

## **SPECIAL SCHOOLS PROPOSALS (22 May 2019)**

### **APPENDIX 3:**

#### **TRANSCRIPTS AND NOTES OF STAFF AND GOVERNOR MEETINGS**

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PLEASE NOTE some names and person identifiers have been removed or redacted from transcripts and meeting notes to protect the identity of those individuals, as no written permission to share their details were obtained at the time.

### 3.1 St Nicholas – Consultation with Staff and Governors

#### 3.1.1 Meeting Notes – Staff Consultation 21 January 2019

**Venue:** St Nicholas Special School

**Time:** 4pm

**Attendance:** 25 school staff and 8 officials

#### **PRESENT:**

Members of St Nicholas' Senior Leadership Team, Teachers and TAs

Alan Stubbersfield, Education & Skills Specialist Lead, Wiltshire Council

Helen Jones, Director of Commissioning - Family & Children's Services, Wiltshire Council

Judith Westcott, Acting Head for Commissioning & Joint Planning, Wiltshire Council

Tim Morgan, SEN Inclusion Support Manager, Wiltshire Council

Caroline Bell, Acting Education Officer (SEN) MAT Cover, Wiltshire Council

Stuart Hall, Strategic Director of Parent/Carer Council

Simone Kermode, School Improvement Officer, Wiltshire Council (minutes)

<b>Actions</b>
<b>(1):</b> LA is to ensure that HR and the Unions clarify the TUPE regulations with regards to protecting pay-scales and the process for teachers applying for a similar grade job, i.e. whether they need to undertake an interview etc.
<b>(2):</b> LA is to ensure that the proposal is to include more information on plans for 16-19 education.
<b>(3):</b> LA is to collate evidence on how the current three special schools work well together, i.e. sharing a curriculum with Larkrise etc.

#### **From the LA's introduction, the following questions were asked:**

- Did the LA ever consider a split-site in Chippenham?
- Why was the proposal to build a large site at Abbeyfield rejected?
- Doesn't the argument to not have the split-site in Trowbridge due to congestion of traffic etc also apply to Rowdeford?
- How will the TUPE regulations protect the employment of, i.e. four deputy headteachers and several assistant headteachers on a single-site option?
- How long will TUPE regulations protect our existing pay-scale levels?
- Why didn't the LA consider keeping the new school as a LA school, rather than an academy?
- There is a perception that the LA wants the new school to become an academy to release the LA from any future responsibility for special schools?

- If pupils are at the centre of the proposal, what benefits will an academy, rather than an LA school, offer pupils?
- As the decision to merge the schools is not based on an ideological principle, we are seeking legal advice on the interpretation of the law of the school having to become an academy.

**Staff and LA representatives undertook small group discussions.**

**Questions asked were regarding:**

- **It would all be really exciting**, for instance having space, facilities, equipment, a nurse, physio etc.
- **70%+ of parent views ignored** – the LA has already made up its mind to have a one site campus and disregarded the majority view of parents.
- **When were the children consulted?** We aren't aware of that happening here.
- **Why not use Abbeyfield?** I am cross that the Council won't be building at Abbeyfield. The distance to the town from Abbeyfield is good.
- **Melksham** is more central in Wiltshire.
- **Who wants Rowde?** I haven't met any parents or staff who are happy. Apparently, there is only one parent who is happy with the situation.
- **New school on new housing estate instead?** Rather than a new mainstream school? Why does the LA sell off land to supermarkets, why not use the land for a school instead?
- **Lack of parental choice** – no choice about which school they choose.
- **All pupils will have go to Wiltshire College for 16-19 education?** Severe medical needs met at Wiltshire College? We need much clearer information about what post 16 provision will look like. Has the council thought how children will be supported post 16?
- **Owning a fleet of minibuses and people carriers** would be a good idea.
- **Vehicle access** at Rowdeford is an issue, especially for taxis and the area is known for fatalities.
- **Security** - how secure will the new site be for children that 'run off site'?
- **Multiple hydro-pools** will be required to share with 350 pupils.
- **Standing frames** will be required – children cannot be expected to spend the whole day in a wheel chair, there is a fear that that they will become institutionalised. Pupils will be in their wheel chairs much longer with the longer journey times.
- **Meeting the needs of pupils with severe and complex issues (that other schools do not want)** – how will their needs be addressed?
- **Pupils not coping in large groups** - i.e. an assembly of 70 pupils, let alone 350 pupils.
- **Access to medical support** for pupils who regularly have seizures and stop breathing – how close are ambulances situated and hospital facilities?

- **Access to community nurses** - at the moment local community nurses come in to school to manage issues like buttons that stop working.
- **No gym in Devizes** within walking distance of Rowde.
- **Parental access to Rowdeford**, especially when their child is ill.
- **Rowdeford is isolated**, the pavements are no good and you would have to rely on minibuses to get into town.
- **No buses** - there are no buses from Rowde, and even if there were buses, there wouldn't be enough space; buses can only take one wheelchair.
- **Staff's lack of access to Rowde** as they do not drive or will need to invest in a more reliable car. Some staff travel from Bristol and are unlikely to travel to Devizes. Will all Passenger Assistants want to go to the new school, especially if they don't drive?
- **Staff not willing to drive a minibus**, will this cause problems in the new school if it means not being able to leave the site?
- **No local facilities** – there is no supermarket or shops to walk to with pupils.
- **No access to Devizes town centre** – it will be difficult to walk on a busy road, up a hill where there is no proper pathway with pupils in their wheel chairs.
- **No access to a community** and do Rowde want 350 pupils in their village?
- **No access to pupils' own local community** which is mainly Trowbridge or Chippenham, of which are growth areas.
- **School should be hub of community** - we have a coffee shop here and some of the children do work experience in the town.
- **Less access to activities** - we could do everything we do here in Rowde but there wouldn't be time because of having to rely on transport.
- **Loss of strong links with Hardenhuish Secondary School** for GCSEs and, i.e. sports day.
- **Loss of The Lions Club** which is really active in Chippenham; we'll miss this.
- **St Nicholas already shares resources with other special schools**, i.e. the curriculum with Larkrise and there has been an art project with a huge art exhibition at Larkrise, as well as many other projects.
- **Longer journey times** are not good for pupils' wellbeing. We need to manage the journeys so children don't suffer.
- **Staff with specialist roles will not be required.**
- **Lack of trust in the process** – LA hopes specialist staff will lose their jobs to save money. Staff need to be included in more discussions and need access to accurate information to support our families during this time.
- **Mistrust in the consultation process** – the questions on the pupil questionnaire were deliberately misleading with trick questions like, 'do you like travelling to school?' Of course, the child answered yes because they are happy with the travel they currently undertake. The question did not ask would you like to have a longer journey to school? The questions were set to influence the responses.

- **LA misled all three schools** – as St Nicholas were led to believe that they were 'safe', there was no need to campaign for support from parents and the community etc to keep the school open. Now that the school is closing, staff feel that the LA were being deceitful and undertook this strategy to deliberately mislead and 'divide and conquer'. Rowdeford having had the opportunity to campaign very early in the process (with a petition and support from the press) has not been fair. Teachers have not been listened to – the whole process has just been a 'tick box' exercise.
- **Parental engagement** – how will parents continue to take part in school lessons and activities?
- **No guarantee this will be an outstanding school.**

### 3.1.2 Meeting Notes – Governors meeting - 12 February 2019

Welcome and introductions

Alan Stubbersfield:

Asked to do meetings for continuity in the process.

Helen Jones director for commissioning – baton from Alan to myself

Judith Westcott – head of children’s commissioning

Caroline Bell Education Officer (Minute Taker)

Purpose of evening is part of a series of meetings to take views following from consultation last summer.

Wide in its scope and looking at options in terms of number of schools to deliver enough special school places and future proof. Enough capacity 2026 and expandable beyond.

Alternatives in 3 schools – location – led to series of discussions to reflect on information from further research and consultation responses. Complex and competing messages.

Proposal for a single school closing 3 LA schools – now going through second consultation – statutory going through a prescribed format.

To do it – not do it – amend it – council end March.

Open new school would be an academy on expanded Rowdeford site – decision will be a recommendation from LA point of view through a procurement process to find a preferred provider to open in 2023.

Welcome questions/comments:

Q. Not given any numbers as to how we came to your decision – how did you get to the decision – e.g. numbers of people writing in – should be open for scrutiny

A. Annexed to November report

Q. Noted Devizes had a disproportionate with population

A. It wasn’t – anticipating a process we didn’t do – not a numerical response a number of factors to be taken into account. High number of responses in favour of Rowdeford location.

Why we want to make consultations school specific – reporting back to cabinet 26<sup>th</sup> March on outcome of consultation to ensure feedback the views of groups of staff, governors and parent/carers depending on location – we suspect there may be difference of views depending on setting – ensure it is made clear.

Q. Consultation in Corsham – mix of Larkrise, Rowdeford and St Nicks parents – don’t understand which views can be apportioned to which location.

A. Try to capture as many views as we can – opportunities to have consultation in different places. Coming back twice here due to concerns raised about being able to attend. In appendices to report will be transcripts of all the meetings so cabinet will have variety of views. Recognise different views between Rowdeford, St Nicks and

Larkrise – part of it is substance of what is said. Very clear things which are coming across which need to be addressed via the consultation – those for and against.

Q. What are those messages?

A. A body of people who are articulating support – facilities on site, investment being made – against, are the argument around community, is there a community in Rowdeford as there is in Chippenham/Trowbridge – issue around choice – travel – particularly young children with PMLD and life limiting conditions – issues around P16 education – for some the offer that is being embryonic state may not offer sufficiency – parental network and resilience parents get who live near a school

Q. Going back to point of community – pupils with behaviour – we can take them to local facilities which won't happen in Rowde – minibuses will be required and training around driving, fixing wheelchairs etc.

Q. Path between Rowde and school is not friendly – what traffic calming measures will be required to allow children out of the school safely.

A. Whatever is needed – not an expert on this point – but can be done.

Q. Salisbury Trowbridge and Chippenham are growth areas - Devizes is not in top 3 – so makes sense to have schools in the areas of growth. Growth in Chippenham is going to mean that it expands and potentially on greenfield sites – not fair there is nowhere in Chippenham as other sites have been identified for other purposes. Mixed messages as to how sites have been selected and adjudicated.

A. Did change our mind

Q. What is LA legal obligation to the children – if it is a requirement of choice and remain in community then it doesn't matter if it costs/pricing – should be legal and environmentally friendly/disabled friendly.

A. Links to previous point – compromise to find solution.

Q. Documents do not say what the benefits are – no definition of special needs being addressed – no detail about how the children will be cared for – if there is a compelling argument for one school at Rowdeford it is yet to be seen. Make any statement of centre of excellence – no evidence.

Argument is clear 73% people has been ignored. 3 years ago, a single school academy in North area was put forward – this has now been ignored.

A. Do think there are arguments but understand you feel they don't have merit.

Q. nature of staffing of special school – most teachers have long day and support staff have shorter day who typically have caring responsibilities and live near schools – how will that translate to an area where people don't live – how will you staff it – MDSA's will not travel long distances and take their time. recruitment and retention of staff will be an issue to an area that doesn't have transport links. No evidence that you can.

A. We think so – have experience of running schools in Devizes area – no difficulties in staffing those schools.

Q. Proposal has displacement – doesn't say that because there is a school to go to – sixth form – transport

Q. Do we have a scale how big site will required e.g. many parking spaces etc? is it 500 – 1,000-1200 in a single main hall – 50 classrooms – is big – can't replicate same culture as here now.

A. Spec is being worked on. Need to resolve tensions. Could split the institution to provide a more familiar scale and have whole community events which are not necessarily whole school.

Q. Will PMLD's be kept in their own isolated area?

A. Choice can be made - not for LA to determine internal arrangements.

Q. LA seems to minimise fears of parents re medical needs – will never be the same social inclusion as they get here and at Larkrise – close relationships with local primary and secondary schools. Vitaly important that mainstream children can learn from our children and vice versa. Will lead to discrimination. Transport will not be available to bring children back to local community due to finances. There is no counter argument for this. Our children need to learn how to behave in community and know they are accepted – this has been forgotten.

Q. Your proposal shows no understanding of social inclusion and being part of the local community – full of platitudes – missed the point. Already heard Chippenham is a growth area which brings more families and facilities – asked LA to think about the needs of the families they serve by putting school in wrong place is not future proofing and providing best outcomes for now and the future. Children with complex needs must learn to be part of a community – part of the school and the local area e.g. walk on the pavement, make sense of their environment. EY and safeguarding is 'think family, think community' – this proposal does not provide that. Not able to provide early intervention. Placing in Rowde is counter-productive to this.

Q. We have different views as to what future proofing is – LA thinks of this as not having to think about it again – but I consider future proofing as sending our children into a ghetto – can be a disaster.

Q. Devizes doesn't offer as much as what is on offer in Chippenham as a local community – not one of the 3 principal settlements in Wiltshire – lack of public transport.

Q. Many children do live near St Nicks School although report says this isn't the case – we need to serve the up and coming areas which are being built. Strong links with many Chippenham schools to share expertise and learn from each other and make movement of children possible. Proposal is not coming up with right provision in right place at the right time.

Q. Staffing and qualified therapists – where will these people come from – how is it going to suddenly appear. Not there at the moment and can't get it now.

Q. Will this site have enough hydrotherapy pools/facilities to enable all children to access all facilities – would site have enough to access all facilities and will it have community access as pools do today. Community use not listed in proposal – current pool is not provided by LA but funded by community so parents, siblings could access pools all together at weekends/after school – pool is used continually – won't be possible at Rowde. Losing a great resource and coming together of family life.

A. Design notes and continuing feedback from you can inform the development.

Q. Social inclusion means you get meaningful support internships, living placements, work experience in your local community.



Economies of scale – why so big in one area when strategic growth areas are in the North. Models cited in consultation are next to urban areas and not rural areas.

Where does it say what parents will do if school is moved – would parents look at Rowdeford or an alternative school e.g. Three Ways – as a parent, would prefer medical needs nearest to hospital of choice for emergencies. Would go to arbitration rather send my child to Rowdeford.

Q. You said you want to get this right at the summer consultation but we all feel it's not right – aware most parents are against the one site school but those votes have been disregarded/minimised. Heads and Governors against it.

Q. This is not resistance to change – already in frame of mind that St Nicks would not stay on this site – on board with that because recognise limitations of site. Its' about the right change – it's the location.

Q. Helen asks - would you feel the same about single school concept if location was different?

A. Audience - 2 principle locations, M4 and up to Cricklade make North area too complicated – reduction of choice is a problem – if conflict arises only choice is out of county school. Won't be able to find a location for a single site school which meets requirements. If go for 3 sites – what about Braeside which is better located than Rowde. Our previous suggestions of options have all been ignored.

Q. Our children are different and we have different dreams. Feel disregarded in our opinions. If you don't understand our children, you don't understand what outcomes could be achieved.

Q. What is centre of excellence? Is it education or centre of resources (people and skill). Is it an aspiration and not a deliverable?

A. Not been defined in the detail – no formula and no distinction between aspiration/deliverable. Enable rather than a promise.

Q. Don't feel we are being listened to.

A. Held this meeting to ensure the spectrum of views are reflected in the report – attaching to the report the transcripts of this meeting so views will be there for members to see.

Q. Who is the decision maker?

A. Cabinet – will take advice from variety of professionals. If legal advice sought, will be available.

### 3.1.4 Audio Recording Transcript – Governors Meeting - 12 February 2019

**Venue:** St Nicholas Special School

#### **PRESENT:**

Members of St Nicholas' Senior Leadership Team, Teachers and TAs

Alan Stubbersfield, Education & Skills Specialist Lead, Wiltshire Council

Helen Jones, Director of Commissioning - Family & Children's Services, Wiltshire Council

Judith Westcott, Acting Head for Commissioning & Joint Planning, Wiltshire Council  
Tim Morgan, SEN Inclusion Support Manager, Wiltshire Council  
Caroline Bell, Acting Education Officer (SEN) MAT Cover, Wiltshire Council  
Stuart Hall, Strategic Director of Parent/Carer Council  
Simone Kermode, School Improvement Officer, Wiltshire Council (minutes)

1. AS – Working together on the project, enough capacity for 2026 and expandable beyond. We looked at alternatives of one two or three schools in alternative locations available according to the number of schools we were looking at, that was a rather broad consultation last summer. That led to a series of meetings in CH reflecting on the info gained through further research through links we had and through consultation responses that led us to the Nov report that you will be aware of. It took us longer than expected as it was complex and competing messages coming back to us so we came up with a proposal for a single school. Now 2<sup>nd</sup> stage in sequence, this is stat consultation because this goes according to prescribed format – last summer’s we call pre-stat as there was no format and something we put into the process. The proposal now involves closure of three schools and opening of new one. IN tech sense they are separate, linked, parallel processes, three schools are marinated the LA may make decision in relation to original proposal to do it, not do it, or amend it. And that will be the decision before Council at the end of March. In parallel of course there is the linked proposal to open a new school- according to the proposal that would be an academy on the expanded Rowdeford site near Devizes. That would be an academy so decision in the end is not one for the LA, in March should it go through the process, the decision from the Councils POV would be a recommendation to go ahead for a procurement process to identify a preferred provider. Which in practice would be an academy or MAT to establish to be the provider of the new school which we would build over the next few years to open in 2023. That’s broadly familiar to you I think, you have read the paperwork, and been to some meetings, there isn’t much more for me to say now because that is not the purpose of the meeting. There are colleagues here from the Authority to listen, note and make note in case Dom’s stuff doesn’t work! So it is over to you for questions, comments, we note what you say; that is our job here today.
2. Person – there were no *intelligible (microphone not switched on)* we have not been given any numbers of how you came to your decision. How did you get to that decision? What were the numbers of the people writing in? The parents etc. etc. I think that should be open to scrutiny.
3. AS – I think that was included in an annex to the November report which you can find online.
4. Person – it was noted that Devizes has a disproportionate number of votes / responses relative to its population so how was it normalised to deal with actual

population across the north of Wiltshire and not simply those people who responded

5. AS – the answer is it wasn't I think – you're anticipating a process that we didn't do, and that was because we don't simply do arithmetical response to consultation there are a number of factors which are borne in mind. I accept your point and we will note that for how we look at the consultation as part of the decision making next time around. There was as you know a high number of responses in favour of a Rowdeford location, but I not the point you make.
6. HJ – that is why we also want to make the school spec consultation events as we are doing. Judith and I have got the job of reporting back to Cabinet on the 26 march on the outcome of the consultation and we will be ensuring that we feedback in that report the different views of the groups of staff, governors and parents / carers depending on what their location is. We suspect there may be a difference of views depending on what setting the meeting is. We are going to ensure that it is made very clear in the consultation back to members a part of the decision-making process on 26 March that they are very clear what specific groups of staff, parents and governors are saying. There will be that segmentation.
7. Person – I know this is a question that is out of context here as it is a governor meeting and I am going to talk about Corsham. The consultation in Corsham, there was a mix of Larkrise Parents, St Nicks Parents and at least one Rowdeford Respective or actual parents, and I don't know how that particular consultation will identify which views were held by which parent.
8. HJ – the general consultation would be representing the views. We are going to try and capture as many views as we can, but we felt that we needed to have opportunities for people to have consultation in diff places so, a lot we wanted to come into the school, some may not. We wanted to offer that opportunity, but we are going to ensure that, and that is why we have done a specific consultation in all schools, in fact we are coming back twice here because of the concerns about the numbers being able to attend the first time around. There will be a mixture of some general comments and some specific. The other thing that we're going to do is we're going to put in appendices to the report the transcript to the meetings as well, so that members have a full, and a written record of the variety of views as well. That is what our job is to do, it is to try and present the variety of views that there are, but we recognise that there will be some different views in Rowdeford, perhaps in Larkrise and in St Nicks.
9. AS – I think part is adding up the numbers and part is about the substance of what is said – irrespective of how many people say it.
10. HJ – I think that is really important, is the substance of what is being said. It seems that what are coming across that we need to address in the consultation and feedback to members, some are for the plan, and some are not in favour. And there are some very clear messages coming back that we need t communicate to members.

