

SPECIAL SCHOOLS PROPOSALS (19 November 2019)

APPENDIX 3(c):

FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS AT ST NICHOLAS SCHOOL – 18 September 2019

Meetings led by: Judith Westcott, Interim head of Children’s Commissioning and Joint Planning
David Paice, Interim head of Special Schools Transformation

Sessions were digitally recorded and then transcribed. Please note that some dialogue did not always come across clearly, where this has been the case this has been identified or a sense of the dialogue included. The original audio recordings can be drawn upon for clarity if needed.

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St Nicholas School – Parent session at 2:30pm

David Paice

I'll start now, and I'll explain what these sessions are for in the first instance-because this exercise is to get your opinions, rather than us transcribe everything, the session is being recorded. So, in order that we don't miss what you want to say, I'm going to come to you and if you have something to say, say it into this microphone. I'll turn it on.

We'll just double check (that the microphone is working).

[David explained that using the recording device might be a little clumsy but should work.]

And the key is this: if you do say something you're giving us consent to be able to use that as part of the evidence base we have to take to the schools' adjudicator.

And we don't want to say anything here that would identify your sons, daughters or whoever it may be. If something is said that identifies a child, we'll make sure it's not put forward in the transcript. But preferably names should not be mentioned.

We are not expecting any fire alarms or anything, if we do hear the alarm the exit is just through that door and the alarm would be therefore be for real.

I'm going to run through things that you will already have heard about and seen about before (from the previous consultation work). So hopefully you will have seen this timeline of what is proposed which is an amalgamation of previous documents and the schedule of stuff that's going to happen. If you don't have a schedule in front of you there's plenty more of those. If you want to take one, you're very welcome.

[David was now speaking, referring to the documentation.]

What I'm going to do today is just give you a little bit more detail around what that might mean. I want you to have plenty of chance to say whatever you feel is appropriate, so as I go through, please feel free to interrupt me to contribute because we absolutely want to capture what you have to say.

So, I'm going to ask you some questions as well to kind of prompt us capturing what you feel about the proposal. I'll explain some legislative bits of why we're here. We'll then be looking at what do you feel about the actual proposal itself? There are two sets of documentation [David shows the documentation on the slides].

The one here is referring to opening and closing maintained schools. That's what we're following at this stage of the process. There is a proposal to close the three schools by name but not by site.

All three sites stay open, so we haven't got to follow a closure process because it's an amalgamation. This document explains that bit. There's also a proposal that once people understand the demand for places better we will come back and consult again on exactly how many sites we need in the future.

So, do we need more than three sites? Is it four sites? Is it five sites? Is it two sites? Is it one site? We are absolutely committed to going back out to consultation again. And the proposal is that by this stage there'll be an amalgamation and a governing body across the three sites. That governing body will take those decisions as to what's appropriate to do with the three existing sites. This proposal is an absolute commitment to three sites staying open. It's just that we're not a hundred percent certain because some of the bids haven't gone through positively yet. So, there is high demand for housing in Chippenham. There might be even higher demand if we're successful with one of the very large bids is going through currently. That's the reason we can't be 100 percent certain about the number of children needing places in the future and how many sites will be needed in the coming years.

[Looking at the slides] we will cover other things around governance:

- The schools that you've got at the moment

- The single school

So that's the process that we're following as per the guidance documents that we'll be circulating after today. You will get all of these slides.

The process for an amalgamation of schools - that's detailed in this document [pointing to the slides]. We're just following through that process of how you go about an amalgamation. Part of the amalgamation process is that the Local Authority are the 'Proposer'. The proposal is for the amalgamation to be a local authority-maintained school (not an academy) and so in accordance with the guidelines, the decision goes to somebody independent of us and that is the Schools' Adjudicator, and they are completely independent.

So even if we all think this proposal is a great idea it still might not happen. First, it has to go to the Cabinet to be endorsed - and they will check that the local authority has listened to the different views during this consultation. Then it would have to be approved by the Schools' Adjudicator.

Parent

This is just a quick question to ask - when does that final decision go to Cabinet?

David Paice

November the 19th - it is a full Cabinet. You're very welcome to attend it and it will be streamed online just like the last one.

Parent

Thank you.

David Paice

Thanks very much. So that's the process that we will follow. We should then hear back after the November 19th Cabinet meeting. It would likely be about six weeks after the Cabinet meeting that we would get confirmation of the decision – so around Christmas.

So, it is important we capture your thoughts on the proposal. We need to “represent” your views, supportive or otherwise, accurately to the Schools' Adjudicator. This is part of a four-week representation period that ends at the end of September.

The proposal talks about the plan to bring Larkrise, St. Nic's and Rowdeford together under a single unified leadership team. It is intended that this would help share best practice from all of the sites. There's a commitment to 32 million pounds for capital build on the Rowdeford site. There's not the space available to expand on the St Nicholas or Larkrise sites so there's a commitment to expand on Rowdeford site. Then, as I mentioned, when we see what's happened in terms of house building, and we get a sense of where the population growth will be, further decisions can be made about the future of the different sites.

Then we'll go back out and consult again as we need more spaces.

Could I ask what your thoughts are on that?

Any thoughts?

Okay. No, that's great.

Parent

My son comes from the other side of Devizes. I'm maybe not as opposed to the proposal as some people because I'm not local. I can completely see other people's view. I'm not sure. I don't know. Part of me thinks it sounds amazing. Part of me thinks I love this school, I love the locality, but I love the fact it's in Chippenham. But if I was from Devizes though maybe I would prefer the Rowdeford location. So, I have a son, he is much older. He's in year 10. So, for him, he might be here the whole time as the New School might not be ready in time for him. So, I'm really here to listen to the proposal.

So, I'm um, I'm not sure, I'm here.

Parent

Tell us more about it. But I would like to put my opinion forward by the end.

David Paice

Thank you. Thank you.

Parent

I think. Just to lead on from that. I think my initial thought is that it's great that there're going to be three sites to give parents choice. And I think like you having a bit more time I think to reflect in the future you know possibly. I don't know a school in Rowde might be appropriate for my son, I'm not sure. Yeah it just depends. But I think it's great to have that choice. Thank you.

