the basis of how they will support and contribute to the LA's duty to

promote the use of sustainable travel and transport to school.

52.5% of pupils currently walk to Maesbury School. Displaced pupils would be eligible for free transport in line with current Shropshire Council policies. As part of the proposals, Kinnerley Primary will develop an updated Home to School travel policy.

4.41 The Decision Maker should consider whether there are any sex, race or disability discrimination issues that arise from the changes being proposed, for example, that where there is a proposed change to single sex provision in an area, there is equal access to single sex provision for the other sex to meet parental demand. Similarly there needs to be a commitment to provide access to a range of opportunities which reflects the ethnic and cultural mix of the area, while ensuring that such opportunities are open to all.

There are no sex, race or disability issues that arise from the proposal.

4.42 In considering statutory proposals to close a rural school, the Decision Maker should have regard to the need to preserve access to a local school for rural communities. There is therefore a presumption against the closure of rural schools. This does not mean that a rural school should never close, but the case for closure should be strong and the proposals clearly in the best interests of educational provision in the area. The presumption will not apply in cases where a rural infant and junior school on the same site are being closed to establish a new primary school. In order to assist the Decision Maker, those proposing closure should provide evidence to the Decision Maker to show that they have carefully considered:

- a. Alternatives to closure including the potential for federation with another local school to increase the school's viability; the scope for an extended school or children's centre to provide local community services and facilities e.g. child care facilities, family and adult learning, healthcare, community internet access etc;
- b. The transport implications as mentioned in paragraphs 4.39 to 4.40; and
- c. The overall and long term impact on local people and the community of closure of the village school and of the loss of the building as a community facility.

Shropshire Council have carefully considered alternatives to closure, as set out in the report to Cabinet on 4 May 2011.

Sections 4.42 to 4.45 are not relevant to this proposal.

4.46 In considering proposals to close a school which currently includes early years provision, the Decision Maker should consider whether the alternative provision will integrate pre-school education with childcare services and/or with other services for young children and their families; and should have particular regard to the views of the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

Not applicable

4.47 The Decision Maker should also consider whether the alternative early years provision will maintain or enhance the standard of educational provision and flexibility of access for parents. Alternative provision could be with providers in the private, voluntary or independent sector.

Not applicable

Section 4.48 is not relevant to this proposal, as the school is not a nursery school. The issue of access to nursery provision is considered in section 4.46.

Sections 4.49 to 4.56 are not relevant to this proposal.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN) PROVISION

Initial Considerations

4.55 When reviewing SEN provision, planning or commissioning alternative types of SEN provision or considering proposals for change, LAs should aim for a flexible range of provision and support that can respond to the special educational needs of individual pupils and parental preferences, rather than necessarily establishing broad categories of provision according to special educational need or disability. There are a number of initial considerations for LAs to take account of in relation to proposals for change. They should ensure that local proposals:

- i. take account of parental preferences for particular styles of provision or education settings;
- ii. offer a range of provision to respond to the needs of individual children and young people, taking account of collaborative arrangements (including between special

- and mainstream), extended school and Children's Centre provision; regional centres (of expertise) and regional and sub-regional provision; out of Local Authority day and residential special provision;
- iii. are consistent with the LA's Children and Young People's Plan;
 - iv. take full account of educational considerations, in particular the need to ensure a broad and balanced curriculum, including the National Curriculum, within a learning environment in which children can be healthy and stay safe;
 - v. support the LA's strategy for making schools and settings more accessible to disabled children and young people and their scheme for promoting equality of opportunity for disabled people;
 - vi. provide access to appropriately trained staff and access to specialist support and advice, so that individual pupils can have the fullest possible opportunities to make progress in their learning and participate in their school and community;
 - vii. ensure appropriate provision for 14-19 year-olds, taking account of the role of local LSC funded institutions and their admissions policies; and
 - viii. ensure that appropriate full-time education will be available to all displaced pupils. Their statements of special educational needs will require amendment and all parental rights must be ensured. Other interested partners, such as the Health Authority should be involved.

4.56 Taking account of the considerations, as set out above, will provide assurance to local communities, children and parents that any reorganisation of SEN provision in their area is designed to improve on existing arrangements and enable all children to achieve the five Every Child Matters outcomes.

There are no separately funded SEN places at the existing school.