11. Person – *Question unintelligible*
12. There are a body of people, who are articulating supporting and who are articulating some of the things we put in the report about the facilities that could be onsite, the investment that is being made etc Some of the things that are coming across against – first of all the argument around community, and is there a community in Rowdeford as there is a community that is being articulated to us and is *unintelligible*. For the people who have concerns about the proposals those are the main concerns so far.
13. Person – the negative list seemed a lot longer than the positive.
14. Person - I just want to reiterate on some of those things, that as a staff governor here, as a staff we are thinking about pupils first and foremost, going back to your point about community, we have a lot of pupils with behavioural and physical needs, and I think in one of the papers I read you were saying parents can take on the responsibility for providing community aspects. A lot of pupils re unable to support their parents in this, and our specialism allows us to take pupils to parks, the local shops, the local church, swimming pools. That isn't going to happen in the location of Rowde; because it will mean going on a minibus you will need staff to drive those buses, to be trained to clamp wheelchairs on – there will be a huge issue in being able to take pupils out into the community.
15. Person – I suppose just taking that one, the path between the school and Rowde itself, does not appear to be wheelchair friendly, you have to cross the road at least once. What traffic calming and improvements will that part of the open environment would be required to allow the community to get out of the school without transport?
16. AS – Whatever is needed. I am not an expert on that, so I can't comment, but we can put speed limits in, there is a full range of thing that can be done at not a huge cost.
17. Person – can we just pick up on the point that the three growth areas are Salisbury, Trowbridge and Chippenham. In growth you get investment; not just in money but in facilities, local support, charities – everything else. Devizes is not top three – Trowbridge and Chippenham are therefore it makes sense to have schools placed in those local communities of growth. The other side of that is, that the growth that we have in Chippenham is going to meant that Chippenham is expanding into the greenfield areas as well as other areas. We keep hearing the argument that there is nowhere in Chippenham to build schools – I totally disagree with that. There was a place found to build a centre for the range to bring 200 lorries a day into Chippenham that was easily found. And they just built Lidl on a site that used to be a special needs place. So I just feel that it is a bit, not very fair to say there is nowhere when we have not seen any evidence of places that have been identified and then to be told they can't use those sites for specific reasons. You yourselves said that Abbeyfield was a great site when you were here, you said that Rowdeford was on a flood plain and was likely not to be chosen, then overnight you have found that Abbeyfield

is not suitable and Rowdeford is. We are getting very mixed messages with no information in the documents being provided by the local authority as to how these sites have been adjudicated, selected or chosen, and why they can't be used. It would help everyone if there was a clearer indication of why schools cannot be built in Trowbridge or Chippenham the two growth areas in North Wiltshire which will provide all of this support for these children.

- 18.** AS – I am making no secret of the fact that I changed my mind and people will now that I was speaking last summer in a diff frame of mind, reflecting on the likelihood of there being a school of one size or another in Chippenham. Abbeyfield was a site mentioned, I have never said it is not suitable, some messages we heard was that it seemed to be some distance from the town centre, that was a factor.
- 19.** Person – No more distance that Rowdeford is to Devizes ... *unintelligible*...
- 20.** AS – it seemed to be about the same.
- 21.** Person – we almost need to start with what is the LA legal obligations to these children? Because if the legal obligation is for them to be in their community, if there is a requirement for choice – if you remove choice and move them out of their community, then it doesn't matter if it costs nothing. It is still not legal.
- 22.** AS – we probably disagree about what the legal duties are.
- 23.** Person – I am not saying I know what they are...
- 24.** AS – On your assumptions, you are right, but I would make different assumptions.
- 25.** Person – before you start the pricing and the model there should be an obligation to be sure that the solutions that you put forward are suitable for whatever the environmental needs are, the disability needs are, the family needs are. Whatever they are they should be covered upfront and then you start looking for a solution that is a best fit for the requirements you have to hit.
- 26.** AS – I guess I would say in response, and it links to the previous point the best fit is – by definition, is a compromise, I am not saying it is the perfect solution, but we have the best available solution. We think we have that. And that is being challenged and will be challenged further that is in question, I know.
- 27.** Person – *unintelligible*
- 28.** AS – Well, the best available in the world if you like.
- 29.** Person – The documents do not state clearly what the benefits are, all we see are financial benefits. There is a nice big £20m lump sum there yet there is no definition of the types of special needs of the children being addressed. They have been lumped into one lump and there is no explanation of how these children will be cared for. There is a general statement about transport, there is nothing taken into consideration of the condition of the children that have to go on that transport. So, what we would like to see is, if there is a clear and compelling argument for a single school in Rowdeford – we would all like to read the evidence for that. Every document I read has no evidence. It just says it will be a centre of excellence, how can it be a centre of excellence when it hasn't been judged or inspected? Anybody can make that statement, you could

build them anywhere. I am sorry, but this does not cut... this is all just platitudes. There is no evidence, there are no clear figures, there is no clear argument to have a single school. In fact, it is the other way the argument is clear by 73% of people that were consulted they want more than one school. They wanted the two or three school option. That has been totally ignored. Three years ago, what was put on the agenda was to have a single school in North Wiltshire, an Academy, three years ago. we have spent three years and a lot of energy in all of the schools trying to academese special needs. Only to come around full circle to have the LA come up again just saying there is a single school needed in North Wiltshire, nothing has changed in three years.

- 30.** AS – There is a degree of disagreement between us of course I think there are arguments for. I recognise that you don't find them, or feel they have merit. I don't think you can submit that the arguments aren't there. You are fully entitled to think they are rubbish, and I take that point from you.
- 31.** Person – I wanted to follow up. *Unintelligible*... over the summer consultation there was support for a single school in Devizes, but as I remember it the people were asked about whether they preferred one, two or three schools and not about the location.
- 32.** AS – I think all of those questions were asked and I think the proportion favouring one school was of the order of 12%. If people have heard me say a lot of people supported one school I don't think we would have said that because it is not what the evidence suggested but there was a lot of support for a school irrespective of if it was one school or one of a number in Rowdeford.
- 33.** Person – OK that is a bit different from how you said it earlier, you phrased it in a different way. The other thing is, and a bit of a separate point, just about the nature of the staffing of a special school. Most of the staffing are not teachers, they are support staff who do not work a full day. They work a shorter day and that is because they have family commitments, and often I think support staff are caring at both ends. They have children and who are still under their care even if they're grown up and they have parents they are caring for, they are used to a short journey to work, they live locally to the schools and I wonder how that will translate to a larger school in a place where people don't live and are you actually going to be able to staff a school of that size in the middle of nowhere compared with *unintelligible*... I think people are not going to want to travel far, people like lunch break supervisors who come in for an hour and a half in the middle of the day. Aren't going to want to travel far so are you going to be able to staff. To get the quality staff in a school that is in such an out of the way location?
- 34.** AS – well, we think so. We have experience of running special schools in the area – one in Devizes, and one in Rowde, there are problems with recruitment in all schools but I don't think they are differentially represented in those two.
- 35.** Person – I suppose that takes us back to the actual proposal, because the proposal has displacement. We are being displaced from this school, but it doesn't say that, it seems to say that there is no displacement because there is

a school to go to, but we are still being displaced, displaced from the sixth form to “somewhere” and it is not specified where. And in the transport section, it talks about mitigation against increased car use should be in the proposal and it does not seem to be there.

36. Person - just wanted to reiterate what (name of person) said about the staffing, again, we have MDSA's and support staff who can walk to work – we have teachers who already commute to Chippenham, that is their choice but obviously they will have an additional 30 minute commute. There is a general feeling that retention and recruitment of staff will be a major issue to recruit in such a rural area without any public transport links.
37. Person – Thanks, can I just pick up on what (name of person) was saying about (not so much the teaching staff) but other staff. We already know that there is a large organisation in Rowde that has gone into special measures because they can't get the staff and are having to use agency staff. Those are the people we would be looking for to have a TA's so I am not sure how you can say that you'd easily be able to staff the... people going to Rowde, because there is no evidence that you could.
38. AS – the evidence I was suggesting is in the two schools that we have in the area.
39. Person – For how many children? We're going to need an awful lot of TA's for a large increase in numbers of children.
40. Person – do we have a scale of how many people, parking spaces, and how big a main hall this new school will have?
41. AS – A specification is being worked on by our premises people, I haven't got those questions right now.
42. Person – But do we have something for now so that we can actually work with a figure during this closure consultation, because at the moment the figure I have got in my head is *unintelligible* parking spaces, a 1000 – 1200-seater main hall, and 200-300 members of staff. It's big – with 50 classrooms.
43. AS – it will be big, yes. And it won't necessarily, I wonder about having a single main hall. I know that would mitigate, or militate against a daily act of collective worship which many schools don't do.
44. Person – but if you're going to give the children here the same experience, they have whole community events, if they don't have a main hall big enough, the whole community events including parents, then you can't replicate the same culture that you've got here today.
45. AS – I think there are competing tensions there, people are saying they're concerned about the scale of operation would not support the idea of a community event in a 1000 place hall. And so that is one view. Your view might be a different view that you would support that, and we will have to try to resolve those tensions.
46. Person – What I am actually saying is I want a school where I can have a whole school community event happen at. If 350 is too big for that then 350 is too big for the school. That is what I think

47. AS – I guess the counterpoint might be that in so far as we have talked before as you will know about splitting the new institution in a way that would provide for a scale that was more familiar to people, then you could have whole community events that might not involve the whole school.
48. Person – But would you also have a full spectrum or mix of abilities, of special needs abilities within that reduced set, or would you end up with a situation where you're ending up with the PMLDs and you're just keeping them in their own isolated area, because that is not necessarily good for them.
49. AS – there will be choices to make there, it might be by age, it might be by difficulty – the split we have at the moment is by difficulty of course. So we have PMLD / SMLD here, and we don't have PMLD in Rowdeford. So that split exists, it could be replicated or a different arrangement could be made. It would not be for the Local Authority to determine the internal arrangements of the school.
50. Person – I had a lot to say at the consultation, and one thing I want to go back to, apart from the fact that I think it is outrageously wrong that the council seems to minimise the fears of parents with children with medical needs. For me the big thing is social inclusion and I am afraid no matter what your answer will be, it will never be the same social inclusion that the children are getting at this school, and at Larkrise. Because they are in the heart of the community. And although there have been promises made in the proposal that of course there is going to be the Rowde community, for 350 children, that is just impossible. Those links that have been made within this community are irreplaceable. You can't replace community links that have been made within this school and the community. We are right next to two mainstream schools, we have really close relationships with them, also with primary schools. I think that people seem to forget that yes our children learn, from mainstream children, however it is also vitally important that mainstream children learn from our children. One of those is being non-judgemental, having a sense of acceptance and mostly those are, those mainstream children. If those children at mainstream school are not exposed to the children that attend St Nicks and Larkrise how are they to know? The community in Rowde and Devizes have got a big benefit from our children and the ones here in Chippenham, and in Trowbridge are going to be discriminated against because actually they're missing out a great deal. And I can't get my head around that. Whatever anybody says it is not going to be the same, because it was said yes we will transport the children back to their communities. That won't happen as there won't be money available for that. It is wishful thinking, actually reality is that a community needs everyone around them including our children. It is not only for the mainstream people but also for our children. When I come to Chippenham which I consider my community because I live in Calne. My child is getting recognised, by the local shops. And say Hello, how are you, it is really nice to see you. She feels a sense of belonging; a sense of belonging is a human need. That is not going to happen in Rowde, I am sorry but it isn't and there is no counter argument for that. It is impossible, what is the counter argument? That you will build a community



around Rowde? Have a coffee shop at Rowde? But you're basically inviting people in, and that is fine, but it is not the real world. It is an environment that is not real life – it is not a real life scenario.

**51.** Person – I would call it “visiting the zoo”

**52.** Person – Yes. And I have no, it is wonderful that it would be, we have a coffee shop as Popular College now and that is wonderful, people from the community can attend. And our children, our young people, are serving coffee and cake, and they're polite to everyone. But when they grow up they are not going to be in a college. They need to go to the real coffee shop. Not one that is replicated in a setting. They need to learn how to behave in the community, and they also need to know that they're accepted. That seems to be totally forgotten. It is all about social inclusion. And you can say “oh you know this is already happening” “we have lots of opportunities where children could potentially go to be socially included but it isn't naturally done. It is, this is, you know the community in Chippenham is amazing and we have so many links and you know, I can't believe that this is possible eradicated.

**53.** Person - Can I just say that I, and probably everyone else here totally agree with what (name of person) is saying, and your proposal shows no understanding of social inclusion, or people needing to be part of their community, learning in the community. It is full of lots of platitude of “it will be like this / it will be like that” and “don't worry whatever we question it will be in the school” but you miss the whole point which is about social inclusion and people being part of the community.

**54.** Person – I would like to add to that, we have already heard that Chippenham is a growth area, that brings with it families, more communities more facilities, I asked the Cabinet and the LEA to think v carefully about the needs of the children that they are trying to serve and future proof for. Because putting the school in the wrong place, without a real community to enhance social inclusion is not going to be future proofing, and the best use of resources to provide the best outcomes, not just for the children now but the children in the future, and I think that needs to be very carefully looked at in terms of the arguments you have heard about social inclusion and the needs of the children. It is vital that children with complex needs learn to be part of a community and that means both within their school – a sense of belonging, any school should provide a sense of belonging, I don't think we're disagreeing with that and have wonderful facilities but our children and the needs of children with complex needs means that they need to learn to walk on the pavement. They need to make sense of the environment around them and people in that environment need to learn with them, and from them, and having a range of facilities on your doorstep is what is in Chippenham. As (name of person) said, those facilities are going to grow, Rowde yes can have a wonderful site, it can be an equal distance if we were in Abbeyfield and getting into Chippenham, but it will not have the range of facilities so that needs to be carefully thought about in future print. In a lot of documents and proposals, early years development, children's centre, Wiltshire

Safeguarding thing, a big theme coming through is “think family, think community”. I don’t think this proposal is addressing that. We are not thinking family, we’re not thinking community. Families need to have access where they feel they can come in, engage if we cannot get families at an early stage we aren’t able to provide early intervention. Your children’s centres, quite rightly, are looking at the local facilities that they can use to work with families out of. We are doing the same here in school really – we are trying to get the families in here, but also we link with local facilities so placing it in Rowde is counter-productive to that. The safeguarding is very much about people living in communities, thinking family thinking communities and on top of that you need to think of social inclusion. I cannot see how this proposal addresses any of that.

- 55.** Person – Can I just add to that, (name of person) has talked about future proofing and I think the danger is that you think of future proofing as we won’t have to think about this again, it’ll all be sorted. I think future proofing is about the possibility of sending all our children to what could more or less be like a ghetto. Putting children where they are never going to be able to come out of a community, because when we want to have to two schools, in five or 10 years’ time you’ll be saying “ah yes but we have this facility in Rowde”. So future proofing can be an absolute disaster for our children as it will take them away from the social inclusion and the community that they need.
- 56.** Person – Also, there was an argument about Rowdeford saying that, you know we have got lovely facilities, outdoor facilities I think was one argument wasn’t it. And I think I said in the parent consultation, we can use Hardenhuish Green, there is nothing stopping us, we are welcome there. And the children, well young people actually, are walking to John Coles park, which is very much in the centre of Chippenham and they’re seen, yeah. Gosh, these children actually exist. And this is my whole point, you could have the most brilliant outdoor facilities at Rowdeford, and they would make use of it, but they are never seen by anyone. And they need to be seen – they, we think that we have done a lot for social inclusion, you know we think that people are accepting but actually that is not the case. Some of the Barnardo’s staff went to a local shop, and they were shouted abuse at, our young people. Now there is no special school in Calne. But that goes to show that actually no, there is not non-judgemental views out there, young people, mainstream children, still look at our children and have prejudice and think they’re weirdos and freaks. That should be prevented, I am going to be in contact with Calne’s local schools to minimise that. That is my effort that I put in here, to serve my community. That actually those children need to be accepted, that should be your job, not mine, to build community acceptance and community inclusion, yet I am doing that because I feel very strongly about that, because I don’t want. I want those children to be educated about disabilities.
- 57.** Person – In our case, they don’t look at her. They look at the wheel chair.
- 58.** AS – Can I ask on your views on Devizes as a community resource?