Parent

I'm not opposed to the one body management being in charge of all three schools. I think a lot can be gained from that. I don't like the way you say that. When you review that it's not set in stone that you will keep three sites open, it just sounds too vague and woolly because it just leaves you open. Go out now and shut it. And I just think what you are saying. Like I've said all along, the big shiny new school would be amazing. [but] It is in the middle of nowhere.

Parent

People who live in Devizes will be fine. Not me. That's the wrong way. I'm not. But we are in the heart of Chippenham and the children are out all the time in the

Parent

That's why when we say keep local. You know, schools local. This is a massive community around St. Nicholas. It's just I won't be in a massive school over there, is it's just going to be... There's no way, especially our children who are more physically impaired are going to be able to. They think they're going to have to wait for a mini bus to go into Devizes. Devizes won't be that community. I've said it all along. There's no way wheelchairs can access round Rowde itself. There're just not, it's dangerous. There's no path, that you know – there's nowhere in the village that they can access because nowhere is accessible. Even the church is very small - not accessible, whereas the whole school walk down to the church.

Parent

Yeah. And we're all in there together. All the children are in there from the whole school. All the parents, it's a massive gathering and it's amazing.

Parent

It's in the heart of Chippenham and it's just a small snippet of what a it problem is not having a St. Nicholas in Chippenham.

Parent

My concern is that as I'm not a driver, I live in Calne and for me to get to Rowdeford if [child] has meetings or is sick. I have to go all the way to Swindon and back to get to Rowdeford . You know it's not doable. It will lose the parent's involvement with the child at school. We won't be able to come to meetings. There's not me walking into town. The activities in the local park we have in the summer. It's just all going to be lost.

David Paice

Having listened to the argument, the proposal now is absolutely that all 3 sites stay open. You made that very clear as part of the pre-publication consultation. You didn't want to go to one site at Rowdeford school.

Parent

How do we know which children are going to be going into which site?

Parent

We've got a lot of questions and as part of Wiltshire SEND Action Group, I've got a list to give to you hopefully.

David Paice

Thank you very much.

Parent

Though probably not today in total, but yeah there's a lot of questions and concerns about how it will be run. What choices for staff will there be. But I think initially it's great that there's going to be more spaces because we need them.

Parent

But I think also this kind of woolly thing about at a later date to consult. I understand you need to give yourselves breathing room to see how things lie when the dust settles, but I think as families we need to know where we stand. So just thinking about it today. I've been driving back and forth. I'm in Calne because my son's on a reduced timetable at St Nic's. And I'm doing 4 school runs today. It's exhausting and I had to take step back from my career to do that.

Parent

And I just think well we can move to Chippenham, but then what if in three or four years' time we consult again and then you decide to consolidate everything to one school and that I'm going to uproot my entire family. I mean my daughter is an emotional wreck at the moment in a mainstream school because of all this to-ing and fro-ing. So yeah, I think we need to know where we stand. And also, as thinking today, you have to keep in mind that a lot of our homes have been adapted to accommodate our children and at a cost to the NHS.

Parent

I mean I know you've had other work done recently. I've had work done. So, to have to reinvest that money every time we move to adapt our children to live there, that's gonna be an extra cost on the NHS as well. I think we need to think about those things as well.

David Paice

Yeah, I'll come on to how you will be empowered in those decisions when we look through the governance. If the amalgamation goes ahead there will be a single governing body. I'll explain how you are empowered as parent carers to make those decisions on behalf of your children and young people. So, I totally get it. And I think there are mechanisms to give you some confidence about your control of the process because that is the governance piece.

I'll explain the suggestion. It's not set in stone in any way but a suggestion to move that forward. And I'm also confident because the three heads, parallel to this process, recognise the challenges that we have; whether it's an amalgamation or not. Next year, the year after and the year after that, what's going to happen is something they are working on now. They are looking

quite diligently at various scenarios and plans to address those things aside from the issue of the amalgamation.

We have tried to capture the key things you have raised in the proposal and really welcome a sense from you about what are the most important. What are the key drivers for you in this proposal?

So, on the timeline it was absolutely clear that we need new school places in the North of Wiltshire. There's a hundred new places being proposed. We also recognise that some schools are overcrowded, in particular here [St. Nic's]. We also appreciate the potential for building on the large site in Rowdeford. We talk about bringing the unified leadership team together, echoing your comments about something that could work. And I think it could have a synergy of bringing people's expertise together. That was a key piece. But it's about being outward facing doing more of the stuff that you do here with other local schools particularly those like Hardenheuish and so forth. There are plans to have more of those types of "bases" across Wiltshire. This is why there is investment going into professional development of staff not just here but across the bases in primary. There are changes afoot in regard to ELP, for a secondary support model and professional development across all schools. It's very much about becoming more inclusive everywhere. This is in addition to enhancing provision here. There is a big focus on increasing health and care provision on site in the new build, working more closely with Resource Bases both in primary but also in secondary.

So that's kind of stepping into the work that you're doing with schools and mainstream and then there's an investment in post 16. So, you already have Poplar college here and the work you're doing in terms of transition and preparation for independent living with a bungalow nearby. More of that is part of the enhancement because there is a commitment in the new build to go all through to post 16 too. And so, would you just mind giving me a sense of what you think is the most important?

Parent

From my point of view, I'm interested in post 16. And you're saying you're intending to have it at the new site. Or is it going to stay here? I think also, what sets people in a panic is we're talking 2021, so soon, and this is like we only sort of finding out about it last year. So back on again I think I might call it, you know what's gonna happen to [child] in post 16 and it's quite woolly.

David Paice

Don't really know anything about that.

Parent

So that's my concern.

David Paice

That's helpful. Thank you.

Parent

I just wanted to pick up on something you said about the health and care support in schools because obviously we lost our school nurse, well nearly three years ago. Our nurse has never been replaced. So, say we had someone who was going to be floating in the community and never really kept on. So, what my issue is, is not specifically to do with those is the fact that um... you're saying that keeping these sites, all sites open, and you're gonna put all lovely health care, health support in this, in the new super school. What about here? You know it's like you're going to try and make that one all lovely and special so that, well I oh well they've got that over there all- Oh please have your child come over here then. Well no. We want our child in our community. Thanks very much. But we want those things. You know you've taken away our school nurse who is absolutely invaluable and was also a key.

