

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

### **APPENDIX 4:**

#### **TRANSCRIPTS AND NOTES OF PARENTS 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.

## 4.1 St Nicholas – Parent Consultation 21 January 2019 Meeting Notes

**Venue:** St Nicholas Special School

**Time:** 5pm

Attendance: 9 parents and 6 officials

### **PRESENT:**

Members of the public

Alan Stubbersfield, Education & Skills Specialist Lead, 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)

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

Parents requested that they sit as one large group rather than the opportunity to talk to a facilitator in small groups of 3.

### **Questions/key statements from the parent/carers:**

- **Build a school in the Pewsey area** and create a 'diamond' of schools?
- **73% of parent views ignored** when these parents know what is best for their children? The one school option is not an option for the majority of parents. Not all the needs will be best met by one school.
- **Lack of trust in the LA's decision-making process.** If all councillors were to vote then St Nicholas' would have more support to stay open?
- **Discrimination against the population of Trowbridge and Chippenham** who are entitled to share their community with our children?
- **Lack of parental choice** - mainstream children have a choice to go to school in their town, SEN children don't get that choice. More pupils will go to an out of county school or will be home schooled.
- **Academy?** First time this has been mentioned and why was there never a consultation on this status? Why isn't this new iconic school being spearheaded by the LA? Is this just a way for the LA to wash their hands of the new school? Will the academy only provide minimum standards?
- **Is £20m sufficient** for 428 pupils (mentioned in the Nov meeting) to be cutting edge when you consider the cost of a hydro pool and hoist etc? More likely to £40m which could pay for two local community schools.
- **More cost effective to RBs at mainstream schools?**
- **Keep the school as it and increase provision in other ways?**

- **Impact of increased travel time** – there will be no choice when travelling time is such a huge issue. It is already taking pupils 45 minutes to travel 6 miles with too many pick-up stops? Care plans show that vulnerable children with complex medical needs have life limiting conditions and the fear is that increased travel time will impact on children’s health and shorten their lives even further.
- **What are the reassurances for emergency medical back-up?** Ambulance service and access to the RUH (ambulance currently travels via parent’s house for medication).
- **Shortage of physios and OTs in the new school** when we don’t have enough physios and OTs in Virgin Care now?
- **Specialist medical support** for a child who, i.e. can only use their eyes to communicate?
- **More mental health** support for pupils.
- **Child not coping in large groups.** Design is important to create a small nurturing environment.
- **Disregard for the loss of strong links with Hardenhuish Secondary School** is being ignored.
- **Pupil access to school on a flexi timetable for medical appointments who can currently attend for a part of day** and for parents who do not drive.
- **Experienced staff and TA’s lack of access to Rowde?** A longer commute to work can be detrimental to the health of staff.
- **Rowdeford is such a remote sight**, isolated from the community on massive hill. Being part of a community and a mainstream secondary school is key.
- **Disregard for the loss of connections with own community** in Chippenham.
- **Option for dual placements?** One at a specialist school like Rowdeford and then with a local school/hub?
- **Work together more** to find common ground so that we can make the right decision together. We need choices that feel harmonious, and agree to make compromises.

## 4.2 St Nicholas – Parent Carers Meeting 12 February 2019

### 4.2.1 Meeting Notes

#### Welcome and Introductions

Following on from summer consultation informed subsequent report in November – turned full range of options into a focus on a particular proposal subject to consultation.

3 school closures and 1 school opening – LA decision maker for maintained schools through Cabinet meeting at end of March.

Opening of new school is more complex process – LA not decision maker – but will make recommendation – decision rests with Secretary of State – identification of a provider – probably a multi academy trust to run from 2023 subject to confirmation of Secretary of State.

Purpose of meeting is to hear your views and take those into account for the meeting in March.

Recorded and typed to capture all views.

Over to you:

Q. LA think that parents are trying to stop this from happening – we are not, but our children cannot speak – my son is devastated – he says ‘the nasty people are wanting to take my school away’ – when he started here he was non-verbal – he goes to Hardenhuish and takes part in activities – this school has given him a sense of belonging. My son desperately needs this school to stay where it is – he can walk to Morrisons and John Cole Park, walk into town – Rowde is not safe – nearest safe pathway is too far – traffic is horrendous – so important that LA think we are being dogmatic and argumentative – we are not, we are speaking for our children. Rowde is too far out. Devizes is not a mile away – its further – none of our children can walk there. LA don’t realise they are isolating our children – in hubs they will be segregated – my son mixes with all children. You cannot imagine what it will do my son and how he feels about his community. LA have forgotten we have other children – my other son has an EHCP in mainstream – if there is an emergency, how can I be in two places at once. Journey to Rowde is not a nice journey – we live near main roads to Chippenham and easier. You need to re think what you are doing for our children and next generation – if you segregate them you will do more damage.

Q. Location issue – last time we met I was relieved as I came away with the impression the planning issues would not make Rowde suitable and that Abbeyfields would be better. I share those views about the journey – this school is part of the community, e.g. church, library, networks – connectivity to community. Consultation document says site is two miles from Chippenham town centre but Rowde site is further from Devizes. Stats are being used economical to support the proposal. Majority of parents supported Rowde site but there are more families at Rowdeford than Larkrise and St Nicks – be careful of statistics. Made clear P16 provision was not part of it – but

statutory consultation now says Poplar College won't stay and Wiltshire College will take over. That terrifies me. How has this been taken into account?

Q. I was at summer consultation and left feeling positive – got the impression the mega school would not be considered and open discussion as to what we would want – wasn't until went to the online survey it was different. Rowdeford had started their petition to save their school, I felt Rowdeford doesn't cater for the primary age – I don't know what I clicked on as found confusing. Also at the time, money was not an object, we want to get it right but now it seems it is down to money and LA have chosen cheapest option without considering other factors. Outcome of summer consultation seemed to focus on quantity e.g. more votes for Rowdeford but of course they would because there are more students there and because they put out their petition which I signed. At no point did I realise St Nicks was under threat of closure – want it recorded I am very much opposed to closure of any special schools. Needs to focus on quality – we didn't have a petition so looked as though we didn't care about our school but we felt reassured by LA we were not under threat. Evidence presented to Cabinet – some of it is flawed e.g. references to Threeways but its' like comparing apples and pears – its' an urban environment but we are a rural county. The whole of BANES is closer to the RUH than any of the schools in Wiltshire. Key concern of parents is medical risk and being so far from A&E – my son has been rushed to A&E – 23 mins on motorway whereas its 40 mins plus the drive for ambulance to get there - -narrow, lots of HGVs, traffic, twisty road – strikes fear in me that my son would have to pass down these roads on the bus with their medical needs. Ambulance station on site?

Q. Safety on road – some Sheldon students have been killed on that road some years back – why would we want our children travelling on that road – its' not safe. Its' too narrow and twisty, slippy. One road in and one road out – shut last week due to an accident. Can't put another road in as green belt. Main roads in Chippenham are safer and are main roads – no issue travelling here. Why would you risk our already at risk children mentally, physically to put them in a minibus out in the middle of nowhere - my husband was led to believe he was not at risk – we have been misled that our school was safe or that we would have another site at Abbeyfields. We need more choice and more special schools. You are looking to build 5 new primary schools – why do they get the choice and our children don't. We need more special schools. Don't close Larkrise and St Nicks but give us another school - that's what we need so we have choice. I don't want my son to move from the community he is embedded in here – they feel they belong and don't take that away from them because if you do, you don't realise what you are doing.

Q. I didn't come to the summer consultation. I live around the corner about 5 minutes away – we bought the house because my son loves the school – he skips into school – really happy with it and thought he was sorted until he was 19 – our dream was that [name of child] would be able to walk to [secondary school] with his brother longer term – we have based our whole life around the fact our son is at St Nicks in the middle of Chippenham which part of his education is to go out for walks in the community. By moving him to a school outside of the place where we are, you are reducing his activities he does as he gets older at 16, then he will have to reintegrate back into his local community. The difference in walking around the corner for 10 mins, he'll go on

a bus about an hour – adds 2 hours to his day. His brother or sister doesn't have to do this - impact on his behaviour – he will change schools at 13 which I am anxious about anyway – impact on learning, development, behaviour. Consultation was slightly naïve – looking at population in Chippenham and Trowbridge are big enough to sustain special schools. 3 school option did not seem properly costed despite it was the most popular option (72%). Not been convinced by consultation enough detail has been given. Eldest son going to [secondary school], he gets picked up from school with [name of child] – he goes into the playground and mixes with the other children – if he was sent out to another school, he is being segregated from others and his brother will become self conscious.

Q. Talking to my daughter who said 'why don't they just build another school'. I said they want to build a new school but somewhere else – she said but Mummy I won't be able to see [name of sibling] so much as he'll be on the bus all the time and I love my little brother. I realised, how this is affecting her as well.

Q. Our children have gone to Springboard and formed a family bond because we are all in the same boat trying to get the best for our children so have gone from Springboard to their local SEN school and stayed within that community. What worries me is that you are saying Rowdeford will take from 3 – 16 so what will happen at Springboard? You're taking them to a small village at Rowde and Devizes. Here on their doorstep you have a specialist opportunity group and SEN school on their doorstep. We have supported each other – this is a family and community which looks as though it will be destroyed.

Q. We live near Corsham in Rudloe – 12 miles for our daughter to go on bus each day each way – not the only one on the bus so will be longer for her – in a wheelchair and needs help with her communication – if she is tired it impacts on us at home because she can't cope – how can you have more children travelling to Rowdeford. Don't feel we have been listened to – the most important people in this is our children. We have to speak for them. Asked [name of child] if she wanted to lose her school but she said 'no'. They have done wonders for her at this school, I was told she wouldn't walk but she is making steps which is amazing. Don't know how she will cope when the transition time comes.

Q. Attendee – I got the strangest feeling and found an incredible pulsing heart at this school – these children accepted me – I discovered I am Aspergers' but these children accepted me. We need to show you on video how they show the love they are getting here, how they say no, passionate thing I am 100% here, need to show you a different approach – not one size fits all. I totally get that connection – I have been disconnected in my life with relationships. I connect with their highly strung nervous system – understand they need someone who knows them. I skim off the surface of their stress when I come in. We could create something phenomenal which will show the rest of England. They need structure from their parents and their school. We end up with children having more seizures, more fits. They teach inclusion. If not, they end up like me, with Aspergers' who sits on the sidelines. We need you to be in a feeling place.

Q. Transport – many are worried about the travel time – no way she could have coped with a journey at 3 – completely wrong. In terms of asking children their opinion – consultation said that some of the children said they quite like being on a bus but not in their best interests. Feel let down by the WPC – never twigged we were talking about 1 school – was feeding into a centre of excellence and feel as though those comments are being misconstrued to promote 1 school. If I had known I would have expressed my views differently. Worried about viability of Larkrise and St Nicks in the interim – staff who haven't got means to go to Rowde we will start to see loss of fantastic, long serving experienced staff – happening already. It has taken 3/4 years to express her opinion working with the same staff – worried my daughter will be deprived of those staff with whom she has built a relationship with.

Q Wider ramifications with us as parents and families - already stressed. What's going on here has a knock-on effect with those around us – staff will leave in droves because there is no security for them. Might be able to transfer to new school but might not keep their job. Transport staff know our children. To change something so pivotal by changing their route, routine, struggle with transition. My concern of ripple effect to everyone else to family, staff, morale to children. We are saying all this, you are recording it, but are you going to take notice of it – we are not saying it to be dogmatic but because we are passionate we need more special needs schools.

Q. In a normal primary school there are a few weeks where they are doing part time and parents pick up through the day – how will parents do that if school is further away. Could be coming from Cricklade, Malmesbury – what provision will LA put in place to make sure those parents are not significantly disadvantaged. Transition is doing 2/3 weeks of doing half days. Hope you re consider taking from the age of 3. What happens if that parent doesn't drive? Worried you are not going to take our comments on board.

A. Alan - difference in consultation between now and summer as there is now a level of detail. I thought last summer we were looking at 2 schools – I am clear I changed my mind. Its' been an evolving process.

Q. Did you change your mind or was your mind changed for you? How do we get the Cabinet to read and listen and consider it – what evidence is there this has happened? How do we know the Cabinet have read everything? Legal guidance is required to make legal decision?

A. Helen – we are duty bound to ensure report is (very different now as is statutory) to make sure all views are taken into account. We are looking at ways in which we can assure you that all the documentation has been read. These are elected people, in a role they understand the importance of their role as community leaders. Looking at ways and means to reassure yourselves that all views have been read – methodology to do that we are still discussing.

Cabinet will have range of professional advice from educationalists, along with legal advice should they require it. At this moment in time, can't tell you how we are going to provide that advice to members – how we ensure the full view – committed to ensure full voice is communicated to members.

Q. Format of Corsham was very different – no recording and no transcript – not as clear cut you will have full view of what was said there.

A. Alan – I am satisfied - will take legal advice.

Q. Attendee - what I am hearing is cognitive approach but what these children offer is a physical approach – this message isn't coming across because you are not experiencing these children – I propose we show you what experiential learning is and not sitting behind a desk.

Q. Speech therapist signed our petition but was given a gagging order by her boss not to support. I've talked to a range of people working with young children who all say I support what you are doing but I can't do anything and can't support you – one charity Manager said don't sign it in your name but in your husband's name. I'm worried about repercussions from funding from LA.

My friend works for WPCC but is afraid because it's under the remit of LA for fear of repercussions – Stuart does not represent all parents and I feel very angry about that.

Is whole of consultation process being undermined.

A Helen - in terms of stakeholders we will reflect on how to communicate. There is no gagging order. We will talk to Virgin Care and we will bust any myth they may hold. This has not come from the LA.

Q. On line survey needs to be more flexible because some text boxes are character restricted.

Q. Consider limited transport options to the Rowdeford site.

A. Helen - consultation closes March 1<sup>st</sup>. Meeting on Cabinet is 26<sup>th</sup> March. Paper to be published around 16<sup>th</sup> March and supporting documentation. Full council meeting next week which some people are attending because of the petition.



## 4.2.2 Audio Recording Transcript

**Venue:** St Nicholas Special School

**Date:** 12 February 2019

**Time:** 4pm

1. AS – Welcome everybody to this consultation. Hello again to those who saw me last summer. Whether you did, or you didn't, a reminder, I am AS – I was last summer interim Director of Education for Wiltshire. I am not doing that anymore, but I have been retained by Wiltshire to continue with the special school's project and to continue with these meetings so there is a degree of continuity in that project. So, I was involved in the consultation, looked at places in all schools last summer, in the planning which led up to that and following that a lot of thinking about the information that we had from the discussion in these meetings, from the feedback. From the data we had, and the professional evidence. All of which went into the mix in thinking about what we were going to do subsequently. You will know then that led to the report in November which turned a wide consultation on the full range of options which we felt there were in the way of one, two or three schools, in the one, two or three locations or areas available to us. So, the November report turned that breadth into a focus on a particular proposal now, and you will know the proposal is for 3 school closures and one school opening. We are consulting as decision maker, the LA, being responsible for decisions about closure of maintained schools, which these three are, and that is a decision which the LA can make through its Cabinet meeting at the end of March. In relation to the linked proposal for a new school – that is a more complex process in which the LA is not the decision maker but has an important role in consultation again, listening to what you say and weighing the evidence and professional opinion and other views to come forward with a recommendation rather than a decision. The decision lays with the Secretary of State (SoS) and the process would be for the identification of a preferred provider which would probably be a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) as a provider for the new school. To run that from 2023 subject to confirmation by the SoS as to whether the provider is the preferred option by the SoS. That is a fairly lengthy process and slightly more complicated. The purpose of this meeting is to hear your views, so we can take those into the report into Cabinet in March. For that purpose we have microphones – if you can't hear me let me know – this is being recorded and we will be asking you if you would mind holding a microphone fairly close – about a hand-width from the face – so we are sure, and you are sure that we capture everything that is said, that will be recorded and typed up. The process of typing this up is very lengthy, we will be starting that now, it is a duplication process but it means when it comes to typing up the recording we have something started already. I will let my colleagues introduce themselves. *Introductions as the listing above.*
2. HJ – I am here as I will be taking over the project when Alan has done with his part. It is important that I hear what you're saying for transparency purposes.

3. AS – So that is the sequence of events that have led us to this point. The purpose of this meeting is to hear your voices, so I am happy to hand over to any points from you which I will make a note of, and my colleagues will record one way or another.
4. Parent – Hello, my name is [parent] I am a parent of a child here at St Nicholas' school. There is something I want to say, I think the council thinks it is us parents trying to stop this from happening. We are our children's voices, a lot of our children either can't speak or can't communicate in a way that would make you all understand how they are feeling. My son is absolutely devastated, he has turned around and said the nasty people want to take my school away. When he started at this school he was non-verbal, this school has done wonders for him. It has given him a sense of community. He goes to Hardenhuish (HH) and does Boccia there. We have sports day at HH where the whole school goes. This school has given him a sense of belonging in a world where, perhaps, he wouldn't have that. So, for me, to save this school yes, I am his parent, yes, it is me going up against Wiltshire Council with other parents, but I am going up for my son who desperately needs this school to stay where it is. We go to Morrisons, they can walk down to John Coles Park. I have looked at where the site is at Rowdeford, the paths aren't wide enough for wheelchair access. It is not safe enough, I wouldn't even dream of letting my son walk anywhere around Rowdeford, or Rowde should I say, because Rowdeford school to the nearest safe pathway it's too far. I wouldn't let him do that. The actual traffic there is horrendous, it is so busy, I know because I have done the journey myself I go to Devizes quite a lot. For me, it is so important, that you, I think the council think we are just trying to be dogmatic and argumentative, we are not. We are speaking for our children. They belong here, in their community here, not somewhere out in the sticks. Rowde is too far out – Devizes is not a mile away like we were told or led to believe in the last meeting in November. It is more than a mile, and there is no way that any of our children in this school would be able to walk from Rowdeford school to Devizes. At the moment they can walk to Morrisons, they can walk to John Coles Park, they can even walk into town. We have so much embedded with the community here it is so important, and I don't think the council realise the enormity of what they are doing. They are isolating our children, they are segregating them. Because when you actually put them into Rowdeford you're having hubs – in those hubs you're having the children who are supposed to be with them or them. Here, my son integrates with people like (names another child) who is in a wheelchair and he doesn't bat an eyelid – he does not bat an eyelid, because to him that is normal. If he sees a child having an epileptic fit he doesn't think "oh my god what is that" he says "OK that is someone else having some issues". We don't get that in normal circles. I tell you what, I have seen someone having an epileptic fit and everyone was going "oh let's have a look -what's going on" instead of saying "that person needs a bit of space – let's give them space." This school it, I have never felt so much part of a family as what I do here, and what my son does. To rip that away from him is unbelievable, you cannot begin to imagine what it will do to him, to his mental

state of mind, as well as to how he feels in the community. Everybody who is say here feels so passionately about this. Also, the council have forgotten that we do have other children, I have a younger son who is at a mainstream school. He has an EHCP as well, he is SEN. I tell you what I am not joking you if you put (name of child) on a school bus from my house to Rowdeford, with how long he will be on that bus. If had a medical emergency for (name of child), or for (name of brother), I have to be in two places. I can't be in two places at once. And Chippenham is nearer to my house than where Rowde is. The actual journey to Rowde is not a nice journey. At the moment we are on the main roads to Chippenham and there are no issues. We don't have to go any back road and it is so much easier. For me, all I am going to say is you really, really need to rethink what you're doing for our children. For the next generation, they are the next generation. If you isolate them and segregate them, you are going to do more damage than you could ever imagine. Thank you.

5. Parent – Hi, I am (name removed) I am also a parent. I would like to build upon the location issue I think. I think, Alan, last time we met, I was relieved really because as part of that discussion I came away with the impression that there was no way the site would be Rowde because of the planning issues with the flood plain. And that Abbeyfield, the site next to Abbeyfield was a pretty good location to site a school. I share those concerns about Rowde being not part of a community, and the fact that the children would have to get on a bus to access any of the things they can currently access, so as Alison said, this school is absolutely part of the community – Morrisons, the library, the local church, local schools. Networks, connectivity – connection with that local community. Although I read what is said in the consultation document about the community at Rowde, I don't think that you will be able to access the same sort of services as we have been able to access in Chippenham. The consultation document makes a lot about the fact that the site in Chippenham is 2.2 miles from the town centre. If you measure the distance from the site in Rowde to the town centre it is more than that. It is three miles. So actually, if you think, the paper is going to try and present the fact in such a way to make it applicable to that circumstance, there are some things that are being a bit economical – some statistics that are being used in a way to make the case for this. I think that the meeting minutes as well, refer to the parent consultation, a majority of parents that had responded felt that Rowde would be a good site if it was a single site. If you look at the number of children attending, double the number of children attending Larkrise, or St Nicks so you would have double the number of parents in favour of that, so again, we need to be careful in how those statistics are being used. Another thing I want to say is that it was made quite clear that 16-18 provision wasn't part of the consultation exercise. Yet we find now that the statutory consultation document comes out and there is a proposal that Poplar College will not continue as it has been. There is talk about Wiltshire College taking over 16-18 provision – that terrifies me basically. I have seen very little consultation or information on 16-18 provision – in fact I have seen nothing other than the three lines that are in here. So, I would like to know more about how that is being taken into account. I will hold it there.