- 59.** Person – I think I have touched on that. In terms of it doesn't offer as much as is already being offered and more in Chippenham.
- 60.** Person – Also you would have to transport the children there. And we do know that being out in the fresh air, walking to your community is good for mental health to be out there, but obviously our young people can only walk so far. And to have it just outside here like in Chippenham, is the ideal scenario.
- 61.** Person – and you don't list it as one of your three principal settlements here in Wiltshire.
- 62.** Person – Because things about buses, trains, using other facilities that we can get our pupils familiar with. I just want to touch on numbers, where our children are coming from, I think it is cited in the proposal that they don't live near. They actually do. And it is going to increase. There are already two major housing developments within Chippenham going up at the moment, that is by itself going to create children with Special Needs we know that, we need to be serving those families. I think it is cited somewhere about well loved schools. It isn't about being a well loved school, it is about being part of a community and building on that community and the links. I fully support the work that the Local Authority wants to do about sharing expertise – I think that is important but we already have strong links with at least two of our secondary schools and 10 of the town Chippenham schools here we are working together so that we can make sure we are sharing expertise learning from each other, making continual movement for children better, so I fully support that not all children should be in special schools. We don't want to increase the number year on year, we can't keep doing that we want children in the right places with the right provision, and that takes us back to look at where are the best places to put those schools. The proposal on the table is not coming up with right provision, in the right place, at the right time.
- 63.** Person – I want to go back to the things that you have been saying in terms of personnel. That there won't be a problem recruiting. You're also going to be providing us with OT, SALT, but it seems to be that you're just thinking you're going to wave a magic wand and all these people will pop up. I teach seven autistic pupils, I need four staff and an MDSA every day. I need OT support, I need SALT support, it is not there. How is it suddenly going to appear for a school of 300 pupils when I have 7 pupils and it isn't there for them?
- 64.** Person – on a similar note about the scale I guess, I teach in a special school in neighbouring authority and we have a hydrotherapy pool – as there is here – so we have got about 140 children in the school. About half of them get to use that pool in the course of a week. Some of the others can access pools in the community, but for 70 children to access a pool they can do that in a week. Is this all-singing all-dancing school going to have three hydrotherapy schools, which is what it would need for half of the children to access the pool within a week. It is easy to say "it will have a pool" and "it will have this/ or that" but is it going to have enough of everything for all the pupils who need it to access those facilities as the scale of the thing seems not.

65. Person – will it have community access for people from Trowbridge, and from Chippenham as the hydro pools do today?
66. AS – So what I said at the beginning was this is in part about thinking about what such a school should look like and what it should contain. The drawing up of special education has a starting point, in design notes from the DfE and the continuing part of development is your messages to us. So, sufficiency of hydro pools is one of the things we have been clear we wanted and you're emphasising that point. Can I just take professional advice from what you have said – it sounds as though you would recommend more than one pool, rather than a bigger pool – and your suggestion would be for three.
67. Person – But you also have community usage of the current hydro-pools which is not listed in the closure proposals
68. Person – the hydro pool here was provided for the children who, in the past we took to the local swimming pools. Some of whom found them v cold and they needed a hydro pool. But the whole idea was that parents, siblings, could access that hydro pool with their brothers / sisters who come to St Nicks, or don't, on weekends or evenings, and that pool is used all the time. In Rowde people can get here, they can get here by public transport or walk. At Rowde you take your life in your in your hands along that road, whether you're driving – there are accidents all the time. Families are not going to want to go there in evenings or at weekends. You're losing a great come together of different families and it is the family life that people with children with disabilities, the children grow and the families grow and they like the support that they get.
69. Person – Just to reply, my point wasn't that the school should have two or three pools, it was that is a single site going to have enough provision for, 300 children, has that been thought about? The economy of scale doesn't necessarily work if children have access to a school where they are at the moment, and suddenly they're moved to a larger school where they don't. Then that is not better provision for them.
70. Person – *unintelligible*... this wasn't provided by the local authority – this was provided by the kindness of the people in Chippenham because they respect the school, and they wanted to give the school something. That goes for a lot of things this school benefits from the local community, I am sorry but there isn't enough fundraising in Devizes to keep that kind of support for 350 children, they will not get the same support there as they get in Chippenham. That pool was £750,000 raised by local people. That is the type of thing we benefit from in living in this community.
71. Person – I think I want to touch on a number of things that we know. Being a well-loved school and being part of the community, enhancing social inclusion means that you get meaningful work experience, supported internships, you challenge the community to provide supported living spaces in the future. This will be, as is recognised, where the majority of children come back to live or to be in later years. And a lot of parents will be making difficult choices, but they will want their young people in a community that offers the best facilities that

they have already learnt in, not just at post 16. They may make the decision for them to leave home, and surely you want your local community to provide that supported living for them. I also want to touch on the economy to scale. Why does it have to be such a big, on one place, when you know there are strategic growth areas in two areas in the north at least that could meet those needs and still have economies of scale. I appreciate there are models of bigger school, which are in very big urban areas or on the edge of that, and the sites that you have cited in the consultation are actually right next to urban areas not in more remote rural areas. They are part of their community.

- 72.** Person – where in the consultation has it worked out what we as parents – I am not talking about parent governors here, I am talking about parents – what will we do if you move our school that way. Because my reaction would be to look at three ways – not Rowdeford. Even though it is further away it is safer.
- 73.** AS – Safer – can you expand on that?
- 74.** Person – *unintelligible*... I said it at cabinet, I am saying it here, if she has a fit, I do not want her further away than here to the next hospital I want her to go to. Which would be the RUH or BCH. So, if you can't do that, I *unintelligible*... which is closer to those hospitals than Rowdeford.
- 75.** AS - Where do you live?
- 76.** Person - We chose to come to Chippenham because it is our community school. If we can't have Chippenham I would prefer Bath to Rowdeford, I don't know if you have that in your consultation on what parents would want to do. Would they want to go to independent, or out of county, because if we react in a way that you are not proposing, we could blow your figures apart. I know a number of parents who would choose to send their child to Rowdeford today but are not interested in the Rowdeford you're proposing. You're already blowing your figures away because they will want to go to Mainstream potentially. That may be what you want, but if could mean that in 4 years' time Rowdeford has half the children on role that it has right now of the type of child that you would want today.
- 77.** AS – the answer is, we are not predicting what parental preference would do. We are aware that three ways is a respected and popular, and we have a number of Wiltshire parents who have expressed a preference for that and their children go there, mainly from that corner of Wiltshire.
- 78.** Parent – I think I have said somewhere, I would probably go to Arbitration before I would let you send my daughter to Rowdeford.
- 79.** AS – I can't disagree with your view – that is your opinion.
- 80.** Parent – I want someone to take responsibility if she has a seizure that causes more brain damage than she already has. A person that, if that happens, they would be prepared to stand up in court and say I knew this was a risk, I accepted it, I took it, it is my decision.
- 81.** Parent – I think Alan, when we went to the summer consultation I liked one thing you said. You said we want to get this right, I want to get this right. This, we all, the majority feel that this is *unintelligible* for the children and for the

future. We know that the majority of parent / carers are *unintelligible* school, those votes have been disregarded, minimised and we do know that parents know their children best and we need to listen to parents because they know what the needs of the children are, and they need to be included and not disregarded and be rolled over, bulldozed over, we don't make this up. There is a feeling... *unintelligible*... grateful getting £20m but if it is the wrong thing to do then it doesn't mean anything. And yes, it is great we need additional spaces, places, but you were right what you said, we need to get it right You need to get it right and it isn't going that way for any of us. We have the heads of the schools against it, we have the governors of the schools against it, and it is not because we don't like the proposal of additional places, but because we genuinely feel that this is harmful. We don't make the children's needs up, these are really vulnerable children, our children are vulnerable, the most vulnerable in society and to just being ignored as parents, carers, governors, heads, is not the right thing to do.

- 82.** Person – this isn't about resistance to change either, people as a rule don't like change. We were already in the frame of mind, and that St Nicks wouldn't exist in the longer term on this site, we were all on board with that as we want something better than the limitations that we face here on this site. This isn't about resistance to change, with the meetings we a been having over the past few years are all about looking ahead, it's not to say everyone wants it to carry on as it is, because we recognise that is not an option. It is about the right change.
- 83.** HJ – You said, it is the location would you feel so opposed to a single school if it was located elsewhere?
- 84.** Person – The single school concept has problems, wherever you put it in North Wilts, you have a 600-square mile area to deal with. Now in South Wilts, you have one town and you have radial roads out from it, so the communication into a single school in Salisbury mean that for south wilts you can just about cover the whole with a single school. North Wilts, because we have two principal locations, and the M4 and all that way up to Cricklade, it just becomes too complicated to get away with one school. Even if it wasn't, the fact that you already have two schools and you're going to reduce choice might be a problem. That might mean that if you have a family that ends up having a conflict with the school, you have nowhere else for them to go apart from out of county. You don't know what this school will be like in 10 years' time, it could be that they have upset so many parents they are at logger heads with it. We don't want to reduce choice really, I don't believe you can get away with a single school site in North Wilts that will fulfil the requirements.
- 85.** Person – can I go back to support what the others are saying, it is about getting it right and getting it right to meet the needs of the children. We recognise it is a range of children, I think I know that the local authority has listened to not having a big super school that is a complete mix of special needs, I think we all accept that. I think we know that as not the right decision, we are asking for

people to make the right decision for all children with SEND across North of Wiltshire. We know that Exeter House and with the provision of additional outreach can serve that area and we know that the town can provide a community. We are asking you to make the right choice, look again and make sure you're making the right choice for the needs of children in the future and knowing that you have two strategic areas that are going to grow, and are already growing beyond what we anticipated now in terms of numbers of special needs and demand across mainstream, resource bases and special schools – that is already happening. We are seeing people moving in from the area. Whether I choose to commute or not in future is not part of this, but I am seeing an estate agent and in the move magazine that they have think about moving to Corsham the other day – on the front page. I know that younger families are moving to Chippenham because of the housing development, the affordability in the area, the work opportunities in the areas. They are moving out of more expensive areas into these areas. So not only new housing but more pull factors... *unintelligible*... so future proofing for the future.

**86.** Person – now if you're putting a third location into Wiltshire, would you go to Marlborough or would you go for Devizes. Now, in Devizes, with the Braeside site that would be better with that being on the edge of town. Than Rowdeford is being in a village. It is just a thought.

**87.** Person – It seems to me that the LA hasn't had a great many thoughts, they decided very early on – three years ago as (name of person) was saying – that they thought they would like to have one school and have never really moved from that and haven't explored other options. I think in some of the papers we put in in the early days, the school and Larkrise as well in the early days we suggested options, but these were all ignored. We gave you options when you came to visit us Alan, but they just disappeared, we never heard any more about them.

**88.** Person – And also, I have mentioned before it was about the cabinet meeting. I think there is misunderstanding of the needs of our children.

How can we convince the other cabinet members that actually what you're hearing is far from the truth and would not be reality now. Because it wouldn't. The children that attend St Nicks and Larkrise will never have the ability to reach that potential no matter how hard you try. So we as parents already feel grief, for our children and now we have been disregarded in our opinions of what we feel is best for them that is really emotional. It is emotional stuff you know because we already have to erase or take away so many options that are available to children who have no disability's and we are angry because I don't think we're understood, I don't think our children are understood and now we are supposed to be carted away to the middle of nowhere so there will be even less understanding about it all. It is a really sad affair actually, it is a very disappointing result. To hear from Cabinet members who voted unanimously without questioning, without even looking at the schools to see how complex

our children are, that for me is the biggest disappointment of all actually, that those people who make the decision don't know the reality.

- 89.** Person – that is right and they talk about making centres of excellence and outcome for children but if you don't understand the children then you don't know what you're trying to achieve to get the best outcomes for them. We have certainly come across this view that they don't get the abilities of our children.
- 90.** Person – Can we go back to the centre of excellence as a question for a second – what is Wiltshire definition of centre of excellence? Is it a centre of educational excellence, or is it a centre where you have the resources that means that is where you have all of a particular type of person and skill?
- 91.** AS – I think the comment earlier is right, it is a general comment, it hasn't been defined in the detail. I think the principal behind it is the bigger mix of resources the better the resulting professional outcomes. There isn't a formula about that, my experience of larger...
- 92.** Person – so that in respect a centre of excellence is an aspiration not a deliverable?
- 93.** AS – there is not a conflict between the two.
- 94.** Person – an aspiration means you may, or may not, become a centre of excellence. If its saying this is where we put all the OTs Physios and SALT for the county then you can say, this is the centre of excellence for the skills set and that is something you can deliver. But that promises nothing in terms of what it delivers to the children – it just says this is where they will be working out of.
- 95.** AS – What it does is to enable, so I substitute the word promise, for enable.
- 96.** HJ – *unintelligible*
- 97.** Person – I am not sure we feel are getting listened to
- 98.** HJ – it is for Judith and I to ensure that we are listening That is what this meeting is for. To ensure we capture your views, and Judith and I when we write the report will need to ensure that the spectrum of reviews is reflected in the report, that is what we are going to have to do. We will be attaching to our report the transcript of this meeting so that your views will be there, absolutely for members to see.
- 99.** Person – who is the decision maker on the proposal to close schools?
- 100.** HJ – Cabinet are the decision maker.
- 101.** Person – so will Cabinet be getting legal advice to ensure they Understand what a legal decision looks like?
- 102.** Cabinet will be getting a variety of advice from professionals, Judith and myself, the person who is taking over the director of education post. If Cabinet seek legal advice then that will be made available to them.
- 103.** Person - It is just this part about granular understanding of who the stakeholder groups are and that the information is being parted against those stakeholder groups.
- 104.** HJ – Yes.



**105.** JW – Thank you all for coming, this has been very helpful, we will draw this all together and we are still hoping to get to the March cabinet so you will see the papers that come out to that as well.

## 3.2 Larkrise – Consultation with Staff and Governors 7 February 2019

### 3.2.1 Meeting Notes

**Venue:** Larkrise Special School

**Date:** 07 February 2019

**Time:** 5pm

**Attendance:** 18 school staff and governors, and 7 officials

#### **PRESENT:**

Alan Stubbersfield, Education & Skills Specialist Lead, Wiltshire Council

Helen Jones, Director of Commissioning - Family & Children's Services, Wiltshire Council

Judith Westcott, Acting Head for Commissioning and Joint Planning, Wiltshire Council

John Hobbs – Education Officer SEN, Wiltshire Council

Philippa Turner – Senior SEND Lead Worker (Southwest), Wiltshire Council

Dominic Argar – Technical Support Officer - Communications, Wiltshire Council

Simone Kermode, School Improvement Officer, Wiltshire Council (minutes)

Emily Wadds – Governor

Jan Winfield – Vice Chair of Governors

Siobhan Cheadle – Deputy Head of Larkrise

Phil Cook – Head of Larkrise

M Humphreys – Teacher

Hannah Steff – Staff Teaching Assistant

Tracey Greatwood – Teacher

Shelia James – Teacher

Mary Seaman – Teacher/Governor

Catherine Pashley – Teaching Assistant

Caroline Owens – Teaching Assistant

Jill Lovell – Teacher

Selina Phillips – Teacher

Sharon Dell – Teaching Assistant

Rachel Bell – Teacher

Becky Churchill – Artist

Claire Porch – Clerk to Governors

Justina Barber – Business Manager

#### **Introduction**

Education & Skills Specialist Lead (LA Project Leader) introduced the process for the meeting.

LA Project Leader: The reasons for recording the meeting is to ensure that all conversations are captured. A document will be produced as a result of the recording, which will go to the Council's consultation meeting for decision- making and transparency.

LA representatives introduced themselves.

LA Project Leader gave an overview of the process.

LA Project Leader: Pre-statutory consultation took place in the summer where we tried to look at a wide range of options available. One, two and three schools in a range of locations were considered. The merging of ideas was a challenge and a specific proposal was decided upon in November. The statutory stage of the consultation has proposed to close three schools and open a brand new one on an expanded site of Rowdeford School. In parallel to the current Rowdeford School, there will be the process of looking at the opening of the new school for the north of Wiltshire.

We are here to hear your views on closing the three schools and the opportunities for a 'phased' pre-statutory stage to think about what the new school on an expanded site can offer. What do you think it should or should not look like? We will go through that process and consider the specification for the new school. What it should have in terms of i.e. access? hydrotherapy pools? access to medical support? We will get more specific about these details over the next 18 months. There is lots of work to be done and a lot of detail to put together and the more detail we can put into the beginning of the process, it will be easier to start work.

**Q: *Why wasn't there a consultation with parents, staff and governors before the plan to build a separate 'super school' was decided? I thought there was one closure, so from the summer when we were so anti the decision (another person added) how did you get to that decision?***

LA Project Leader: – the process evolved from a two school option.

- A site in Chippenham was do-able and then there was a strength of views from Rowdeford and a considerable volume of voices.
- For Larkrise, there was a petition and we looked at how we could do that (*as in keeping it open*).
- We looked at sites but there were planning difficulties - rules are more complex with building a new school
- We looked at Ashton Street, then a split site at Larkrise and a neighbouring school site. –
- There was lots of toing and froing – a lot of debate.

**Q: Why is this (one super school) the best option? Is it for financial reasons? Is the proposal best for the children?**

LA Project Leader: In November, cabinet reports were reviewed with regards to relativities. The best option was to extend the site in Rowde with a new build. This is better than a split site and will allow for a school to run whilst there is building taking place. There are advantages to having a larger school. During the consultation those who are familiar with larger schools are supportive of them, having seen Three Ways in Bath. Some said, 'give us a Three Ways where we are', having seen that model and thought it was good. Most parents have not seen this and are not familiar with what (a large site) they can offer. They offer the good work you do here as well as at St Nicholas and Rowderford. There is loyalty at schools (*minute taker not sure if it meant all schools*). The professional view is that the larger school is an attractive option.