Paragraphs 4.57 to 4.61 are only relevant to the reduction of places in special schools and units.

OTHER ISSUES

4.62 The Decision Maker should consider the views of all those affected by the proposals or who have an interest in them including: pupils; families of pupils; staff; other schools and colleges; local residents; diocesan bodies and other providers; LAs; the LSC (where proposals affect 14-19 provision) and the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership if one exists, or any local partnership or group that exists in place of an EYDCP (where proposals affect early years and/or childcare provision). This includes statutory objections and comments submitted during the representation period. The Decision Maker should not simply take account of the numbers of people expressing a particular view when considering representations made on proposals. Instead the Decision Maker should give the greatest weight to representations from those stakeholders likely to be most directly affected by the proposals.

Shropshire Council has actively sought and carefully considered the views of all those with an interest in the proposals. This has included local publicity and the ability to respond in writing, electronically and by telephone direct to the Council, publicity through the school and the option to respond to the Council via the school and meeting with staff, governors and the local community in a series of meetings chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Learning and Skills. All responses received during the earlier phases of consultation were made available to all elected Members, and key points were included in the report to Cabinet considered on 4 May 2011. Before considering that report, the Leader of the Council and other members of Cabinet visited the school to see the school in operation and to meet with staff, governors and parents.

All the earlier responses and those received during the statutory consultation were reconsidered in the preparation of the current report and the actual responses are once again available to Members.

Specified Information

Regulations specify certain details of plans which must be set out as part of the proposal. This is reproduced below.

MATTERS TO BE SPECIFIED IN SECTION 15 PROPOSALS TO DISCONTINUE A SCHOOL

Extract of Schedule 4 to The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools)(England) Regulations 2007 (as amended):

Contact details

1. The name of the LA or governing body publishing the proposals, and a contact address, and the name of the school it is proposed that should be discontinued.

Shropshire Council, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ.
Maesbury Primary School

Implementation

2. The date when it is planned that the proposals will be implemented, or, where the proposals are to be implemented in stages, information about each stage and the date on which each stage is planned to be implemented.

Implementation of the proposal would be on 31st August 2012.

Consultation

3. A statement to the effect that all applicable statutory requirements to consult in relation to the proposals were complied with.

All applicable statutory requirements to consult in relation to the proposals were complied with.

4. Evidence of the consultation before the proposals were published including:

- a) a list of persons and/or parties who were consulted;
- b) minutes of all public consultation meetings;
- c) the views of the persons consulted; and
- d) copies of all consultation documents and a statement of how these were made available.

(1) Copies of consultation papers were made available on the Council's website and were also sent to the school, other schools in the county, all Governing Body members and staff for the school in question, the appropriate local Councillor for the area, the local parish/town council(s) for the school, parents with pupils already at the school including nursery pupils, the appropriate Church of England and Catholic diocesan officers and the local Member of Parliament. These either

took the form of email contact or paper copies as appropriate.

A copy of the Cabinet paper is attached. This document includes copies of the consultation document, school and public meetings and the formal responses received.

Objectives

5. The objectives of the proposal.

(2) To improve standards of education by increasing the proportion of the dedicated school budget which is targeted to front line education. This would be achieved by reducing surplus places and the number of inefficient school sites in Shropshire, through the closure of Maesbury Primary School in line with the criteria adopted by Shropshire Council.

Standards and Diversity

6. A statement and supporting evidence indicating how the proposals will impact on the standards, diversity and quality of education in the area.

(3) Maesbury Primary School is a community school. It has been inspected by Ofsted and reported to be satisfactory. The named alternative school, Kinnerley CE Primary School is a Church of England voluntary controlled school, which has been inspected by Ofsted and reported to be Good.

(4) Closing Maesbury Primary School would enable £208,070 to be redistributed to other schools, with significant potential to raise standards as a result of extra resources.

Provision for 16-19 year olds

7. Where the school proposed to be discontinued provides sixth form education, how the proposals will impact on:

- a) the educational or training achievements;
- b) participation in education or training; and
- c) the range of educational or training opportunities,

for 16-19 year olds in the area.

Not applicable.

Need for places

8. A statement and supporting evidence about the need for places in the area including whether there is sufficient capacity to accommodate displaced pupils.

(5) Maesbury Primary School has 40 pupils in a building with 56 places. There are 56 unfilled places in neighbouring schools including 26 at Kinnerley CE Primary School.