6. Parent – My name is (name removed), my son (name of child) attends St Nicholas, he started in September. I was also here at the Summer consultation with you Alan. Like (name of parent) left feeling positive. We got the impression that a mega school, as it was called, wasn't something that would be considered and it was much more of an open discussion about what would we want in our dream school, rather than specific options – it wasn't until I went to the online survey and saw the options. But again, it didn't make it clear, I admit that I was quite naive and I found it quite confusing, because it didn't tally with the consultation meeting. The option was to make one new school in one of these sites, or we make two new schools, or develop three schools. To me seeing that, we create one new school, I thought that was in addition to the existing school. Again, that was me being naïve and new to the school, my son just starting. Also, to pre-empt that, Rowdeford had started their petition to save their school – I thought perhaps they know something we didn't, we thought it was something we didn't. A process parallel to this consultation. They directed us on how to answer the consultation – saying click near Devizes anytime you can. So again, I thought Rowdeford doesn't cater for primary aged students, I can't tell you if I clicked Rowde or if I clicked for the three-option site. I might very well have clicked on yes, we need another school in Rowde. We need more specialist places, yes let's have a school there that can help add to the current schools. So, I wanted to point that out that I found it confusing. This consultation, also that at the time we were also told that money isn't an object we aren't talking about money – we want to get it right is what you said. Now it seems that it is coming very down to money, and the council has chosen the cheapest option without considering other factors. Again, also in the report from the outcome of that consultation it seemed to focus on the quantity of the responses. As (name of person) said there were more votes for Rowdeford – of course there would be, there are more students there and they also put out this petition which I also signed saying to respond this way. I didn't, naively, feel that St Nicks was under threat of closure. At no point was there a discussion that schools were under threat of closure. I want to very much, on record, I want to very much oppose the closure of any specialist schools. We need more specialist schools, not fewer, we're parents. We deserve choice just like any other parent of a child. Back to the quantity vs. quality, I hope that this consultation or representation period will focus on the quality of responses rather than just the votes or "oh they have done a petition". Again, I thought that was noted in the outcome, the petition from the two other schools. We didn't have one, so it looked like we didn't care about our school, whereas I felt assured by the council that we weren't under threat of closure so why would we need a petition to save it? Of course, when that report came out, we were there straight away to start a petition. Also, I would just like to say that you talk about evidence presented to the Cabinet. I find some of their – I don't know where it has gone awry, but some of their evidence is flawed. Cllr Mayes seems to be talking about Three Ways in Bath, but you're comparing apples and oranges. They're a very urban environment, yes, they consolidated into one single school, yes that works for them but we are a very rural county.

7. Person – The whole of BANES is closer to the RUH than any of the schools in Wiltshire.
8. Person – That is a key concern of parents, the medical risk. For myself, my son has epilepsy and difficult to control epilepsy, as well as ASD, he is non-verbal. He has had to be rushed to A&E a few times, we have an ambulance station around the corner from school here in Chippenham and it is 23 minutes on the motorway from here to Swindon Great Western – whereas it is 43 minutes from Rowde. The ambulance also has to get to Rowdeford and as other parents have said it is quite a tricky drive there. Even I find it tricky to drive from Calne to Rowde – it is very narrow, you're passing a lot of lorries. There are a lot of HGVs heading to the Hills recycling centre in Calne, there is also a biomass site in Bromham. There, it is very twisty, I have hit the curb. It strikes fear into me, my son having to be on a bus passing these HGVs at speed. Also, if he had a seizure and they have to pull over quickly to deal with him, or other children on the bus. There are children on the bus that have oxygen, or that need head supports because of their mobility. Going around twisty turns, yes, to me one of the big things is the medical risk of being so far from A&E so I hope that is something the council will consider. Whether or not they put an ambulance station on site, or, I just don't know.
9. Person – Just reiterating what you said about the safety of the roads. A couple of years back there were some Sheldon students who were killed on that road – on the bend right by Rowdeford school. It is not a safe road. Why would we want to risk our children actually traveling to a school where it has such a dangerous way to get there? It is just not safe, I am an adult and I drive to Devizes sometimes through Bromham, and then Rowde and up to Devizes and I am sorry, but I don't like that part of the road – it is too narrow, it is too twisty...
10. Person – ...If it is dark or raining...
11. Person – ...If it is slippy, if there is snow, or ice or anything like that...
12. Person – ... There is one road in, one road out, last week, it was shut because of an accident, the Rowdy Cow couldn't open because the road was shut.
13. Person – As you said it is one road in, one road out, it is not, you can't even because of the greenbelt area you can't have another road to go there. I can't see how this is a viable option for our children.
14. Person – Then of course, if you're saying that, parents trying to get there because their child is having a medical emergency. They will not be concentrating on driving – they are concentrating on what happens when they get there. Or worse, travelling home after they got there with a child that is not well, but not ready to go in an ambulance. They are still not concentrating on driving. They are concentrating on the child in the back of the car. None of these are good on a road that is twisty and that they are not familiar with because it is not in their local community.
15. Person – As I said the roads here to Chippenham are main roads. My son certainly doesn't have to go on a back road from Calne to Chippenham. You know there is no issue with travelling here. It is main roads. For me, I don't understand why you would risk our already at-risk children, you know mentally, physically by putting them in a minibus to a school that is out in the middle of

nowhere, isn't near a hospital and is a dangerous road. I am sorry but also to reiterate what (name of parent) said, I wasn't here in July, my husband was here – he came home and said to me “we are not at risk. School is staying open”. Even he was led to believe there was no risk of our school closing. I remember so vividly him telling me that. So, we have all been misled. We have all believed our school was safe or that we might have another site over by Abbeyfield so that you can take the pressure off some of the children who can't get into Larkrise or can't get into here. We don't need schools closing we need more special needs schools. We need more choice. Now you said in November that you're looking to do five new primary schools. So why is it that our neurotypical children can have choice of what primary school they go to in their own towns, or nearest town? Why do they get the choice, but our children don't? Why? What is so different? Our children can't speak for themselves as I said earlier, they haven't got the mental age that they are. So, for me, we're standing here and saying we need more special schools – not less, don't close St Nicks, don't close Larkrise, don't close Rowdeford. Keep them all open and give us another school. Spend that £20m on another school that is what we need. We need more choice. I tell you what, when it is 2023, my son is 13. He is going through transition stage, I don't want him to move from this school that he has known. From the community that he has here. I am not just saying for me, I am saying for everyone here, we do not want our children moved from the community that they are embedded in. They are part of it, they feel they belong. They belong. Don't take that away from them. Don't. Because if you do, you just don't realise what you're doing. We need more schools – not less.

- 16.** Parent – Hi, I am (name removed) and my son attends St Nicholas. He is just coming up to eight years old. I didn't come to the consultation in the summer partly because (details removed to protect identity). So, I live just around the corner, about 5 minutes away. When we brought our house our thinking was (name of child) absolutely loves St Nicholas school. He skips in the door in the mornings, so we were happy that we thought his education is looked after until he is 19 years old. He is one of three children, my eldest is just about – we have put in an application for him to go to Sheldon school for next year. You know, our dream is or what we thought would be reality, was that (name of child) soon – sometime in the near future, would be able to walk around the corner, with us, to the school. Which for an adult walking is about four minutes? Then longer term, potentially as he gets older he would walk around the corner with his brother (name of other child) who will be at Sheldon, and if he doesn't get in there HH. So, we have based our whole life around the fact that our son is at St Nicholas school which he loves, he is at school in the middle of Chippenham, where as part of his education involves going out into the community. So, one of the activities in his class is to go out for walks. So, as (name of parent) was saying they go out to Morrisons, to the park, these are things that really affect our life at home. These are things that really impact our life as he gets older. (Name of child) has a genetic syndrome. He is non-verbal, he has autism and severe LD, but he does have a chance at having a small amount of independence I think. As he gets older, by taking him, if he is moved

to a school that is outside of the place where he lives, then you're kind of reducing his ability... it is particular to him. He is fixated on the activities he does. But if he is building up a life in the middle of, say Rowde, it means as he gets older, say as he comes to 16 and his education ends there, he is going to have to reintegrate back into his local community. So that is one of the things that makes a massive difference for us. The other thing is we have got the difference between him walking around the corner in let's say 10 minutes and him going on a bus, which is I think about a 25-minute drive to get there, without stopping, that is me driving – he will be on a bus for let's say, realistically, an hour, which adds two hours onto his day. Now that for any kid, his (sibling) doesn't have to do this, his younger (sibling) doesn't have to do that either, the impact that will have on his behaviour, my husband is putting him to bed at the moment as with the others. That is difficult enough as it is. You're gonna hit, he is going to change schools as he is hitting 13 which I am anxious about anyway and it will have a massive impact on his behaviour and everything and .... *Inaudible*... So, yes, I mean when it comes to the consultation, I was probably slightly naive about what would happen. I look at the population in Chippenham and the population of Trowbridge and I am thinking "these two towns are big enough to have a special school". That is the kind of feedback I get from everyone I talk to about it to. Chippenham is expanding, it has so much building work going on in all these places, building new supermarkets, multiple housing developments which is why there is a need for more special schools places. It seems when I looked at the consultation document that came back the three-school option wasn't fully costed in that. It just felt to me like, given that this was something the majority of people said they wanted as part of the consultation – 72% I think said it was something they wanted, it wasn't even costed out. That felt like it was dismissed without it being given enough thought to be honest. So yes, basically my issues are on a personal level-this will have a huge impact on my son's life. I have not been convinced by the consultation that enough detail has been given to the three options.

17. Person – You want the same family life for your son and your other children.
18. (Name of parent) – Yes, that reminds me of a different point, which is the fact that, so yes, my other son going to Sheldon he at the moment every day when he is picked up from school, (name of child) comes with him. He is at Monkton school at the moment, so (name of child) goes into the playground with (name of other child), with all the other kids around Monkton Park school know (name of child) and are brilliant with him. If he is doing some of his unusual behaviour, then that is fine, and they are all used to it to be honest. It just feels like if he was sent out to another school, not only is he being segregated from the other children he is seeing every day, it also has an impact on (name of other child). I am starting to notice that, (name of other child) is 10 now and some of his friends, some of his friends are better than others let's say, at dealing with (name of child) unusual behaviours. I think if they're completely separated then (name of other child) is going to become slightly anxious to be honest.
19. (Name of parent) – I wanted to add to that as well, something I thought about this afternoon. Sorry, it is (Name of parent) again for the recording. Just talking

to my daughter today, she said mummy why don't they just build a new school, for kids with special needs. Sorry my daughter who is eight and attends mainstream school. I said that they want to build a new school, for all children like your (sibling) to go there from here, from Chippenham, from where daddy works in (town in north Wilts), from Trowbridge, from Devizes, from Calne, all to this one school. And she said but mummy I won't get to see (name of child) as much because he will be on the bus all the time, and I love my little brother and I like to play with him and it just, it suddenly occurred to me how much this is affecting her and will as well in the future. And like (name of parent) here, I had hopes after taking (name of child) to a specialist nursery and a pre-school and having other supports and hospital appointments and all this back and forth driving, I thought it will be wonderful when (name of other child) hopefully gets into HH which is right next door to St Nicholas school. I thought there would finally I can take them both and drop them off at the same place and my daughter will have some normality as well. I know that HH often hosts the sports days for St Nicholas, and her friends know (name of child), having him around has opened up their eyes and they're accepting of him. Also, his peers, I would love for him to be going to the same school as my daughter, but I know that is not possible for the moment, but it might be in the future. Or maybe somehow dual enrolment where he can go there once a fortnight where he can have that normality for her, and him. We used to go to playgroups with a lot of his peers, and we still see them. We still meet up with them and he gets invited to birthday parties still. How long is that going to continue if they don't get to see him. His peers will be at HH when he is here, I just...

- 20.** Person – Also what we have all forgot to say is, a lot of our children have gone to Springfields opportunity... sorry, Springboards opportunity group. We have formed a family bond because we're all in the same boat. We are all trying to get the best for our children. Our children have gone to Springboard opportunity group, to the local SEN school, in Chippenham. They have gone from Pewsham, where the opportunity group is, to the SEN School in Chippenham. They have stayed within that community. I have known (name of parent), because both our boys, in fact – both my younger boys were at Springboard. I have known (name of parent), his daughter was at Springboard, I have known (name of parent), her son was at Springboard – I have known the majority of people who are here. Their children have come from Springboard opportunity group in Pewsham, to this school. What worries me is, you're saying that Rowdeford will take from the age of 3–16, what then happens to Springboard opportunity group and the children that are there? You're going to take them out of Pewsham where there was a local SEN school on their doorstep to go to Rowde. Which is a small village. Not being funny but I haven't seen much in way of community there. You have a couple of pubs, you have the Rowdy Cow, which is quite a walk for our children – I wouldn't even let them walk it but there we go. Then you have Devizes. Here on their doorstep you have a special opportunity group at Pewsham and a special needs school in their doorstep. I have been fortunate enough to call the people here my friends for such a long time, because we have worked together, we have lived and supported each



other with what our children have gone through from a very early age and what they're still going through. This is a community, this is a family, and it just looks like it is going to be destroyed and that isn't what we want. We don't want that. We want the opportunity for them, just like any neurotypical child does.

- 21.** Parent – Hi, I am (name), I am a parent of a child here at St Nicks. We live in (name of village) near Corsham. We have worked out, one way it is 12. something miles for our daughter to travel on the bus, so that is double that each day. But then she isn't the only one on the bus so there is more travel for her. So that is going to be tiring for her, she tires very quickly. She is in a wheelchair, she can do a little bit of walking and needs help with communication. But if she is very, very tired it is an impact on us when she comes home. She can't cope. I just don't know how you would cope with more buses and travel to Rowdeford, with more children, how that would work. I just don't feel we have been listened to as parents and to be honest the most important people in this is our children. Our children that are like you said earlier on, we have to speak for them. I did ask my daughter, (name of child), if she wanted to lose her school – no was her answer straight away. They have done wonders for her here, I was told she wasn't going to be able to walk with support. Which is amazing, her communication is slowly coming. The other thing that worries me is that by 2023 she will be 17, she will be in that transition and like you said, that scares the hell out of me, I am sorry, but I don't know how she would cope. Mentally she is behind so I just don't know how she would cope in that situation. It is a worry for me. I don't know what else to say, sort.
- 22.** Person – my name is (name removed), and I have been at school somewhere between 10-11 years. When I came here it was the strangest of feelings I got, it was "I am going to be here a long time." I didn't know why I was going to be here a long time. But I found this incredible pulsing heart in this school and I found an incredible acceptance in this school. I found that these children, and I didn't understand what I was going through at the time, but these children accepted me. I am Asperger's and they accepted me. This I only discovered about three years ago. But what I got from these children and this is what we need to film and show you guys, because we can't talk this. We need to show you these incredible children of these mums and fathers – we need to show you on video how they say no. How they resist change, because they know it is not right. How they show the love they are getting here. I think it is a passionate thing that I am 100% behind now. We really need to show you a different approach, that there isn't one size to fit all. I said recently, we don't wear the same shoes, we don't wear the same glasses, we don't eat the same food, we live in different places with different families but I totally... I am almost in tears with some of these mums. No I don't have children with Asperger's, I think my son was on the spectrum, but I totally get that connection. My whole life because of Asperger's I have been disconnected in relationships. I struggle to have relationships with men because I was abused as a child. Because all of that puts my nervous system into a highly stressed state. The reason I connect with these children is because I connect with their highly stressed nervous system. I understand their nervous system. I understand that they

need a parent, they need someone who knows them. These parents need that security that when their children come to school that they have a teaching assistant and a teacher who has been with them constantly. So that their minds are at rest, and then we begin to heal. What I do here, I just literally skim off the surface of stress when I come in for these kids to try and put them back into balance on a daily basis. I believe that we together as a school and as a county, we could create something quite phenomenally different to show the whole of England. I genuinely believe that passionately. For the last 10 years I have been working with neuroscience and epigenetics, because I wanted to belong. You take these kids out of this community and I can't even begin to – it just finishes me off. They need the structure, not just from their parents. They need the structure from the school and their parents. They need to be able to be with their brother and sisters. Take them away from what is consistent, that gives them less stability. We end up with children having more seizures, children more ill in hospital, parents who don't deserve that. We deserve to give them an education where they can come to school they can play with their friends. Even more so these kids who have the most special gift in all the world – they teach inclusion. Just like (name of parent) was saying – you go into the playground, if they can mingle with other children. If we separate them they end up like me, the Asperger who sits on the peripheral all the time. All the time. Because they want to be included, I couldn't speak with emotion. What I have learned now, is I don't have to sit in a corner. That is what these kids have taught me – that is what you gorgeous parents have taught me and all the teachers at St Nicks accepted me. They didn't understand what I was doing – but it is very simple what I do now. What we need to do is, we need you to be in a feeling place, where you see how these children communicate. They speak with sounds, pictures, tones. Because I was so traumatised as a child, I read body language, I read pictures, I read tones. I know I would much rather work with these kids any day than most adults. Because they're authentic, they're genuine, and if we don't watch out the rest of our children... I have seen it, I have worked in other mainstream schools, resource centres, secondary schools. We have got children who are self-harming. We have got mental health out of the statistics now. If we don't start teaching a new programme - which is "who am I - I am this most beautiful individual who just wants to be joy and happiness". And that is these children, coming here. I have never seen a better smile in all my life. We wipe it out of our children. None of this is done intentionally, I promise you, because as I have watched and observed for the last 12 years, it is normal to want to belong. To have a normal relationship. I have watched, and I have learned by observing. I am glad I have Asperger's, I am glad I was abused, I am glad that those things happened to me. Because if I can share with you this stuff. I know about the nervous system, these parents won't have to have their children go to a school and no, they shouldn't go on a bus and be shook up, and their nervous system for a whole hour. I am shaking just at the implications of these implications of those children having to go on that bus. I am shaking, I am worried about the parents and how they're going to have to drive if they're worried about their kids going to hospital. I can't cope

with that personally, so I am stepping forward. And I will give you all the information on epigenetics, on neuroscience that I have studied with people in Canada because I passionately believe in these children and these parents and their heart. Thank you.

**23.** Person – So three more points I would like to make. Picking up on transport, a lot of people are worried about the journey time. I think back to my daughter aged three and four and there is no way she would have coped with the journey from here to Rowde. To think about children that small having to make a journey of that distance is completely wrong. Just in terms of the, asking children their opinion, there was a comment in the minutes I think that made me particularly smile – I think some of the children said they quite like being on the bus. My 14-year-old neurotypical son who hasn't got any special needs, likes playing his X-Box for 3 hours a day but that doesn't mean to say that it is good for him or I should let that happen – so the same would be for our children being on a bus for that period of time. It is not in their best interests really. I think a number of people feel quite let down by the WPCCC. I was at the consultation meeting in November, about 18 months ago, at that time, it just never ever twigged. Maybe I was being naive, but it never ever twigged that we were talking about moving to one school. We were talking about a centre of excellence, and I was feeding in comments about how that could be established and how great it would be in terms of outreach into units across the county, to mainstream units. I feel as if those comments are being misconstrued and misinterpreted, in order to promote one centre of excellence. If I had known at the time, then I would have expressed my views differently as part of that consultation. The final point I want to make, my daughter is the same year as (name of a child), so she will be too old to go to Rowde as she will have moved onto sixth form. I am worried about the viability of Larkrise and St Nicks going forward in that interim period of time. Particularly for long established staff like TAs who perhaps haven't got the means to get to Rowde. They will start to look for other work, for other jobs. We will start to see a loss in some incredibly fantastic, long serving experienced members of staff.

**24.** Person – I think we have already haven't we?

**25.** Person – Yes, we have.

**26.** Person – That is true. It has taken – my daughter is 11 and she finally has a voice. She can't speak, she is non-verbal, but she has a way of communicating. It has taken three or four years working with the same people to get her to the point now that she can express her opinion. She told the classroom staff the other day that she was embarrassed because she was wheezing; you know this is a child you look at and think there is no cognitive ability in there at all. Yet she has reached this age and found this mechanism for communication. I am just really worried that, the staff she has been working with over that period of time, who have built up that relationship with her, she will be deprived of them at a really critical point in her development.

**27.** Person – I'd like to add to that as well. What I am worried about is a couple of things. Exactly what (name of parent) said. I mentioned this before. This has, wider ramifications and has a knock-on effect with not only us parents, but our

families because of the stress it puts us under. We are already under stress with our children being poorly, or not being able to communicate. So, we already have countless hospital appointments. We are already under that stress. What is going on here adds to that stress. It has a knock-on effect with our families. That has a knock-on effect with other people, friends, staff here. I am really concerned that staff will start leaving in droves. There is no job security for them because they are going to be going to a bigger school. They might be able to transfer over to that bigger school but that doesn't mean to say they will definitely have a job at the end of it. These are members of staff that know our children. It is also the transport staff – they know our children. They know (child), they know (child), they know (child) comes with you. They know our children, they know (name of child). They highlight to me when (name of child) hasn't been right on the bus. To change something that is so pivotal to our children's needs by changing their route – which a lot of them will struggle with transition. It took my son when he first came here four weeks of going part time before he could come here full time. Because he struggled to transition from Springboard where it is small to a school where it was a different atmosphere, it was different people, it was different learning all over again. My concern is the knock-on effect, the ripple it has, if you take this school away the knock-on effect that has on everybody else. To family, staff, morale and the children most important. The other concern I have, and I have been quite vocal about this, we are saying all these things to you – you are recording all of this. But are you really going to listen to us? Are you really going to take on board what we are saying? Because we are not saying this for the sake of being dogmatic and sticking our heels in and we just want you to save our school. We are saying it because we are genuinely passionate about saving this school, about saving the special needs schools that you're looking to close, and we are genuinely passionate about that we need more special needs schools. We don't need less, we need more. And doing a massive school – my son would not cope with 350 pupils, I can tell you that now.