**Q: A super school is okay, close to hospital and part of a community and access to medical provision but your proposal is the country. How is that good?**

**Q: A school that is isolated and away from communities with children never seen and never part of the community – how can you compare this (your proposal) to Three Ways?**

**Q: There is talk about capping numbers at this school yet some parents have seen Three Ways and moved their child here?**

I know of a parent that came from London to come here, to a smaller school.

**Q: A super school will mean our children will become institutionalised in a small village that is culturally devoid and has no community. We thrive on the community. It will be a case of 'out of sight and out of mind'?**

**Q: Is your decision down to the price of land?**

**Q: I have worked at mainstream and a special school and you are saying (the new school) is going to be a centre of excellence? What does that look like?**

It was mentioned (*at the cabinet meeting? minute-taker*) that two schools were good and one was not good, this was particularly insulting to the staff of this school.

A first class education was mentioned on the radio (*for the proposed school*), yet we are already getting that.

It will be less than that (*a first-class education*). We need social communities. Most of the learning takes place out in the community. I am very worried about that and the

new school does not offer any post-16 provision. It will be at local colleges or Fairfield and this does not meet our children's needs.

**Q: My son will be 18 when the new school opens and how can he be at Wiltshire College or Fairfield with severe autism? There is no provision there for him. What provision are you going to have? This school caters well for pupils with severe and complex needs. How will Wiltshire College cope if children have to be in education and work until 18?**

LA Project Leader: We will be responsible for pupils up to the age of 25 and we will work with other providers to develop this (*post 16 education*).

**Q: Why can't our pupils stay until the age of 25?**

LA Project Leader: Do we want adults to be in school in their early 20s?

(there are pupils at university?).

**Q: Every government document states how the government is failing pupils with special needs and how they need to be part of the community. Parents struggle and some are single parents. Pupils need roots in where they live. Ashton Street was not appropriate but pupils need to be in their own community. This is a total flip (*in opinion*) – why? When will consciousness shift and (*Wiltshire Council*) listen to parents?**

LA Project Leader: We know there are issues around funding pupils with high special needs. Here (*at the new school*) we are putting resources in and we believe it will be excellent with you as the staff. There is praise and respect for the work done here, but the building is not fit for purpose.

**Q: If this school's building is not fit for purpose, why not build a new school here where the children can access the community? Whether they have a super school, our pupils thrive in a small community and small classes. They are going to be miserable. Something needs to be done within Trowbridge, Chippenham and Rowde in the right environment for the right reasons?**

Since 2010 there has been space/ empty site adjoining the school which is now an OAP home and over the road (*Ashton Street site?*) should be okay for planning. They never say, when it comes to mainstream that there is not enough land, let's move to another town.

**Q: There are plans to build another (*mainstream*) primary school in Trowbridge. Would you treat (*mainstream*) primary school (*parents*) like this?**

LA Project Leader: We have no choice to do this for (*mainstream*) primary schools, it would not be a consideration.

**Q: Why is it one rule for them (*mainstream schools*) and not for special schools?**

LA Project Leader: They do travel to special schools (*not sure if this is right – minute taker*)

**Q: (*With regards to*) the funding from the 106 Agreement for Paxcroft, you can't presume that there will not be pupils with special needs from the building of 4-5 bedroom homes? This money should come to this school. It is morally wrong.**

LA Project Leader: That is about the Section 106 funding. £20m is being invested by the council for this new school. There is an argument for financial support from house developers as you can't presume these children will not have special needs. This is all factored in to managing places, hence the need to expand special needs provision.

**Q: Yes, but (*expand the special needs provision*) in their own (*local*) community?**

**Q: We have an opportunity for you to show us that you value our children and our community but you are “shoving them out”. What does that say to others? You are happy to have those (*mainstream*) school here? My kids walk past this school but will not be able to attend for their own education.**

(Q – ‘cannot educate our own children’ – *minute-taker did not catch this*).

This school has spent a lot of time and many years building up a network of business' and organisations with the Church, fire station, police officers, Palmer Gardens (where there is work experience) and the Wiltshire Wood Recycling Centre - that is our community. That is what we mean by what will be lost. Rowdeford will never be able to replace this, there is not the infrastructure there. You can make a school community, but not a real community where pupils 'grow up and live'. Having to always go to school on a bus completely divorces the children from where they live. There will only be one urban centre near. Our special school is in the same place where you do your shopping or go to the cinema – it is a place you are familiar with and when pupils leave us and end up in supported independent living, they know it (*familiar with the area*). This is not the case in Rowde. These pupils are highly anxious, it is a massive step (*to take this change*) and it takes years for them to adapt to (*change*). Oddly enough, every single time there is major structural change, it's our children at the 'chalk face of it'. Whether it is the LA budget or national (*directives*) from the government, our children are like 'straws in the wind', blown from one idea to the next. In 5 years' time when there is a new LA, it will all change back. This is not 'future proofing'. These pupils are not going to go to university or around the world and they are Wiltshire Council's

responsibility for the rest of their lives - invest in them now in the local community where they belong!

LA Project Leader: This is not about investment. Rowde is not culturally void. Rowdeford and Devizes will retain links.

Pupils will go to school in a different village and then come back home (aged 16) and will have to face another change. It is inconsistent and does not make any logical sense.

LA Project Leader: We will explore the issue of dissolving links with the local community activity and businesses – but is it necessary (to dissolve links)?

### **How long does it take to get to Rowde?**

Are you asking how long is it from A-B or with children in wheel chairs with (*bus*) pick-ups, which takes much longer?

LA answered: It takes 42 minutes.

You are clearly not listening, otherwise you would not have asked this question. Yet you have already made the final decision!

LA Project Leader:

### **Q: Why do the community links have to be broken?**

Because you can't walk there (from Rowde)!

As you do not fully understand the whole 'time factor', you need to be here (*at the school*). You need to come into the school and then take a walk outside. You do not understand how our school works. You do not know our pupils or the timings of the day, you have made a uniformed decision.

**Q: (The decision) is 'down to' money. What are the plans for this land (at *Larkrise*) and St Nicholas? To build more houses? You are not thinking about our children at all.**

This (*issue*) is larger than education, it is about human rights. We are not just educators. Children go into town and face hate crime and all manner of things, yet the community accepts us all. Originally there were 45 students here, not now, every single mainstream school has children that should be here and they should also be in this community.

**Q: Why do you keep referring to this area as North Wiltshire, which is Chippenham and Calne? This is West Wiltshire.**

LA Project Leader: We are looking at a bigger planning area which includes the North West, East and top of the plain. We should be clearer about that.

**Q: Have you seen on what is (*being said*) on social media? Rowdeford are defending, with a petition, two schools being built? Is there another proposal?**

LA Project Leader: I have not seen that. People can be slightly unpredictable when they are feeling under threat. We will find out more at the meeting in Rowdeford. There is no other proposal, the proposal is for one school. We will consider all your comments. We said (*?? Minute-taker missed this*) in June and we had more homework to do. Things have moved on to this proposal (*for one super school*). These recordings will take (*your comments*) into account

**Q: You also said that excellent staff will go to the new school but some staff don't drive and don't want to go out of their community to work?**

LA Project Leader: We are looking at where people live and travelling options. We are looking at our responsibilities and HR systems to support the process. We will be managing that process.

TAs and staff, who have child at a school in Trowbridge school, will not be able to get to work on time at Rowdeford.

LA Project Leader: The situation will be looked at on a case by case basis.

**Q: How can you say there will be no redundancies? We have support staff and skilled staff who will not find it viable to continue working in a special school in Rowde.**

Also for parents that don't drive they are fortunate in being able to get from Melksham and Trowbridge, if ever needed. They cannot do this if there is a school in Rowde.

LA Project Leader: We will look at planning support.

That is your response to every question - it is going to be a mess and you are being unrealistic. You cannot easily solve these problems.

Consultations should be two-way with listening on both sides and people should not be feeling under threat. We feel that you are not listening. When we ask questions, it feels like you have made your decision. You aren't listening, you are blocking.



LA Director for Commissioning: It is not our decision, as officers, to make. We cannot answer your questions. Your views will be presented at the cabinet meeting.

**Q: So, we have to trust you, that you will take our views forward?**

LA Director for Commissioning: (*Minute-taker missed the start of this response*)..through the consultation process as well as minuting and recording this meeting.

(With regards to) the film of the cabinet meeting, 'big fibs' were said at that meeting.

**Q: What is the point (of taking our views) if it just for one proposal (that we don't want)?**

The law has been broken with (*regards to the process of*) the debate and signatures for a petition (*minute-taker did not fully understand this*).

LA Director for Commissioning: I have sought advice on this.

LA Project Leader: The legal advice will be appropriately dealt with at the cabinet meeting along with the debate which will happen in same place.

LA Director for Commissioning: A transcript of this meeting will be part of the body of evidence that will go to members in March. They will make the decision. We are here to ascertain your views and communicate those in a fair way to members, not to say we will agree. We will look at all questionnaires that come in and feed back to the cabinet. They will make a decision on a lot of factors... (*LA Director for Commissioning was interrupted*)

We do feel not listened to you, we have just seen you looking at your phone!

LA Director for Commissioning: I was looking at the distance of travel to Rowde by train.

We cannot get our children on a train in a wheel chair! And there is no train station in Devizes.

LA Director for Commissioning: I was looking at the distance by road, I wanted to understand.

My son lives slightly closer but there are pupils from Trowbridge, Warminster and Westbury who live a lot further away.

**Q: Can you see how concerned we are, when we are this far in the process, that you do not even know that there isn't a train service to Rowde?**

LA Director for Commissioning: I just wanted to check the distance myself. I am sorry that you felt this was wrong.

I accept your apology. Can you hear and are you listening to what parents are saying? It would be good if we had access to the concerns and issues on social media from parents. A parent in Warminster has pointed out that her son's journey will be twice the length. There are 13 pupils who live in Warminster who will have vastly extended journeys. 3 of these parents do not drive. 3 buses to Rowdeford will take over 2 hours each way.

**Q: How can parents (*who come from this distance*) attend a (*school*) meeting?**

**Q: As well as every speech & language and physio appointment – how will pupils access those?**

LA Project Leader: If it is a single school, we will want to be thinking about parental access in the specification.

We are debating about the practicalities but it is an immoral attitude to have our children in a rural community and for future generations not to have contact with our community. I, as a teenager, grew up with these (*special needs*) pupils as my parents did this type of work – it is immoral!

We are going back 50 years with just 'sending our children away' to a rural location.

We cannot continue the meeting but staff/governors can email or write to the LA on any other points they want to raise or send the information via Mr Cook.

### 3.2.2 Audio Recording Transcript

**Venue:** Larkrise Special School

**Date:** 07 February 2019

**Time:** 5pm

1. **AS** – Can you hear me now is that because of the microphone? We have Dom here who's main job is working at the Albert Hall on their sound system so this reason for this is that we have a recording of the meeting so we can be quite sure that we've captured everything that people have said. We have someone making a note of what's said and we've had that in the past but people have raised that question so we want to be quite sure that people are confident we are capturing everything that's said so we've got the digital stuff and the typing is so that when it comes to turning the recording into something written down we are halfway there already; does that make sense? There will be a document as a result of the recording, written which will go with the Council's documentation for the decision making that happens at the end of March, okay, and that will be transparent, people will be able to see what has been said and look at what proposals are being made around that. So that's a bit of process stuff. Dom here has various black box things so that there looks like the Starship Enterprise in miniature, it's actually a microphone and it talks to that thing up there so that's how the system works so we are asking if you want to speak that's the purpose of the meeting and we just to make sure that you are in such a distance or so of the black box that Dom here is carrying.
2. **DA** – I've got that one recording the whole time just in case.
3. **AS** – So we seem to be recording about twenty times over it will be helpful that if you are speaking into those things if you say who you are. You are not obliged to say who you are so it's not a problem but it just helps so we know so we can kind of organise it in paragraphs with who said which if that makes sense. Also for recording we've got an attendance register just somewhere which is passing around the room if you would note your presence then we've got a full account for the consultation that have been taken in this process. Okay, there's probably nobody here who hasn't met me before, I'm Alan Stubberfield, when we last met last summer I was the Director of Education for Wiltshire, they've now got somebody else doing that because I was interim, supply if you like, now I'm doing that job somewhere else but Wiltshire Council has asked me to continue with this particular aspect of work I was doing here the process of talking with you, listening with people around the views about the future of Special Education in North Wiltshire, so there's continuity there, I was closely involved in setting up the process a year and more ago and I will be continuing to be involved for the next few months. I have with me one or two other Council people, Dom you know about that's his role, but I guess my colleague to introduce themselves and probably don't need to be speak into a microphone.

4. HJ - Hi, so I'm Helen Jones, I'm Director of Commissioning and I will, Alan's handing the baton over to me for this particular programme, so you'll be seeing a lot more of me in future.
5. JW – Hi, I'm Judith Westcott and I'm Head of Joint Planning and Children's Commissioning.
6. JH – John Hobbs, I think some of you have seen me when I've been in school. I'm SEND Education Officer
7. AS – and on keyboards
8. SK – I'm Simone and I work for the local authority and I'm School Improvement Officer.
9. PT – Hi I'm Phillipa Turner and I work in Children's Commissioning, SEND.
10. AS – So, I think for this meeting we have staff and Governors is that right? Yep. Which are governors? Okay so mostly staff some governors and some are both I guess. You're well informed with the process I think so the purpose of this meeting is not for me to talk really so I'm just kicking this off. It's really for you to have the opportunity to express your views so I'll briefly set that in context. Essentially the purpose of the meeting is to listen to your views in this consultation process. And that started, I mean that started probably a couple of years ago, two or three years ago with the development of our ideas in conversations between Phil and his colleague Head Teachers and representatives of the Local Authority, moving towards Cabinet report which set up the summer consultation where we met here last time, that is what we call pre-statutory consultation, voluntary consultation if you like, to ensure that people are well informed and what we were doing there was to look, try and look at the wide range of options available for the future of special education in the north of Wiltshire and you'll remember we were looking at option for one, two or three schools in the range of locations available in the various locations where the schools are now and we had that consultation. We drew together the thinking around that it took us longer than we expected so over the summer there was a lot of toing and throwing of ideas, challenge and reflection so it took us to November which was longer than we had planned but it did take us that long to come up with what the proposal, the specific proposal was going to be for what is now the statutory stage of consultation with statutory notices around proposals to close three schools including this one and to open a brand new one on the site or on an expanded site of Rowdeford school near Devizes that's the proposal on which there is a statutory process of consultation around the closure of the three schools and in parallel there is a parallel process of looking at the opening of a new school to serve the north of Wiltshire. In a legal sense the two process are separate but linked so we need to remember that we hearing your views about closing schools and there's also opportunity in because whatever that means phased, we are the pre-statutory stage, we are at the last summer stage, pre-statutory stage around the thinking about the new schools and of course if the decision around closures isn't yes we will close in favour of a new school that would take a different track so it's all subject to

decision which are yet to take place, so this is all about what if, what if we close this school and what if we have a new school based on an expanded significantly expanded Rowdeford site over there, we're interested to know what if that happens what you think it should look like or what you think it should not look like so that if we go through that process and come up with a decision around a new school one of things we would have to go is consider the specification for a new school, what sort of things it should have it in, things like access, hydrotherapy pools have come up again and again, access to medical support and so on and so on but those things subject to due decisions we would need to be getting more specific about during the course of we don't know how long it will take, over the next eighteen months or so because subject to that being the answer there be a lot of work because as you can imagine building a big school there'll be a lot of detail to link together and the more we can put into that process at the beginning the easier it is for the contractors that are doing that or the sponsors of an Academy the easier it is for them to start work. Is there anything, I do have a habit of rabbiting on, so I'm going to shut up and say.

11. I have a question, was there a consultation? Was there a consultation with parents and staff and governors before the plan the Council to build a separate super school.
12. AS – That consultation was last summer.
13. Okay I didn't know about it.
14. AS – Right
15. Person – I thought there was only one proposal and the proposal is that there's going to be closure and just one school open so to me when we have the thing in the summer how did you get to the decision to have one school when it seemed that everything was saying that that wouldn't be a good idea, I don't know how you quite got to that decision.
16. AS – Okay, so I think that people might remember that my thinking at the time when we must have met last June or so, I thought it would be quite likely that there would be two schools. In a month's long process things move on and I've certainly said that and I'm quite open about that in meetings we felt that we were probably not going to sustain three. There seemed to be a lot of concern about a single school option and what we were trying to do was to see how we would make a two school option work and we found that that was difficult. We had a site in Chippenham which was certainly doable but there was some mixed views about that. We obviously had a strength of views from Rowdeford about retaining that and out of the consultation there was a very considerable volume of voices speaking on behalf of that case. For Larkrise, we know there was a petition, there was a lot of voices saying keep Larkrise and we looked into how we would do that. We had sites where we could build a new school and I think we talked about that when I was here last. When we looked at that we had concerns or difficulties coming back from planners about would this be doable because when an authority needs to build a school, even when its on its own

land and it is the Council it actually has to apply for planning permission. So with my education hat on we apply to the people with their planners hat on just as anyone else would when building a house or an extension. The rules are obviously much more complex when you are building something like a school and what we did before we got too far along the road was to take an initial view from planners about if we put this in would it stack up. And the new sites looked as though it would be difficult particularly around access to the site. One of them was some distance out of the town at West Aston so there was that issue about it as well. We were left essentially with the option you are familiar with of looking at a split site school for Trowbridge using this location and the neighbouring site in Ashton Street and that was one of the reasons why I as I said there was a lot of toing and throwing, and it took us to November to conclude what was the first option because there was a lot of debate about them that very thing.

**17.** Person – so why do you think it's the best option? Is that there is no one else at all? Do you think it is the best option because its financially the best option or do you think that's the best option as that's what's best for the children or why do you think that is actually the best option?