What's the word? You know she did toileting clinics and a key connection to community health. You know from our doctors and things like that. You've taken her away and you're gonna put some stuff in the new school. Why? Why can't we have it? I don't understand.

David Paice

I think having their own dedicated area is part of the feasibility proposal.

Parent

But we've got a dedicated area here as well.

We've got an office here. That's where our school nurse used to work. Which is still there. Which is where all the meds get locked away and things like that. So we do have a dedicated space here.

Parent

Yes.

[For the record, Judith Westcott arrives at the meeting.]

Judith Westcott

What you'll be aware of is that this particular project, which is about the capital build and what we're doing in terms of creating new places, is separate from what you will also have seen from Wiltshire Parent Carer Council which is the SEND strategy which is being consulted on. So, the provision of the nursing care is not part of this plan as such. Although every school gets resourced so it's part of the wider SEND strategy. Talking about what do we want from where. So, we have a £12 million contract with Virgin care who provide all our community nursing and when we talk about whatever we do with the schools here, we will be talking about how we ensure that the right nursing support is available to the right kids in the right places.

So, the decision about how many nurses are here or how many nurses are at the new provision is something that we need to think about. So, the Virgin care contract is a five year contract and so we get an option to talk about renewing that contract and that will go into our consultations as well and we will want to have conversations with them as the provider to say well why we thought you were meant to be providing that. You know that's the part of the provision that is made available and that's where we'll have that conversation.

Parent

You say we're in the middle of a five year.

Judith Westcott

We are indeed.

Parent

So, if it is deemed that there should be nursing provision in that school, presumably then that nursing provision will be shared. Round three sites?

Judith Westcott

So, when we talk about nursing provision we base it on the children, not on the schools, so we don't say St. Nicholas has X number of hours. The way it's worked is each of your children are given support based on what their needs are at any individual time. What we then do, is when we go to a place like this, is we say, well, there are lots of children who are needing lots of hours so there comes a point where you say well what would be really helpful is if they were based here and it will be really helpful if it was the same nurse that we saw every time they came here and that's where we get the economies of scale, not least to say because our nurses spend quite a bit of time driving around the county getting to all the schools, and how we stretch the budget that we have available to go to those different places. So that will be an assessment which comes right at the bottom from your EHC piece.

So, for every child we will be looking at what it says in those EHCPs and we continue to do that in terms of then saying how do we ensure that that provision is available to the children in the right place at the right time.

Parent

So is this an ongoing thing not just something that will be looked at with this proposal. Is that something?

Judith Westcott

Yes. So, the SEND strategy, five years ago when I started at the council, I had to write the first SEND strategy and that's coming to an end this Christmas. So now we're going into a period where we're starting to think about, well, what do we want next? Did we get what we wanted out of the first strategy? Did we do the things that we said we should do? What do we want to change? What do we want to do different, what's kind of slipped over that time? And if you like this particular proposal which is about bringing the schools together and creating new places. The strategy was actually set five years ago.

So that process was set five years ago, and the underlying knowledge base was revisited as part of this proposal. We knew that the number of children with an EHCP was going to grow over that time.

David Paice

I am conscious that we only have 15 minutes, so I'll focus on the governance in particular.

So, for absolute clarity, the proposal is an amalgamation which means one school. So, in name the three close and a new one opens. There is commitment to the three sites. St Nic's will stay open as it is at the moment, although probably with a different name, but that's for your governing body, the shadow governing body and then the formal governing body to decide. But there is an absolute commitment and we completely heard about the need for continuity of provision in the localities.

There is a commitment for up to 400 places but what we might find is, looking at the demand for places, that we might not want to go to 400. It might be, well let's think about it. So, the proposal is for a modular design so that you can think about carefully, in light of the demand and in light of what requirements are coming through from your children, what do we need? Why do we need it? And do we need more? So, I mentioned, particularly here in Chippenham, that there is

an appreciation that actually growth could be quite significant and therefore we might need even more places here in this locality.

We then get in to what. How is this likely to pan out then? So, on the timeline I'm just going to talk you through some of the key dates. [looking at the slides] So on this slide it's kind of how is this going to affect the school? And it's business as usual, which is the key word to pick up. And although I've kind of gone from here 'til Christmas because we have no agreement from the independent Schools' Adjudicator to do any of the amalgamation, it's a proposal. But actually, the business as usual carries on. It's just we have no green light. Hopefully we will do. I suggest that from Christmas to Easter the importance of the shadow governing body will be significant to you here, because each school will have representation, equitable representation, on the shadow governing body. One hopes that by April, the suggestion is it could happen that by April, we will have got a Principal to bind this together. It's a single unified leadership team with a single Principal and she or he would be appointed in April. So, they appoint them, but they wouldn't be able to start, even if you appoint in April, until September.

So, in essence the first academic year of the new amalgamated school would be this time next year. We said that it would be by 2021. The reason for that is you might not appoint, you know across the three schools, you might find that the candidates are not the candidates that you feel can realise your vision.

Parent

Would you then re-advertise?

David Paice

Absolutely. Yeah.

Parent

In terms of appointing someone - like the interview process and short listing - will the shadow governing body be part of that?

David Paice

Absolutely. They're pivotal. It's their decision. So, it's not the local authority's decision, it's our proposal. But once the proposals is accepted, the shadow governing body take responsibility for moving things forward.

So, the three sets of governors need to come together because it's your collective appointment. Because it's your Principal that you want. Your amalgamated school is across the three sites.

So that means actually we need to do quite a lot of work considering this. And what happens if not. What do we do for this time next year, and the next year? So, there is as you know an informal stream of work which is happening at the moment to consider all possibilities. Just so you know we're not left in the lurch in any way should particularly, either we don't get a green light, or we get a green light and then don't get the Principal in time.

We still want to make sure that there is absolute continuity of provision and that your children continue to get a great education regardless of whether or not we get an amalgamation. That commitment to continuity of great education is key.

Parent

You just take some continuity and great education. What are you doing at the moment to ensure that the current staff in three schools' feelings are appreciated? That they are okay in their jobs because we have lost a number of brilliant teachers and TAs over the summer holidays. Well at the end of last year. What are you doing to actually? Because they're invaluable.

David Paice

Yeah, all right.