- 28.** Person – In a normal primary school, when a child starts they have two or three weeks where they're only doing part time education. That generally means that the parents are picking up part way through the day. So, you're saying here, that when you start in reception if we're only going to have morning and evening transport, how are the children going to be picked up part way through the day? Or do part days while they get established at a reception class at a school? They could be coming from Cricklade – or Warminster, or Malmesbury. It is, how does it work for them? What provision is the council going to ensure is in place to deal with those parents to ensure they are not significantly disadvantaged or their children's education isn't significantly disadvantaged?
- 29.** Person – I actually brought (name of child) here when he was doing his four weeks of transition – he was initially doing half days. Then he decided to start doing two or three days in the week, by then end of the four weeks he was coming full time. The transition as Duncan was saying, in a mainstream school the transition is, they do 2-3 weeks of half days. I can't see why if you're going to look to take from the age of three, but I really hope you will reconsider that

as well because I think three is way too young to be putting a child in a school. It is different in a nursery environment, but when it is in a school well – that is something I don't even want to think about now. But there is transitions, there has to be transitions because that is what every child deserves is the transition. Just because it is a special needs school doesn't mean that they don't deserve transitions. Then, as (name of parent) says, what happens? Do the parents have to, and what happens if that parent doesn't drive? Do they then not allow the child to do the transition when they're out at Rowde? It just really, I am really concerned that we have said so much to you and have asked you to take on board all of our things and all of the comment we have said, and I am worried that you might not do that, and we will end up with the same outcomes. And I am really worried about the effect that will have on all the children, all the parents and all the staff. That ripple effect is going to be felt all the way through all of the community.

- 30.** AS – I think there is a difference between consultation last summer and now because we're getting into a level of details about a specific proposal and that is helpful as it is concrete. Last summer it was much more open, and as you reminded me and am very clear – at the time I thought we would be looking at two schools. My view is I made no promises, but I talked about what I thought was likely, and I have said the same at Trowbridge because I did say the same there. I am also clear that I changed my mind. This has been an evolving process and continues to be so.
- 31.** Person – Did you change your mind, or was your mind changed for you? Is what I wonder. Because I do wonder, you might take on board all of our comments here and all our consultation and present to the Cabinet in a fair and unbiased way. I am confident that you will. How do we get the Cabinet then to read it, listen to it, and consider it, what evidence do they have to show that they have actually considered it? And listened to what the stakeholders have to say?
- 32.** AS – It is not for me to advise you on tactics.
- 33.** Person – Can I read a line from the Annex B closures “the decision maker will need to be satisfied that the proposal has met the statutory requirements. The decision maker must consider all the views submitted during the representation period, including all support for, objection to, and comments on, the proposal.” So, that means the cabinet must read everything. How do we know that they have? Is that something that you have to sit down in a room with them, and go through it page by page, or do we have to trust that these people who are voting on our children's future have done the right thing? Have considered the views and have come to a decision that is fitting the statutory requirements.
- 34.** HJ – First of all we are duty bound to ensure that the report, and as Alan said this is the statutory phase of consultation, and we have to ensure that all views are represented. All that the views of people who are supportive and also those who have significant concerns and are not supportive of the proposals. We are looking at ways in which we can assure you that all the documentation has been read. There are ways, actually there is an element of which – these are elected

people, these are people who are in a role. They understand the importance of their role as community leaders and community representatives.

35. Person – Do any of them have special needs children?
36. HJ – That I don't know, and I can't talk about individual personal...
37. Person – *Inaudible*....
38. HJ – ...but we are also looking at ways and means in which we can assure yourselves that all the views have actually been read and all the paperwork has been read. Now the methodology that we have to do that, we are still discussing but we are looking at ways you can be assured.
39. Person – OK but it comes back to this line – “The decision maker will need to be satisfied that the proposal has met the statutory requirements.” There is a requirement there as far as I can make out that they have legal guidance that they are making a legal decision – then they can't make it.
40. HJ – As I said to you Cabinet will have a range of professional advice at their disposal to guide them through this. Be that professional advice from educationalists, like Alan or Helean, who is now the Director of Education, and legal advice as well should they require it. At this moment in time I can't tell you exactly how we are going to provide that advice to members but we absolutely will be looking into how to do it. And as I said we will be looking at how we ensure that members have the full view of the representatives who have attended the meetings, been online etc. so we are absolutely committed to ensuring that the full voice gets to members.
41. Person – OK, and I am going to add one more thing. I went to the Corsham consultation as well as the one here – that was a different format to this one. There wasn't recording there, there is here. Here you're going to have a transcript of the meeting, they have notes that were made at the time. So, it is not as clear cut for Corsham that you will have a full set of everything that was said by every parent.
42. AS – I am satisfied about that myself as I think I distinguish from what you read between having all views – on the one hand which I am completely comfortable about. On the other, every single articulation of those views. Which I don't think is required by the law. That is not for me to say as I am not a lawyer, and it may be challenged. The council expect to be challenged so it is going to be very careful and in so far as I make that distinction and might advise the council so – they won't be taking my word as the law. They will be taking legal advice.
43. JW – I am aware that time is moving on so I know you want to say something so please do, but I am aware that we have kept you longer than we said we would so if you would like to speak... OK and (name of parent) can speak after that and then we can bring to a close if you're all happy.
44. (Name is removed) – I just want to simply flip this around, what I am hearing is a very cognitive approach which is written down, or audibly heard, what these children offer is a very physical approach. They are human beings, we don't learn anything by reading, we have to experientially learn. What I am hearing is that perhaps this message isn't coming across in the right way because you're not actually experiencing how these children are. You're not going to understand it from words on a page. Because you only know what you know

in your life, these parents know because they have had to live with it. That is experiential learning and that is totally, totally different. So, I am proposing that as parents and as a supporter to the parents, school and to you as a county because I want this to work out in the best way, that perhaps we need to show you what experiential learning is – what emotions really are. Because it is very easy for us to sit back and sit behind a desk and it isn't being judged in any way. You're doing a super job, you're thinking of finances and you've got boxes to tick. But this is about real life and human beings, that is what I wanted to say. Thank you.

45. Person – Quickly wanted to ask something else I thought about this afternoon speaking to a friend who is a speech therapist who signed our petition but was then basically given a gagging order from her boss and was told not to express her views. I am a chatterer – I talk to a lot of people, I have a lot of friends, and if they're not friends – I chat to everyone. I have talked to a lot of charities, the district inclusion centres, therapists. A range of people that work with young children who all say, I think what you're doing is great, but I can't do anything to help you – I can't do anything to support you, by signing my name. I know one charity their manager said if you want to sign the petition, sign it under your husband's name. Also, when I asked the speech therapist, have you done the online survey for the consultation, she said she didn't know and didn't think she could get involved. I said no, you do need to do that as that is your way of expressing you... yes. Is there a way to engage people who are stakeholders? She said she signed the petition as a parent but also in her professional capacity she didn't think it was right either. I can't tell you the number of times, and I get personal messages from people I don't know who recognise me and said "I think what you're doing is great, but I can't do anything as I am worried about the repercussions of funding from Wiltshire Council"
46. Parents – my friend works at WPCC and she has said she cannot say anything for fear that her job is under the remit of Wiltshire Council. Stuart from WPCC does not speak for all of us families, he does not understand, and I am very angry about that. It is almost like they have been given a gagging restriction on being able to air their own views because of repercussions...
47. Person – ...from the council, and I think you're missing an entire voice there. Of professionals who understand what children...
48. Parent – If WPCC are not able to help Wiltshire Council define good consultation then the whole consultation period is being undermined to the detriment of all.
49. HJ – in terms of what you're saying about stakeholders, I will reflect on how we can communicate.
50. Parent – I will do my part as well to try and publicise the online survey.
51. HJ – There is no gagging whatsoever.
52. Parent – This is coming from the manager of Virgin Care, and charities – I don't even want to name them in case there is negative repercussions.
53. HJ – we will speak to...
54. Parent – *inaudible*

55. Parent – ...or if there is a way to encourage them to do the online survey but be able to say that they work in a professional capacity.
56. AS – You're speaking here to the people that are responsible for the contracts we have with Virgin Care for example.
57. HJ – We will talk to them and we will bust any myths that they may have but this is not anything that has come from the council whatsoever.
58. Parent – But if you're going to do it anonymously, using the online survey, then the online survey needs to be more flexible of what can be given into it. Because the "other" box seems to be tech limited.
59. Parent – One final point I want to make when we were talking about parents. These schools are reliant on parent volunteers often to help with events, daily activities. So, I wondered if people who put together the proposal have considered that, the limited transportation options to the Rowdeford site.
60. HJ – Thank you.
61. AS – OK all this goes into the box.
62. HJ – Consultation closes online on 1 March – the meeting of the Cabinet is 26 March and we have to get a paper to be published around about 16 March and supporting documentation. I know some of you know as well that there is the full Council next Tuesday and some people are attending.
63. AS – That is to do with the petition.
64. Person – Am I correct in thinking though it won't just be a discussion about our petition, but that Cllr Mayes will table a motion – that is our understanding, so that Cllrs can have a full debate about the petition?
65. HJ – I don't know, sorry I am not sure about that process, I am not democratic services. I can find out what is happening, but I can find out what the process is.
66. AS – I would have thought there will be some discussion on the petition and if there is an agenda item it will be on the forward plan which will be on the website – so you can go onto the democratic services tab and check on there. Thank you.



## 4.3 Larkrise – Parent Consultation 7 February 2019

### 4.3.1 Meeting Notes

**Venue: Larkrise Special School**

**Time: 6pm**

#### **PRESENT:**

Members of Larkrise Special School's Senior Leadership Team,

#### **Parents and Carers (15)**

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)

Mr Cook introduced the LA Education & Skills Specialist Lead.

Education & Skills Specialist Lead (LA Project Leader) gave an overview of the process for the meeting. The meeting will be recorded, there will be minutes and a transcript. We met before in the Summer and I am now working for the Bristol LA and have stayed on to develop this project.

LA representatives introduced themselves. LA Director for Commissioning explained that the LA Project Leader will be handing over the 'project' to her.

#### **Introduction**

LA Project Leader: You are familiar with the story that we talked about last summer when we met last July. Through the summer holidays and early Autumn, we have been thinking about the different views from the meetings held. It took longer than expected as there were so many ideas to take on board. Last time we said that the likely outcome would be to keep this school and the one in Chippenham but this is not what was decided at the end of the day. We reviewed the practicalities of a two school option and this developed into a one school option. There is some controversy about this and that is why I am here and the meeting is being recorded for the cabinet meeting, that will take place at the end of March. The proposal is to close three schools and open one school as replacement. There is a technical complexity with pre-statutory consultation. We are now in the statutory phase with giving formal notices and saying what the proposals are. You can respond to these now and on-line.

The LA will look at developing ideas on what the new school should look like? A specification on the new school, if we go down that line, will be required for providers who will pitch for the bid. The Secretary of State will choose from those bids.

Meanwhile, we are here to hear what you think of this 'sort of stuff', prior to the cabinet meeting on 26 March.

**Q: What happened about the full council meeting before the meeting on 26 February?** (*minute-taker – not sure if I have the right date*)

LA Project Leader: I do not know about that as I work in Bristol.

Acting Head for Commissioning and Joint Planning: The petition, presented at this meeting, will be acknowledged but will be tabled for the March meeting (*not sure if this make sense – minute-taker*).

**Q: If the full council of 98 members and cabinet go against the proposal, will it (the proposal) get sacked?**

Acting Head for Commissioning and Joint Planning: You get a hearing but you cannot make that decision at that meeting.

LA Director for Commissioning: My understanding is that the decision is not made, views go to the cabinet on 26 March.

**Parent/carer:** We have seen what your cabinet does and we don't like it.

**Parent A – Parent Governor:** We went to the last meeting with the petition and that was ignored. The cabinet just wanted one school.

LA Director for Commissioning: We have explained about the petition.

**Parent A – Parent Governor:** You will do the same on 26 February? You are right, council will see. (*something about the petition – minute taker could not understand*).

**Parent/carer:** We were ignored before and watched (*on the video*) cabinet members rolling their eyes when emotional stories were being told by parents/carers.

**Parent/carer:** They (*cabinet members*) were bored by our stories. We put in the time and effort for our families (*to tell our stories*) but they got bored, they did not listen and then they were quick to put their hand up to make the decision (*to vote for the proposal*). Only 11% did want the one school (*proposal*).

**Q: Where is this 11% (against the proposal), we cannot find one person? Maybe they are made up of a few Rowde parents? We think, they are thinking - are the council being truthful? We asked the question but got nothing back?**

LA Project Leader: That is why we are going through a consultation process and a full account of the process is being recorded. This will be used as part of the decision-making process.

**Q: You say the decision is pre – statutory, this is just a tick box. They are just words, no matter how many protest (against the decision), you will not change your mind. You have already made your mind up. (more was said here but missed – minute-taker). We watched the online video (of the cabinet meeting) and there**

was no 'humming and harring' (*about the decision*), they put their hand straight up (*to agree to the proposal*). It is a disgrace and where will that be recorded? The consultation (*process*) is just about legal tick boxes, it does not give us the opportunity to say what we want to say. If I say anything, will it make a difference?

LA Project Leader: Things did change, my view went from having two schools to one school.

Parent B (has a son who has left School)

**Q: I have watched and read a lot about (*the proposal*). Why is the one school so much better? I have no problem with having a centre of excellence but why would one be so much better than a number of centres of excellence? Is it more about procedure and management with (*not taking account of*) the interest of local families and seeking local solutions. Why one centre rather than two or three?**

**Parent/carer:** It's all about (*saving*) money.

LA Project Leader: No, the council is ambitious to do something completely different.

**Parent/carer:** But you are using our vulnerable kids, in a centre of excellence, as a punch bag (*as in being used as an experiment? minute-taker*).

LA Project Leader: A one school option was seen as the best alternative to a two school option having looked at the split site in Ashton Street.

**Parent/carer:** But Ashton Street is a much bigger site and I went to a secondary school in Sheffield and their split site was miles apart!

LA Project Leader: I am just trying to explain what you are up against.

**Q: About money, we are aware that St Nicholas could make millions of pounds for housing. Are you trampling over (*the needs of*) our children for a housing development or do you already have an idea what you are going to do being doing with this land?**

LA Project Leader: Not specifically, it could be housing and that would only bring in tops £3m and this is not worth a lot to the council when the council is spending £20m (*on the new proposal*).

**Q: Is Ashton Street marked for housing?**

LA Project Leader: It has not been marked for anything in the consultation. All options are open as we need loads of housing and we are also short of mainstream schools.

**Q: We have heard that they (*the council?*) want to build houses by shutting this site and they want to extend Paxcroft (*Primary School*)?**

LA Project Leader: I would not know about that.

**Q: We have 150 kids and we have kids going ‘out of county’ and ‘out of county’ kids coming here. Why is that, it seems weird?**

LA Project Leader: There is a shortage of places in Somerset and children are going out of Trowbridge when this school is full or the nature of the children’s needs are not met in a local school. It is hard to believe, so I don’t specifically know why we would push children away.

**Parent/carer:** But you are (*pushing children away*).

**Parent B** (has a son who has left Larkrise): We are seeking more choice for families with children of special needs. Is one option for the whole county considered appropriate? Is it okay to ship children with special needs long distances but not (*expect the same of*) mainstream parents? No parent at Paxcroft would be expected to send their child to one (*large*) school (*a long distance away*). Wiltshire’s massive strength is that it has (*choice with*) a number of special schools and resource bases and there is (*also*) a degree of choice with Three Ways or Critchell. Having excellence in one building (*is not of any benefit to SEN children*) as young as 4 with parents who don’t drive. Transportation to one (*site*) is not an option. I just feel that this switch (*to the decision of one school*) would not be expected from any other (*mainstream*) parent. This (*proposal of one school*) is inappropriate and it would be ‘laughed out’ by (*mainstream*) parents but they would be able to cope with the (*long*) journeys better.

Parent with a Son at Larkrise

**Q: I have submitted a freedom of information request to find out how many non-SEND children are expected to make a journey that takes up to 2 hours on a bus? Considering the geographical areas of pupils, how far are they expected to travel if they do not have SEND requirements? The response from the council was that, ‘we do not have that data available’. What is the answer to that question? My son has severe disabilities, he is non-verbal, has delayed development and cannot walk far (*he is often sick from bus journeys – minute-taker*). It is 20 miles to Rowde from where we live which would mean 2 hours there and 2 hours back. It takes (*currently*) 7-8 pupils one hour. How long will children be expected to be on that bus? When are council going to listen?**

LA Project Leader: The answer is, we do not hold the information (*about journey times for non-SEND children*).

**Parent/carer:** That’s because it does not happen.

LA Project Leader: My son had a three-quarters of an hour bus journey to a mainstream school as we lived in a rural area. I did not have a choice. Though this is not the same for you.

**Q: So our choice is Salisbury or Rowde with our town right in the middle. (*Spire FM said new school will look like a prison – minute-taker could not hear all the details*). We both work as parents and as we have a carer for our child who does not**

**drive, we use taxis and where feasible, trains. This would be impossible for Rowde. One of us will have to give up work or we would have to move. Would that be best for our child?**

LA Project Leader: We do not want a prison (*for the new school*) and we want access for parents.

**Q: What about ambulance and fire services? These things need to be thought about as well as the impact of the extended journey on children with special needs?**

LA Project Leader: It has been thought about. We do not use transport for children with MLD.

**Parent/carer:** That's not the same (*as a child with complex special needs*).

Parent with a son at Larkrise

**Q: You ignored my question about the safety of my son on the bus with the increased danger - that issue is more important than any other.**

LA Project Leader: I cannot disagree with you.

Parent with a son at Larkrise

**Q: Where is the duty of care?**

LA Project Leader: ECHPs can include stuff around transport.

**Q: Why should children be travelling this long distance in the first place? Some will only be 4 years old? These children do well and learn (*better*) when they travel locally.**

Parent with a son at Larkrise

**Q: My son will end up having to do 10-12 hour a day! Many adults and mainstream pupils would struggle to do that. This is discrimination against the disabled and there are legal challenges when it comes to that.**

**Q: Have you looked at these vulnerable children's care plans?**

LA Project Leader: No.

**Q: Have the council (*looked at these vulnerable children's care plans*)?**

LA Project Leader: I think they do.

**Q: Pupils have seizures on transport and need medication. They might need hospital treatment – there is potentially disastrous consequences for our children who have a shortened life span due to their seizures.**

LA Project Leader: If they need those (*support*) plans (*to manage journeys*), they will have them.

**Q: But a child (*who suffers*) with seizures on transport, with a whole bus of children, could potentially die?**

LA Project Leader: The longer the journey, the more risk.

**Q: (*If a child is having a seizure on a bus*) and the road to Rowde is blocked by a lorry, how can you access that child? By air ambulance?**

**Parent A – Parent Governor:** The air ambulance at Semington is nowhere near Rowde.

*(parents were talking over each other – minute-taker)*

LA Project Leader: And if the air ambulance is grounded? I cannot answer that question.

**Q: My daughter has severe epilepsy and is disabled. We live close to the school. We walk and don't drive. We are not on the statistics, so has the extra money needed for the bus journey (*to the new school*) with 1:1 support been taken into account? And we are not alone, there are more kids in the same situation.**

LA Project Leader: We are hearing about pupils with medical issues and we have to make the proposal work.

**Q: What if (*the proposal*) does not work and children are taken out of school and home educated?**

**Q: As you can hear, young pupils with PMLD are (*currently*) supported as much as possible in their community. (*The proposal of only*) one potential school means a long journey for the majority of parents, so we need to look for a compromise? Why is (*the proposal*) an all or nothing (*solution*)? Yes, we are open to a new school, a centre of excellence, but why not at least look at Larkrise and St Nicholas in terms of PMLD education? Perhaps, children can go to a local primary school and then maybe move at the age of 11 when some can then undertake a longer journey? We still have a year to work towards a solution and can think about what will work for the majority of parents? My concern is that the council is reducing choice and even limiting it.**

LA Project Leader: For post-16 we will offer a range of services from providers.

Parent A – Parent Governor

**Q: Who are those (*post-16*) providers? Wiltshire College and Fairfield College are not suitable (*for pupils with PMLD*).**

LA Project Leader: I cannot say the names exactly.

**Parent A – Parent Governor:** My child is severely autistic (*and will need specialist post- 16 provision*).

Acting Head for Commissioning and Joint Planning: (*Minute-taker missed the beginning of this response*). There will be 20 different providers working with us and alongside Wiltshire College and Fairfield College.

**Parent A – Parent Governor:** (*Minute-taker missed the response*).

**Q: Taking children out of their local community to a village they don't know and then bringing them back to do some sort of post-16 education means that they will have lost the connection (*with their local community*). Currently, my child is being taunted for being different (*and this moving back and forth will not help the situation?*)**

LA Project Leader: Dependent on the age of the child, there might be a different solution for transition. If a child just has 2 years left at school, they might not go. Transition process needs more detail.

**Q: Do you need to know how long the transition process takes for our child (*with PMLD*)?**

Acting Head for Commissioning and Joint Planning: For Post-16 education, children can come back to integrate with their local community.

**Q: Why can't our younger children do this (*integrate with the community*) in our school here? They will live here and spend their whole lives here (*minute taker – missed some of the question on children needing 5 years to get used their home town*). All children are known in their community.**

**Q: Kids should be brought up in their own community. Why put them somewhere they don't know and Laura Mayes even said that?**

LA Project Leader: We do that (*message-taker was not sure what the response was in reference to?*).

**Parent/carer:** Our kids are being pushed out (*of their local community*) and we are angry as cabinet have not heard anything we have said. Our kid's safety comes first.

**Q: What will the new school offer? My daughter visits (*the shop*) Home Bargains, goes swimming, has been horse-riding and meets carers and local people in the town. So how will she learn to shop and swim?**

**Q: I have looked at the facilities closest to Rowde. The swimming pool, supermarket and shop and even a café is not within walking distance. Access to the community will have to be via transport which will mean more time on the bus and more money (*cost*) for the LA.**

**Q: What is the upside for the council when the roads are already busy with traffic and now you are looking to triple the amount of transport (*on the road*)?**

**Q: It will need 50 minibuses for 410 kids, including those out of county, to go to the new school?**

LA Project Leader: Those pupils who are out of county will probably carry on going at that school. We will keep the pupils we know.