**18.** AS – There is a range of reasons why and they were put in the November Cabinet reports. I can't remember all that off the top of my head. It was to do with relativities, so we are not saying this was absolutely impossible and the Rowdeford site was absolutely perfect. Clearly there is a range of views about those things, we think it's the best option, we thought for example the extended site with the extended new build available in Rowde to us was better than having a split site, having to deal with a building project where you've got to keep a school running in a place where you've got contractors vehicles and all that process going on for some time and the eventual solution of a split site solution would not be as good as a single site solution. We thought that there were advantages to a larger school and I know that there are a range of views about that, but one of the things that came out of the consultation was that parents who were familiar with larger schools were supportive of them. Particularly, we had heard from parents who had seen Three Ways in Bath and some of whom had chosen that and had children, Wiltshire people, who had children at Three Ways in Bath which is a large amalgamated school and they were very happy with that. Some people in the consultation said give us a Three Ways where we are because they were too far away from it. They saw that model and thought it was really good. Most Wiltshire parents haven't seen that and are unfamiliar with the large Special Schools offer and very understandably what they are familiar with is what the brilliant work that Phil, his team and you do here and your colleagues in Chippenham and Rowdeford too. So, there was clearly loyalty, well deserved loyalty, to the existing schools which came back to us in the message from consultation and yes, a minority view that the large schools were attractive that chimed in with professional views. So that came to the fore and we are here now saying what do you think about that?

19. Person – I think it's alright saying that we'll have super school, Three Ways are in a position where they are very close to the hospitals, they are very you know not out in the middle of the country, they are part of the community. It's very easy to get into the middle of Bath etc. so, Three Ways is a bit different I think. The proposal is to put it out in the country, out in country lanes and we don't feel that it is good for the children, for the communities or for the adults.
20. I was going to make a very similar point. I've been a teacher in special schools for over thirty years. Thirty years ago when I was qualifying, children that had a learning difficulty were quite often isolated away from their communities in a country rural setting, never seen and never part of the community.
21. Clapping
22. I think to compare a super school with Three Ways in Bath is ludicrous. It's a city centre site and it's got all the facilities, its inclusive in the community. You can't compare the two and that's my point.
23. Person – I think we are all for a super school actually. Maybe if it was in a community that would be great, you know.
24. Person – I think the other thing I'd say is that I don't think Three Ways is a large school. Its capping at, they are capping their numbers at two hundred. We are looking at three hundred and fifty so I'd say there is a significant difference. I'd also say there are significant number of parents who look at Three Ways and look here and chose here.
25. Person – I've had parents that have moved down from London particularly to be away from the big school, to be in more of the community feel so, you know, I just don't get it.
26. AS – So we felt because of the land we have available at the Rowdeford site and behind it we could.
27. Person – inaudible
28. AS – Sorry I missed that.
29. We are talking about a super school, an institutionalised super school, in a small village that is culturally devoid, no community and that is what we thrive on here at Larkrise. We are just being taken out of site and out of mind. It comes down I'm sure to the price of land and another thing, I've been working in many schools over the years, mainstream, special needs, I'm intrigued by the tag line from Wiltshire Council saying it's going to be a centre of excellence. I've got thirty years' experience I'd like to know what a centre of excellence looks like please?
30. AS – Large
31. Does it? No it doesn't. You have to earn it and you cannot have this super school and stamp it with centre of excellence to sugar the pill for the parents to say.
32. AS – We don't disagree about that and I wouldn't disagree that this school is excellent I think.
33. It's been mentioned, three schools, one of them was rubbish and two were good so that's in black and white,

- 34.** Person – It was also mentioned by Councillor Laura Mayes about failing schools.
- 35.** – and old fashioned.
- 36.** Person – Particularly insulting to staff who work incredibly hard.
- 37.** Person – I was listening to the radio yesterday, maybe, can't remember about, saying that there was going to be first class education and that is what they are getting now. Why is it, why, how offensive that the new school will provide a first-class education that is what they are getting now.
- 38.** Person – It'll be less than first class as currently my students follow a community based learning. They have social communication needs, autism spectrum quite mostly, and most of my learning that I'm doing with them is out in the community. They are not going to have access to that and also, I am very worried about the fact that in the new school you are saying that it won't be post sixteen provision. Post sixteen provision will be in the existing offer that we have now which is the local colleges or Fairfield Community College and it's not meeting need now.
- 39.** Person – That worries me exactly, I mean you could say that the super school isn't going to fit my child because he'd be eighteen when the new school opens but there isn't actually any provision for children like my child. Are you going to enrol him to Wiltshire College and Fairfield, there's no provision for children with severe autism or severe or profound complex needs. What provision are you going to have for those type of children?
- 40.** AS – So we have provision at the college.
- 41.** Here, this school caters very well for children who have profound and severe complex needs, many of them are autistic. How exactly are you going to cater for those children at Wiltshire College when they reach sixteen and it's also national government policy at the moment for children to stay in education, work or train until they are eighteen and why should the children here not have that option?
- 42.** AS – We of course will be responsible up to age twenty-five for all these children using college, using Fairfield and other providers which have been developed across Wiltshire. So, the proposals for post sixteen give us a much wider range of providers and locations.
- 43.** Is there specialist provision in some independent schools just up to twenty-five, here you appear to cap it off at nineteen. So, why can't our most severe children go up to twenty-five?
- 44.** AS – Well we retain that responsibility. The question I think for us all is whether we want young adults to be in school in their early twenties?
- 45.** Person – Well they are. I've had pupils go to university.
- 46.** AS – Okay.
- 47.** Person - Every Government document published since 2011 talks about how the Government are failing people with special needs and pretty much everything says that they need to be feeling part of their community and I think you know, a lot of parent really struggle with really complex children, a lot of those statistics are single parents, they need their children and its very unlikely



that those children will grow up and move to another town. They need to know where they live, they need have their roots where they live. And you know when I think about Ashton Street and when that was closed down and the reason that it was closed down, is that it was deemed that it was not appropriate to have a large space where people from all over Wiltshire came to. They need to have small satellite places in their own community. So, it's a total flip what's happened there?

- 48.** AS – I don't know what was thought of at that time but obviously I can comment what's happening now.
- 49.** Person – We were hoping that conscious would have shifted and people would be more open and actually listening to the parents.
- 50.** AS – I mean the failures in reports in the current decade that you refer to significantly relate to the aspirations of the SEND reforms being not funded, the 19-25 expansion notoriously being an illustration of that. Here we know that there are issues around as we know with other Authorities' pressure on the High Needs Funding Block and here the solution is not under funding but putting resource in, so it's a big investment. So, going back, we do believe it will be excellent because it will have you as staff but it won't have the storage facilities in the corridor for example. And whilst I'm very happy to respect and praise the work that's done here, I think it's despite some of the facilities and what we want is excellent facilities for excellent staff.
- 51.** Person – You mentioned the stuff in the corridor etc, none of us are decrying the fact that this school may not be fit for purpose as it stands now, but what we are saying is keep our children in Trowbridge, build a new school by all means but where the children can access a community and where our wheelchairs can be put away. Things that are in corridors are important to the children and unfortunately, this building isn't the best building anymore for them. It was initially but like everything things change. But the children are still the children of this community, not Rowdeford community and where they'll have a super school that takes three hundred children can you honestly admit that children like these children here, who thrive on a small community, small classes, will do well in a school of 300 children whatever their needs, are not going to survive, they are not going to enjoy their lives, they are going to be miserable.
- 52.** AS – We have different views about that and I'm not here to argue with you but to listen.
- 53.** Person – Obviously.
- 54.** AS – I have seen it done.
- 55.** Person – Yep, it may well suit some places but as we said about Bath but obviously you are pointing out to us the obvious elements in this school that are not good for us, and they're not, but do something about it within Trowbridge, within Chippenham and within Rowdeford for the three schools you've got already. Plough all that money in, brilliant, but within the right environment for the right reasons.

- 56.** AS – Okay.
- 57.** Person – So, the issue around the space here, that was first, that was first going around in 2010 and there was a recommendation there from the Children’s Select Committee that something’s done about it with the empty site adjoining this school. There’s now an old peoples home built on that. Then it was moving over the road and having a split site with the new build over there. The architect’s drawings were done, the planning, I don’t see why there are now planning issues when back then they didn’t find planning issues. In all my time in Trowbridge I have been involved with the secondary expansion, the primary expansion, I have never when it comes to mainstream children heard it said there isn’t enough land, let’s move them to another town.
- 58.** Clapping
- 59.** Person – There’s even talk of plans to build yet another primary school in Trowbridge but you appear to be shying away from the fact that we really need to have another special needs school in Trowbridge. You wouldn’t go shifting primary school children away.
- 60.** AS – The trust is that we don’t have a choice about building primary schools in a local community, there’s just no digressions to it really.
- 61.** Person – Can you explain that so I can understand what you’ve just said please.
- 62.** AS – Well, we would not be considering as the point has been made, we would not be considering a primary school in Rowde for Trowbridge. It couldn’t be considered due to the duty to supply sufficient school places that’s the law.
- 63.** Person – so why should here be affected. I don’t understand. There’s one rule for special needs children and another for primary school children.
- 64.** AS – Yes, it’s the law of the land. There are different expectations and the practice is very different. People do travel to special schools for special centres of excellence.
- 65.** Person – But they shouldn’t. Actually, when I asked why Paxcroft Mead opened, our school just next door, had received funding from the S106 agreement and all of that was being built, a Councillor said to me that we cannot presume that anybody moving into those houses will have a special needs child. So, my question was how can you presume that anybody will have a child? Yet they are building five bedroom homes, four bedroom homes. Statistically, there will be special needs children within those families and so therefore that money, some of that money should have come to this school.
- 66.** AS – I absolutely agree with that.
- 67.** Person – It’s morally wrong.
- 68.** AS – Yes, it is but that’s not something we can affect. That’s to do with the regulations surrounding the section 106 funding. We can’t get special school funding through the section 106 route and that’s why the Council is having to and is willing to make the investment. The £20 million has been talked about, it may be more, it may be less, but a very significant investment which the Council will make, because those developers won’t do it and law won’t let us make them. So, the argument there is about the financial relationship between the

Council and the people that develop housing estates. It's not saying that we presume there won't be children with special educational needs that come from a big house. We know that where there's housing development, there will be a growth of population and a proportion of that will be children with special education needs, which is all factored in to that number of 220 extra places needed hence the need to expand the special school provision we've got.

**69.** Person - Yes, but expand the special needs provision in their own local community?

**70.** I just think that you've got this incredible opportunity haven't you. You can do something that shows us and everyone in our community that you value these children and you value the role that they have in their community, and you're just blowing it really. You're just shoving them all out into the middle of a field in the middle of nowhere. What is that saying to everybody else. I live in Trowbridge and I'm really happy to have this school here. My own children go to mainstream school and we walked past this school and I was able to explain to them that these children are just like you but they have special needs and we are going to lose that are we, we are going to lose that community.

**71.** Person – We are educating the next generation to accept.

**72.** Yes, these children belong in our community.

**73.** This school has spent a lot of time and many many years building up a network of local businesses, local organisations, local charities, the Church, the fire station, the police officers, Parma Gardens, the garden centre that takes on young people with SEND when they leave school and sometimes for work experience, the Wiltshire Wood Recycling Centre, the list goes on and on of the network that the school has built up and that's what I would call community. That's what we mean by this will be lost. Rowde village however willing is never going to be able to replace that, not if it worked at if for 10 or 20 years. That infrastructure that makes a community is not there. You can make a school community out of it but you can't make a real community that these children are going to grow up and live in. What's going to happen is that children are going to go to school on a bus, that school is going to be completely divorced of anywhere that they know and they are familiar with. At the moment I agree not all SEND children always live in exactly the same community as the school they go to. If you live in a village there probably isn't an SEN school in your village. But there is one in the nearest biggest urban centre, whether it's Chippenham, whether it's Trowbridge. If you go to a Special School it's probably the same place that your mum or your dad take you on a Saturday to do the shopping. It's where you go when to go to the cinema, it's a place that you are familiar with and it's the same place that these children, when they leave us, are going to end up in supported independent living. There isn't any at Rowde, not for 350 young people coming out, there isn't any. Even if there was, there's no infrastructure to support it. Whereas, here there is, there is housing that is suitable for them. My son came to Larkrise in his time, he then went on to Fairfield and he is now in the process of moving towards independent supported

living. Several of his friends that he went to school with and came through college with, are already in independent supported living and, oddly enough, are still being supported by some of the staff they have known all through their school years and all through their college years. These are kids that get together with their support carers and meet in town on a Saturday. And in the summer they go to play crazy golf in Trowbridge park; in the winter, the cinema at the Odeon. They don't have to catch buses, they don't have to get a taxi to access these things, they are on their doorstep because they are living in Trowbridge, where they've grown up, where they went to school, where they now live. A lot of these young people are highly anxious, they take a long time to adapt to the new. Moving from school to college, from college into your own home is a massive step for them and it will take some of them years to adapt to that. And yet oddly enough every time that there is a major change, a major structural change, it's our children who are at the short face of it. They are constantly having things changed under them because the budget is held by either local authorities or national government. So they are like straws in the wind, blown from one idea to the next. You know there will be general elections soon enough and who knows five years from now, just as this new school is opening, we might have a completely different local authority who don't believe in all of this. What happens then? This is not what I call future proofing. Future proofing is keeping these children in their local communities. These children are not going to move away, they are not going to go to university, they are not going to go and travel the world. They are going to be living in Trowbridge and they are going to be Wiltshire Council's responsibility once they are young adults for the rest of their lives to support them. You need to invest in them now, in their communities, here where they belong.

**74.** Clapping

**75.** AS – Thank you. There's no question about investment, it's about how it's done and where it's done. I think we will be thinking about, I don't think we'd accept the Rowde is culturally void, we think of Rowde.

**76.** Person - There's a village shop and a school and that's it.

**77.** AS – We would think of Rowde and Devizes for example and we would also think, bearing in mind, what we were saying about post sixteen, of retaining links with communities like this one with Trowbridge and surrounding areas where most of the children come from.

**78.** But again you are asking them to go from home to school in a different village and then have yet another change when they go into the sixth form as then they are coming back into a different community again, back into their community again and then another change a few years later when they go to college and then another change again. It makes no logical sense to the child's life to say you are going to be in Trowbridge for all your life expect for this bit here when you are going to be in a village 12 miles away.

**79.** AS – Let me just explore the logic of the question about the need to dissolve the links with local community, activity and businesses that you have here

because the school isn't here. Is that necessary? And my other question, which is slightly dangerous as I don't know the answer to it but, how long does it take to get from here to Rowde in your view?

- 80.** Well that depends, depends whether you are driving a car from A to B or whether you are trying to get several children including wheelchairs and so on, picking up around a town, children who are sometime reluctant or do not understand hurry in the morning, you know, so time for picking up each child, getting them in there and then driving to the school.
- 81.** AS – If I was taking a group of children from a school,
- 82.** That takes a lot longer.
- 83.** AS – In Rowde to Tesco here.
- 84.** Person – It would take you a good half an hour at least, you can walk to Tesco here.
- 85.** Person – It takes 45 minutes apparently and that came from Wiltshire Council. With that question it feels like you haven't and not listening and already made some decision and you're actually not really listening by the fact that you asked that question.
- 86.** AS – I disagree but that's your point of view.
- 87.** Person – My issue there would be the logic of that, so the children get on a bus in the morning to go to Rowde, then get on a bus to come back to Trowbridge, to do an activity and then go back to Rowde.
- 88.** AS – Good point they might not. They might go straight to a community base. So, the question, the challenge to me.
- 89.** Person – What do you mean a community base?
- 90.** AS – The challenge you made to me was, there are excellent community links here and because the school isn't here they would have to end and I'm saying why?
- 91.** Person – Because they can walk there.
- 92.** Person – And they do walk there.
- 93.** Person – They couldn't come straight to a facility in the town because the children that come on the buses are geographically positioned to go on those buses. They're not necessarily in the same class, so you could just say that the bus could go straight to swimming or whatever. You can't do that. We'd walk there.
- 94.** AS – Yeah okay.
- 95.** Person – I also think, I just don't think that you fully understand actually, that if you were in the school for a week or two maybe you'd understand a bit more, but the whole time factor, you have to be here to be able to understand it, you know. (Name of person)'s class they can come in in the morning get ready and they can walk out, you know. That just wouldn't be the case over in Rowde. It would just be taking too long. You don't understand, I believe you don't understand how our school works. You don't understand our pupils, you don't understand the timings of the day, and I just think you are making decisions and they are uninformed.

- 96.** AS – If I hadn't made that challenge then you wouldn't have responded so clearly to me. It's helping us understand.
- 97.** I just think ultimately, what this is down to is money. So, I am just wondering what you would do with this land once the school is gone and is made into a super school in Rowdeford. What is your plan for the land in St Nicolas School and this land here?
- 98.** AS – There's no specific plan.
- 99.** But actually in the end you can, you could use it to build houses, make money, so.
- 100.** AS – It'll probably be housing.
- 101.** You could put all this money into a super school but in the end, I think you are going to be making more money through the Council by building houses and that sort of thing. I don't think you are thinking about our children at all in this. That's my point.
- 102.** Person – This issue is much larger than education it's about human rights and I feel that what you're not understanding is that every single teacher in this school, they are not just educators. By taking the children into town, they will face all kind of things including hate crime. And part of their job and their role is to make the community and the people here accept us all, you know. And this school was built to house 45 because it was believed then that through medical advances we would have less children with special needs. We now know that the reality is totally the opposite. Every single mainstream school has children that should be here. Therefore, those children also need to be in this community.
- 103.** Person – You keep referring to this area as north Wiltshire, since when was it north Wiltshire? I'm not originally from Wiltshire but I have been here for about 20 years, and I have always thought of this area as west Wiltshire. So, why are you referring to it as north Wiltshire?
- 104.** Simply because of the plain and the way we organise our thinking about where the schools are so we don't have an outstanding problem with the number of school places, special school places, we've got south of the plain.
- 105.** Person – But north Wiltshire is Chippenham and Calne and Malmesbury actually.
- 106.** AS – We quite simply look at a bigger planning and yes it includes west Wiltshire and I don't mean to be dismissive at the pride in west Wiltshire. So, its north, west and east at the top of the plain. And I accept your point we should be clear about that. I think we have another meeting at six.
- 107.** I've recently seen on social media a posting from Rowdeford School where we are setting a petition up for the parents to defend the fact that they are being, that they are aware that there may be two schools being built and Rowde won't continue to exist. Where does that come from? Your comment of that please.
- 108.** AS – I've not seen that, I think everyone feels nervous, it's the uncertainty thing that we know about nationally and that certainly affects you and so on and so on for all these three schools. Everyone reacts in slightly different and unpredictable ways when they are feeling under threat. So, why is Rowdeford thinking like that

I don't know. I'll have to find out when we go to a similar meeting at Rowdeford school and I'll have to check on social media. There is one proposal.