Parent

You know, and they're jumping ship because they're worried about that, about their job and that having done a survey, they know that they can't travel over there.

Parent

We did an extensive survey in St. Nicholas and it was for staff as well. So, what are you doing in this? You know it's all very well talking to us. What are you doing to give some security to the staff members?

David Paice

We are meeting staff next, in seven minutes, to give them absolute assurance about the proposal. The reason that you've asked for it to be a local authority maintained school, which is just not the presumption in the system at the moment. The presumption is that it's an academy. But because you made it absolutely clear that the staff are pivotal to this; that was one of the reasons, a significant reason, as to why we went for a local authority-maintained school, because actually then there are no TUPE implications. The job contract is exactly the same and for the vast majority of people it's the same jobs.

You're not even looking at doing a slightly different role. It's exactly that, a commitment to the staff that work with your children and young people that is why we asked could it be a maintained school. Because we listened absolutely to that and we've now listened to the fact that you're committed to the localities. You should retain the staff who work in the localities. I've got that commitment. This is a three-site solution with an absolute commitment to St Nicholas here.

Parent

You're not going to then once the new Principal is in place, you're not going to start switching staff round between sites.

David Paice

No that is not my decision at all. That's a decision for you. It's your governing body, the shadow governing body in the short term, and the actual governing body. That's their decision. So how you actually manage the three sites is the decision for the governing body. Together with your executive and the Principal to take that forward. So that's their decision.

In terms of representation on the shadow governing body, I've suggested that you might want to ensure there is equitable representation.

- Three parent governors, so one from each school.
- Six staff governors. So, it's all of the heads plus another staff governor, one from each school to give you kind of comfort that everybody's important here.
- Only one local authority governor.

So that's the kind of standard piece. And then when you've decided what are the key skill sets that you require to run three sites as one school and to drive this forward in the way you desire, then you can co-opt; and I'm suggesting four co-opted governors. But you look at the skill sets that your governing bodies have. All the parents and staff have to think well these are the things you want. Have we got them? If not, we want to co-opt them. And you can co-opt from colleagues at the local authority, but you don't have to.

So, this is just suggestion regarding the possible structure of the shadow governing body for you to consider. But that's for your consideration to take forward. We do need to have a shadow governing body and that's there for the curriculum and how you're going to address the needs of the children. That's is a decision for them. The shadow governing body. There is a change when it gets to one school. So, we don't have St Nic's and Larkrise as one school. If the Principal for the amalgamated school is appointed in April, then they could start in September. So, the actual governing body would kick in at that time, to hold the Principal when they're in place to account to deliver the learning and wellbeing outcomes that you wish for.

So, at that stage the actual governing body might be just one Principal, one parent governor, one staff governor and one local authority governor. You can have more co-opted governors if you so wish and you can have associate members for various teams as you so wish. Some have said well that might be a bit small for us. You need to have seven people. The five already mentioned plus at least two more. That's the proposal for the shadow governing body and the subsequent actual governing body. I hope that reduces your anxiety because you're in control.

You have the equitable opportunity to get to the one school, three site solution once you've shaped that to everybody's agreement. You're in control.

What do you think to that?

I'll give you the slides so you're welcome to those as well.

Parent

Don't completely understand how a shadow governing body transforms into the actual governing body. Are they the same members?

David Paice

You have two ways of doing it. Actually, voting or proposing people from the existing governing body.

You don't have to go out to an election if you feel you've got the right person here, but you could.

I'm beginning to have a chat with the chairs and vice chairs of the governors here and at the other schools to start thinking about this. It has to be your decision. This is just a kind of suggestion to start that thinking.

Parent

Just aware of the time.

David Paice

I'm sorry.

We've done most of it ...

Parent

There's not enough time.

David Paice

Please feel free to send your comments in through the online survey.

If we just whizz through the slides, we'll see this proposal is just one bit of the wider SEND jigsaw. There is a lot of investment going on across the county. A free school in the South. Expanding and enhancing post 16 provision and looking again at ELP in secondaries.

Parent

Next September.

That could be a new Principal for all three school.

David Paice

Yes.

Parent

Will there still be the heads at the school?

David Paice

No. No not as not as a head of a school because the school won't exist.

Parent

So, one head is going to go one school to another

David Paice

No not necessarily. That again is for the leadership and your governing body to go well how do you want these three sites one school to be managed.

Parent

So, Ros might not be here this time next year?

David Paice

Might not, might.

Parent

And it might just be one person in charge of this school, Larkrise and Rowdeford?

David Paice

Yes, that is correct.

Judith Westcott

You have to remember Ros doesn't do it alone.

So, you have a senior leadership team here which is made up of deputies and assistants and when they look at that. So, the governing bodies, the shadow governing body and your own governing bodies stands at the moment, they'll have to look at them and say "how do we do that? How do we work together now that we're one school?" so is their expertise at Larkrise that you want to know about here and I'm talking senior leadership team so I'm not talking about the day to day classroom teachers and TAs is their expertise that you want.

Is there some thinking that you want to draw from each other? And there are all kinds of models. So multi academy trusts do this, they do not have a head teacher on each site, they have a lead teacher so there might be somebody whose job is to particularly look at curriculum on that site or curriculum across all three sites. So, there'll be lots of conversations and that's why we're starting the conversation now with the governors and with the head teachers and saying well let's throw it around a bit. What does it feel like for you? What might work? Let's go and look at other models. Let's go and see how other people have put this together. So that there can be lots of conversations now so by the time we get to this time next year, they'll be in a position to say well now we want to take the next step and it doesn't mean that they have to move out the head teacher straight away, it may be a period of time that they have an executive head with shadow heads in place.

So, they won't just sort of get them all out and say you know day one will change it all, but that's all for the consideration. So, they've got lots of time to think about that over this coming year That will have to be a conversation that has to happen locally here and it has to be led by the shadow governing body because as you say you feel far away from where the local authority can't make those decisions on behalf of the schools, the schools themselves have to be involved in what works.

David Paice

Yeah. Very briefly was that useful.

Parent

Yeah, yeah.

David Paice

Thank you very much indeed for your time.