**Q: If children go to the 'super school', what if they don't get on? Where can they go? There will be no option and no choice to go anywhere else?**

LA Project Leader: They can go to another part of the school. There will be more choice in one school.

**Q: So, you will just move my child from one class to another?**

**Q: There will be one huge school on the Rowdeford site? Why is the HT of Rowde (*ford?*) saying that there will be three individual schools?**

LA Project Leader: There will be three buildings but only one school. There will be small scale schools within the one school making there a choice within the school. (*Strategic*) landscaping will make the school (*schools within the one school*) feel accessible.

**Q: This (*one large school*) would be totally overwhelming for children. How are they going to learn life skills like shopping at Tesco and Asda and swimming at a local swimming pool? How are they going to learn these and apply them back to the town they live in?**

**Q: Our children are being discriminated against when they cannot choose a college or school? Why can't our children stay on after the age of 16? Even mainstream pupils can struggle with transition and our children have more challenges to face but will be dumped. The best post-16 education for our children is in a school that they know, nurtured by people they know into their adult years. Why do they need to go somewhere else where they will struggle to fit in?**

**Parent/carer:** It (*the new school*) feels nothing short of an institution.

**Parent/carer:** 'Centre of excellence' is just a 'sound bite', it is meaningless. State of the art equipment does not make a school a centre excellence.

Parent with a Son at Larkrise

**Q: Fairfield Farm College is for able pupils, not for mine and ours. My son will never live independently. He has a mind of a 4 or 5-year-old. What are his options after 16 when he can barely walk, cannot think for himself, is a danger out shopping and always has a carer? He cannot be left alone for more than 5 minutes and cannot adapt to anything else other than being here (*at this school*) up to the age of 19 years old.**



Acting Head for Commissioning and Joint Planning: Your son's situation will be addressed.

Parent with a Son at Larkrise

**Q: His (*my son*) needs need to be addressed now?**

Acting Head for Commissioning and Joint Planning: There will be charities and providers who will want to work with your child.

Parent A – Parent Governor

**Q: Are these post-15 providers experienced and what can they provide?**

Acting Head for Commissioning and Joint Planning: I would like to give your more ideas of what they can offer.

**Q: What is the range of (*post-16*) provision now we are in the statutory phase? You should be able to say, 'the post-16 provision is this for those children with these needs, offering colleges and Fairfield'. You should know what the provision is by now! So, you do not have a plan?**

LA Project Leader: We don't know for some (*children?*). Post-16 provision will be addressed in the ECHP.

**Q: If post-16 provision is not suitable for our children at other colleges, can the door stay open for children to stay on at Rowderford? Can you put that option in the proposal?**

LA Project Leader: It is not in the proposal yet. The details of the child's ECHP will lead on what we have to provide in the plan.

**Parent/carer:** With our children (*needs*), us adults need significant support. We can strongly argue that us parents take the brunt of the care and support for our children. Our school enables parents to get together and learn from each other. With a school being far away and pupils attending by bus means parents will not (*have the opportunity to*) meet. St Nicholas and Larkrise parents are strong friends and attend school events. Parents are supported together. You will have to think carefully about partnerships and working with parents to keep parents strong enough to support their child's needs into adulthood. I have a support network at my child's school – it an amazing school! Do not underestimate that (*parental support?*) - it is important.

**Parent/carer:** The council forget how much we parents suffer. It is a depressing life, it drains you and this is our world, it is emotionally and physically draining (*looking after our children*) and this place (*our school*) is our saviour. When we see teachers in town they interact with my child like they are their family. This is school is a 'home to home'. Staff know our pupils as well as we do.

**Parent/carer:** Staff here are exemplary and they know our kids better than ourselves sometimes, as they work with them all the time. Staff have known our children all their lives and then we are expected to send our children to Rowde – how many children

will go across? Our children are excited to be here and if the staff don't go then our children will have to get to know new staff and peers. This will (*negatively*) affect my son and that is why parents are worried. None of this is taken into account. They (*the children*) are just (*thought of as*) a number (*to the LA*) and the LA wants to ship them off to an institution, as they know these children cannot fend for themselves. My child has no danger awareness and the LA has no idea what impact this has on our family. The LA does not deal with these children's melt-downs and anger and there is no support from council. Now the council are making the situation 10 times worse (*by moving children to a different school a distance away*).

**Q: At the CAB (?) meeting Laura Mayes was patronising us by saying that parents don't like change. Yet, we are open to a compromise but the LA are not listening to what we don't want. Let's have a show of hands – who wants it (*the new one school*)? (*no hands were put up*). There is the distance, medical issues and community issues. We sound like we are personally afraid of change but we want to keep what we have got and expand on that. We do not want one school and no one is listening to the people that matter.**

**Parent A – Parent Governor:** The council is opening a school that no one wants. You have had the consultations and listened to parents. Who has come back to say they want it (*the new one school*)? You admitted that only a minority want it.

**Parent/carer:** There are 137 pupils at Rowdeford, 95 pupils at Larkrise and 85 pupils at St Nicholas, which is over 300. This does not leave a lot of spare places.

**Q: The LA will only consider (*delivering the provision as stated on*) the child's ECHP?**

LA Project Leader: Yes, it is important to do so.

**Q: As ECHPs are decided co-operatively between the school and parent, how are we to in-put into that if we struggle to get to parents' meetings? We only live 10 miles away (*and will struggle*) so how many parents will be able to get to Rowde for these meetings? We will have to make special arrangements (*with our employers*) to use annual leave, which we need for when our child is ill. How can transport and post-16 decisions be fairly decided with parents face-to-face? We need to make decisions together (*with the school*), not on our own. When we have multi-disciplinary meetings with experts, we (*the parents*) are the expert of our child, not the experts or the LA. There needs to be development on updates between home and school and how is this (*situation going to be*) good for the child?**

**Parent/carer:** We will not be able to build good relationships with the teachers (*in the new school*). Here we are an extended family. We see teachers crying now (*here at this meeting*) and know they care about us and our children.

**Parent A – Parent Governor:** These are passionate remarks but we do not feel listened to.

**Parent/carer:** The only time you (*the LA*) listen is when you want our votes.

Director of Commissioning: This is why we are here (*to listen*).

**Q: We said all of this last year when the LA Project Leader said that we could have this school (*continue as a school*). Now that decision has been turned on its head and the council said we could have 3 years for talking (*a debate*) but now it's only 1 year. What is the legal challenge on that? We are going over old ground but I have one more question. What will happen to the 20 children who need places for September when St Nicholas and here are full?**

Acting Head for Commissioning and Joint Planning: We will create a plan.

**Q: Are you pre-empting the cons to the proposal and drip feeding the proposal as a final decision to us?** (minute-taker did not understand the question)

Acting Head for Commissioning and Joint Planning: We are looking at all options.

**Q: Will you listen to parents?**

Acting Head for Commissioning and Joint Planning: Yes.

**Q: Why are you against split-sites? Why is the decision not to have a split-site shrouded in secrecy?**

LA Project Leader: Due to the extra cost.

**Parent/carer:** My child attended a school in Devon. His first school was a comprehensive built in 1964 which was not fit for purpose. A new comprehensive (based on old secondary modern/ grammar school) continued but at the age of 13 /14 pupils were bussed across town between 2 sites, 2 miles apart. We lived with it. Using Ashton Street (*as a split site*) is not rocket science.

LA Project Leader: We are not saying it is not do-able. Yes, some schools worked in the same way. However, since the 1960s and 1970s these schools have been got rid of as they are difficult to organise and now there are fewer of them.

**Parent/carer:** The Ashton Street split -site is not miles apart in this instance. There are no fears of children crossing road as staff would be able to take care of that.

Parent with a Son at Larkrise

**Q: The new site will contain Rowdeford School and plans for an expanded school onto a massive amount of land. What is the value of that land if it was to be sold off (*for housing*)?**

LA Project Leader: It would not be worth a lot. The land at Rowdeford cannot be changed to housing due to planning laws.

**Parent/carer:** The top and bottom of it is that we do not want that option (*of one new school*). We want to keep this school open. After all the months of discussions and consultations it is pitiful that you can only come up with this option. You are wrong (*with your proposal for one school*) and unfortunately, we do not have the option to send our child anywhere else.

**Q: You (*the Project Leader*) changed your mind to support this proposal for one school?**

LA Project Leader: I wanted the two school option but changed my mind with the work undertaken over the few months.

**Q: After hearing everything, you now think the ‘super school’ proposal is the best option?**

LA Project Leader: Yes.

**Q: A parent asked you at St Nicholas, what had changed your mind (*about the original suggestion of having Larkrise and St Nicholas open*) since July?**

LA Project Leader: There was not one specific thing, it was the best of the balance.

**Q: So you personally changed your mind (*about the original suggestion of having Larkrise and St Nicholas open*)?**

LA Project Leader: I am here to do a job. I am freelance and I can decide who I work for (*not sure if there was more to this response – minute-taker*)

**Q: We are saying that this proposal is not the best proposal for our children and your duty is to take that back to the LA?**

LA Project Leader: Yes, I will take that (*your feedback*) back. I hear what parents say and I know what teachers and headteachers are saying. I need to come up with viable solutions but it's not down to me.

**Q: If it is a school of excellence run by an academy, does this mean the LA will not have to fund it further?**

LA Project Leader: Whether the school is maintained or an academy, the LA will borrow money to pay for that school. (*minute-taker not sure of the meaning of this*)

**Q: Did the LA look at a range of things (*options*)?**

LA Project Leader: Yes, from the consultation, position of sites were viewed with planners. Sites that were thought to be good, did not stack up for planning.

**Q: Did you consider building a school at the back of Dursley Road?**

LA Project Leader: We looked at West Ashton as well.

**Q: Why are mainstream schools (*given priority*) over special schools?**

LA Project Leader: Rowdeford is in the countryside and so is West Ashton.

**Q: Can you build another road or access road to make it easier to access to Rowdeford?**

LA Project Leader: We can already access the site at Rowdeford.

**Q: How (*can you access Rowdeford*) when it is a country road?**

LA Project Leader: We can build a gate. (*minute-taker, not sure if I got the full answer*)

**Q: If there is access (*for a school to be built*) at West Ashton and Dursley Road, why are you pushing our kids out to the middle of nowhere at Rowde?**

LA Project Leader: Trowbridge needs a primary school and secondary school and building those outside Trowbridge is not an option.

**Q: How come we do not have a choice of special school sites, (*like mainstream pupils*)?**

**Parent/carer:** You said that houses cannot be built on the land at Rowdeford. You answered your own question – the decision made is down to money at the end of the day!

7.45pm: Mr Cook (HT) closed the meeting and advised parents/carers to go online (on the LA Consultation website) and convey their comments on there. Or parents/carers can bring comments to Mr Cook and he will ensure they are passed on to the LA.

### 4.3.2 Audio Recording Transcript

**Venue:** Larkrise Special School

**Date:** 07 February 2019

**Time:** 6pm

1. PC – Can we make a start please. I am just going to talk very briefly at the beginning and I will hand over to Alan. This meeting is being recorded and on the back of that a transcript can be made so it's completely accurate in terms of what was said. It'll be great if you say who you are before you speak and if you forget that's absolutely fine as well. The reason for the recording it that there's an accurate transcript. It is a local authority meeting so the only other thing I've got to say is there are some people here who are very confident at speaking in public, some people have quieter voices so if we could all be respectful of that and give everyone a chance to say what they want to say and there'll be a whole draft coming through as all the doors are open, I will go and close it in about ten minutes when we are confident everybody is here.
2. AS – Thank you. I think you've all probably met me before last summer. You might not have met my colleagues but you know I am Alan Stubbersfield and I use to be Director of Education for Wiltshire, somebody else is doing that job now but I'm doing the job in Bristol actually, but Wiltshire have asked me to stay on to work on the special school developments that's why I'm here tonight and that there's continuity in the project. To continue that there's two colleagues also from County Hall and I'll ask my colleagues to introduce themselves.
3. HJ – I'm Helen Jones and I am Director of Commissioning and Alan will be handing this programme over to me when we hear what you've got to say so I can understand your views as parents and carers.
4. JW – I am Judith Westcott and I am part of Helen's team and the Head of Service of Children's Commissioning.
5. SK – Hello, I'm Simone Kermode, I work at the local authority and I am in commissioning and I minute-take for them.
6. DA – Hi, I'm Dominic Argar and I am the multi-media officer at Wiltshire Council and I'll be recording the meeting. If you don't mind, if you pop your hand up when you have a question and I will come to you and pop a microphone in front of you when you ask any questions.
7. AS – So, I believe we have an hour or so to hear what you have to say and make a note of that so it goes into the thinking in the next stage of this process. I'm going to talk for as short time as possible to set the scene and then open it up to you here. So, you are familiar with the story that we were talking about last summer. We must have met around last June, between June and September.
8. Person – It was July,

9. AS – Okay, towards the end of the summer term then. Through the summer holiday and the early autumn, a lot of thinking was done about all the meetings that happened here and at the other schools, picking on the different views from those places, and it took us longer than expected because there was so much to take on board. It was complicated, different ideas came up you know. You may well remember, when I was here last time, I was probably saying and I was thinking about the outcome, that there would likely be two schools, one school here and one in Chippenham. That's not what came out of it at the end of the day, a lot of it was to do with consultation and a lot of it was to do with the practicalities of how we would actually deliver a two school option in Trowbridge and Chippenham and looking at the options before us we came up with a single school option as you know. There is some controversy attached to that which is why I am here to say this is me, let's hear what you've got to say. We've talked about being recorded and being taken into account in the next Council meeting, that will be a Cabinet meeting at the end of March and that will be looking at the proposals to close the three schools firstly, secondly to open the new school as the replacement. There's a technical complexity with what we call pre-statutory and statutory consultation for the closures. Last summer is what we call pre-statutory. It was in effect something the Council didn't have to do but wanted to do. It is now in the statutory phase which is what it has to do, which is to do with the formal notices which are around and about, saying what the proposals are, so you've got something in black and white to respond to. And of course there is a consultation online which I would urge you to do as well as attend these meetings. That's the statutory process around the closures of schools and that's a decision for the local authority because the local authority maintains schools with local authority staff that we need to think about as well and care about. The other side of it is the opening of a new school. The technicality is, is that that's a parallel process that's not directly part of the statutory notices, although it's linked because we have to say what we are going to do with these children that attend these schools, and the answer is the new school. The process we have to go through there is to develop what that school will look like and contain, technically what the specification for the new school will be because subject to all the decisions, which has not yet happened, if we go down that line we would need to publish a specification for providers of a school to say that is something I would like to pitch in for and there would be a pitching process for people who would want to deliver that school and Secretaries of State would decide which of those people would do it and off they would go. All that's going to take a long time. For the moment, the key thing is to hear what you think about that sort of stuff so that can be feed into the 26 March Cabinet meeting over the road at County Hall. There's not much more I want to be saying as this meeting is about what you say and how we listen and take note of that. Over to you unless you want me to carry on.
10. Person – There's a full Council meeting being called before that on the 26<sup>th</sup> February.

11. AS – So I don't know about that partly because my day job is now in Bristol rather than here. So, maybe somebody else can answer that question?
12. Person – So I believe the Friends of groups are sharing their petitions at full Council and that is the right thing to do that it goes through to that Council meeting. It's not a point of long debate but it can be presented at that point, that will be acknowledged and then identified as part of the consultation, so the full debate will happen in March so you won't have a long time for that discussion as it will be tabled for the March meeting.
13. AS – So, the February meeting is parallel to this, so it feeds in to the March.
14. Person – The Councillors and the Cabinet, if they decide to go against what you are or the Council has proposed will it get sacked?
15. Person – They won't make that sort of decision in that meeting. You get a hearing but they won't be making decisions in that meeting.
16. Person – But if Councillors go against it you have to stop it.
17. HJ – My understanding is that the decision has not been made by Council. Whole Council will hear the views of petitioners, it then goes to Cabinet which is the decision-making body on the 26<sup>th</sup> March.
18. Person – We've seen the things your Cabinet does and we don't like it. They've already done that to us once already and they'll do it again.
19. Person – As I said earlier people went to that meeting with petitions that were signed by thousands and it was completely ignored. You have a Cabinet that have appeared to have made a decision for a one school.
20. HJ – Obviously, at the other meeting you did raise that with us and Alan, obviously explained that the decision about petitions is around the.
21. Person – So are you going to do exactly the same thing this time on the 26<sup>th</sup> February?
22. AS – We don't know, that is up to the Council members and you are right to say all the Council will be able to have a view of the petition, they will hear what the petition have to say at the Council meeting, that won't be ignored but its.
23. Person – That's how it felt.
24. Person – I watched Cabinet member roll their eyes when people were telling stories about their children and I watched Cabinet sit there and go like this at each other and I wasn't the only one.
25. Person – They behave disgustingly.
26. Person – They were bored of our stories. We put in time and effort to be there to represent the children and the parents and families that couldn't be there and they were bored of our stories. They were sat there, they were talking amongst themselves, they weren't listening, it wasn't going in, the minute they asked for the decision to be made all their hands went up. They didn't take on board anything we said. They didn't take on board from the last consultation that only 11 percent wanted one school. And nobody has explained to us where are that 11 percent and where are the people in support of that proposal because we cannot find one person. Where are they all? They are all sitting quietly, they are all sitting quietly. Okay maybe there is a few Rowde parents that are quite happy



and think they've saved their school. We even think they are starting to reconsider and think actually the Council aren't being completely honest enough. Where are these numbers on paper? Where are they?

**27.** Person – There's no proof of anything and we've put forward questions, we've put forward freedom of information and we don't get anything back.

**28.** AS – The consultation was part of the paper work that went into the Cabinet meeting that got us into this stage of consultation. So, there was fifty odd pages of reporting including an Annex which was the analysis of the consultation last time. That's why we are recording now and why I have to speak into a microphone so there will be a full account, nothing missed out, that is part of the decision making so that's where the numbers are.

**29.** Person – Can I just make a point about your consultation process. I'm a parent of one of the children here. Consultation process, your words, there is a pre-statutory, there's a statutory and then a decision. Those are tick boxes only in words, there's no idea of ever changing your mind and you can use these words. As you said pre-statutory and statutory. Statutory means its legal it just means you've got to go through the steps, you've got to go through the motions, you've got to have a record of it and it doesn't really matter how many people protest against it or however many people complain about it. You make up your mind as a Council but when we complained about it, you go well we went through consultation, we went through this and we went through that. I've been made redundant in my life and the biggest joke of all is that they consult the employees about the redundancies and the changes. It doesn't mean a damn thing because they've made their mind up and they are going to kick you out anyway. There's no comeback because they have statutory rights and they have gone through those processes. The meeting where they said they have already made up their minds to the parents, well I looked at the minutes and some of the online video of it and I've got to agree. I wasn't there, but it was a case of oh well we've already made our minds up because I watched the video of it and the minute it was put to the vote all of the executive hands went up in an instant. There was no thinking about it or um-ing and r-ing or anything. It was here we go we've done it, thank you, tick the box. The second point about the consultation, your online one is a disgrace. I filled it in recently, you've got one question that says please pick three of the items about your concerns. Three. There was seven or eight there and one clicked other and in the box, all of the above. Where's that going to be recorded? I feel strongly that about seven, eight or all of them but I was only restricted to three and the system wouldn't let me do it. So, this is a point of order. Your consultation thing is about a legal tick box, no more no less, and it sucks because it's not even giving us what we want to say about it.

**30.** AS – Well you can say what you want here and we will take.

**31.** Person – Is what I say here going to make a difference though?

**32.** Person – Well it didn't last time.

- 33.** AS- Well I don't know. Things do change in the last process and that's why it took until November. In the way I just said. My own view changed from a two school to a one school. You don't agree with that but I am saying that things moved on and things still can move on.
- 34.** Person – My son came to Larkrise, he's now left. I've watched and read quite a lot about it. It is still not clear to me why the one school solution is some much better. I have no problem with centres of excellence, I think already in Wiltshire there are some centres of excellence but I cannot yet understand why one centre of excellence would be so much better than a number of centres of excellence within a rural county. It baffles me why. What I suppose I want to ask you is one centre of excellence more about procedure management? Because I can't believe that it is for the benefit of and in the interest of local families seeking local solutions. That's my concern about the whole thing. I do not understand why one is better than two or three.
- 35.** AS – In very blunt terms is boils down to.
- 36.** Person – Its money.
- 37.** AS – I don't think it does as I have been involved in discussions in County Hall where these things have been talked about. I think the Council is very ambitious to do the best and something future proof.
- 38.** Person – You are not using our kids as punch bags because that is basically what you are doing.
- 39.** AS – Well.
- 40.** Person – Well it is. You've got vulnerable kids in centres of excellence which you've already got here and St Nicks, so why make something up that we have got already?
- 41.** AS – There's no argument that your staff here aren't excellent. I think my point was that and I'm saying it bluntly, let's have it out on the table, the one school option was seen, I'm trying to answer your question, as a better alternative than the two school option. Principally because the two school option would have meant a split site using this and Ashton Street and I know it's been thought about before.
- 42.** Person – It's a much bigger site, it's just across the road and it is a much bigger site.
- 43.** AS – Okay.
- 44.** Person – I actually went to a secondary school in Sheffield which was a split site just outside of the city centre. You attend sixth form right on the edge of Sheffield that is what you call a split site.
- 45.** AS – Okay but I am trying to explain where the Council is coming from. So you know what you are up against.
- 46.** Person – Just going back to the talk about the money. So, obviously we are aware that this site, St Nicolas, and Ashton Street site are all going to be worth millions and millions and millions for housing. So, why is it that you are trampling on our children just to get more money for housing developments?
- 47.** AS – I think we.