9. Where the school has a religious character, a statement about the impact of the proposed closure on the balance of denominational provision in the area and the impact on parental choice.

Not applicable.

Current School Information

10. Information as to the numbers, age range, sex and special educational needs of pupils (distinguishing between boarding and day pupils) for whom provision is made at the school.

The number of pupils at the school in January 2011 was 40. The school takes pupils aged 5 to 11. It is a mixed school. There were two children with a statement of special educational needs.

Displaced Pupils

11. Details of the schools or FE colleges which pupils at the school for whom provision is to be discontinued will be offered places, including:

- a) any interim arrangements;
- b) where the school included provision that is recognised by the LA as reserved for children with special educational needs, the alternative provision to be made for pupils in the school's reserved provision; and
- c) in the case of special schools, alternative provision made by LAs other than the authority which maintains the school.

All displaced pupils will be offered places at Kinnerley CE (Controlled) Primary School, School Road, Kinnerley, Oswestry, SY10 8DF.

12. Details of any other measures proposed to be taken to increase the number of school or FE college places available in consequence of the proposed discontinuance.

Expansion of Kinnerley Primary School is not necessary in order to receive the displaced pupils.

Impact on the Community

13. A statement and supporting evidence about the impact on the community and any measures proposed to mitigate any adverse impact.

Shropshire Council has carefully considered the impact on Maesbury of the proposed closure of the school, and weighed this against the effect of the high

costs of very small schools on the education of pupils across the county and the educational effects on the pupils themselves.

(6) Maesbury is a small and sparsely populated settlement and there are no commercial facilities or a village hall.

(7) Of the 11 staff employed at the school, 2 non-teaching staff (18%) live in the catchment area. Therefore, there could be a marginal effect on local employment.

14. Details of extended services the school offered and what it is proposed for these services once the school has discontinued.

The school offers a programme of extended schools activities, such as a breakfast club, extra-curricular clubs and study support activities. These activities are available at neighbouring schools.

Travel

15. Details of the length and journeys to alternative provision.

(8) Kinnerley CE Primary School is 3.6 miles from Maesbury Primary School. Morda CE Primary School is 1.7 miles, West Felton CE Primary School is 2.5 miles and Trefonen CE Primary School is 3 miles from Maesbury.

16. The proposed arrangements for travel of displaced pupils to other schools including how they will help to work against increased car use.

(9) Transport may need to be provided for some of the pupils on roll, however, an element of these (currently 15 pupils) travel to school by car. It is hoped that these arrangements will work towards reducing the number of car journeys.

Related Proposals

17. A statement as to whether in the opinion of the LA or governing body, the proposals are related to any other proposals which may have been, are, or are about to be published.

The Local Authority does not consider that this proposal is linked in any way to any other proposals.

Rural Primary Schools

18. Where proposals relate to a rural primary school designated as such by an order made for the purposes of section 15, a statement that the LA or the governing body (as the case may be) considered:

- a) the likely effect of discontinuance of the school on the local community;
- b) the availability, and likely cost to the LA, of transport to other schools;
- c) any increase in the use of motor vehicles which is likely to result from the discontinuance of the school, and the likely effects of any such increase; and

d) any alternatives to the discontinuance of the school,

as required by section 15(4)

(10) The LA has considered the effect of the discontinuance of the school on the community; the availability, and likely cost to the LA, of transport to other schools; any increase and effects of such increase in the use of motor vehicles as a result of the discontinuance of the school; alternatives to the discontinuance of the school. The evidence of this is contained in the attached report.

Maintained nursery schools

19. Where proposals relate to the discontinuance of a maintained nursery school, a statement setting out:

- a) the consideration that has been given to developing the school into a children's centre and the grounds for not doing so;
- b) the LA's assessment of the quality and quantity of alternative provision compared to the school proposed to be discontinued and the proposed arrangements to ensure the expertise and specialism continues to be available; and
- c) the accessibility and convenience of replacement provision for local parents.

Not applicable.

Special educational provision

20. Where existing provision that is recognised by the LA as reserved for pupils with special educational needs is being discontinued, a statement as to how the LA or the governing body believes the proposal is likely to lead to improvements in the standard, quality and/or range of the educational provision for these children.

Not applicable.