St Nicholas School – Staff session

Judith Westcott

I'm behind this mic because we are recording all of that we're doing today because all the information that we have, goes to Cabinet and then goes all the way up to the schools' adjudicator who is part of the DfE. So, we're trying to capture all the information and that will mean as we have conversations with you and you're able to talk to us about stuff. There is a roving mic. So, Emily is in charge of the sound system and you'll need to speak into the mic in order that we can capture what you're saying. In terms of GDPR et cetera, by talking into the mic, you are, by default therefore, consenting to be recorded. And if you do not want to be recorded then you just need to put it to one side but accept that your comments then will not officially be going up to the schools' adjudicator. All get that bit?

Yeah OK.

So, thank you so much for finding the time. We do know at the end of a busy day, halfway through the week, all our energy levels maybe not at a top level. So, thank you so much for coming to join us. We've been sharing round with you the timeline which I think probably was sent out to you as an email at the end of last term, so some have you seen this one before.

So, it has changed slightly.

It does change all the time in terms of creating the scope of what we're doing but we're here today as part of the official consultation around the next stage of the process.

So, we're following DfE guidelines in terms of how you make changes to schools. I'm going to hand over to David in a moment because we've got a number of slides so that you can talk through what we're doing rather than pre-empting that. But the main thing I would say is this is a great opportunity for us to have a conversation. So, do say all the things you want to say. Ask all the things that you want to ask and then we can gather that all together and hand over to David.

David Paice

Yes. Thanks very much. So, I'm independent of council. I'm an independent consultant just brought in for capacity, to help move this process forward. So, there's a degree of independence about what I do and I've built special schools all over the country. So that's part of my background.

So, for here today it is really important as Judith was saying, that it is part of a representation period. We need to hear what you feel about the proposal because what you say will be transcribed. I will stick it in a computer and take your voice file and put it into text and that then goes to a completely independent organization called the Schools' adjudicator. There is a team of them, but one will be chosen and then they'll kind of take a view of, Is this an appropriate proposal? So, what you feel as to whether it's appropriate or not is really important.

The during the pre-publication, before we got to this stage, I had the opportunity to speak to a couple of you and I spoke to a number of your parent carers about things they like, things they didn't like. And as a consequence of that it has changed. So, there is definitely a commitment, for instance, to this being open. The sites. All three sites are now open as a consequence of hearing that loud and clearly. So that's a very significant change from the previous proposal that people were not very happy about. And today I'm just going to run through the kind of process by which we can feed this through.

I'm gonna go through the timeline and I'm going to just break it down into bits and then ask you questions, or you can ask me questions at any time. So, do feel free to chip in but I've got to specifically go through the process. I will highlight the legislation that we have to follow and then ask you some questions about what you feel about the proposal and then I'm gonna tell you about how you govern the process. There is quite a bit about governance. You are your governing body here. You are your staff representation on that governing body. I will speak to you about how you get to control the process and give you a suggestion; it is nothing more than a suggestion, as how this works on the back of advice and guidance that's come from the experts in Wiltshire, and that hopefully will give you a bit of a sense of where we're at. I will highlight two lots of legislation that you need to be aware of and you will get this slide deck, so you can write notes. You will get everything.

So, on one side you have stuff about opening and closing schools and on the other side it's kind of how you govern those schools. There are four documents that we're having to follow, and we have to follow the procedure. You've got a slide here that outlines the procedure that we are following in respect of opening and closing schools. That's what this is about in that document. The next bit it refers to an amalgamation. What is an amalgamation and how can you go about it.

Listening to everybody's views, this was seemingly the most appropriate of all of the suggestions. We wanted it to be a local authority-maintained school.

People wanted three sites, but they wanted to learn and pull together the best and share from the best. It was felt that there's a synergy between the three schools. Stronger together was what we heard. That is why we're suggesting the amalgamation. So, it's a single leadership team across three sites. One school.

This proposal appreciates that from a staff perspective you didn't want any TUPE arrangements. You'd prefer it if we just keep it as a maintained school, which means you will not have, if this proposal goes through, your terms and conditions do not change at all. That is no TUPE. The same employer remains the local authority that pays everybody's wages. So, it's business as usual in that regard and that is the proposal. But because the local authority is the proposer we can't mark our own homework. So, this is what Judith was referring to.

We have to send this proposal, assuming it goes to Cabinet and we go to Cabinet in November the exact date 19th sort of rings a bell. Mid-November. It is a public cabinet meeting at the local authority. Elected members will make a call. They already made a commitment in May to commit 32 million pounds to this proposal. So, we would expect them to continue to support it going forward.

But that doesn't mean that it happens. It will go to the schools' adjudicator after the November cabinet meeting. We should hear back yes or no definitively by Christmas. We're cautiously optimistic. That's the sort of timescale.

So, what we're doing now is really important because of this independent body. They need to have the right evidence base to make an impartial decision about our proposal.

So that's why we're capturing this. I'd encourage you to send any comments you have through the online survey. We're really keen to capture your voice so that we've got a really solid evidence base to send to the schools' adjudicator. This representation phase ends in September.

You will be part of a three sited school. So, your school would embrace a Larkrise site and embrace the Rowdeford site and you'll be one leadership team across those.

This is a capital build proposal. There's a significant amount of money on the table. That's thirty-two million pounds to build on the Rowdeford site.

There is a view that this houses too many students for the physical size of site. There is a degree of overcrowding here and a more significant overcrowding in Larkrise.

But there is space on the Rowdeford site so that's where the capital build is. That's where the capital build money is being allocated. That's why we're here.

We are committed to three sites as part of the amalgamation with up to 400 places on the Rowdeford site. This will be reviewed as we are aware that demand might change. Particularly in Chippenham as potential housing growth is quite significant.

There's a further bid in to support this housing. If successful it will significantly increase infrastructure in Chippenham which is very likely to increase housing. So, we want to be able to consult again when we know more about the actual demand for special places if some of these large bids go through. So that's why one site seems very unlikely. Is it two? Is it three? Is it four? Is it five? Not sure. So, it sounds whilst we appreciate it sounds a bit woolly, the commitment right now is to the three sites.

How we use the sites and do we need more. That is still an uncertainty. That's why one would have to go out to consultation and as your consultation run by your governing body.

So, can I ask any thoughts?
Anything that you would like to feed into the proposal?
Any initial thoughts.