48. Person – Or do you already have an idea or the Council already have an idea what they are going to do with this and St Nicolas.
49. AS – Well, specifically they don't, well it probably would be housing. The value of those sites is the topside of three million which in Council budgets is not very much and it wouldn't be worth the Council going into a big fight for that kind of money. Its wanting to spend £20 million or more on the whole project. So, its big spend and some saving if you like.
50. So, is Aston Street marked for housing? Will you build houses on the Ashton Street Site?
51. AS – Well at the moment its marked as, well because we have not concluded this consultation it's not marked for anything.
52. Person – Do you have that in mind?
53. AS – Well all options are open in the end. So, I'm not saying that nobody has ever thought of housing for this site or St Nicolas or Ashton Street or anywhere because basically we need loads and loads of housing. So, any space land is probably going to be housing. Or we also know that Trowbridge is also short of space for mainstream schools.
54. Person – So I believe that you are going to put 300 houses on there, that's what I was led to believe, shut this site and possibly extend Paxcroft school so you can have a school big enough to cater for those.
55. AS – I can't imagine that you would get 300 houses on Ashton Street but that's not something I would know about anyway.
56. Person – That's your secondary school project, right? Where you could get about 150 kids. We've got kids from around the county and you've got kids out the county coming here. People come from in from Crewkerne Somerset coming here, when we've got kids from Bath and Avon.
57. AS – My guess is that, I don't know the cases.
58. Person – Well I don't expect you to know names but it just seems weird.
59. AS – Yes it does and it's got to be to do with shortage of places in Crewkerne and shortage of the particular kind of spaces we need because this covers most things. But if some child is going to be going out of Trowbridge it must be because the particular, this school is full so that's an issue for us or it's the nature of the needs of the child will not be met in this school. That's hard really as this school meets all kinds of needs, I don't know the specifics of the situation but we wouldn't do that unless we were pushed into a corner as we don't want to send children away. Not that they want to send children away from Crewkerne to Trowbridge.
60. Person – Sorry, its Parent B again. I may be speaking out of turn but I am actually seeking more choice for families with children who have families with special needs. My concern is that I cannot think of another group for whom one option in one half of the county would be considered appropriate. So, you're right there are new schools needing to be built. What I am concerned about is that children with special needs are considered to be okay to be shipped long distances. It isn't something that is being offered to mainstream parents, you

know. Nobody is suggesting to the Mead that suddenly their children have to go to Rowde for the appropriate schooling and that Rowde will become the only choice in Wiltshire, and that's what I am really worried about. Apologies, obviously Salisbury as well. I feel that Wiltshire has had a massive strength. We've had a number of special schools, we've had resource bases. Therefore, parents have had a degree of choice, even if that choice is going to Three Ways or Critchill school. But we are looking at taking what I think could be a number of centres of excellence and choosing to put it all in one building. And for instances the very youngest children, to think that for those at four are going to be happy, particularly with parents that don't drive, with transporting the children to the one option because actually they aren't being given the opportunity to look at a Larkrise or to look at a St Nicks. I just feel that if we switched it and expected any other parents with another group of children to say that this is appropriate for you, it would be laughed out. You just wouldn't do it for mainstream families. And yet I would argue that those were the children who could cope with those journeys better.

**61.** Clapping.

**62.** AP – parent C and my son (name of child) comes here and I am going to reiterate what Parent B is saying because I submitted a freedom of information request to the Council and my question was how many non-SEND children are expected to make the 20 mile journey that my son would have to make against the number of SEND children that would be expected to do it? How many would be expected to take up to two hours on a bus whether its SEND or non-SEND? And I wanted to know the geographical areas and the distribution of these children around the county of Wiltshire, or this half of Wiltshire, and how far they would be expected to travel if they did not have SEND requirements. I didn't expect a lot and I was actually disappointed by that standard. The answer was we do not have that data available. The Council's response was that answer. I have thought about appealing it but I just know that it'll fall on deaf ears again as that's exactly what the Council wants. What is the answer to that question? If you could put it in simple words, my son has severe disabilities, and he cannot always handle journeys of up to an hour to get here. Just the other day he got ten minutes, we got a call from the bus driver saying we are going to have to bring him back as he's been sick. He was right as rain before he went, he was right as rain afterwards because often he can't cope with the temperature on the bus which is difficult. In that time the passenger assistant cannot be sat next to him for the entire journey and there's choking hazards involved here, there's safety of the child involved here. None of these are taken into account as the passenger assistant has got their hands full with other children on the bus. Is this going to be a safety matter if he has to go 20 miles? We live in a Wiltshire town, 20 miles to Rowde. That's an hour, potential two hours dependant on traffic there and two hours back. Here is on a bus of about seven or eight people and they take an hour to get here. If they are going 20 miles are they going to fill that bus up with more children? Are they going to pick up more people along

the way? How long is he going to be on that bus? The Council could not answer me on how many mainstream children with SEND difficulties are expected to do it. Exactly what Parent B was saying, and I want that answer. So, when are the Council actually going to listen?

**63.** Clapping.

**64.** AS – So, you would have had the answer. We don't hold the information because we don't hold the information.

**65.** AL – I don't believe that. I don't believe that.

**66.** Person – That's why it doesn't happen because you don't.

**67.** AS – I could speculate on an answer on how many mainstream children travel two hours, I don't think they do.

**68.** Person – Well they are being educated in the local community.

**69.** AS – My son went to his mainstream primary school three quarters on an hour on the bus, each way, because I have always lived in rural places, so there are places. I did not have a choice in mainstream because of where I lived and that's the case for a lot of people in mainstream. But it's not the same as you face, I know. I'm realistic about that.

**70.** AL – The choices that we have got are Salisbury or Rowde. Either way it's 20 miles each way. Whichever one, we are not going to send them to the one in Rowde, we are going to send them to the one in Salisbury. That's still twenty miles for him because we are smack in the middle. There was a Spire FM news report this week about the new school in Chippenham that has just opened up and its function for one for the north of the county. I saw the pictures of that site and it looks like an institution, it looks like a prison and that's what Rowde is going to look like and that's not going to be acceptable to anybody. My wife and I both work, we both drive, our oldest daughter is his carer and she doesn't drive. As it is, my wife is in Warminster and she can get to Trowbridge if necessary. When both of us have been working, our daughter has had to come here by taxi to pick him up when he's been ill and go back. £50 a time, 20 miles each way, or by train which is an hour each way and the bit to get to school in between. If it was 20 miles at least Trowbridge, if she has to get a train, she can get a train. Rowde is impossible to get to unless she learns to drive. She tried and failed so I can't put any pressure on her. She's doing the best she can. One of us will have to give up work or we'd have to move out the county. Is that's what's best for our children?

**71.** AS – What I'm hearing is concerns about what if there was going to be a school there you don't want it to look like a prison, nobody does, we need to take care about enabling parents to get to the school if they need to.

**72.** Person – And will ambulances and fire engines be able to get in there if needed as well.

**73.** Person – Shouldn't all of this have been taken into account? Journey times, children with additional needs and life limiting conditions. Shouldn't all of these have been thought about when you came to this conclusion. It's almost like you have gone well this is what we are doing and you don't seem to have listened.

- 74.**AS – I'm saying it has been and you are challenging that. There is an experience of transporting children from across Wiltshire to our special school in Devizes to Rowdeford. They are not PMLD of course.
- 75.**Person – No but they are moderate learning difficulties and that's completely different to having children with profound and severe complex needs.
- 76.**AL – And the concerns that I have just said about the distance you have ignored. So, this is why we have no faith in the Council.
- 77.**AS – Well I'm not finishing.
- 78.**and it's one of the most important points I made. What about the safety of children that are picked up? It's increased danger the further and longer they are on the bus. That is a big concern and probably the most, I know, if I can say for everybody, that we are concerned about. But what about the safety of our children? Surely that is more important than any other consideration that the Council has to take in making a decision.
- 79.**AS – And I don't disagree.
- 80.**Person – Where is the duty of care around our children on that transport?
- 81.**AS – Well transport is now in the EHCP. Specifications can be made in the planning in the EHCP and a review of the plan if it's not working and those specifications can include stuff about the transport. We will not have children who are not safe.
- 82.**Person – Why should we have to take these risks in the first place? Some of these kids are going to be four years old. It's going to be exhausting, you know. How do you expect them to perform and learn and do well at school if they've got travel like that at either end of the day?
- 83.**AL - This was one of my questions. It is a case of sometimes having to do a 10, 12-hour day and most adults struggle to do that, let alone many children in mainstream schools struggle to do that. Yet these children with SEND requirements are potentially, well I don't want to say potentially anymore, are going to be expected to do it if the Council gets its way, and that to me is discrimination against the disabled, and I think that is a strong point that Council should take note of because those are legal challenges if it comes to that.
- 84.**AS – Fair point.
- 85.**Person – Have you actually looked at the vulnerable children cares plans at all?
- 86.**AS – No, I haven't, no.
- 87.**Person – Have the Council?
- 88.**AS – Yes Council officers do that.
- 89.**Person – I don't think they do. So, we have children here that have severe epilepsy, they have life limiting illnesses, what happens if they have a seizure on transport and requires medication? I know PA's some of them are trained to give medication, well what if that medication doesn't work? That child may need hospital treatment. What are you going to do? Drop the other kids off at school first before you take them to hospital? It's not going to happen. You have to take them to hospital, it's as simple as that. You know that potentially, this could have potentially disastrous consequences for our children, because some of

them, are they going to have epilepsy profiles on the bus, because they are going to need, because some children only have a very short span when they can be in seizure for and then, well we all know what could happen.

**90.** AS – Yeah, so if they need those plans they will have those plans.

**91.** Person – Yes but how are you going to deal with it if a child has potentially a bad seizure on the transport and they are not, the medication isn't working for them? What are you going to do with a whole bus full of children and a child that could potentially die?

**92.** AS – I think we are going to do the same as we do already and what you are saying to me I think is, with a longer journey there's more risk.

**93.** Person – There is more risk to it, definitely.

**94.** AS – But those things can happen now.

**95.** Person – But there is an ambulance station down the road.

**96.** Person – Exactly, there ain't one at Rowdeford. There's one road to Rowdeford from Calne and Chippenham. It was recently blocked off wasn't it because of an RTA both ends. How are the kids going to get in and out? And the other thing is that Councillor Mayes, bless her, said oh well we'll have a helicopter pad built on the new site. Air ambulance was grounded two months ago wasn't it? How are you going to get around that one?

**97.** Person – The air ambulance is currently in Semington and that's nowhere near Rowdeford.

**98.** AS – Okay, I have experience of working with a school that did exactly that and if the air ambulance is grounded I don't know what arrangements they make. There is an experience of having schools to get to schools if they need to.

**99.** Person – Can I just intervene please? My daughter is one of these children that has severe epilepsy and she doesn't get on the bus at the moment, so she's not in any of your statistics that you've got. I walk her to school, I don't drive and she's not the only one. There are other children who are driven here or who walk to school, you know. They are not on the statistics at the moment to get transport. What about those children? Have you taken them into account because that's going to be extra money that you are going to have to find. (Name of child) will have to get on a bus. She doesn't have to do that now and she will need a one to one PA on the bus who could give her rescue meds if they need to and she isn't alone. There are a lot of other children in that position. Have you got the costings for those children? I doubt it.

**100.** AS – So we've not got the costing for individual children but what I'm hearing very strongly is that your concerns about the medical issues and for you it has to stack up if this is going to work or whatever the solution is.

**101.** Person – The solution is that they will be taken out of education and will be home educated, that's what will happen.

**102.** Person – I'm hearing and I think you are as well, there is a very strong argument for PMLD children and very young children particularly to be supported within their local communities, or as much as possible. I live in a Wiltshire Town, I was terrified at the thought of bringing my son over to

Trowbridge, that seemed a long way away for me. But actually we are looking as I say at only two potential schools, if we think about it are going to be a long long way away for the majority of parents. It's going to be by exception, particularly, in the Rowde area that you are going to have a school on your doorstep. So, you know one of the things again, I think we need to be looking toward compromise sometimes. I don't understand why it has to be all or nothing. I do believe there is a place for a new school, centre of excellence or whatever in the county. I think certainly the numbers coming through we have to generate that. But why couldn't we at least look and again this is, you know I haven't given this a great deal of thought and I haven't spoken to Mr Cook about it at all, but why aren't we looking at Larkrise and St Nicks in terms of PMLD children and the youngest primary education? You know if you had local primary at eleven you could argue that some children can take a longer journey, are better prepared for a change of school like there mainstream peers. I just sometimes think that you veer towards one solution when actually if we looked at compromise and we looked at what would work for the majority, we might all end up with better choice and the feeling that views were being listened to. It's a real concern for me that we are reducing choice and not actually developing it. This is a terrific opportunity for Wiltshire.

- 103.** AS – Some compromise that you talk about has come through the thinking that has happened in the summer and autumn about the post-16, that at 16 we would look at a range of providers.
- 104.** Person – What providers would you actually look at? Your only provision is Wiltshire College and Fairfield and that isn't suitable for some of our children.
- 105.** AS – Additional providers have been developed.
- 106.** Person – What exactly?
- 107.** AS – I don't know the names.
- 108.** Person – My child is severely autistic. What provision have you looked at for those type of children?
- 109.** JW – I can give you some of the answers to that at the moment. So, we have been doing work with a whole range of providers.
- 110.** Person – What providers?
- 111.** JW – So, there is Catch 22, Kumon, there's a range of different providers about 20 in total who are looking to work with us at the moment. I don't want to name any particular one. The idea at the moment is to work alongside Wiltshire College and Fairfield to enable children to have opportunities in their own communities as well as linked to one of the colleges so that they would get.
- 112.** Person – My child needs one to one and sometimes three to one in school. Are you going to provide that post-16?
- 113.** JW – If that's what's need then we will continue it going forward.
- 114.** Person – So my question. We are going to take children out of the local community to go to another school. By the time it's open, my daughter is going to get a couple of years in a school she's not going to know and in a village that she's not going to know. Then she has got to come back to a community that



she has lost her connection with to try and do some sort of post-16 when at the moment my child is currently having issues with being taunted and picked on in the town centre for being different. But you want to take her away from what she wants already.

- 115.** AS – So we have different age group based solutions. We talked about how the building would open in 2023 and I think they are questions for us about how we do that transition. So your question is exactly what I would have in my mind. Would you move a child in the last year of school from here to Rowde for the one year, you might not, for two years you might not, for each different year group there may be different questions. So, the transition thing is something that we will need to get into more detail. That's someway down the road but I think there is some flexibility that can be in place.
- 116.** Person – Judith said that post-16 would come back here to integrate into their community, do things in their own community. Why can't our younger children do things in their community in a school here?
- 117.** Person - Most of our children will live their whole lives in Trowbridge or in Chippenham and you are intending to move them to somewhere they don't know, to get used to that. My son is only young so when, if he goes there, because if I have my way he's not going, if he goes over there, he'll have five years of getting used to Rowde to come back home to have to go through it all again to get use to his home town. That's not very fair to him is it? It's not very fair to any of them. All the children around here are known in the community.
- 118.** AS – Okay.
- 119.** Person – Why is this Council moving our kids out of the community? Why move them to somewhere that doesn't work?
- 120.** AS – This Council is doing, what most Councils do. We do move children out of villages and towns around this area to Trowbridge already, to Rowdeford.
- 121.** Person – But they are being moved to here they are being pushed out.
- 122.** AS – I understand.
- 123.** Person – This is why we are so angry with the Council as they have not being listening to what any of us have been saying.
- 124.** Person – Going back to keeping them in their community. I want to know what the new school will offer at the moment, I can't talk for every child at the school obviously, but my daughter has been to Home Bargains this week and they have brought their health snack, they have been swimming at the local swimming pool, they go horse riding, they do all sorts of things, meeting people and shops and career people in their town. What do they have in Rowde that offers those opportunities? Where do they learn to shop, where do they learn to swim?
- 125.** Person – Can I just add on to that. I've been doing a bit of homework today and facilities in and the closest to here in Trowbridge, the closest to Larkrise. And I looked at the closest in Devizes and I looked at the closest things that children use like swimming pools, like the supermarket, like the shop. And every single one of those things, including the café, is not within walking

distance for our children. So, they would have to access the community via transport incurring more cost for you guys and even more time on a bus.

- 126.** Person – And Rowde Parish Council are already upset about their roads being too busy and they are going to have, what, triple the transport coming through?
- 127.** I've actually worked out that the kids coming to the new school, it'll take 50 minutes or something. How are you going to afford that? Who's going to pay for that? I'll tell you who the silly buggers here, us.
- 128.** AS – We'll have to pay for 15 mini buses wherever they go.
- 129.** Person – Well actually your figures are wrong, they'll be 350 kids. It's going to be more than that. If you work your maths out properly because you've obviously been to the school of Diane Abbott of mathematics it'll actually be 410. That's the amount of kids at the moment. If no one came or went, it's 410 kids.
- 130.** AS – Well, we wouldn't necessarily be planning for children from out of Wiltshire. That takes account of kids from here who will have to go out the county. So, add all those back on, they are actually coming back into county.
- 131.** AS – They probably won't. If they are going to that school they will probably continue going to that school. The issue for us is.
- 132.** Person – But that's not the issue, you want to keep the kids in the county.
- 133.** AS – Well the new ones they will. The ones that are already established in the school they know we wouldn't be pulling them out.
- 134.** Person – But what happens when they go to this new super school, as you put it this centre of excellence? What happens if our children do not get on in that school? Where else is there for them to go? There is no other option because you are making one school.
- 135.** AS – With a large school like that, and you might disagree with the answer, is another part of the school, because you'll have more choice within one school. You've got the same number of teachers, you've got the same number of classes, you've got the same range in one school that you have got in three.
- 136.** Person – Then you can deal with my son when he has a meltdown.
- 137.** Person – So, you're saying that on Rowdeford site there is going to be one school?
- 138.** AS – That's the proposal.
- 139.** Person – One huge school.
- 140.** AS – Yes.
- 141.** Person – Right, why is the head of Rowdeford telling people that there are going to be three individual schools on that site?
- 142.** AS – Because he's talking about buildings.
- 143.** Person – Well then, he needs to get his facts right about what is being said.
- 144.** AS – He is right.
- 145.** Because he is saying three individual schools.

- 146.** AS – It will not be three individual schools. The proposal is there will be one school and we've made that very clear. We don't want something that looks like a prison or an institution all these things have been said, or a super school. We want it to be small scale, lots of places so there is a choice of the blue building, the red building, or however you describe them, because we've got loads of land there. Do the landscaping, we can make it feel accessible, not too big, because round the corner there will be another part that you might go to when you are older or you might, like your point, go to another class that's suits, as they'll be another class to go to like a big school. In a small school this doesn't.
- 147.** Person – Which will be totally overwhelming.
- 148.** AS – Well the idea is for all those separate buildings is exactly to deal with that question.
- 149.** Person – The thing is that the teachers take them out into the local community to Tesco, to Asda, to buy their bread rolls. Like Hayley said, they know where the swimming pool is. They've got to learn their life skills. How are they going to learn those out in the middle of a village somewhere? How do they then apply those life skills back into the town that they live in? It's no good learning how to catch a bus over there if you then can't apply that in the town that you live in.
- 150.** AS – Okay.
- 151.** Person – I just want to go back to the point of post-16. It seems very discriminatory to me. Mainstream children have the option of staying on at school after they are 16. They can either chose to go to college in their local area or they can stay on at school. So, I don't know why our children can't stay on at school after they are 16. I've taught in FE for over 20 years and in LD and right through to mainstream level three, and even the most articulate and able level three child can struggle at 16 moving into college, you know, just into the transition into adulthood, being in a new place etcetera. Our kids have far more challenges in place and yet they are going to be dumped basically out of the familiar environment. The best place for them to be post-16 is to be in the school that they know, with the teachers that they know, in a familiar environment that can nurture them through to their adult years, not dropped into some kind of provider who has commercial ability and not much else, or another college where they don't fit in and will struggle to fit in. You're dropping them in the ocean and it's really really unfair. It really does seem like nothing short of an institution.
- 152.** Person – I thought that we were supposed to be moving forward, not Victorian times.
- 153.** Person – This centre of excellence, it's a sound-bite, it's nameless. You know you can fill a school with state of the art equipment, it doesn't make it a centre of excellence.
- 154.** Person – Taking it back to the post-16 provision. The talk that you are mentioning, the private providers, the colleges, Fairfield Farm. I've been to

Fairfield farm and been to the café there. I've seen the children and they are able children, who are able to understand and able to work in the environment. Yes, they have SEND difficulties same as everybody else, but they are able to understand certain things. What about children like mine and other parents around here. My son will never, ever be able to live independently as he will not be able to understand now. He is ten years old now and he'll be nearly fifteen when this new school opens. He has the mind of a four/five-year-old in some areas. He will also be a dependant. He will never leave home unless we put him in a home, which sounds like you want to do here. After 16 what are his options and children like him? He cannot live independently, he's not safe to be independent, he can barely walk long distances, he can't think for himself, he doesn't understand the concept of danger, he can't understand the concept of shopping even though they try to, and at least he gets taken out here, he's always got a carer. Post-16 here can't go to Fairfield farm. What about these private providers, are they going to offer education of some kind? He's not going to take to that, he has to have one to one care in his class. God help the teachers here, they do a marvellous job. What's going to happen after 16? He cannot adapt to any other environment except here, and here from 16 to 19 there's a provision. Plus he'll only have the distance from home than he would be from Rowde. There's nothing post-16 for him and children like him because the way they are and the difficulties for them they just cannot be left in a safe way. What's the provision for the Council and I'm addressing the lady there as she's the one with all the answers. That there doesn't say much and that one there is. So, I would like to ask you what the provision is for children like mine who cannot be left alone for five minutes in a safe environment? What is there for them?