**109.** Person – Nothing else on the table

**110.** AS – Well yes but what will be considered in the end is all the stuff that comes out of these meetings.

**111.** Person – Sorry you did say all this when you came in June.

**112.** AS – And I guess in June we had more homework to do and as I said this was being done through August through to the writing of the November report. That happened in various drafts through the summer and into the autumn. So, things moved on and things may move on again. There is a proposal, the closures and an opening. The consultation will mean that all these recordings are written up, taken account of in the next stage of thinking.

**113.** Person – You also said that you didn't think it would be an excellent school because the excellent staff would go with it. We have a huge number of staff as you are aware. Quite a lot of those are support staff who don't drive and don't work enough hours to warrant going out of their community to go and work. What's your response to that?

**114.** AS – I haven't got one, I don't know. We are looking at where people live and what travel arrangements would need to be made. We are looking at the Council responsibilities to its staff. You're all Council staff and that applies in the same way to other schools. Where there are Council workers that are expected to change site, there are HR Systems to support that process. We can talk about that, as I think its early days to know what is going to happen in the end, but we will be managing that process.

**115.** Person – Those parents who have children in Trowbridge who need to drop off one child and then they wouldn't get to work on time, again, what would be their protection?

**116.** AS – We'd have to look at that on a case by case basis to make sure that children can get to school.

**117.** Person – I think that the thing that is upsetting people, there is the promise that there would be no redundancies as if every staff job but as for the practicalities for some staff it doesn't work. And I think to make that statement in the proposal there would be no redundancies, I think that people found that, well I could see from many people that's not the case and I think that is a huge worry for the skill set that could be lost. Yes and many jobs in senior leadership teaching where, yes, it warrants the time to travel but actually the bulk of your staff, the support staff, there's a massive amount of skill there and it wouldn't be viable for a number of them to continue working within the special school environment.

**118.** Okay.

**119.** Person – (Name of person) made a very important point about some staff that don't drive. You also have quite a few parents here that don't drive. I don't drive, I am fortunate enough to get the bus into Trowbridge from Melksham. I live in Melksham, my child is brought to school anyway but I am fortunate enough to get the bus from Melksham to Trowbridge if I ever need to come in to the school

- for meetings, to pick my child up or whatever. In Rowde, if the schools in Rowde, I wouldn't be able to do that and I'm not a parent in that position by the way.
- 120.** AS – Okay so we would need to look at what kind of support was available to help parent in that position. You wouldn't be the only one.
- 121.** Person – I think the impression is that everything is oh yeah, we'll look at that and we'll try to solve that but actually it'll just be a great big mess as they are not easily solvable. I think it's unrealistic to think about that you can solve things like that actually. I just don't think it's realistic.
- 122.** AS – Okay.
- 123.** Person – Consultations are two way conversations and listening from both sides and you mentioned people feeling under threat. A consultation does not mean that people should be feeling under threat.
- 124.** AS – I know and I'm sorry if they do, we try.
- 125.** Person – Maybe, it's because we feel that you are not listening because when we ask you a question it feels like you've made your decision and you are blocking so it's really difficult for us as it feels like you are not listening.
- 126.** HJ – It's actually not, Helen Jones, not our decision as officers to make and this really is, it is not about getting all the answers to your questions. It's about making sure your views are represented in a fair and transparent way to members at the cabinet meeting, and that is what we are going to do. So we want to hear the views so that we can represent those to members but it is not us.
- 127.** Person – But we've got to really trust you to really share what we are saying.
- 128.** HJ – and that is why we have some of the advice that was given to us by families through the consultation, as well as minuting, that we recorded so it was a fair and accurate representation and that is what we are doing.
- 129.** Person – Remember, there was a film of the Cabinet meeting where a Council member did big fibs about the consultation they'd made, we can't forget not seeing that.
- 130.** HJ – I don't know about that.
- 131.** Person – At that Cabinet meeting where they suddenly decided to go for the one school option. What was the point of the consultation?
- 132.** HJ – Well, consultation is about
- 133.** Person – And there is a petition with thousands of signatures. Surely, you've broken the law.
- 134.** HJ – No, the law is not that members.
- 135.** Person – You're supposed to have debate to a certain amount of signatures on a petition.
- 136.** HJ – I don't how about the size of the petition. I believe the people spoke to petitions at that Cabinet but we here as officers what we are here.
- 137.** Person – The petition we've got had 55,000 signatures.
- 138.** AS – And I think we took legal advice on how to deal with the petition and the legal advice, the lawyers advice was that we could appropriately deal with it in amalgamating that with the Cabinet meeting because the alternative would have to be to have a debate at full Council.



- 139.** Person – That’s exactly what you’re supposed to do.
- 140.** AS – And that is the question we asked the lawyers, what do we need to do and it seemed the most sensible thing to do was to have a debate all in the same place rather than rehearse it again at Council.
- 141.** HJ – As Alan has said a transcript of this meeting will be part of the body of evidence that will go to Members in March and they are as political leaders the ones that make the decisions not us as officers. We are here to ascertain your views and to communicate those in a fair and open way to members. It doesn’t necessarily mean that we are all going to agree but that is what the purpose of this meeting is to hear what you’ve got to say, to look at all the questionnaires that come in and to feed that back to members in a fair and transparent way. And ultimately, they make the decision, not only based on the evidence of the consultation but also based on all the other factors that were outlined here today.
- 142.** Person – With due respect, we do feel that we aren’t being listened to and thank goodness this is being recorded as I have sat watching you using your phone during this meeting which, I know we all have lives and things, but it gives the impression.
- 143.** Person – Yeah why are you sat there on your phone?
- 144.** HJ – I used my phone because I wanted to look at the train times between Rowde, so I looked at where you said you lived to Rowde. So, I looked at what the distance was.
- 145.** Person – And that’s fine but the fact that is the impression to us isn’t it that you’re here but are you listening.
- 146.** Person – But you know Children with wheelchairs couldn’t get on the train. None of these things are easy.
- 147.** Person – There’s not even a train station in Devizes.
- 148.** HJ – I didn’t know what the distance was. I was just merely looking at what the lady was saying about the distance of where she lives now and here and for Rowde. I wanted to understand what she was saying.
- 149.** Person – Actually for my child personally it wouldn’t make. If he did have to make that journey because by the time you open the new school he’ll be eighteen anyway. For him it wouldn’t make that much difference journey wise as Melksham is slightly closer to Rowde. But for the children that have to travel from Trowbridge and from Warminster and from Westbury, it’s a hell of a lot further.
- 150.** Person – Can you understand why parents are concerned about putting their trust in the local authority when this far into the process with a proposal like this which is a pretty major change, we discover in this meeting that you don’t even know there isn’t even a train service to Rowde. These are the kind of things that make parents worried and concerned.
- 151.** Person – You don’t even live in Wiltshire, do you?
- 152.** HJ – I do live in Wiltshire. I wanted to check this for myself. I don’t think I did anything wrong by having a look myself at the distance. I’m sorry that you felt that that was wrong for me to try and find out information which is all I was doing.

- 153.** Person – That’s fine, I accept your apology. All I’m asking is that you hear and see what parents are saying.
- 154.** HJ – Absolutely.
- 155.** Person – One of the things which would be really good in a way would be if Wiltshire Council had access to some of the social media concerns and issues that are coming through from parents. A parent in Warminster, you could almost hear the tears really over the text messages, pointing out that her sons journey is now going to be twice the length that it would have been. We currently have 13 pupils in Warminster, all of whom would have vastly extended journeys from Warminster for the parent. I don’t know if any of their parents drive or not but, three that don’t drive, but even the ones that do may not have access to a car during the school day. If anything happens to their child during the school day on public transport, its three buses to get to Rowde, that’s going to take them well over two hours. That’s not a feasible thing to ask of a family.
- 156.** Person – Think of a child in a wheel chair.
- 157.** Person – And of course if all the extended services go to the new site then every speech and language therapy appointment, every psychologist appointment and so on, how do those parents access those?
- 158.** Person – Will the Council provide transport for those parents? Course not.
- 159.** AS – I mentioned earlier on that need to have singular school to specification, that specification also needs to be thinking about how parents access to the school is made possible.
- 160.** All of this is debate around the practicalities which is valid, very valid and very hurtful for parents in the communities. But I still think that, as a teacher of 30 odd years in special ed, it is the immoral attitude of putting our children out in the middle of a rural community, away from anybody to see them, and that the future generations will not have contact with children with learning difficulties. And I know, I know that because I was one of the few people when I was a teenager growing up with people with disability, as my parents were working in that field. And I know the children that I was alongside in school had no contact, and what they thought and how they related and how they didn’t know how to communicate or interact with our young people, and I think that is immoral.
- 161.** Clapping.
- 162.** Person – Are we going back fifty years? Fifty years ago, parents who had a special needs child were told just to send them away and that’s exactly what you appear to be doing now by sticking them out in a rural location in the middle of nowhere.
- 163.** Person – Sorry, I am aware that there’s lots of parent waiting. I know that there is some staff that have things to say, maybe they could do that through the consultation email. If there is anything you want to pass to me I’ll pass on as we don’t want to keep parent waiting if that’s okay Tessa?
- 164.** Person – I think we’ll go speak to some parents as well.



### 3.3 Rowdeford School – Staff and Governor Consultation 27 February 2019

#### 3.3.1 Meeting Notes

**Venue:** Rowdeford Special School

**Date:** 26 February 2019

**Time:** 3.55pm

**Attendance:** 25 teaching staff and governors, and 7 officials

#### **PRESENT:**

Members of Rowdeford’s HT and Senior Leadership Team, Teachers and TAs

Alan Stubbersfield, Education & Skills Specialist Lead, Wiltshire Council (AS)

Helen Jones, Director of Commissioning - Family & Children’s Services, Wiltshire Council (HJ)

Judith Westcott, Acting Head for Commissioning & Joint Planning, Wiltshire Council (JW)

Lisa Fryer, SEN Inclusion Support Officer, Wiltshire Council (LF)

Dominic Argar, Technical Support Officer, Communications, Wiltshire Council (DA)

Sandra Singer, Co-ordinator for School Leadership & Governance, Wiltshire Council (note-taker) (SS)

<b>Actions</b>
<b>AS advised all attendees at both meetings of this Rowdeford Consultation to ensure they capture all their views and concerns in writing and make these known on the Council by the deadline on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> March at 5pm.</b>
<b>The Rowdeford HT reiterated this message to all his staff, governors and parents and those parents attending from other schools.</b>

Welcome and introductions by Rowdeford HT. Then general introduction by AS. Wide range of options have been considered by special schools in this part of Wiltshire. Have looked at a wide range of options over a number of months. We are now in the extended consultation stage of discussion – the original consultation formally ended in July/August 2018. Looked at transport, buildings etc. and now have a solution following the consultation. Talked a fair amount about the background to the solution they came to agree on. So we are now with one school solution based on one site with the 3 schools involved. We are now in statutory school consultation about this site – 350 pupils. Some area of concern is that this is a remote site and some parents have concerns if medical or other emergencies occur with the SEN pupils. The consultation for this phase is this Friday and then will go to Cabinet on 26<sup>th</sup> March with full report from last November, encompassing all views from then until present. So the Cabinet decision in March will be: will the November report stand, will parts of it stand or will it

be a completely new report based on all the views received to date, including transport issues/community issues?

SENCO/teacher question – feels very strong community links already exist – do you think you have enough information around the links in this Rowdeford community and all the extra-curricular activities we run at this school? Recognises we are remote – feels there should be flexibility and support to improve the pathways for it more accessible and safe for a large number of children on site. AS response – will need to consider using and accessing the facilities of Devizes as Cabinet will need to be convinced that Rowdeford is the best site.

HJ response– make sure you do write in with all your concerns by 1<sup>st</sup> March. This is very important so they can be captured in the latest report that will go to Cabinet.

School staff - feels Rowdeford would be an excellent site with those improvements and could reassure other parents who have concerns this site is too remote. Rowdeford HT – in terms of footpaths all need to be looked at to be accessible to the middle of Rowde and along the side of the woods. HT is currently raising funds to try and be self-managing in this respect.

Staff member – more discussion on the footpaths – have worked with volunteer groups and Council footpath teams so plans have happened already and still further plans in place and accessibility plan is also robust so confident that would reassure this is a rural BUT NOT an isolated site. This school continues to work on that with all interested parties. School is keen to welcome and integrate all 3 schools on this site and feels that Rowdeford social work/hub for other care and support is already strong and this school is already offering that to the local community and could put it to the wider community. Café and community gardens/animal and play areas have already been highlighted as a possible commercial interest and the school agreed with JW they are very keen to agree this and bring the local and wider community into the school.

Staff feels site already well known to lots and lots of visitors. Previously have run coffee mornings and pop up cafes for both community and residents – very keen to reinstate these.

Staff – links are good but could be better with the community and other other local residents as it is currently difficult to walk from village to the school (Rowde and Bromham) so feels they do need looking at - whatever the outcome of the chosen site. Bus stop situated outside the school and have good relationship with local bus company so very accessible on public transport.

Staff will consider a Devizes Park Run being held at Rowdeford in the future – the school is 3 months into that consultation with relevant parties and is looking pretty viable as an option now. So all very positive.

Governor – it is a unique environment at Rowdeford. Very keen to work with the school and to take the proposal forward with enthusiasm to have Rowdeford as the main site for the 3 school amalgamation.

AS responded that there are some children across the other two schools that have life debilitating illnesses and the harsh reality some will die and so understandably parents of those children are concerned about a more remote site for emergency and ambulance care.

Staff – Rowdeford has never turned away a child with severe learning or medical conditions. Staff are extremely well trained here and an ambulance can arrive within minutes and staff can do all the necessary care as an immediate reaction. Staff do not see this as a barrier at Rowdeford. See it as an opportunity to be all inclusive for even the profoundly affected children. Rowdeford would not try and shoe-horn any children into the 'Rowdeford way'. This school prides themselves on providing bespoke and very appropriate care and learning for all students in their care.

Staff – now have physio therapy room and emergency procedures securely in place – there is a great deal of expertise in this school to deal with the very complex needs' children. Work well with external agencies and are motivated to keep a great attitude of all the adults involved at Rowdeford. Rowdeford is passionate about being all embracing and all inclusive.

Staff recruitment question from JW. The Rowdeford SBM has confirmed recruitment has never been an issue. People want to come and work here and have no statistics to suggest that there is a recruitment issue. AS asked how far people travel to work here? Rowdeford HT responded the furthest staff is an hour's drive and closest is someone who walks from the village – and everything in between.

SEN Governor – in a larger school like this you are in a much better position to have 3 or 4 year group classes, staff who specialise in the specific areas and can offer a richer and varied curriculum.

JW raised the question about the safety of pupils at Rowdeford? Staff responded that the school has outstanding safeguarding practices and has 100% response from staff and parents they feel safe and are safe at Rowdeford. **Rowdeford HT asked that this response/fact is included into the new build provision.**

Staff – real strength here is they can take the children out of class and take them to a calm area outside. This is planned intervention. Can go outside and have some outside time supported by staff.

Staff - school has strong links with Secondary and Primary SENCOS in the area and beyond and strong community and school links with many schools involved– a really good example of how we link with the community and how they use the facilities at Rowdeford. Have never had a child abscond.

Staff – comment from an estate management perspective. Will not be able to recreate this unique environment in an urban environment. Very passionate it will work for everyone at Rowdeford much better than in an urban environment. Many students and parents love the opportunity to be outside and do walks and pick carrots from the garden and other wonderful outside and extra-curricular duties – can offer so much horticulture/forests and everything else that makes this site unique. Fantastic opportunities to make this site a main hub of the local and wider community – so much local produce and suppliers and community resources close by and keen to be involved.

AS encouraged all to write in with their views before Friday (closing date).

Governor/staff - asked about the court case and judgement the 2 other schools have brought against the Council. HJ responded the Council cannot comment on the court case that the other 2 schools have submitted.

Staff – integrated with a wide range of students and the opportunity of being able to extend this school further would be a fantastic opportunity to have the benefit of a remote site but also being able to cope with all the complex needs and emergency care very quickly and make it an extremely strong SEN site for all.

Staff – significant issue retention and recruitment – current model is closing all 3 schools and rebuild new school on one site. HT worries that approach will make it difficult to recruit in the next few years. The idea of growth of one existing school could make it so much easier to provide continuity etc. Not least if people have to re-apply for their job as this would create problems. Staff agency concerns would need looking at.

Staff – think about the 3 schools working together a lot more strongly now and forming links to help all involved. It is already in place but a great opportunity to build and develop that larger teamwork.

Staff have concerns about the one school approach – don't shut 3 schools and build one new – **have one school and evolve an existing site** – so much more value for all 3 schools – want so much to integrate and let one school evolve out of that amalgamation. Concerns about watering down and losing expertise if a new school is built. In the best use of efficiency, value for money, learning environment for all 3 schools to use an existing site. Rowdeford wishes to be at the forefront of all SEN education.

Concern that they must keep all the best people in Wiltshire for all our SEN children. Protecting the expertise we have across all 3 schools – huge teamwork in place and can be built on. Rowdeford is very keen to be involved in that.

Governors - 3 schools and 3 governing bodies – would like to see them merge and work together for a smooth transition. On a side note, there is a 30 mile speed limit sign in Rowde village – but there is a 50 mile speed limit sign just before the school which is ridiculous (and unsafe) and needs to be addressed by the Council.

Staff – one school solution – seems sensible to make that in Rowde as much more central. Only 24% of all Wiltshire SEN children at the moment are educated in their own local community anyway.

HJ – integration is coming through as quite a key focus. The parents in urban schools feel that they could become segregated in a remote area. Member of staff replied saying that Rowdeford has plenty of integration opportunities and work experience opportunities here – Rowdeford always ensures everyone has a place.