No. Oh good.

Staff 1

So, what would then trigger you saying that we're going to close?

David Paice

I can't imagine, and it wouldn't be for me to say that at all. That would be for the governing body. We; the local authority, have to have places. That's the responsibility of the local authority. So, the local authority needs to keep a very tight view on what's the capacity of the system. And we're working really closely with all of the three heads at the moment to consider what do we do

even if this amalgamation does not take place. We are acutely aware that next September there will be more demand for places and that will exceed the amount of supply that we have.

So, what are we going to do about that?

So, there's an informal piece of work that's nothing to do with this process but it's absolutely about covering all angles as we do every year.

Judith Westcott

The bit that I would need to make very clear is what the cabinet agreed to in May as part of the proposal is that there will be a further consultation.

So, it is not a matter of if it will be but when. And the when that they've decided on is the point at which the build is all but done. So, when we're getting close, that's when they will consult because until then we kind of don't know. We don't. So, in other words this bid if it goes through in Chippenham will create 7000 extra houses if it doesn't go through there won't be 7000 extra houses.

So, that's such a huge number that we can't sort of say make a decision now without knowing the outcome of that bid and how many houses might come here to Chippenham. So, there will be a point of consultation and at that time we will decide, does it work best having three sites? Does it work best having two sites? Does it work best having one site? Or do we need to have four sites? Or five sites? And we need to ask ourselves questions about, is this the right one? So, if we felt you know to be great in Chippenham then could we still use this site, or would we potentially need to create another site in Chippenham in order to ensure that there are enough places here locally?

So, the decision here is very much about saying we want to do this together. So, we do not want to have three schools independently thinking about what does growth look like and how do we work together? So, we want to do that together and when it's the right time in terms of knowing a bit more about what's going to happen, next there will be a point of consultation to say now let's look at sites. Now let's look at whether we've got enough in what we've got in the right places. Yeah.

Staff 2

So, if the site is opened with 300 or 400 places, who's going to make the decision as to which pupils go to this school or that school and when and where from?

David Paice

That decision again is for the governing body. I will come on to the shadow governing body in a while. That body may start taking a view as to how we realise the vision of this integrated and outward reaching school that's part of the proposal. There will be a shadow governing body at the same time as there is an actual governing body. The governors will hold the leadership team to account.

So, in essence it's their collective responsibility to do that.

You have the experts in terms of education that you will be taking proposals as to what is the right curriculum, what's the right some pastoral support for the children and young people coming through the system. So, in some respects you collectively would take a view as what's the right proposal for the children and young people that are coming to your sites in the single school and what's the right curriculum for them. But then it will be for the governors to hold senior leaders to account to deliver that vision.

Staff 3

So, leading then from that, are we are you able to confirm that basically before 2023 when it says the new build that no pupils or staff will have to move from their current sites?

David Paice

That decision is kind of yours to make....

So, I wouldn't want to shackle you or otherwise hold you back from doing what you collectively feel is the appropriate thing for the children and young people.

And in terms of what roles you want to do, I think it will be business as usual for the vast majority of staff given that we've got three sites and we've got more children coming through. It would seem this is likely to be the case.

Would you want to offer new experiences to children and young people from here?

I've just been speaking to a parent carer, for instance, who's interested in post 16 provision. Well, actually, that might be interesting to think about because you have an expertise in this area that you might be able to nurture afresh on the Rowdeford site.

I wouldn't want to prejudge what might be the most exciting opportunity. It does seem there will be opportunities to do things differently. That's up to you if you wish to embrace this sort of change if you feel it appropriate.

Well yeah you can take advantage of that or not but that's in your hands

Judith Westcott

The bit that we're very clear about at the moment in the proposal, it's business as usual for this year.

When you get your new Principal and your governing body in place, they can have conversations with you about what might work. So, I cannot say to you that every member of staff will stay here and I cannot guarantee you that every child will stay here because it's not my decision. That will be your governing body of the one school which will make the decisions about what works best. Now that you're altogether.

Staff 4

With regards to the Post 16 provision you say that it's going to be based on the Rowdeford site. So, what happens to Poplar college?

David Paice

No what I meant is there will be some additional provision on the Rowdeford site. You will still have Poplar College - Poplar College is going to stay and there are also lots of other areas that your students could choose. For instance, the college or they could go to Fairfield farm. There are lots of things that students could do. Currently there is no post 16 provision on Rowdeford site. Part of the proposal is there will be. So that's another opportunity that if the proposal goes forward. It's additionality. There's not taking anything away. It's just this becomes a possibility now. If the process goes forward there will be provision basically.

Staff 4

With regards to the location of Rowdeford in comparison to Chippenham, Chippenham is obviously a better location for our young people to be involved in their local community for work experience, going to the gym, being involved and part of their community, instead of out in Rowdeford, where there's very little for them to access.

David Paice

So, so they don't go. That's your choice. If that, if that's the best provision that you think is available for the children and young people themselves, then because you've got three sites

you've now got some flexibility. So, it was interesting the parent I spoke to said, actually, I live just outside of Devizes. So, for me post sixteen provision in Devizes is interesting. So, for her it may well work. I'm not saying it all shifts in any way at all to Rowdeford and stops here just saying that there is another additionality that comes on stream if the proposal were taken forward.

(Inaudible comment made)

Judith Westcott

So, it goes back to that bit about being on the microphone. .

So, the question, the question was, for the record, why we signing a piece of paper? (referring to staff sign-in sheet). Because the schools' adjudicator will want to know how many of you turned up and who turned up so that the fact that you are here is now on record that you've turned up and that you were available. If you then speak on microphone you won't be referred to by name. You've not said your names, so it will be person one, person two et cetera and that will come forward as well. But because this is a formal consultation or representation we have to tell the schools' adjudicator exactly what happened.

Just in case you want to be contacted at some point if you want to ask questions. No. If you don't want to put your email address you don't have to. And quite frankly if you've all put down the school's one that's what I would expect and that's perfectly fine.

Okay.

Staff 5

Can you explain how the senior leadership team will work and how that's going to affect us and also the day to day running of a school, as obviously I don't know how many. Obviously one overarching head I assume. And what other sort of senior leadership members are going to be sort of on site.