- 155.** JW – That's something that we are going to need to address looking at the whole system.
- 156.** Person – It needs to be addressed. We need to know exactly now.
- 157.** JW – And that's why we are working with a range of providers at the moment. There are some charities as well as private business. In fact most of them are charities who want to work with your children and want to provide for them post-16.
- 158.** Person – Are they going to have staff who have experience of profound and complex needs.
- 159.** Person – What can they provide?
- 160.** JW – They want to provide both support and skills.
- 161.** Person – What can they? Not the textbook answer, what can they provide?
- 162.** JW – I would need to go through all the providers with you. I would like to introduce you to them and we can give you links to the sites so you can look a bit more and explore for yourselves what these providers can offer to you.
- 163.** Person – Okay. So, what are the range of provisions that they offer? Never mind which providers. At this point now in the statutory phase when you

are about to make the decision in six weeks' time, you should be able to say post-16 the type of provision we've got is this for children with these needs, it is that for children with those needs, and there's colleges for people who can understand that side of things. There's Fairfield farm, at this point in time. God forbid you should know this at this point in time, doing otherwise you're no better than Theresa May. By the time Brexit comes we won't even know what's happening with our children in five years' time.

- 164.** AS – The answers I think are the same as for 16 year olds as they as for the older ones.
- 165.** Person – You haven't got a plan. Theresa May doesn't have one.
- 166.** AS – We don't know all that is going to be in the main school, if it turns out to be in Rowde. It'll be like this only better, the facilities will be there, the space will be there so on and so on. The same will be true for post-16 because what you will get and what your children will get is what is specified on the EHCP. You've got us over a barrel, they will get what's in your plan.
- 167.** Person – Will it provide provision for children from 16 to 19 for those who have no other options. Post-16 provisions at the moment are not suitable, the children are not suitable for Fairfield, not suitable for other colleges. Are you saying to me that the door is still open for them to stay at Rowdeford from 16 to 19 as that's the only place that they can be?
- 168.** AS – That's not the proposal at the moment.
- 169.** Person – Well then put it in the proposal.
- 170.** AS – That's what you are saying to us and we are hearing what you are saying. What I'm saying is the EHCP is a lever as we have got to provide what's in the assessed plan.
- 171.** Person – Can I just add to that. This is really key. Our children are going to be adults one day. They are going to need significant levels of support the whole way through. Now what matters for our children is the resilience of their parents because parents, whether we like it or not, are going to take the brunt of the care and support working with the local authority. Now, I would argue very strongly that a school in the local community enables us to get together. It enables us to learn from each other and support each other. And again a really big concern for me is that the school is far away and the children, all the children will go on a bus there and back. Parents do not see each other or meet each other and I think if you speak to St Nicks, if you speak to Larkrise, you'll find that they have really strong Friends of Larkrise or Friends of St Nicks which are events held where parents are supported together. And I do think we have to think carefully about partnership working with parents and they are strong enough to be able to continue to meet children's needs way on into adulthood. My son has left school now and believe me it's not getting easier. So you know that the strength I gain through the support network and I'm looking round at it, while he was at school is amazingly important. And I've got to go to another meeting. Please do not underestimate that, it's really important.
- 172.** Clapping.

- 173.** AS – Okay, supporting parents.
- 174.** Person – I think what the Council forgot how much parents suffer. Having a special needs child, it's quite a depressing life, it really drains you. Although we love our children and they are our worlds. Personally, I am emotionally and physically drained on most days and this place is my child's second home.
- 175.** Person – It's our saviour, this place. Definitely.
- 176.** Person – Walking into town and bumping into the teachers and they will interact with my child as if it's one of their own members of their family. They are fantastic. And if you put her in a school of that size, with that many people, with that many students, with that many teachers, are they still going to interact with them the same? Are they still going to know them on a one to one basis?
- 177.** AS – I think, my experience of very big schools is, yes.
- 178.** Person – The things is that we are also thinking of is that the staff here are exemplary, all of them, from the head teacher down, all of them exemplary and they know our children sometimes better than we know them ourselves. They might have spotted something about our child that we don't even know. It's no downer on us but they work with them all the time. You're proposing to send our children over to Rowde. How many of the staff who have known these children all their lives, how many are going to go with them? These are staff that they know and they trust and they are excited to be at school with, staff that know them and care for them and look after them. If those staff don't go with them our children have to get used to not just a new school, new staff, other strangers, new peers, everything. I can't even begin to think about how that's going to affect my son and I am sure that the parents that are here are worried about how it's going to affect their children. You're just not taking that into account. They're a number on a piece of paper and its oh look they're the most vulnerable, we'll just ship them out to an institution because that's what it is going to be.
- 179.** Person – They can't fend for themselves.
- 180.** Person – They can't fend for themselves. I would love for my child to be able to walk to school but he can't he relies on me to take him to school because he has no danger awareness, he would run out in front of a car, he has no danger awareness. You're not taking into consideration the impact on these children or the impact it's going to have on the families, because you're not the ones who have to deal with our children when they are having a meltdown, or they are so angry and they don't want to go to school. It's us that will deal with it and getting no support from Wiltshire Council for the parents or the children. It is just going to make it ten times worse.
- 181.** Person – Can I just say, sorry, that in the Cabinet meeting Laura Mayes said, it was quite patronising, she made out that we are just parents who don't like change and we are worried. It's not that, we know that we need change, we are open to compromise but you are not listening to what we don't want. Show of hands in this room, is there anyone here who wants it to happen? We know we have to have compromise. We are happy to have compromise, but the key

factors are the distance, the medical issues, the community issues, they're not being listened to. No offence, it's starting to sound personal, it's starting to sound that we are worried, that we are afraid of change. We are not afraid of change. We want to keep what we've got. We want to expand on that and we don't want one school. But nobody is listening to that, nobody is listening to the people that matter and should matter.

- 182.** Person – So you are going to end up building a school that nobody actually wants. You've had countless consultations, you've listened to parents from across Wiltshire and all three schools and has anybody actually come back to you and said they want this super school? You admitted yourselves earlier that only a small minority actually want it. Have you also done the maths? At the moment you have a 137 children in Rowdeford about 95 here about 85 in St Nicks. If you add together all those children it is pushing 300. You aren't going to have that many spaces once you get to 350.
- 183.** AS – Okay.
- 184.** Person – To go back to a parental choice. If I decided that I didn't not want to send my daughter to this school for various reasons, it could be travelling, it could be that it doesn't meet her needs or for whatever reason I don't want to send her there. What choice do I have? Where else can she go? What else are you going to offer her?
- 185.** Person – Just going on from what you said earlier about the EHCP's, you said that they are the only thing you consider when you make decisions about what children are going to have.
- 186.** AS – I don't think I did say that.
- 187.** Person – Well you said EHCP is the law, something like that you said about EHCP being the top thing you take into account.
- 188.** AS – It is important yes.
- 189.** Person – So let's just establish that it is important then. ECHP's are decided by the cooperation of the school and the parent, that's why we have parents evenings, correct I think, because we have a say what the plan is and we put in what we think. We get given a sheet, please fill I what your child has done and what you think they need, okay, we do that. We struggle as a family ourselves to get to parents evenings here, we missed one last week which I want to speak to Mr Cook about later, we only live ten miles away but how many parents are going to struggle to get to parent's evening if they are in Rowde? Even if you are local here in Trowbridge its ten miles. We'd have 20 miles. We both work full time, sometimes they are short notice, sometimes there is more notice but most parents evenings start at six o'clock. I don't finish at 5.30, most people do. I can't remember the last parents evening I attended for my son but if we are unable to get to those meetings and have EHCP's discussed in the timely manner the school want them, then we have to make special arrangements to come and discuss them, which means taking leave at short notice which is hard when you have a child with special needs as they are short notice. So, if EHCP's are the most important thing to take into account when

considering transport, post-16 and other things that have been said, how are they fairly decided? The parents cannot have input face to face. It's not right because you have to have the form sent to the home, fillings it in and then sent back to the school. Often, you sit down think about things and you can't remember all of them, face to face like we should be with the teachers, you discuss them, as you should, and it that discussion, ah yes that's another thing I wanted to talk to you about and then things get added to it. These things are decided by a panel and put together but the parents are the most important as they are the ones who know what their child needs outside the school. Put them inside the school and they have all the provisions, outside the school the parents are the only ones. If you are the parent of a child with special needs, medical concerns or anything else, the first thing you know is you get input in a meeting with a multi-disciplinary meeting and everybody introduces themselves, I'm this person and I'm an expert in this and I'm that person I'm and expert in that. I sat in my first one and I felt like I was being pushed around, good you're an expert, that makes us all experts but when it comes to our child we are the experts. Not you, not the school, not the governing council, we are the experts in what our child needs and quite often the schools input back to us, in a community like this where its small enough and the children are noticed and recognised, they come back to you and say did you know your son did this? Blimey, he doesn't do that at home, home do we get him to do that, what can we do? The development comes back and forth between the home and the school. If we cannot get to this school because it is out of the way, how is it good for any child?

- 190.** Person – What we are saying is that it's going to be very impersonal and they are not going to be able to build relationships with the teachers, like the good relationships we've got with the teachers at their school. It's fairly well known that teachers and families aren't supposed to form relationships but when you have got children with special needs it's almost impossible not to. We think a lot of our teachers and they think a lot of our children and we watched staff go in tears. That shows you and it shows us how much they care about our children and their education.
- 191.** Person – You have staff who are very passionate and asked passionate questions. They didn't feel as if they were being listened to. Are you listening to anybody at all?
- 192.** Person – The only time they'll listen is when it comes to voting. That's what I feel.
- 193.** HJ – And this is what the purpose of this is to listen to what you are saying.
- 194.** Person – But we had this last year and nobody listened then. We didn't want one school.
- 195.** Person – Alan was there saying he wanted to keep Ashton Street.
- 196.** Person – When we at that meeting we were told money is no option and it was turned on its head by those Councillors.



- 197.** Person – The Council brought out a poster that said you'd been talking to us for three years. The first we heard about it was last year.
- 198.** Person – we have got a legal challenge about that so that's an easy one. I think we are going over and over the same things.
- 199.** Person – We are going over and over old ground. We've been over in July and we keep going over and over it but we, I do have one more question and my question is to Judith. So, the 20 children that need places in September, what is your plans for those because Larkrise is full and St Nicolas is full.
- 200.** JW – I am meeting with the head teachers this Friday when we will be discussing that and between us we will create a plan.
- 201.** Person – Okay, so do you have any plans you might be able to share with us?
- 202.** JW – Unfortunately, not until I have spoken to the head teachers.
- 203.** Person – Okay so what about the fact that they might be putting in a mobile in Rowde? You are drip feeding them into Rowdeford which is pre-empting the consultation.
- 204.** JW – It's one of the considerations that they might consider and they might think about others. We have started that conversation with them on Monday and I have got time with them on Friday. We need to consider all the options but we do need to ensure that we have something in place by September.
- 205.** Person – And will you listen to the parents and what they want?
- 206.** JW – We have to provide what is required by the children so yes.
- 207.** Person – Why are you such against the split sites?
- 208.** AS – Because it is extra cost and extra organisation.
- 209.** Person – You have a special criteria associated with split site schools which is shrouded in mists of secrecy. For what it's worth, there is no problem in operating a split site location. Now for my sins or otherwise I was one of the first children to attend comprehensive schools in the country in south Devon in 1964. Now because back then they didn't have purpose built buildings, what they did is said right the new comprehensive is going to be based on the old secondary modern, the grammar school can continue as it was until the children work their way through the year system but we had to go, what I was then 13 or 14 I think. We were bused across town the town is on big hill on one side and one big hill on the other side and the town the middle. The two schools were something like two miles apart. There wasn't a problem, we lived with it. Now, you know, with Ashton Street, it's not rocket science, this problem can be overcome.
- 210.** AS – Yes and we are not saying it's not doable and I recognise what you did, as I did and that was quite common. However, mostly since the 1960s and 1970s they have disappeared as they were difficult to organise. So there are fewer split sites schools compared to what there used to be. They are now placed by single site because that is what's preferred.

211. Person – I understand your point and it is logical to have one school but we are not talking about a split site miles apart in this instance. You know, fears about children crossing the road, they are groundless because the staff would be able to take care of that.
212. Person – I just want to ask about the new site and I have to be honest I've still not been able to find out everything about it. The new site contains the current Rowde school, correct? Okay, and the plan is to extend that school on to all the mass of land you mentioned earlier on will be opened up. What I'm trying to understand that if Rowde itself is expanded slightly it won't need all that land that you talked about as it will be a massive super site. What's the value of that land that can be sold off and the money could be reinvested to keep the centres of excellence open here.
213. AS – Not all that much.
214. Person – I don't mean closing Rowde. I'm not suggesting that for a minute.
215. AS – It's outside the planning envelope for the development. Rowdeford isn't a site that you could change to housing because of the planning rules. So, value isn't as much. It's big so each acre is worth twice as much as half an acre but it's not housing land.
216. Person – That's fine that's a fair answer if that's the truth.
217. AS – Shall we finish by half past? Five minutes or are we done?
218. Person – We just don't want that option.
219. AS – I've got that clear.
220. Person – We want it to stay local but we said that last time.
221. Person – It's sad that after all your thoughts, all your meetings, your consultation, and all your discussions that this is all you can come up with. It's pitiful really.
222. AS – I think it is but in the end, it's not anything that my opinion decides.
223. Person – Well, I think your wrong and by the time anyone else realises your wrong they won't be able to put there kid anywhere else.
224. So, you change your mind but even though you think it's a pitiful situation you can't change your mind to support it.
225. AS – When we were talking last July I thought it was going to be easier to do and I no longer think that is the case.
226. Person – That's what the report said. The majority of people in Trowbridge think the two school option is the better option.
227. Person – So, after hearing everything do you know think that the super school is not the best option.
228. AS – That's right.
229. Person – Yeah but you said that last time. Do you have any sway over that meeting?
230. Person – She said do you think it's not the best option and he said no to the super school.
231. AS – Not I think the one school is the best option.

232. Person – But that’s not what you said.
233. Person – You said its pitiful.
234. AS - And I have tried to be as clear as I can. I changed my mind and I talked about the extra work that was done between July when we last met and that report went out,
235. Person – Alan, sorry, you were asked specifically as I was sat with a St Nicks parent and she asked you face to face what is it or what was it that changed your mind from July and you agree that the one school strategy is the best option. So, what is it that has changed your mind because you didn’t answer that question when we were sat around the tables at Corsham.
236. AS – It’s not one specific thing. It’s not a black and white decision. It’s the best of the balance.
237. Person – But we are talking about a more personal opinion and you were saying your personal opinion. So, you’ve changed you mind because of the outcome of the consultation? What’s changed your personal mind? Why do you now think that the one school, we are putting you on the spot now.
238. AS – You are. I’m here to do a job.
239. Person – Because you get paid by the Council.
240. AS – We’ll I’m a freelance so I can decide who I work for and I wouldn’t work for a Council that I disagree with.
241. Person – But your job is to do the best for our children and we are telling you that this one school is not the best option. So, your duty is to take that back.
242. AS – Absolutely, it is.
243. Person – to your Cabinet to listen to the public.
244. AS – That’s the reason of my job to be that between person with added professional experience because I have been in meetings like this going back to 1996 and I hear what parents say and teacher and headteachers say and I have got to come up with viable solutions. I think the Council has come up with a good solution and the best available solution. In the end, it’s not me that decides.
245. Person – If it’s a school of excellence they won’t have to fund it, anymore will they?
246. AS – The Council will put their own money to go into a new school whether it is a maintained school or an academy or whatever it is the Council will be paying and financing that for the next thirty years.
247. Person – Alan, sorry, there is a range of things that have changed your mind. What are those things?
248. AS – Partly the consultation, partly we got sites around Trowbridge that we looked at and we were looking quite positively at. That changed because since July we took views from the planners because if we are building a school, we’ve got to apply for planning permission same as you have if you’re making an extension on a house. Its more complicated if you are building a whole school and there is a whole set of regulations and the sites I thought were going

to be good did not stack up for planning. Mostly about access to the sites, so that left us with.

- 249.** Person – But Rowde has bad access.
- 250.** Person – What about Dursley Road. Around the back of Dursley Road there's a load of land there. You could build a new property on there and that was in the place as earmarked.
- 251.** Person – What about the secondary school at West Ashton?
- 252.** AS – Yes, West Ashton was one of the sites that we looked at for the special school.
- 253.** Person – But they have just said there that they weren't good sites but you wouldn't build schools on them.
- 254.** Person – So, why do mainstream schools get priority over special needs schools?
- 255.** AS – Partly access partly because that planners said, I don't know the planning jargon.
- 256.** Person – If access is the biggest thing going, the planning for Rowdeford is just ridiculous.
- 257.** AS – You'll tell me that Rowdeford is in the county and of course it is relative to here and they were yes and more so in relation to the West Ashton site for the special school. I was being told this by the planner and all I heard it was they told me and of course it is some distance out of town.
- 258.** Person – But you can build access there. You can't do that in Rowdeford.
- 259.** AS – Well we can. There's a road, there's hedges.
- 260.** Person – There's one road in and one road out.
- 261.** Person – Do the people that live there want another access road in their village.
- 262.** AS – It won't be in the middle of the village no but we can access the site.
- 263.** Person – How can you access the site? It's a country road.
- 264.** AS – Well, you'll build a gate.
- 265.** Person – But how are you going to access that site with fifty mini buses?
- 266.** AS – You'll build a gate. What more can I say?
- 267.** Person – You build a gate, you have children here who have no sense of danger. So, how is that supposed to be safe?
- 268.** AS – There's a gate.
- 269.** Person – Those two sites that have been mentioned at West Ashton and Dursley. There's plenty of land there that you can build access in and out and it doesn't affect mainstream traffic in and out of Trowbridge or out towards Melksham but you are willing to do that for Rowde but you aren't willing to do that for our kids. Mainstream kids can go anywhere they want but you want to push our kids out to the middle of nowhere? Why can't you build a special needs school in their own town but instead you're pushing them out to Rowde. That's what I am getting at but you want to build a secondary and primary school in Trowbridge.

- 270.** Person – He’s already answered that question.
- 271.** AS – Trowbridge needs a primary and secondary school and we are not going to build those outside of Trowbridge. It’s not an option.
- 272.** Person – As a parent with a mainstream child you have a choice of schools in the county town but we don’t have a choice of special schools if you put one out in the middle of a village somewhere.
- 273.** Person – I think you have answered the question though as you’ve already said that in Rowdeford you cannot build houses on it but you can build houses on here and you can build house on St Nicks. You answered your own question. Its money at the end of the day.
- 274.** PC – I am really sorry but we have run half an hour over and we are going to have to wrap it up. If there are any further questions, and I hate to have to cut things short like this, go on line and fill in the consultation. We’ll send that via email and also if people want to bring things to us then we can pass them on. So if there’s something afterwards that you think that you didn’t get a chance to say that then please do let us know.

## 4.4 Rowdeford School – Parent Consultation 26 February 2019

### 4.4.1 Meeting Notes

**Venue: Rowdeford Special School**

**Time:** 5.10pm

#### **PRESENT:**

#### **19/20 parents/carers/charity workers**

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)

Rowdeford HT and AS introduced the meeting.

AS said he was here in July and had discussed the range of opportunities that faced us then. Now they are being asked to consider a range of locations around the 3 schools involved. How this is an evolving situation and the need to capture the differing views of the 3 schools involved as part of this extended consultation period.

The original consultation closed in July – proposal went to November Cabinet meeting – now in final week of extended consultation including this meeting and finally closes 5pm on Friday. This will then go into assimilating all the views made as part of the extended consultation in a report that goes to Cabinet on 26<sup>th</sup> March. At that time Members can decide to continue with original proposal/stop it or amend it and could come up with a new version of the proposal following all the views.

Parent from Larkrise - location here is perceived as distant and remote/rural character. Concerns from children who have profound medical emergencies. AS – this matter was discussed at the meeting with staff and governors - and staff have given reassurances of how this can be managed at Rowdeford and will be added to the report for Cabinet's consideration.

The community links and relationships with other schools has also been raised as concerns as part of the extended consultation.

CoG at Rowdeford did have concerns about the one new school option but since having visited other schools out of area and seen the integration of children of different needs and ages and how it works so well in one large school, the governor position now is they support growth at Rowdeford and the required improvement in buildings to accommodate the integration of the other 2 schools. They oppose the closure of Rowdeford School. Would be very motivated to back SLT to grow the school and make all the necessary provision for growth.

Parent/Charity worker – profound needs and medical emergencies concerns have been made by non Rowdeford parents. Assumes this is because Chippenham and Trowbridge are seen as closer to hospitals and emergency medical care.

Parent – what does it actually mean if the 3 schools close and re-open as an academy (new school). How will the LA still support the school?

AS the proposal is up for grabs at the moment – the final plan will be made in March after Cabinet consider all comments and views and concerns that have been made as part of the extended consultation. DfE rulings are if a new school is opened then it has to become an academy and then no longer under LA 'control'. AS also confirmed that all schools are under the umbrella of the DfE anyway ultimately even if they are an LA maintained school.

Lots of responsibilities will remain with the LA regardless of whether they are in a maintained school or an academy as they are special schools and their children have very specific needs.

Parent has a concern that an academy would mean no personal involvement and mostly run online/via email and that is obviously distressing to her. She is also concerned that there will be a large amount of children of different ages and abilities/needs in one combined school.