Goernors - lives in the village and observes on a regular basis the community comes into the school and all events are hugely attended and successful and all children despite their needs are all involved with the community.

Staff - Rowdeford is not segregated – they have all sorts of cultural and trips out and swimming trips etc. etc. regardless of level of need - all pupils are out all the time. Segregation is a nonsense – it does not happen at Rowdeford.

Rowdeford is already offering full integration within their school and their pupils and that spills into the community and are all learning together. They discuss life skills like which college they are going to and there is no strong argument that coming here will be segregation and isolated. We have all the facilities and expertise to offer the same as urban schools – and more.

JW – how might you come together with the other schools over the 5 year transition? Shared teams? Shared training? Staff response – already have strong links with Larkrise – single project days – working together already happening and confident could build much stronger links there. Great enthusiasm to bring all the schools together and work together for all the students in that 5 year period.

Staff - Once there is a clearer idea of the plan/site etc. it will be much easier for all 3 schools to work effectively together as they will then know what the final target will be. Very keen to increase and develop the already strong links with the other 2 schools.

Governors - very much in favour of workshops being held with all SLT staff, governors etc. across all 3 schools and to work closely with professionals at the other 2 schools



– would love to open their training to that wider group and also feed off their expertise. Sharing experiences. All staff at Rowdeford are very keen to develop further and ‘wear more hats’/extend their skills and services.

The school is concerned about the extended consultancy period and that it will rumble on and on. It causes high levels of anxiety for all staff and students and parents.

AS - closed the meeting and thanked everyone for attending – reminded all that the extended consultation period closes on Friday – online on the Wilts Council website.

Rowdeford HT – thanks to the staff for coming and that he really appreciates their input and that it reminds him what a wonderful place Rowdeford is and what wonderful people it has in it. Thanked them so much for their passion. He asked them to please go home and capture everything you have said and write it down and put it to the Council BY FRIDAY!!

**Closed at 5.01pm.**

### 3.3.2 Audio Recording Transcript

**Venue:** Rowdeford Special School

**Date:** 26 February 2019

**Time:** 3.55pm

**PRESENT:**

Members of Rowdeford's HT and Senior Leadership Team, Teachers and TAs

Alan Stubbersfield, Education & Skills Specialist Lead, Wiltshire Council (AS)

Helen Jones, Director of Commissioning - Family & Children's Services, Wiltshire Council (HJ)

Judith Westcott, Acting Head for Commissioning & Joint Planning, Wiltshire Council (JW)

Lisa Fryer, SEN Inclusion Support Officer, Wiltshire Council (LF)

Dominic Argar, Technical Support Officer, Communications, Wiltshire Council (DA)

Sandra Singer, Co-ordinator for School Leadership & Governance, Wiltshire Council (note-taker) (SS)

1. Good afternoon, thank you for coming, sorry we were a bit late in getting started. I would like to introduce a few people, some of them you've met before. We've got Helen Jones who is Director of Education, Commissioning. Sorry I meant to say that we've got Alan Stubbersfield who you've met before. I'll call him a consultant who has oversight for the consultation period. You've met him before, and then Judith Westcott who is the Head of Joint Planning and Commissioning. So I'm going to hand over to Alan who is going to direct proceedings for now.
2. AS – And I'm going to speak into a microphone not because you can't hear me or I can't shout but this he, he used be the soundman for Jethro Tull [laughing] but he got promoted via Gorky's Zygotic Mynci's was it. So the recording is for the purpose of having a record of these events and we've been doing that at the various consultation meetings that have been happening in the autumn so everybody is assured that we have a full account that's been said. For the same reason that Dominic will run around with a microphone. These ones look like microphone that last ones looked like starship enterprise. So if you want to speak you will do if you speak into a microphone and the rule is about that far apart from your mouth for those who are not use to being on the stage. Right, you know I'm Alan Stubbersfield. I must have met some of you and if not all of you at last summer's meetings here, looking at the wide range of options that were being considered for the future of Special Schools for children with cognitive difficulties in the northern part of Wiltshire. And at that time we were looking at if it should be one school, two schools, three schools and with those options looking at the various locations that combination of number of schools could be in. And it was fairly wide open as we wanted to capture the range of

views and the range of possibilities before narrowing things done. And last summer that was the appropriate thing to do because at that stage we were at the exploratory stage of consultation, in the trade we call it formative and that took us to the end of the summer term. The consultation closed at the end of July and at the end of August I, because I was responsible for leading the project at that time with colleagues, was pacing up and down quite a lot with thoughts of one school, two schools, three schools, looking at the various factors to do with transport, to do with locations, to do with the nature of special educational needs, the nature of the buildings, and so on and so on, to come up with the best solution. You know what solution we came up with. It wasn't in fact what had originally been in my mind when I was speaking to you last summer. I was quite unsure about this being used as a location because I was thinking in terms of building for the future - special provision in the north to match what we have in Salisbury, Trowbridge and Chippenham. And there was a couple of things that caused me to pace up and down in a worried state about. One, in a practical sense, was finding a Trowbridge site which would do the Trowbridge end of such a proposition. We went into the detail and we didn't think we could. And the other was about the future of pupils of this school. This school is not the same as the other two, and it's not the same as most schools for pupils with cognitive difficulties because its origin is in moderate learning difficulties, merging into complex with various syndromes and so on, spread to severe learning difficulties. I was persuaded that this school had a unique proposition to do with the children who don't fit well in mainstream and whatever our views are on inclusive mainstream schools and what we would like them to do. What we found was that in Wiltshire the presence of Rowdeford had evolved what we felt was a good solution and you were telling me this last summer and I was like I will think about it, and that is exactly what I did do. So we came up with the one school solution based on this site with the closures of three schools as you know from the documentation last November. And that would mean a significant change here. We have in our view got the space, we've got the wherewithal to make those changes and we've got we knew from the consultation the strength of view in the consultation about the future of special education on the site. So that took us to the November report with those proposals. We are now in what we call statutory consultation which is a specific proposal for a school on this site for 350 pupils to be future proof, to be human scale, family scale if you like, because we have listened to the concerns about a so called super-school and the notion that that would be daunting, unfamiliar, inhuman scale even. And we listened to concerns about travel times, travel distances and transport. We listened to concerns about what happens to deal with medical emergencies when you are in a location which many people perceive to be remote and the other area of concerns that we are interested in. Because people are talking to us about this with a range a views, about the importance of links with community and the way in which a school in a place like this provides for experience in community for a lot of pupils. 350 of course

is very big. We used to and I heard it again in the consultation responses last summer, used to provide for community links locally here and we know to that we have a special school in Devizes not very far away and they are doing the same kind of stuff. So, those are the issues that are emerging now in the consultation, the consultation closes in this phase on Friday so that's quite soon and thereafter there will be a report done for Cabinet meeting again towards the end of March, 26<sup>th</sup>, and that is potentially crunch time having you know the members of the Cabinet decide whether its crunch time or not but the report is intended to go on the agenda, picking up from last November, picking up the views from consultation, saying this is what we've heard, these are the issues. And there will be a recommendation from officers to the Cabinet whether they want to go forward with the proposal which was put in November or to amend it or to not do it. So, the options open to the Council in relation to the school closure proposals are that in the light of the consultation and what you say everybody says between now and Friday to take forward what was put in the November report or to do a version of it so parts of it, in formal terms to amend the proposal or to not do it and leave things as they are or go back and think of something completely different. So, the options are open and it is important that we are aware, so the whole thing has been an evolving situation. I described how my own thinking changed over the summer period up to November and those changes are natural as you hear what people say and reflect further professionally on the issues. I don't think I need to say much more. You'll be well informed, you've come here because you have an interest, you'll have read paper work, you'll have seen what's in the press, you'll have your own views anyway. And the purpose of the meeting is to record those to write them down and to emerge smiling, hopefully. So, issues, transport issues, community issues, keep the school don't keep the school, the mix, the size.

3. I just wondered one of our, I mean I do think we've got amazing, we make the very best of our community links and I wondered firstly, so it's two parts to the questions really. Do you feel that you have enough information around the links that we have with the community and the amount, I know that (name of person) who's sat behind me gave a list of how many extra activities that we do out of school as he oversees all the kind of risk assessment, so he could say you know during this period we've done 75 trips out and things like that. So my first question is have you got enough information about our community links? And the other one is that as a school we are kind of a bit, you know we are where we are, we know that we are remote. Would there be any plans in the future to improve things like the pathways around schools so that we could get better access to the village itself?
4. AS – I'll do those in reverse order, part of this process is for consultation, is for you as consultees to say to us it will work if you do this, do that, do the other. In other words, what we are doing is to generate ideas for a specification for the school because there are two decisions in parallel following March one is about closures but the other is about opening the new school and what's that

going to look like. So don't say will there be, say I think there should be so you tell us what you think there should be to make it work. So I think if your saying there should be paths then.

5. We can't take them, we can't walk them into the village because the pathway ends if you look when you go out you'll see that there is a footpath and then its ends and you'll have to cross them over the main road. So, we don't let that become a barrier so for the Christmas carol service for example we bus the children to Rowde church which is two minutes up the road, but it would take five minutes to walk because the pathways aren't good enough to walk. So, I think that this would be something that would really strengthen, as we are remote, and this would make the people that are voicing a concern to think but yes, we have links, we have a village shop, we have transport that we could use that could open up a world of opportunities. We could walk them to the Rowde Cow which isn't that far away.
6. AS - Yes and when I think about the practicalities of using the community of Devizes, which is not that far away in the scheme of things would help as well, because Cabinet would want to be convinced that the community facilities that can be enjoyed from this location are a match for what those other schools already have.
7. HJ – Alan, can I just come in a second. As Alan said, please will you write in and say we would like new paths because this will open up, exactly what you said. We do not have enough evidence around community links. Judith and I are writing the report, we don't know what you do and it would be very helpful for us in terms of, and I don't want to predetermine what Cabinet are going to conclude, neither as an officer do I want to sway the views of Cabinet, and I'm not trying to do that here. But what I am suggesting is that there are genuine concerns about what some parents feel about what would be segregation and isolation. If you evidence, as you have said, an analysis of community links and what you do, having that sent in to Judith and I as letters as part of the consultation would be very useful because we haven't got that evidence.
8. Person – Can I just say in terms of footpaths, not only footpaths out the front of the school but also footpaths that connect at the end of the woods as well because there's not easy access. You can get to the far end of Rowde but not the middle of Rowde from that footpath, so we would need that as well.
9. AS – We have to think about being non-ambulant pupils as well.
10. Person – Yes exactly but we are in the process of raising money to provide walkways all the way to the end of the footpath over the next 12 to 18 months.
11. AS – So, that's a footpath that goes into the village that's not along the road?
12. Person – Yes that's right.
13. Person – It's just around the accessibility of the site really in terms of the past five years. At the end of the woodland, there are public footpaths that lead us to St Edith's Marsh and kind of into the back end of Rowde village and we have worked with volunteer groups and we have also worked with the Council's footpath team and improved both of those footpaths that link that end of the

school. So, that's already happened and there are plans in place to continue to improve those footpath networks. Of course, they aren't full accessible but we have got an accessibility plan that we have worked on in the past two years that hopefully you may have seen, no, okay. So, that's something else we can put in and that includes how we have looked at the whole site and how we would make that more accessible. It includes a boardwalk project in our woodland that would allow much better access to our woodland and link in with our footpaths at the end. So, lots of the work has already been done and is easy to give to you. So, that might reassure some people that even though we are rural we are not isolated. We do have really good links and we are continually working on that not just for our pupils but for the community as well.

- 14.** Person – Can I just pick up on what (name of person) said and say that I don't think we are exclusive and I don't think that we are secluded either. And I would like that message to go back to people and I also think that we would be keen to be seen as not just in terms of our outward facing links to the community but in terms of inward. It would be nice for people to recognise that we want to invite them into our community that's here, and that we want to integrate both things and thinking in terms of social care going forward. In terms of being a hub for other areas of care and support for particular need, we already have speech and language therapists that come and are regularly based here. I think we would like to be saying that we offer that support with the community and wider and we can do that from this site. I think that that is something I would like to go back.
- 15.** JW – In the proposals we specifically put the idea of you having a community café here which would be open to the general public and the thought of having community gardens so that people would be able to come and potentially help with the gardening, potentially even move towards a garden centre that would add a more public, commercial nature to it as well. Is that something you would welcome? Is that something that would be positive?
- 16.** Person – We've been talking about that as a school for quite a number of years and there are lots of opportunities such as a shop, café, like you say gardens, you can have an animal area, play areas all on site. This would bring the community into the school and that is something that we would welcome.
- 17.** Person – We've also got a track record with the garden fair, the summer fair, which sees huge numbers of the public already come onto our site and is really well known. Getting all those members of the public mingling with the children at this event anyway. So, that would be perfect to have those kinds of facilities.
- 18.** Person – Can I just say, years ago we used to run a really successful, (name of person) would remember this, we used to run a really successful coffee morning, several through the year, pop up cafes and I did it for a number of years and I know you did it before with Ilene Burns, I know you've done it but we used to invite the local elderly residents from Angel House and they would come in and the kids would do it as part of their projects. So, all of those things are things that we very much could do. Sponsored walk, we have people come

into the school. What I think we need to remember is the accessibility plan that John mentioned, that we did send in initially, maybe what we need to do is make sure that we've sent everything in.

- 19.** Person – Just adding on to the point about how we could link better with our community and things that are out of our control, there are amazing ideas that have been discussed today and have been recognised. As a local resident living a mile away from the school and as a teacher within the school, some of the barriers are outside of our control. It is barely possible to walk to school from a local village because the state of the footpath and the pavement outside the school, access to Rowde and to Bromham and beyond is impassable at certain times of the year, let alone if you were accessing that with a group of students. So, that would be an issue I assume for future planning or highways. It is very very narrow, I've tried it and you can't push a buggy to school. So, those things need to be developed to move it forward. I would also like to make an extra point as life skills co-ordinator. We do access our community, we are talking about Devizes here and Chippenham, and Bath and Calne. We explicitly teach those skills via life skills days, or life skills lessons, or trips out or have access to regularly, talking two three times a year to different year groups using public transport. There's a bus that stops outside the school and we contact the bus company and they are really flexible. They'll stop right outside the school and let groups of students on and that is something that we are doing and will continue to do.
- 20.** Person – One more kind of community thing that we have been developing recently. There is a park run, ambassadors are coming on Thursday to look at the possibility of developing a park run here, which would be a park run for Devizes that would support and involve the whole community. That's kind of three months in now and it's got to the point that a park run ambassador is visiting the school and it looks pretty viable and that is something we are taking forward. If a new school is developed here and the size of the site is increased and that will add to the quality of a park run through the year. So, that is something that we were already planning.
- 21.** AS – Sorry to interrupt. I'm not sure what a park run is.
- 22.** Person – So, there are around 300 parks runs at present around the country, its international, its non-profit making fitness and exercise getting outdoors.
- 23.** AS – That's why I don't know about it.
- 24.** Person – nine o'clock every Saturday morning. Turn up at a park and go for a run.
- 25.** AS – No thanks.
- 26.** I think everybody recognises that we have a unique environment at Rowdeford and we've had many long debates in the governing board on the way forward and the proposals that have been put forward. But we need the people that are making the decisions to recognise that as a governing body, and everybody else in SLT, that we are very keen to work with the Council and the end proposal, if that involves Rowdeford, to take it forward as we don't want to lose

this environment and it is so fabulous and it will benefit so many people. And I don't know how many of the parents have got concerns and we do recognise those concerns but I don't know how many of those parents have got concerns have actually been to this environment themselves. So, there could be concern that could be taken away if they came and saw the school themselves.

- 27.** AS – I think the strongest concerns and the strongest voices that we hear in the current phase of the consultation are from very concerned parents with children who have the most profound difficulties. Who are non-ambulant and have life limiting conditions. Sadly many will die relatively young and some may die at school age. So, things that are medical emergencies in what is perceived in a distant location from home and from hospital are really really sharp for those people and we need to think about. We want to hear about your experience. I think some of those experiences, I understand that there are children with medical conditions here and it is useful to know your experience with that sort of thing. For the great majority of children and for those with the most severe learning difficulties, I think people see real opportunities from the learning environment, things like sensory gardens, experiences and so on. The tricky one if I'm honest is around the most profoundly disabled.
- 28.** I oversee a lot of the transitions coming into the school. Our school accepts students from a massive wide range of areas and parents love it. In terms of getting students in, we've never turned away a child based on medical reasons. We have children here with life limiting conditions that will die at a very young age, possibly even at school age. The Devizes ambulance service is available to us and can be here in minutes. We have trained staff available for those students and I presume growing a school to deal with PMLD will come with specialists who would be able to maintain a child's state until the emergency services can get here. We don't find this to be a problem and when we discuss this with families that are involved, because we've got more than one. That is not a barrier to them and they love it, because also, why shouldn't those children experience the outside space, to experience the joy of getting into the woods. We don't see it as a barrier for the school, we actually see it as an opportunity to broaden the horizon for our students and not isolate students with PMLD or medically life limiting conditions into 'you can just go into the city centres where we can deal with you', no that should not be the way we move forward at all.
- 29.** Clapping.
- 30.** Person – I just want to add for the record another community link. Every year students have their work exhibited in the local village hall. They do the flower show, we've had students have their work exhibited in Bath as well, and at the moment I am working with a workshop in Warminster to have an exhibition of our year 10 and 11 work. I just wanted to say that but then the conversation moved on quite quickly.
- 31.** Person – Sorry I was just going to carry on from (name of person) comment about working with children who are more profound. I think one of the biggest



concerns of the parents and carers who have children at Larkrise and St Nicks with more profound needs coming here, is that they were worried that we are just going to shoehorn them into the Rowdeford curriculum. We are not going to do that at all. We recognise that these children need to have a bespoke curriculum, that these children need bespoke care plans. You know, all of those sort of things we pride ourselves on at this school, working at the individuals level and what they need, and what health needs they have, what academic needs they have, what care needs they have. So it's not about trying to shoe horn them into what we do and just giving them more of Rowdeford. It's actually yes, bringing them into this space, but it's about creating and developing a bespoke approach that meets the needs of those children.