David Paice

Yes, I can. I can't tell you the structure because I don't know the structure and it's not really for me to inform that structure, that's for the shadow governing body.

Judith Westcott

We probably need to go through some of the slides because we're going to talk about all this, so you can have a look at all this.

David Paice

So yeah if there's there's one other question but I'll explain briefly and then you'll see in detail how the decision on the structure of how to achieve the vision for the school; the amalgamated school, is being considered now by the heads.

How? What do we do?

But if we're thinking of this amalgamation because it's been talked about over a number of years actually what is it. How do we own it? And I think Ros your Principal will start involving you collectively around well what do you want? What is the actual clear vision? And what is the mission that we're hoping to achieve? From that then you start thinking about well what jobs need to be done to deliver that vision. And as I say mostly if there's going to be any change it'll be around the senior leadership team.

The jobs you do with the children and young people. There's an absolute commitment to continuity of provision there. So that's not likely to change in any way to how you manage three sites when currently you manage one. And the role of the Principal will be different because currently they manage on one site. So that particular job description actually what jobs does that person do will need to be considered. That's going to be taken forward as part of a, let's make sure all options are covered, by the governing bodies and the three heads working collaboratively with us. That will take us up until Christmas. After Christmas if it's a green light. This informal governance becomes a shadow governing body. And I'll talk about that because there's equity being proposed for its constitution. It's kind of making sure that each school is equitably represented. That they will start taking forward a view of how do we do it. And that has got to be within the budget that we've got. So, there is a big capital amount of money to spend and then we have money that comes through in terms of revenue paying staff. So, then it will be a matter of is that sustainable? That structure. If so great. I've then got a job description and Principal and a good idea of the potential leadership team to go out to the market from probably late February. At the moment the desire is for a single chief executive officer or Principal or a head. We want one person and she or he to be able to unify this. So, we should have a reasonable idea of the Principal's job description and what processes and jobs the combined school will need to do. I can explain the process for getting to that point. I don't know definitively how that will look but I know there's a process to ensure that we get there by the appropriate time.

Staff 6

Yes. I work in the (muffled) we're concerned with the merger of the schools that there won't be a requirement for so many admin staff between the three (audio loss) managed where, we can't quite (audio loss). We'd like to be reassured.

David Paice

Absolutely. Well I guess I say in three sites there's still quite a lot of those jobs that would be required to administer three sites. So much of the work that you do is likely still to be needed to go ahead. There should be a desire, you know an opportunity, to share some services and expertise from admin. This might work collectively and so the leadership teams will take a view of what systems work that we could take forward as we amalgamate. So, there could be some change put forward when the new school happens. I would have thought there is an opportunity in the same way you can kind of share leadership expertise, you can share administration expertise and systems as well. So again, just talking to a colleague here around actually some systems let's make sure they're consistent as well. Don't know the exact structure of that but I know there's a process to get to it and I think you'll become a much clearer.

So what jobs need to be done in the new structure? I can reassure you that you'd have certainly this year though, you have to do exactly the same things you are. So, there's no change in the short term.

Judith Westcott

I don't, I wouldn't want to hide behind this and say that there isn't change on the horizon. So, let's be clear there will be change and there will need to be considerations when you have your new shadow governing body and then you have your governing body and you put in place your Principal. They will then need to work collectively and say well what does it look like going forward and they will need to make decisions about what are we creating here by bringing the schools together at this stage. We can't say exactly what that is.

As David says I think there are things that we can guess at and we can assume there are things that they might want to look at before other things. But it will have to be step by step in terms of how does that help our children get the best education, OK?

David Paice

So, the next slide that is another set of questions to you. So, on the timeline there are drivers of why we're doing it. And so, I'd really appreciate, well which of these are the most important so we can reflect back through the representation what you feel are the most important that we absolutely hang onto. So, on the timeline it talks about, you know, we need more places and to reduce overcrowding. So that was key. It's up to another 100 places. There is then kind of

bringing together the unified senior management team. That's key. There is also a commitment to professional development. Sharing expertise. But also, not only between the three schools but outward facing too. So, you continue to do even more of the work that you might be doing at the moment. You're very close to Hardenhewish, and we are hoping to amplify that work across all schools and settings to be more inclusive. There's lots of other work that's going on around us, the SEND strategy, little bit later on, to enhance that work, you might want to play a key role in supporting colleagues in primary bases in addition to that.

And it is the outreach provision in secondary and into mainstream that's a key part of the drive.

There is also a big push on health. So in on the Rowdeford site, in the feasibility there is a key commitment to having onsite health care provision. And that's an enhancement, that was meant to be a very key part of the proposal.

Staff 7

So, what does that mean, that it would be at Rowde and not here?

David Paice

Well the building of the provision, yes. Because that's the only place that we've got space. Here you have space for health.

So, it's not saying anything here won't continue. It's just where the capital is going. That there will be provision to support having pretty much full time Virgin Care at the Rowde site. That paediatric nursing or occupational therapy may be onsite.

So, enhanced onsite facilities are part of the proposal.

Staff 8

It feels or sounds like it's going to move to Rowde. And when you're saying 'we'll move when appropriate' for these pupils that are on this site, that we're going to gradually take away things from here which means they have to go.

David Paice

No fortunately Judith explains this exceptionally well, so I could start but I might just go to it (the slide) now. This is the provision of the space. It is where the money for new buildings is going to be spent. So, the 32 million pounds is to provide bricks and mortar. That's capital. So, all we're saying is there is the space to have dedicated health and care provision onsite expecting that there will be significant presence on site.

How you then manage the overall spending of the operational side of the Virgin care contract and who goes where is a different matter. And that is a slightly separate piece of work. And there is a review of how resources are deployed across Wiltshire as part of the SEND strategy that people are asking about. That is the contract. So, by the time the new school opens we will be into a different contract. Is my understanding.

(Audio loss)

Staff

She doesn't want to use it (microphone), she said....

Judith Westcott

Well okay I'm going to talk to you about the SEND strategy in a moment.

I'm the children's commissioner. So, I run the contracts which aren't school stuff. So, the Virgin Care contract. I'm involved in contract managing that, the CAMHS contract, the Oxford Health one. So, we sort of have somewhere between 8 or 10 million in one contract. 12 million in the other and those cover the whole of the county. And the way those resources are set out is based on the children.