Rowdeford HT says he has worked in a large academy before becoming HT at Rowdeford and has not experienced any issues on communication but respects the parent's view. The proportion to staff/pupil ratio will continue whatever happens - even if the school was part of a Multi Academy Trust.

AS – there is a legal process of change. What has emerged in the consultation is that the view now seems to be in favour of some sort of merger with the 3 schools and evolving and amalgamating on one site.

Parent challenged this – so it is not set in stone that all 3 schools will close? AS confirmed this could potentially change as part of the extended consultation process.

Parent asked Rowdeford HT if there would be a recruitment issue if they were an academy. AS and HT said in HTs experience this is not the case – you always get the best staff as a provision for the students in your care. It seems to be irrelevant to school status/category of school.

Governor – asked the question of what expansion and amalgamation might look like. AS reported that the November report said 3 school closures and new academy opening. At the time it seemed to be the more equitable way of setting things in motion. There are now a range of views coming forward which could change the final plan.

HJ– there are various concerns made in current extended consultation and they now have the authority to make recommendations following this further consultation to Cabinet.

Parent asked about closure of 3 schools and the public notice in the press. AS responded you have a proposal published then everyone has the chance in the extended consultation to make their views known before the final report goes to Cabinet on 26<sup>th</sup> March.

Charitable Trust Worker – at what stage are architects involved? AS it would be usual for them to be involved at this early stage so all options and costs can be reviewed. So if a new school is agreed then there will be specifications, etc. at a very early stage.

JW - there is a lot of background work with architects and road planners and transport team and ambulance service etc. alongside all the consultations concerns and this will all be put in the report that goes to Cabinet in March. JW confirmed that the Rowdeford HT is already aware this is happening in the background at the LA.

HJ says there is a feasibility study at high level – just to look at what is possible for the LA. So the background team will look at what is possible at this Rowdeford site and what is possible at a new academy school and what is not possible and will look at the feasibility of any new locations that are coming through from the other sites/different proposals coming through etc.

The final plan by Cabinet - may have to then have further consultation following it - dependent if there was significant amendment from the original proposal.

HJ advised the audience to look at the website and view the online progress.



Audience still pushing on what new proposals and concerns might have been raised. AS – it's all part of the extended consultation process so have your view online and make your comments known in writing.

Professional range and choices? AS replied there is a choice now and there will still be the same choice in professional range whether a small or large school.

Parent – there is lack of placement and feels there is no choice now and has great concerns about the closure of 3 schools and funnelling into one school. She hopes if children are moved they are moved with the same army of staff. It is problematic for the child and the parent starting in a bigger school with no familiar support around them, She feels that is just daft.

Parent from Larkrise – has a child with complex needs – she is concerned that her child will get lost in a bigger school and taken over by children with profound medical needs on top of SEN needs – he thrives in the smaller environment. Her biggest fear he will be isolated and lost in the system//bigger classrooms and number of children. How do you access them? How do you move them around?

Rowdeford parent responded – community links are extremely strong and children are not segregated nor shut away.

Another Rowdeford school parent responded she genuinely does understand the Larkrise parent/s' concerns but this is a lovely school with lots of community links.

AS responded a large school can still have small class sizes and small numbers of students receiving the necessary support from the staff.

Parents from all the schools are aggrieved at the initial consultation period as they can't believe that any of them would have chosen a single school - that is a statement and no response from AS required. Question: mitigate risks and geographical spread of ambulatory services and hospitals? Thinking how this might be mitigated and go forward to the Cabinet in March?

HJ has responded that the staff at Rowdeford have put very good arguments across for dealing with emergencies etc. on this site for a larger number of students. HJ said please talk to the staff and HT here and see how they can reassure you on that point and others.

Parent – 80 children out of County currently – how could that be reduced with a single school provision – less children out of County? AS responded it depends on the need why they are out of County – some of it comes down to space – those are the children that could come back into County as the single school option would create more

Wiltshire places. It can't prevent out of County children whose needs cannot be met in Wiltshire. Although it is hoped such wider issues could be addressed in future.

Staff - there are already children at Rowdeford with life threatening conditions so well versed in dealing with it now but developing further in growing the medical support base here.

Governor can they have assurance that the LA will consider the option of Rowdeford remaining open and growing. HJ responded that all views will be considered from this school and all those involved from the other two schools and there does seem to be a theme about growth – so it is the Council's officers' responsibility to agree that this all goes in the final report that Cabinet/Members.

Parent – there seems to be growth of all SEN children across Wiltshire – if there is an amalgamation in reality will there really be more Wiltshire places available? Will you really bring other children back in? With all the extra SEN children/families coming into Wiltshire the parent feels that the relocation site will still be too small. AS – are looking at student numbers but recognise they might get that wrong – but whatever the plan turns out to be it must be future proof so accepts the point that it is a growing number. There is no proposal to bring back from existing out of County schools all those 80 children - but the aim would be to reduce long term the number Wiltshire children going out of County.

Rowdeford HT – to respond some of your concerns: I shared the same opinion up until about 2 months ago that one school solution was not the right way - but have visited one school in Bath and one in Gloucester and the largest school had 330 children..... and the school was fantastic– it felt very small and fully integrated. There is marvellous provision in place in that large school.

Rowdeford HT – expertise of staff – part of the growth of the new school would be getting staff from all schools and expanding further so a bespoke curriculum provided for each child's individual needs. Saw a large school with a real large variety of resources and links with local community and whatever the outcome each and every child in their care must have a voice. Fully integrated school could be inspirational. Alongside this there are still plans for expansion in the South of the County and some of those children might not come to Rowdeford - and will make space for more children in this area of the County.

Even if current plan stops we will still need to plan for how children in parts of the County are having to go out of the County so something will have to change going forward.

Parent concerns about 6<sup>th</sup> form provision – where will it come from if not in the proposal? How will children be prepared for 6<sup>th</sup> form provision. HJ responded Council

is looking at this as it has come through very strongly the concern at the loss of post 16 provision in the proposal. But to confirm this could be an amendment to the original proposal and could include having 6<sup>th</sup> form provision. So please do make your view known in writing before Friday.

Parent - In this new school how will children be categorised? Has there been any thought? How will affect my child?

AS – if it does become an academy then you go through a procurement process to answer those questions but the LA does set out the specification – so do make your views known as part of the consultation process and go online by Friday. A larger school will give more choice on organisational practices so let us know please.

Rowdeford HT urged parents to please give their view online and and thanked them for coming and giving up their time.

**Closed at 6.22pm.**

## 4.4.2 Audio Recording Transcript

**Venue:** Rowdeford Special School

**Date:** 26 February 2019

**Time:** 5.10pm

1. Head – Good evening ladies and gentlemen, we are going to make a start. Firstly, I would like to introduce you to a few people. We've got Helen Jones who's the Director of Commissioning, we've got Alan Stubberfield who many of you who were involved in the pre-consultation period last summer will have met before he's the consultant who has oversight over the complex needs consultation in the north of the county and we've also got Judith Westcott at the back of the room who is the Head of Joint Planning and Commissioning. Thank you very much to everybody for coming and I am glad you've been able to join us. I'm going to hand over to Alan.
2. AS – Thank you Head. I am speaking in a microphone so that the session is recorded, and we have a full account of everything that is said. There will be microphones coming around the room when you want to speak, and they work by Bluetooth. You need to be quite careful, hold them about a hand's width away from your mouth and speak into the end of it like I am doing now not like that. You can see the difference as you get end on. If you point it at Dominic here, he's given up his day job in the abattoir to be our soundman. I think that covers the technicalities, there's no fire alarm planned, and the facilities are through the door there. So, you've met me before I was here in July talking about the range of alternatives which faced us in the pre-statutory stage of consultation about the future of education for children with cognitive difficulties in the north of Wiltshire and at that time we were looking at a range of options which included a number of schools one, two or three in all the alternative location available according to the different numbers of schools that might come out of the process. I was quite unsure about the future of this school as you'll remember when I was speaking in the summer and had different views about the other schools involved, as some of you will also remember and we have talked about it in various places about this has been an evolving situation where my own views developed through the summer up to when the consultation closed in July. The process developed towards a single school solution that went to the November Cabinet meeting. That meeting proposed the consultation that is happening now, and it closes on Friday this week. So, this meeting is part of the consultation and it is still opening online on the Wiltshire website and is up there until five o'clock Friday for your submissions to the consultation process. That then closes and we go to assimilating all the views that come from that and then that goes to a report which goes to the Cabinet meeting on 26 March and at that time the Councillors who are Cabinet members will be looking to say okay there was this proposal in November, lots of people have said various things about it, that'll be summed up in the consultation. If what happens in March is the same as what happened last November, then

there will be representations from consultees and members of the public. They will then make a decision, if they decide to hear it in March as it is up to members what they do but it is on the agenda, they can continue with the proposal, they can stop it, or they can amend it. Those are the options open to the Councillors. So, it could be a one school option, it could be a version of the proposal that went in November in other words an amended proposal in light of what people like you have said in these meetings, in the other schools and online or they can stop it. So, that's up in the air. What this is then is part of that consultation for you in Rowdeford around issues that are emerging in the consultation and the issues that are emerging in my impression are about the size of the one school option, its location here in what is a location perceived to be relatively distant for many people and relatively remote in terms of its rural character. There are concerns particularly from parents with children who have the most profound needs around medical emergencies and how that's dealt with in a location like this. There are issues being raised with us around transport really coming out of those points I've made to do with location and to do with the nature of the special education needs to the passengers. Community links have been raised and what it means to be in a school in this sort of place when community links are seen as an important part of the whole experience of all young children and relationships with other schools. That's just a point of the issues that I am hearing in the consultation which you may echo or not or come up with entirely different things. It's your meeting and we are here to hear your views so I'm not going to say much more. Community issues, location issues, size issues, nature of the need, your issues.

3. AF – My name is parent D and I am a governor here at Rowdeford school and the governors have already filed a position statement, but I just wanted to reiterate that I had concerns about the one school option. However, after visiting Three Ways School in Bath and Milestone in Gloucester and seen how the integration of the pupils with different needs and different ages worked really well. The governors position is that we support growth of Rowdeford School and we support an increase in the building to accommodate for the increase in pupils and the different needs that the pupils will bring but we oppose the closure of Rowdeford School and what we, as chair of governors, are looking at the growth of Rowdeford School and the growth in numbers of students and the growth in the knowledge and skills of our teaching staff, our senior leadership team as well as our associated staff and we grow as a school to increase numbers and to increase the number of buildings to increase the number of students that is being predicted. We are well aware that Wiltshire Council has done a lot of statistics. We oppose Rowdeford closing but we look towards the growth of the school on this site.
4. AS – Thank you.
5. TS – Person E you mentioned five issues that are emerging, in my view four of those issues are not emerging but were covered in the original consultation. The other one that I feel is new is the profound needs and medical emergencies and presumably it is because Trowbridge and Chippenham currently have hospitals. Presumably it's the only reason they think about that.

6. AS – Points have been made to use about the distance of this school from hospitals, yes. There are also concerns about medical emergencies occurring during the course of transport.
7. TS – I appreciate that, but the real point is that four of those issues are not new and they are the ones you had in the original consultation.
8. AS – Yes, I gave examples of issues that have been emphasized in the current phase of consultation, so they are live issues and they are live as they were last time.
9. Person – So, okay is Rowdeford still in the running to be extended or is this not the plan anymore is my first bit? The second bit is that I understand that three special schools will close, and academy created here on this site but what does that actually mean, will the LA have no responsibility for the children and all the parents? Who will actually be responsible to fulfil the promises or that we will hearing that will happen and will go through for the school whether that goes through as an academy.
10. AS – First point, is that the plan. There's a fine choice of words there. That's the proposal and the plan will emerge following the March decision. So, at the moment it's a proposal that is up for grabs and up for consultation. That's the paper that went to Cabinet in November. The plan because the three schools are maintained schools the authority has the power to make the decision in March about the closure. After which a plan would need to emerge because the parallel process is what would happen if those three schools close, what's the alternative plan? That gets into a long sequence of events and that links into your next question. So, at the moment the proposal was for the closure of the three schools and the opening of a new school, and the opening of any new school is always an academy, and part of the national rhetoric is that academies are free from local authority control. I don't understand what that means because as a local authority Director of Education I control any schools. The government controls maintain schools as the governments law requires them to observe the national curriculum for example. Whereas, the government doesn't choose to control academy's in the same way because they are not subject to the national curriculum. Similarly, there's a distinction in the national law about government control, about pay and conditions in maintained schools that doesn't apply in academies. So, you can see that I have a view on some of the national rhetoric and I think that can be played in various ways and everybody will have their own views on that and what I've said is factually true. The alternative are to open a new academy which you'll have your own views about the control issues but none of that changes the local authorities responsibilities for maintaining EHCP's and its responsibilities for children with special educational needs because whether it's an academy or not those responsibilities stay with the local authority. The control thing is maybe a bit obscure. I think in practice that it doesn't make a lot of difference in Wiltshire as we have a lot of experience working with academies, special schools and maintained special schools. In terms of our dialogue with those schools, which is overwhelmingly about their pupils, I don't think it makes much difference. Have I answered that question fully?

- 11.**CT – No not for me but I just wanted to say that academies for me have never been a positive thing. Parent F of a child that currently goes here and now with academies everything is done via the internet, so you don't have any personal one to one. I work with so many Rowdeford staff with my child, for me a massive concern is that that is going to be taken away, that personal interaction and knowledge with each of our children isn't going to be there anymore and that is really really concerning for safety wise, for loads of different, I don't know about the rest of us but I know as a parent that having that connection taken away is going to be massive.
- 12.**AS – I don't share that view I suppose, that's your view and that is what this meeting is about. I think if you were to look at parent view and the Ofsted reports on the relationships with parents between maintained and academy schools, I don't think that you would see that as a statistical pattern. I as it happens fell out with my son's primary school so that I moved him from one school to the other, twice, and those were maintained schools as it happens. People fall out with their schools, they love their schools because of the relationship they have and you're suggesting that this is affected by the internet connections.
- 13.**CT – Well, just for me personally its going to be the personal touch. So, with academies I think it is done via emails. A lot of communication is done via emails. Whereas, now I have regular meetings with the Rowdeford teachers here, I have one particular person that I can go to who is fantastic and gets it done straightaway. I think with a bigger school with the amount of risk that is going to be involved having that, personally in my experience, having that many different ages is going to be a massive risk for my child especially with the variety of disabilities that is going to be there, that is something that is concerning for me to be able to manage that many people. That's my main concern.
- 14.**AS – Okay, so the communications issues around academies and school with maintained status in your view are quite separate to that. Communications around the size of the school and the range of needs it covers?
- 15.**CT – Yeah, I think overall for me it's a massive concern.
- 16.**AS – Okay.
- 17.**Person – So, before working at Rowdeford I actually worked in a very large academy school and for me I didn't think that made any difference at all in terms of the communication levels between the staff and the parents and carers. So, again I appreciate that's your view point but it's not something that I have experienced in a large academy school before coming here. I think in terms of this school, obviously there would be more children but there will also be more staff as well. So, actually in terms of the proportion of the number of staff to the number of children that proportion will remain the same, if not actually increase. So, in terms of being enough staff to provide you with that personal touch that you currently get, I think that that would continue to exist if this school was apart of an academy trust. That's in my experience.
- 18.**AS – Let me pick up another point because I think another thing that is emerging out of this dialogue is around the legal process of change. The one is that put to the Cabinet and the proposal is three schools close and an academy open.

What has emerged in reflection to do with the consultations that are going on is that that's not the only way to do it and that people might have views about doing it in a different way to do with some kind of merger rather than closures.

19. Person – I think you have just partly answered my question. I was getting the impression from what you were saying earlier on was that it's a given that Rowdeford would close and the new school will open as an academy, am I right in thinking that decision hasn't actually been made and is part of the negotiations?
20. AS – Well, nothing is given as it is all subject to due process and on the specific there was a proposal that there would be closures and the new school would therefore have to be an academy and what we are now reflecting is that there would be another way of doing it. The merger thing is complex in law, it would be that not all schools close, but some do, and one grows. You would then have a maintained school because all other three are and you would have one growing. They don't simply merge like stuff you make a cake with, I'm trying to think of an analogy, for a merger to happen there is a growth and a closure. So, if this whole thing goes through there would be closures but there doesn't have to be three.
21. Person – Right okay. I think that has answered my question, thank you very much. Just picking up on the talk about staffing levels, is it a bit cynical to suggest that there is a vested interest in academies having less experienced staff that are paid not as much or is that an unjustified view?
22. AS – I think that all schools face recruitment issues and there is a market out there and all schools want to recruit the best teachers. So, if the recruitment issue was very different then there might be a different approach national to academy wages, but I don't see that happening.
23. Person – Just to clarify what I was saying before I had a microphone in my hand. In my experience its not the case and that when you lead a school you want the best staff you can possibly get to give you the best provision that you can give for the children that you look after. So, I haven't been in a school, academy or otherwise that financial considerations have been part of the selection process.
24. Person – Just to clarify what you were really saying and following on from parent D's thing is that the governor's position is expansion not closure. I am not sure of exactly the position would be and the advantages and disadvantages that you have been talking about mergers opposed to the expansion of Rowdeford. I suppose I am just the thinking of the local authority, if the local authority has got that far around that is?
25. AS – I can only report on what the local authorities thinking was when I was the guy doing it, I am not doing these odd meetings, but my day job is Director of Education somewhere else now. The proposal of course which I was involved in writing for the November report was for three closures and the opening of an academy, that's not because it was felt that it was wanted to be an academy but that was the inevitable result of the three closures but in my mind by having three closures and opening something new was about having equitable treatment of the staff. If you have two schools growing and one opening there



might be a perception that one group of staff was privileged, because they are sitting tenants for want of a better word, and you have two other groups of staff that are in a less advantageous position. That was my reasoning and I think there is a range of views about that and there is a range of views everything I say, reasonable so, that's why we consult.

- 26.** HJ – Can I just confirm what AS has said. The proposal on the table that we have published is that a single school, which is an academy, and three schools shut. The whole point of this consultation is that it's a statutory consultation and that we engage the widest possible views. JW and I have got the pleasure of writhing the report that goes to Cabinet on March 26. We in that report have a responsibility to feedback to Cabinet the wide range of views that there are. There are some strong views held by some of the parents in Larkrise and St Nicolas and we need to make sure we represent those views. We also need to make sure that we represent the views of the staff, the governors and the parents here in Rowdeford as well. We will present that to members and some of the arguments we will have evidence that might mitigate some of the concerns raised, there may be some we say we can't find anything to mitigate and we may as officers make recommendations for there to be a modification or indeed a new proposal for members to consider but at this moment I can't predetermine what they will decide on March 26 but the whole point of this is and we do know that there is a view of the governors as we have received the letter that says there should be an expansion but the proposal is the proposal.
- 27.** Person – Thank you, just talking about the closures it's just a bit confusing. So, there was a notice in the paper to close three special schools in Wiltshire. So, how come it has been proposed to close three special schools in Wiltshire and the notice has been put out there to the public but when will that be determined and why has that notice not been put forward, should that notice have been put forward after the decision was made?
- 28.** AS – No, that is how the sequence of events works. The local authority is obliged to publish the notice of the sort you have seen to initiate the kind of consultation that is happening now. It take a prescribed form so that in simple terms you can see what you are up against if you don't like and what you want to support if you do like it, so there is something saying that this is the proposal and that comes after what we call pre-statutory which were the discussions of last summer and before the statutory which is happening now. So, there are two stage of consultation and the first pre-statutory is fairly loose as it is pre-statutory. This is tighter as it is statutory and part of those requirements is the notice in the paper. That's determined then after the consultation ends of Friday, back to the notice, via all the consultation to the March decision.
- 29.** Person G. I am just interested to know at what stage the architects will get involved and so on. Is that's when the final decision is made to what the format is going to be, or have you started planning already at this stage and what it might look like?
- 30.** AS – I am not working in Wiltshire at the moment, so I can't answer that. It would be normal, if I can talk hypothetically, for architects to be involved at an early stage just as planners are because you want to know if something is

feasible and you want to know something about costs. Planners and architects are the people who deal in that kind of business and there were bits of information about costs in the November report. So, you can see that that sort of thing has happened at an early stage. What happens about this stage of the consultation and I mentioned about closures, there is also the question about whether the whole thing should go through then the proposal would be for a new school, which has to be built and then there is a process of coming up with a specification, to some degree this happens in this sort of phase but the specifics and detail will happen once we know it's a runner. That is how it feels to me, but I am not the technician on that.

31. JW – You are absolutely right, that is what we are doing. We have had some architects that have come and had a look around and said does this really work because it would be wrong of use to put forward a report that everybody supports then to discover that it wasn't workable. So, we do have some architects who are looking and saying could we build it here, does it cost this, are there any issues about it being out here, are there any issues in terms flora and fauna around here. So, they have to check out a few of those things because of we get to the cabinet stage and members decide they want to do it, we can say yes that is doable or we can let them know early on if there were concerns. So, that you are aware we are doing quite a lot of background work behind this. There were issues that were raised when AS did come and see you in the first instances, so there is a lot of work that Helen and I are taking forward. Some of that is with the architects, some of that is also with the road planners, we are also talking with our transport team asking them what the transport routes are like, we've been talking with the ambulance service to see what that looks like and so all of that long side what people are saying here will be brought together, so as many of those things that have been worrying us all, we will be able to say these are what the answers are.
32. JG – Can I just ask you then, have you been sharing that with any of the team here of the school, of the governors, or anybody, or not?
33. JW – At this stage the Head knows that they came, and he invited them in. So, they are aware of them but at this point they haven't finished their report, so I haven't seen it either. So, they will be pulling that together in time so that when we get to the Cabinet report it will be part of the appendices.
34. JG – There are quite a lot of local knowledge that is known, and I am surprised that they haven't consulted on that.
35. JW – Yes, so that is what they are doing. They'll be spending time.
36. JG – So they will contact us in due course?
37. JW – Pardon?
38. JG – I just don't see how you can start to do a plan without finding out the local knowledge about this place and the fact that the charitable trust has spent one point five million pounds here. So, obviously we are quite concerned about that being protected for the future, which obviously there is quite a great deal of debate about, if you start a whole new school and that fact it is listed and we just feel that, I just feel and I am sure some of my fellow trustees will feel that

you are running a bit roughshod. In one respect there should be a bit of consulting on that or sharing a bit with us potentially.