**32.** Person – I just wanted to say as well, that when we first took it on we didn't have any young people that were wheelchair users at all. We didn't have a physiotherapy room, we didn't have any of those things. And young people were doing physiotherapy sessions in the assembly hall or whatever spaces that we could find for them. Actually, what we have done is turn this into a massive strength for the school and now it's actually well known amongst the therapists that we've actually got this area of expertise in this school. We have a trainer, we have a TA who is a manual handling trainer, so she can deliver training to anyone on site as and when they need to ...very complex needs children. And what I love about this school is that everything that's comes our way, we rise to that and we make sure that we draw on the external agency relationships that we have, and we go okay we don't know about this, we need to know about this and we need to push ourselves forward. And you're looking at a group of people that will welcome any child into this school and make sure we get rid of any barriers we possibly can to include them. And I just wish that some of those parents with those, and I understand that it is a very worrying time for them, I just wish they could come and see some of the things that go on here, some of the attitudes of the adults that work here. And those other schools also have those passionate people, and that's very difficult to have to leave these people behind maybe, but hopefully some of those people will move to the new school. But I just think that Rowdeford is passionate about making sure that we include people. So, if we can give a message of that we won't leave anybody behind and we will welcome anybody that we are faced with and any challenges we have, we will fully meet those as much as we possibly can.

**33.** JW – I just wanted to ask you that, one of the challenges that has been put to us, is that recruitment might be difficult here. I am wanting to know what your experience as staff is here in terms of coming to work here, if you think it's been tricky to recruit? The other question that has been put against us is safety. How you feel in terms of the safety of pupils? Two very different things that I should say that I am asking you about here. The safety of pupils, particularly those with ASD who decide to go for a run, and maybe not the park run, and how you feel this site and how you guys generally might cope with that?

- 34.** I have worked in a number of different schools and have been here for just over a year. Recruitment in this school is never an issue. We usually have to fight them off with a stick. People want to come and work here and we've never had any issues in recruiting staff, and that goes for ancillary staff, part time, etc. People do want to come and work here because we are so close to Devizes and there aren't any issues with getting staff who want to work part time.
- 35.** AS – Can I just check on that point? Clearly, close to Devizes. What kind of distances do people travel to work here? Obviously, we are talking about an existing group of staff who go to work in those towns and one of the things we are hearing is that they don't think it will be worth coming this far. How far do people come to work here?
- 36.** Person – The furthest we have is about an hour's drive and the closest is somebody that walks from the village.
- 37.** Person – A lot of them live in Trowbridge, Chippenham, Swindon and Warminster.
- 38.** Person – And I moved all the way from Cornwall to work for a unique school.
- 39.** I have worked in special needs in Hertfordshire for a long time and working in quite small schools, where you have a full age range from three to 19, where you have 10 children in a year group which include PMLD, ASD and they would all be in the same class. We didn't have any problems, but in a much larger school you are in a much better position for grouping children, particularly PMLD children, because you might have three or four classes in a year group. And then you could have an ASD class where you can tailor the curriculum to their needs and a PMLD or a group for children with physical difficulties and it's a much more economical way of working, because you have your groups of staff that can specialise in a way in particular needs.
- 40.** AS – Thank you.
- 41.** Person – Can I address the safeguarding issue that you mentioned? We have been recognised as having outstanding safeguarding practices and that includes site security. We do annual questionnaires' with staff and students and parents. They say they feel 100% safe and they are safe. So, yes, we've got a bigger site but we take measures to be able to control that so it's safe for all of our children. And 50% of our children are ASD so we are used to people that want to get out and we deal with it.
- 42.** Person – It is just worth saying as well to you that you factor that into the new provision.
- 43.** Person – I was just thinking actually, one of the strengths we have here is the fact that we can take young people outside when they are anxious and feeling worried or their behaviour is starting to become challenging. So, I would say to those people that worry about the outdoor spaces and children wanting to abscond, again I have worked here for 17 years, I can count on my hand the amount of children that have tried to leave the school premises. What we do is use it in a much more proactive way, in that we have that as a planned intervention. If they are finding something difficult, they can go outside with an

adult and be supported in a positive way. I can understand why parents would be concerned about the open site, but we actually use the site for behaviour management really.

- 44.** Person – I just want to come back to the community links as well. I know we have gone on from that but I just want to briefly talk about it. The Plus programme here, which is a link with the other secondary schools in the local area. I work with currently between 12 and 15 schools that's been extended in primary as well. So, I don't know how many we've had through the books this year. I think it's about 11 primary aged children as well and that's another really good example of how we link with the community. And I think that the majority of those students who I have on the secondary Plus programme spend the majority of their week in a mainstream school in isolation. And when they come here they feel safe, they find that the fact that they are in the brilliant outdoor environment that they have got here, they never absconded, they never want to and they feel safe. They are learning and it's just that brilliant link and I can see that, as the school grows getting bigger and stronger. It's something that I am really excited that we can expand in the future.
- 45.** Person – I also have a unique perspective as a surveyor and I was a Royal Chartered Surveyor and I look at this from an estate management point of view. You can never recreate what we have here in an urban environment. You cannot get the kids stimulated like you can here with learning outside the class room. In every bit of press that you pick up and specifically kids with learning difficulties and autism and being outside and having those sensory stimulations is unbeatable. It cannot be recreated in an urban environment. You can create the safeguards and what you need to look after these kids with profound medical needs here. We have got these amazing opportunities in terms of estate management of a garden centre, we could get kids here into learning how to cashiers, we could get all these professional and interactive community benefits from those. That's a fantastic benefit, I didn't put it in my report but I wish I had done.
- 46.** AS – You've got until Friday.
- 47.** Person – It was absolutely amazing, and of course if I was a mum of a children with profound difficulties I would want them as safe as possible. But I would also want them to experience being out in a garden. I would also like them to see a carrot being pulled up, maybe even pull their own carrot out and say hey look. That's an experience they will never ever get if you confine them to an urban environment. We've got links with swimming pools here, we've got links with the Jubilee wood here, we can go out and look at birds, we've just done the RSPB bird watch. You're not going to get that in the urban environment. We spent all day walking today and we sat down and said to the kids what is your highlight and lowlight of the week and today 60 percent of the class said their highlight of the week is coming here. I get to see other parents whose kids do not get the opportunity in mainstream school and are struggling in isolation and things like that.

- 48.** I've been involved with the school for over 20 years and I'm a governor as well. I've seen the school evolve over the last 20 years in a massive way and to have so much space it would be a shame to not utilise it. There are a couple of things, one is that on the Facebook go fund me Larkrise and St Nicks are trying to raise enough money to put a court case in against the judgement. So, how does that work and how do you stand with that?
- 49.** HJ – We can't comment on that unfortunately. As you can imagine lawyers have told me not to comment on but it is their right if they wish to challenge the proposals of the Council and that is what they are fundraising it for.
- 50.** Person – I just want to go back to, you mentioned about rights there. The rights of all students to experience freedom no matter how limited and how trapped they may be within the conditions they may have. But the freedom to go out, to explore and to be integrated with a wide range of students, and to do that in a safe and secure manner, I think would be remiss of us to not look at. And I think the opportunity to build a bigger school here would allow for all students to experience the joy of outdoor learning, the joy of being to work alongside each other when appropriate, the joy of having specialist staff who are really keen to work with them no matter if they've come from Rowdeford or from the other schools. But also to make those links because we are closely linked with the respite home and I know a lot of those parents. We also have quite close links with hospices. Let's not forget the values that we extol here have as much relevance to students that have PMLD, whether they have SLD, MLD or whether they have a wide range of mental health issues. Those values that we offer and really teach explicitly will be key to ensuring that, yes it's going to be a bumpy start, but if we can make a new community, a better community and a stronger community that can have much more influence on Wiltshire as a whole in accepting the various needs of SEND kids and are worth their rights to outside, inside, every environment.
- 51.** AS – Is there any particular bumpiness, picking up your phrase there, that you can tell us to watch out for and plan for so as to smooth it out?
- 52.** Person – So, I think that one of the most significant in terms of the bumpiness and the brave new world is actually in terms of retention and recruitment potentially. The current model is talking about closing all three schools and with a new school being built on this site. I worry that that particular approach is going to make it difficult to recruit and retain staff over the next few years in the build up to that. I think that idea of, and I know that I said this to you privately, and the rest of the staff have heard me say this before as well, I think the growth of the school rather than the closure of three schools. Opening a new school would allow you to provide much more continuity in terms of staffing looking forward it could potentially, if they are talking about school closures in three years with everyone thinking that I will need to reapply for my job. Is that actually going to create problems if staff leave in the next few years. I think that the growth of a school would actually mitigate against that issue.
- 53.** AS – Okay, thank you.

- 54.** Person – I was just going to say that one possibility with regards to the bumpiness may be due to the access for the transport and traffic, that would need some looking at and some tweaking.
- 55.** AS – Okay.
- 56.** Person – Going back to the three schools shutting scenario. We all actually work quite closely with the schools. I work closely with the SPN's in both Larkrise and St Nicks. What about taking a three-school approach and doing some staff swapping? Having more integration so that we are all working together and that by the three schools working together we are making the one school work going forwards in the future. I feel that this will help with the retention of staff and also help with the fears of some staff that would like to come and see what's happening.
- 57.** Person – I wanted to use this work, evolution, because I think that this is what we are all talking about. When we heard that the one school approach was a possibility, we were really excited about that. But what I think our concern is that you are talking about shutting three schools and opening one new one. What we want to achieve is an evolution. What we want to happen is for all three schools to come together and evolve into that new school by 2023. At the moment, it sounds like you are going to shut down three schools and open one new one. There is so much value in all three schools and if we've got the opportunity to work together to do the things that have already been talked about. We already do those bits, give us the opportunity to do more of that so that we can amalgamate and evolve for the start in 2023. Otherwise we do stand the chance of losing expertise, watering down what we have already got there. And why close a school that is already very successful. Let us evolve and become that new school, to keep all the good things that are here and at the other two sites. So, I think that is what we want. And I think that's in the best interest of efficiency, learning, value for money, all of those things can be achieved. It's the learning environment that we can create. I've just pulled up our mission statement there, to be at the forefront of specialist education, that is the schools mission statement, so that's what we want to achieve. And we want that in whatever this becomes, and we want to bring Larkrise and St Nicks with us. This new school is at the forefront of specialist education, that's what all three schools want and especially what we want.
- 58.** Person – My point is following on from that and the danger is in all this is that in Wiltshire we've got everything we need to meet the complex needs of young people, we've got high levels of expertise, we've got the compassion, we've got the care, we've got the drive. What we need is to ensure that we keep the very best people within Wiltshire. And in this time of uncertainty, we don't want people looking elsewhere and thinking that they'll have to move on or re-apply for jobs. It's a very difficult situation for people and I think protecting the expertise that we have within all three schools, because the one school solution requires that. It requires huge team work between all of those three schools, recognising what each of them does so well and what each of us has to learn

from each other. I think what we have as a school are staff that are willing to learn from the expertise to get the very best outcomes for our young people.

- 59.** Person – I would just like to expand upon that if I can. You've obviously got three schools with three governing bodies. Just with closing the three schools just with the staff also applies to the governing bodies as well. You've got three sets of governors all with their own sets of experiences and disciplines and if we can work together and merge together it becomes a much smoother transition than trying to force people to do something because they have to. The other point is that outside the school, talking about access, you have a 30 mile an hour speed limit in the village which goes to 50 miles an hour before you get to the school gates, which is bizarre and ridiculous so that is something else that will need to be looked at.
- 60.** Person – Can I talk about the actual positioning of Rowdeford in Wiltshire because I have only just moved here a year and a half ago from Bristol and looking at the map actually if you are looking at a one school solution central to that is Devizes and Rowde. In terms of parity from every area of the county to get to the centre is Rowde and that seems to make sense. And actually the arguments that are being put about how children should be educated in their local community, well if you look at the number of children that are currently educated in those three schools in their community it comes to 24 percent. So, actually at the moment only 24 percent are educated in their current community. But actually by having a central location that would give more parity for all children. And it actually means that you have a bit more flexibility with even taking people from Salisbury if we need to, and they are the better fit for Rowdeford, there's still that flexibility to come to the north of the county.
- 61.** HJ – Another question from me is that, I thought the argument you gave around integration and integration with other children was one that we hadn't thought of and integration is coming through as quite a theme, particularly with parents whose children are PMLD, who say that because the school is in a local community the children are seen more and therefore it breaks down stereotypes. Therefore, it supports community integration. I just wondered about that as well about how you ensure that your students are not segregated, and I just wondered if you had any views about that?
- 62.** Person – I know it's gone now but when we had the boarding school upstairs, my son works at the local youth club in Bromham and our students went there and they didn't have anybody stay with them. He looked after them with the other adults in the youth club and they were treated no different. Also, I have to say about work experience here, all our year 11s, not one of them did not go off on work experience and this has gone on for years out in the community, and if they need to go with a TA they go, but every single one of them goes on a week's work.
- 63.** Person – Just talking about integration. I'm a relative newcomer to this school as a governor, I live in the village but one of the things that happens regularly is that the community come to the school. It's not just the people going out of

the school but them actually coming to this school through all the events throughout the year. And the pupils here have the opportunity to be involved in that and they do get involved in it to a huge extent, no matter what their ability. They serve teas and coffees, they help around the school during the garden fetes or whatever is happening. The communities have such an involvement that come to the school as well as go out of the school to get integrated.

- 64.** Person – Can I just add to that. We have a walk that goes every year along the canal. We are happy to be out and about. We have made numerous examples to everyone about the kind of things that we do where we bring our students out to be part of the community and to share in the community around them. So, I don't think that we are segregated and we are very well seen. We've just put on performances as part of Shakespeare in schools, which was at the Wyvern Theatre. We are regularly running trips out and just as a day to day thing we regularly run swimming trips for every single member of our student body regardless of their level of need. We get everybody out and that's into our immediate local area. So, I think that the idea that we are segregated out here is nonsense.
- 65.** Person – Moving forward from that, I think that all the plans we have spoken about just here today about having a café and all the planned trips out, surely that answer the question about segregation. We've shown you what we do and talked to you about what we can do. And I also just want to say about integration within the school, we have pupils that look and move and have needs that are very different to the pupil sat next to them, let alone the community, and we have such a good opportunity. And we have some very interesting conversations about why a certain person might need something. I think it is important to recognise that this happens inside and out of the school. We are not hidden away, and we don't hide certain students. Everyone is talking, and everyone is working together. We've given you lots of examples of what we do in the community.
- 66.** Person – In terms of preparing for adulthood, we know that all our students are going to go back into their local communities, so we ensure that all of our students need post-16 transition work to really enable them to get to the local college appropriate to them. We ensure that through our life skills days we go back to where they are going to go next. It doesn't seem to me to be a strong argument that coming here prevents them from becoming a valuable part of their communities at home. Our values-based education is all about community and taking the values that we have here and take them back to the home. So, we can do that and we know that we've got students that will be going to Swindon college, that will be going to Salisbury, they'll be going to Fairfield and all sort of other wonderful places. And we explore that fully with them with the support of the professionals working with children and we make sure that if they are going to be placed somewhere we will work to get them there, to support them in that transition back into the community and wherever they are going to.

- 67.** AS – We have about five minutes, you can hear the mob outside.
- 68.** JW – I did just want to push a bit harder about this idea about how you might come together with the other schools. We've got 5 years to work on this. Do you have thoughts about how we might be able to build that so we could start creating shared teams or if there's shared training. Is that something that you would welcome?
- 69.** Person – Over the years I have linked up with many schools, Larkrise being one probably a few years ago now. I've brought students over from Larkrise school and they've had access to the technology room which they don't have access to in Larkrise. And we had days where they built a clock or a car or a single project in a day. They've really enjoyed and got so much out of those days and I think that has been a fantastic session for them. The staff that have come with them as well have said how much its proved, and self-worth they have got out of it, that they are producing something to take home.
- 70.** Person – I have regular SENCO cluster meetings but at the moment it's very difficult to do that because as a Rowdeford representative going into those special school at the moment but actually we've put all that on hold. So, if anything once we have a clear idea, I think all of the schools are happy to work together.
- 71.** Person – So, St Nicks hadn't been running DofE. We have a new DofE co-ordinator and she came over here. We worked together for a day, helped set up DofE at their school and then they came to our site, they stayed on our site, ran all of their walks with a wheelchair user and the wheelchair user used the yurt to stay in overnight, was fully supported and they did all their walks from here and completed their bronze award, and they are coming back again this year. Those links are there and we want to increase and develop them.
- 72.** Person – There are a series of, once the way forward is known, there is a series of facilitated workshops with governors, staff or whatever would be a tremendous help in making a smooth transition for everybody involved including the people like yourself who are trying to move this forward. I think if that process was enabled it might help smooth out some of the ripples that maybe bouncing around.
- 73.** Person – We already work quite closely with professionals in other schools and we would want to extend that again. We offer a consultancy service and we are able to offer training and are quite open to offer our training to the other staff. Equally, we'd like to gain from their expertise. We are not the experts in PMLD yet and neither would we want to be the only experts in anything. We have to broaden the areas of experience of every single professional. I don't think it would be right to say that I am a PMLD specialist and that is all I will do or I am an MLD ASD specialist and that is all I will do. We have to be able to expand it and we already have a number of people here that are very very welcoming and want to get other people in.
- 74.** AS – A couple more comments and we'll have to finish.



- 75.** Person – Can I just say that I would be really concerned about an extended consultancy and that is what worries me about the legal challenge - that this will rumble on and on. I think it needs to be highlighted, about the levels of stress and anxiety that this process has caused for all those people involved and the students who are involved that have heard rumours, who have seen different press releases and other things and for this to continue on and on would be really damaging. Not only for those levels of anxiety but also for the staff body and then putting three groups of staff and trying to get them to work together. So, it does worry me that this could go on and especially with the legal challenge.
- 76.** AS – Thank you all and remember it doesn't finish today, the consultation closes on Friday. It's helpful to have written contributions and you can do that online on the Wiltshire Council website. Then we have your words. Transcribing this whole recording and what's being typed is going to take forever and we will do that but it is a case of the more the merrier.