- 39.** HJ – Can I say at this stage because this is a proposal it would be inappropriate for us to consult. We literally just doing a feasibility study. Its high level and it's not around design it's just what JW said, what is possible? Are there some rare species on site that wouldn't make it possible? There are looking at things like JW at access. Depending on whether cabinet accept the proposal or not and one has to bear that in mind because Alan said they may not, they may want to modify, they may want to reject. At the point in which a proposal is agreed, be it on this site or whatever, it would be absolute appropriate for it to happen to be wider engagement for developing plans. This is not a plan to say this is what is this school, if it was accepted, would look like here and really that feasibility.
- 40.** Person – So, with that in mind have you done feasibility studies with the other alternative sites?
- 41.** HJ – No because the proposal is only on this site. So, it is only appropriate that we do the feasibility of this site. However, through the consultation there have been some views given about how maybe some different proposals might look like and we are getting our planners to look at the feasibility of those, so we can communicate back to members.
- 42.** Person – Okay, so you have actually done feasibility studies for other potential sites.
- 43.** HJ – We doing really high level so not the detail that has been done here but we have had some proposals in to what may be what a different proposal might look like and we are getting a very high level of planning with just views as to what feasibility is and what the cost is.
- 44.** Person – So, if on 26 March if the proposal is changed so that then two sites become the proposal, you'll then have to do a feasibility study for that and then go to another consultation?
- 45.** AS – Well I think we wouldn't have to go through another consultation process depending on how the divergence from the proposal is. Remember the law says that the decision maker is allowed to amend the proposal.
- 46.** HJ – I think the decision is that if the proposal put forward and the cabinet want a significant amendment, that is not based on a one school, then we would go out to consultation again.
- 47.** JW – It is the definition of modification so that's what it says, it says modification and you can assume that modification means basically the same thing but you have changed a bit but at the point that a bit starts to feel like a lot then that's the point that the members have to reject and put forward a new plan.
- 48.** Person – And these other proposed sites are?
- 49.** HJ – I think it, for those that want to look at the Council website today, there was a proposal around a split site with one site being in Melksham for example. So, we are looking at Melksham.

Audio recording stopped.

- 50.** Person - I know that your building designs and that will have massive changes to this environment here to be able to capable for that and that is my biggest

fear. My other fear also is, where is the community here? Where is it for those children? How can then come from here and go into Devizes. That means getting back into a bus again and some of them would have travelled for forty minutes. I know its probably a lovely village community here but I live in a village and its fantastic but at the moment he gets to see the local primary school, they are just next door and then come into the school. There's going to be so much community lost for those children.

- 51.** Person – I would just like to respond to the community elements. I live locally and my child comes here and whenever I am out and about with my child she knows people from Bromham, Rowde, Chippenham, Devizes, everywhere. People come from all the local areas to support this amazing school and they are not just part of one. They are not shut away. There's lots of things saying that they are hidden and shut away. I appreciate that people are in their own communities in their own towns and want to go to school in their own towns but the reality is that its not shut away here.
- 52.** Person – I've got a daughter that comes to Rowdeford and I understand I think because you put so much time and energy and love into your child and you want the right placement. My child comes here and I feel for you I really do because you have your child and you want what's best for them. I can only speak for myself and Rowdeford is a fantastic school and they do go into Devizes, and they do mix with other children in other towns, they do lots of lovely things here and different events. I do feel for you and I would be the same if my child had to go to Larkrise or St Nicolas.
- 53.** AS – The local authority cannot not acknowledge the strength of views. I think the purpose of the meeting is to talk to the local authority, so it can here what you are saying and what I am saying is that the local authority cannot ignore those concerns that you have articulated as a parent of another school and those points are well noted. I think that my own view is that there is no reason as to why a large school would have different class sizes for a small school because it's the number of pupils in the school that drives the money in. So, the more money, the more pupils, the more teachers will be what they are. I do recognise the concerns at the scale of the operation. You'll have read in the November report about proposals to mitigate by the design of the site and the separation of the buildings. My feeling is that this doesn't answer your concerns and we note that.
- 54.** Person – I've got more of a statement than a question to start with and then I will go onto a question if that's okay, but it builds on what you have just said about the points being noted. Some of the frustration comes from the pre-statutory consultation process and I don't think there was any parent of any child at any of the three schools that would have voiced the opinion for a single school and yet that was the conclusion that was reached. So, I think that we all feel that what weight was given to our opinions in that pre-statutory consultation process and I guess from a slightly cynical perspective what weight is being to anything we say in this room this evening because in our experiences it doesn't seem like any weight was given of the concerns that we stressed in the pre-

statutory stage. So, that's just a statement and I am not asking you to respond to that. That's just how I feel and I guess a lot of parents feel in the room.

**55.** Clapping.

**56.** Person – The question I guess, or the questions are. Is that you noted the emerging issues, I don't think there's been any different issues and you expanded on the issues are the start, but you spoke about how you would mitigate some of the risks or how you would mitigate some of the risks and some of the issues are around risks. When we look at the geographical spread of ambulatory services or hospitals and things like that. This is not something that this would be able to address, they are where they are. So, you're thinking about how those risks might be mitigated because in the proposal that went previously and the one that will go back in March, is there any thinking about that that you are able to share to reassure anybody in this room because we articulate these concerns and these issues but is there anything you are able to do to reassure us this evening?

**57.** HJ – We have also had a meeting with the staff and the governors here and they have given us their assurances about how they access ambulances and how they transport children to hospital. We understand that the ambulance depot is near by so ambulances can discharge rapidly. We have got our travel planning team who are currently looking at not just those reassurances but actually what does that mean and that will be a report that JW and I will receive by the time we end up writing the report next week. So, I can't give you those reassurances but I think the staff here might be able to communicate from their personal experience, but I wouldn't like to say, as somebody who is writing the report, that that is fact because we will test out those with the planners.

**58.** Person – Yes, I guess its not the status quo and the provision that exists around the school today and I do appreciate that the school spreads from SLD through but the mix and needs of one bigger school and the scale of that is a different level of demand of other local services that what is required from this site today.

**59.** HJ – Yes you are correct, and our planners are looking into that. So, that will be part of the evidence and I can't tell you at this stage what they are going to tell us but that obviously will be what we communicate to members.

**60.** Person – So, can I ask one final question. When we spoke about the out of county piece earlier if your child didn't fit into the single school and you said there was about eighty children that have to move out of county currently and you were looking to reduce that through the proposal you were putting forward, could you perhaps expand a little bit on how the proposal of a single school would provide a setting or a solution that would mean that less children from Wiltshire would have to be catered for out of county? You said that is what you were targeting and there wasn't really, with us as nonprofessional and parents don't really understand how a single site would achieve that objective.

**61.** AS – So, in the first place if we look at those eighty children or whatever the number is, some of them are out of county because of the severity of need is not a need that can be met in any of our special schools, some of them are out of county because those needs could be met if there was space. So, the major part of the answer is that its scale of operation and in truth that's not about it

being a single school its about there being enough places. The further question I would say I about how we are able to provide those places, clearly with come up with the single school option as the best way of doing that and clearly that is disputed. One of the propositions around that is that the scale of operation brings together the area of expertise that you can edge into that first group of children that I talked about and who's needs are not currently met because the generation of what we refer to as centre of excellence can address those as well.

- 62.** Person – Shall I just say about the medical side of it. We at Rowdeford as it stands currently have a large number of students who have life threatening conditions that we cope, and we manage, and we deal with really successfully. At the moment we have Virgin Care staff who are actually based in the school to provide young people with that medical support. I think that in this plan part of it would be to grow that medical support base of that there is a certain amount of support on site. Obviously, we would be able to get to casualty but we would be able to grow a medical support base to run it alongside education and that's how I think EHCP's should be and the closer you can tie that in the better.
- 63.** Person – Can we have an assurance from the local authority that they will consider the option that Rowdeford would remain open but with growth and development in the school.
- 64.** HJ – I have said that were we have got themes through the consultation and Alan articulated at the beginning some of the themes that we have heard very strongly from parents, teachers and governors from the other two schools which we will put forward, we have also heard a theme about growth so it would be our responsibility to as we are going to communicate the views of everybody and that we communicate that to members. So, that will be put into the consultation paper that goes on March 26.
- 65.** Person – You say about the three schools going into one and the eight children from out the county, the children when you lump them all together, for me the numbers don't stack up. So, X amount of years done the line when this school is built whether that be here there or wherever that growth of children with SEN and that need the support the school, I feel, will be too small upon completion because if you've got eighty children out of area and you want to bring them back into county to keep Wiltshire money in Wiltshire and to have that one site as it is, when you put Larkrise, St Nicks and Rowdeford together there's not that many places extra. I thought it was about 20 odd and I'm from Chippenham, and the housing that is going up on Chippenham is going up quicker than you can build a Lego building, Up the road from us there is a new estate with seven hundred and fifty houses. This is happening everywhere and not just in Chippenham. You even have all these forces families that are relocating and that's in the thousands, if you have only got 20 places and if you are looking to keep money in Wiltshire, have extra families coming to Wiltshire, it just seems like that one place wherever that is, is too small.
- 66.** AS – The Army relocation and the planning for houses are known a long time in advance in the Authority and we are able to put that into the projections for pupil numbers but we might get that wrong and therefore we have been

instructed by the Council that whatever plan does come end it needs to be future proof, answering your point, we don't know how many we will need in beyond thirty years so the design is as such that there can be expansion. So, it won't be limited in that way and as for the eighty, I wouldn't expect there to be a proposal to bring them back from their existing schools in which they are placed but the aim would be to reduce the flow. So, it would be a long term fair slow reduction and that's the way it always happens. Once children are placed you don't really want to have to move them from a school that they are familiar with.

**67.** Person – I just thought it might be helpful to respond to some of your concerns parent and then you just gave me some more. So, I will try and cover some from last time and the ladies at the back as well, I just wanted to pick up on a few things that you said. I share the same opinion as you until up about two months ago that I wasn't convinced that the one school solution was the best solution. Since then I have been to visit two very large special needs schools, one in Bath and one in Gloucester, and I went there concerned about the size and the one in Gloucester is three hundred and thirty children so not far away from the projected size of this. The school was fantastic, it didn't feel like there were three hundred plus students on site, all the children were fully integrated, no body was hidden away in a corner and not allowed to communicate or interact with other children around the site. I witnessed children with MLD supported children with PMLD, helping them and having gone through training to push their wheelchairs and to support those children in classes. So, there was full integration with all of the students. In terms of your concerns about the expertise of the staff, part of the growth of the new school, the new big school will be about getting the expertise from the other schools and beyond to support the growth of those. I don't expert children with the most profound needs to just come in a fit in with the Rowdeford model, that's not what this is about at all, we will need to make sure that we provide a bespoke curriculum for them based upon their individual needs and I am certainly not advocated that they just need to come and fit in with Rowdeford because that's not possible. It's about providing a bespoke curriculum and as I said I saw a school with a real variety of needs working together in a fantastic community. Those children with profound needs, we need to continue to make sure that they have a voice and we need to continue to make sure that their needs are being met and they are not being lost in that school because I agree, I know the ladies at the back said it as well, there could be a danger that it happens and we need to make sure it doesn't with a fully integrated school like the one that I saw in Gloucester. I left there feeling completely inspired about what could be possible and I just think that its worth me sharing that with you. The last thing said about extra space being provided and there not being enough, don't forget that there are also plans for expansion in the south of the county and the number of children that perhaps in the past would have come from the Salisbury area to Rowdeford would not necessarily be coming to Rowdeford as there is additional provision being planned in the south of the county as well. So, that will create extra space in the north, east and west of the county as well.

- 68.** AS – How long have we got the building for Head?
- 69.** Person – Just a very quick one then. Did I understand correctly that on 26th that the Cabinet could approve, amend or stop? Is it theoretical or practically possible that we could be in two years' time or five years' time if what's proposed and its not financial attractive as first thought?
- 70.** AS – Theoretical not practical I would say.
- 71.** Person – So, is there a deadline when a decision would have to be made?
- 72.** AS – A decision will be made, I think, on 26 March. It could be any of those that you mentioned but if it were to stop then there would still be an unanswered question about the growing number of special needs children will have their needs met in the north of Wiltshire. So, the process would need to go round the loop again.
- 73.** Person – So, it could in theory carry on as we are?
- 74.** AS – We can't carry on as we are because a problem has been identified of more and more children having to go out of county and this will become more severe that we would not be able to find those places at any reasonable distance. So, something has to be done.
- 75.** Person – Obviously, all of us here have children at different stages of education but personally I am looking forward to 2023 when you potentially want to propose to open this big super school and my daughter at that time will be nearing what I would call sixth form education. So, I am looking at where she will go when she finishes her statutory education. My understanding is, and tell me if I am wrong, that this super school would not have a sixth form provision and my concern is that with the closure of Larkrise and St Nicks, that I understand do currently have a sixth form provision, you will be losing some placements there and I have heard rumors that there is Wiltshire College, there's Fairfield College, there's Poplar's at Chippenham but how are you going to fit these children in if you are potentially losing the sixth form provision in Larkrise and St Nicks? Also, for the continuity of children who would be potentially coming through the super school, how is that going to affect them? How are you going to prepare them for sixth form provision?
- 76.** HJ – This is an area that we are looking at the feasibility of. It's come through very strongly throughout the consultation around the loss of St Nicolas and Larkrise post-16 provision and the issues that parents have articulated to us around developmental needs and maybe the need for some children to have longer to transition into any FE provision or etcetera. We are looking, and I can't really say much more than this at the moment and clearly this is a subject again for members whether they want to look at this as an amendment to the proposition, we are looking at the feasibility of having a small sixth form provision if there were a single school because we recognise that its come through very strongly that some families are concerned about the end of 16.
- 77.** Person – So, I kind of heard, and I did speak to Rowdeford previously, that there was meant to be some young children in a pop up tent kind of coming in to Rowdeford, you're nodding already, and that's not been confirmed or denied but I wondered how, if we had this big school, has there been any thought of how these children are going to be sectioned in ages, is there going to be



categories of more profound one side. How is it going work? Clearly, they are all going to be a different stages, are you thinking of 5 classes, ten classes, has there been any thought into how those children are going to be sorted into ages because of me at the moment it seems all very secret. So, as a parent I just want to know what the facts are and how that is going to affect my child because a lot of it is about the grounds and I understand that is important but a lot of it doesn't seem to be based round our children and what their needs are and how we are going to meet there needs in this new school.

**78.** AS – The process of starting an academy is the proposal so far and that means that you go through a procurement process to identify a provider, who is likely to be a multi academy trust, to set up the new academy. It is the job of the provider to answer those questions and its not the job of the local authority but what we do is set out the specification and you have the right and the option to say what sort of things should be in that specification through this current consultation process. So, if you take the view that there should be a particular form of organisation then you let us know. There isn't much time not but there is time until Friday to go online and say that. I suppose that the general view is that the large school means that there are more choices around the organisation of classes, and you would have heard me say that before and you will have your own views about that so let us know.

**79.** Person – I just want to say thank you for coming this evening and I appreciate you giving up your time to be here. I just want to reiterate what AS said and if you haven't responded to the consultation please do so by Friday.

## 4.5 Melksham Town Hall – 25 February 2019

Present:

Helen Jones, Wiltshire Council, Head of Commissioning  
Judith Westcott, Wiltshire Council, Interim Head of Children's Commissioning  
Emily Wood, Wiltshire Council, Children' Commissioning (minutes)  
Parent I  
Parent J  
Parent H  
Governor: Larkrise School

HJ\_ Introduced the session by explaining this was an Informal conversation and that no audio was being taken although EW is present to take some notes. That this is an opportunity to engage in a discussion as the Larkrise parent/carer event was busy and some chances to contribute may have been missed.

HJ\_ JW met with Cabinet officers last week. Explanation given on how the report will be constructed. It will focus on the concerns raised to date. Which are predominately include: Travel times, Health & Safety of the travel (particularly for children with complex health issues). Travel for staff (esp those on lower wages). Issues for travel for parents as it's recognised that children with the most complex needs often have a parent who is a primer carer who may rely on public transport. Ambulances – comparative times to hospital. The proposed school's position in the 'community' – could be seen as segregation with lack of access to community facilities. Post 16 ed, PMLD/severe health issues which require a phased access to post 16 education. The school size. Parental support access – school impacts on the parent's wellbeing. The report needs to ensure that all these concerns are addressed. Appendices to the report will be huge. Need to demonstrate that all members will read the entire report. Members need to give due weight to what is being said. Balance needs to be arrived at to listening to both sides of the argument. (It is recognised that the majority in support have child with MLD).

Parent I/J\_ Perceived that Laura Mayes didn't listen back in November.

EW\_ Now feels comfortable that parents against the proposal have been listened to.

Governor\_ Appreciate that additional time has been given to vent concerns. Out of county children whose places may be more secure may not be so interested.

JW\_ Same themes are coming through. These builds the picture to develop the cabinet report.

Governor\_ Would like to put forward ideas for compromise.

HJ\_ Reassured all that a lot of work is being done behind the scenes. Solution focussed. Post 16 unit could be on site- this is a tangible outcome. Transport plans for every child are being calculated, including those who are NOT currently on transport. Differentiate the report for different groups of children based on their health needs.

Governor\_Transport plans needs to be future proofed. Consider housing developments and how this will impact transport plans.

HJ\_Rush-hour calculations and testing also to be undertaken. Specialised software is being used.

Governor\_Proposals are not clear as to whether children will be placed in taxis or minibuses.

JWest\_Transport plans are considered pick-up times. Choice of vehicle perhaps needs to be taken into consideration.

Parent I/J\_Parents have increasingly decided to take their own children into school.

Parent I/J\_Voiced concerns that 50 minibuses on the one road in and out of Rowde.

HJ\_Transport planners are looking at the logistics of this.

Larkrise and St Nics are similar compared to Rowdeford (which is secondary) where parents have chosen a rural-based education. Parents wish their children to be in a town location.

A centre of excellence would work well in an urban setting (eg Three Ways).

Rowde may be geographically centrally located, but it's far away from the main towns.

Discussion had over positioning of school in Melksham – Governor explained that Melksham is served by a main road. (A350)

Parent I/J\_Concerns over the LA's ability to staff the new centre in this rural location. These are low-paid employees who may have to travel a great distance to get to work. Most schools have a difficulty in finding sufficient people to fill these jobs.

HJ\_Explained that members could accept part of the proposals or the proposal with moderation.

Governor\_0-25 SEND project was 'ground-breaking' – long-time strategic thinking. How do the proposals fit in with this strategy? There is no supported independent-living in Rowde.

EW\_No sense in bringing the three schools together, the designation of children attending Rowde is completely different to Larkrise and St Nics.

Parent I/J\_What choice is there if a child does not get on with the new school?

Governor\_ Size is a concern. Big and busy – is overwhelming. Transitions need to be slow and steady. Suggest that a centre is developed in Rowde (to centralise services). SALT or physio could be administered there.

Governor\_Need to get a balance and avoid staff travelling around the county each week.

HJ\_Medway example given – split on two sites – moved onto one site. Specialised service on one site.

JWest\_A lot of children have more than one need, therefore centralising services would be good.

JWest\_TAC is developed further by centralising services.

JW\_new site could accommodate 11-16 only. Better solution (retain PMLD in urban centres).

Parent I/J\_Concern that we'll be hard-pushed to employ a Band 6 physio. NHS struggle.

HJ\_Consultation has been shared with our existing care provider (Virgin Care). We have the flexibility to build the new care contract around the one school, if proposal was accepted.

Compromises could be:

One site in an Urban environment (Melksham?) with an all age MLD school in Rowdeford,

Post 16 children who attend Rowdeford – the majority attend Wiltshire College in their numerous bases across the county. SEND provision is outstanding. Good platform of understanding. Split between campus and their home town. Each child has their own, unique package.

PMLD/SLD children could be positioned in Melksham, this could then include Post 16 provision.

Residential question? Parents need respite and access to peer support group that is age appropriate.

The education provision needs to dovetail into adult care.

Parent I/J\_Couldn't Ashton Street be used for secondary provision?

JWest\_but what about Chippenham based children?

Parent I/J\_Wheelchair service is based in Melksham; the independent living centre is also in Semington

JWest\_ Suggests that Melksham and Rowdeford could do both primary, Secondary provision then split by designation.

Governor\_One executive leadership will enable strategic overview.

JWest\_Do we genuinely have the land to develop something in Melksham?

All agreed that both Larkrise and St Nics are now no longer fit for purpose. Just need to find a compromise.

Agreement was reached that everyone wants the best solution.

Parent I/J\_Transport costs need to include daily trips out to accessing local facilities in Rowde or Devizes. Currently children at Larkriser/St Nics walk to these facilities. Swimming pool in Devizes doesn't have a movable floor (unlike Trowbridge).

Parent I/J\_How will the children's dignity be maintained on transport if their medicines are rectally administered?

Parent I/J\_There's a concern over a proposed Helipad, this could be alarming for children with sensory issues.

HJ\_Concluded the session by explaining that tomorrow's full council meeting is not a decision-making forum but an opportunity for the full council to be briefed on the consultation to date. Comments raised at the meeting will be added to the consultation feedback.