So, it builds up from their ECHP and those who are on SEND support. So, what you don't have here is you don't have a provision of nursing time or occupational health time which is for the school. You have something which is based on the children that are here. So, if the children need it they come here. Now quite clearly over time what happens is that you end up with the same person turning up more often than not and you end up in sort of having a room here because there's lots of children here who have needs more than say in Hardenhuish.

So, you get more time here. But that contract is run in terms of all of the help that's needed across the whole of the county. When we review the SEND strategy that contract will be about halfway through. And so, we will be having conversations with them about how does it feel right now? Are we getting the right people to the right places? So, it includes all the public nursing. The OTs.

And because there is a SEND strategy consultation which is about to start in October, and that's where we get the chance to have a good chat about that one, as opposed to this one which is about the three schools together.

And when you look at that the reality is that what we know is that having space dedicated to our health providers onsite in school is a good thing. So, when we start building at Rowdeford we want to do that and we want to say to the provider we would rather you didn't have your own offices which you're spending money on and I'm paying for. How about you come to our school where it keeps it local. It means it's available to the children where they are here and that's the conversation that we will be wanting to take forward.

So, when we look at the new build, we'll want to do the best we can with that build. But that debate is not led by what we do here. So, it will continue to go on behind the scenes.

Staff 9

As professionals then that work with these kids daily (audio loss) SEND consultation because as far as we're concerned we don't see enough people coming into our school.

Judith Westcott

I sincerely hope you will. Your school gets an opportunity to complete something called a SEND SEF self-evaluation every year and Ros gets the opportunity in that to tell me annually what she feels the experience is at the moment. I've asked her explicitly for a whole range of information about how many hours is she getting. How does it feel like this year compared to last year? So that's an ongoing conversation that I have with Ros but really when we do the SEND strategy I hope you will turn up. I hope you will fill in the forms. I hope you will go online and that you engage in the conversation because you're dead right. You are the guys experiencing it on the front end. And we want to work with whoever the provider is going forward, creatively, about how do we make that money stretch as far as we can to ensure that every child is getting the support that they need.

Staff 9

Because they are on a similar line going forward. I think the concern is that a lot of money is going to be put into this new site and all the new resources for the new site and that us and Larkrise will kind of just be left to sort of struggle on as we have been.

Judith Westcott

It's a tricky issue the way capital comes to schools now. So, in real terms, what you'll be aware of, I don't know if you saw in the press that we have a new school that will be opening in the south, so there's a new school for children with ASD/SEMH that is totally funded by the DfE. They put forward 12 million pounds to create that new school. And normally the way money comes to schools for making this building the best it can be, comes via schools. And that's the way it goes forward.

Money that's being found for this particular new project is coming from the council. That's really unusual. Normally councils don't get involved in finding the money for school buildings, it's all about the DfE. So, when we then talk about this school (in the South) we have to go and negotiate with the DfE for what money can be brought to this building. So, it's a different pot of money and it's different rules in terms of the way we go forward. That's really hard and what we want is to ensure that every child gets the best provision that they can do.

But we have to use the vehicles that we have, the tools that we have, in order to bring the best to each one of those schools. We won't be letting it rest. So, we won't be just saying to the DfE, ujust confine your support to the school in the South because we got a brand new one down here. What we know and what David said a moment ago was it's not that we need just 400 places at Rowdeford, we need lots of places. We need at least 620 places, so it can't be that what we do is we say it's fine that this building is a, you know, left to its own devices. And indeed, as we say if that housing infrastructure bid goes forward for Chippenham, then we may want to be coming to talk to you and say actually we need a whole new building.

We might need an additional new school entirely for Chippenham. But we will have to wait and see. For now, we need to work within the scope that we have in order to be able to resource as much as we can.

David Paice

All right. I want to now look the governance bit because hopefully this should give you a sense of how you are in control of the process.

So, let's just absolutely make it clear that it is the one school, three sites and up to 400 places.

But if we move forward that continuity of provision is key.

So, you'll see on the other slide, a view of what's going to happen in terms of times and then a little bit more detail and the exact dates.

So, there's no significant change here at all from business as usual all year. We can't do anything definitively regarding the amalgamation until we get the green light at Christmas. But there are things we can do to move that process forward.

So, we've talked about the cabinet meeting in November. If the outcome is positive at the Cabinet meeting, we move ahead to the schools' adjudicator. We should know if they approve

of the proposal by Christmas. Hopefully if everything is positive and it's a green light we can start. One of the first things we need to do is to get the Principal in place. So, to get a Principal in place we need a shadow governing body.

Regarding the shadow governing body.

I'll go into the detail of what this means.

You're still running three schools. The schools won't close at all this year. There is no change.

You are doing what you're doing, and your governing bodies will support you and manage the school. And your leadership teams are committed to doing all of the things that they continue to do.

But you'll be now thinking about what we are going to do when we amalgamate?

So, the first process in that key task is to get that integrated leadership team with the Principal.

So, we need a Principal therefore by February.

We pretty much have got to have that job ad out by February in order to get the Principal interviews in place, so you can recruit them April. They have to have been recruited by April if they are to start in September this time next year.

So, we need a shadow governing body to support that process.

I am proposing that membership to the shadow governing body is equitable.

On the timeline it talks about having an integrated leadership by 2021. This is because we might not find the ideal candidate by April. If there is a delay in recruitment it might mean, we don't have a new Principal until January 2021. But we hope by 2021 we should have one school, one Principal. All united.

That's the plan

We phase the building to support an appropriate growth and any transition arrangements to a larger number of places on Rowdeford site. We have until 2023 to deliver the full masterplan.

So, the proposal is to increase numbers on the Rowde site but in a way that is appropriate and sensitive to the needs of the children and young people that you have on the three sites.

So, this might create job development opportunities as new phases come on stream. For instance, the 6th form on the Rowdeford site. You do that here currently and some of you might fancy doing it over there as well. You might want to help set it up. I'd like to suggest this curriculum, so I don't have one yet. So, there's a lot of interaction to get from this year through to the actual build and that's where the governing body and the leadership team work with you as a staffing body to consider what is the right thing to do.

It will be it'll be phased appropriately, and the build will align with your plans for the curriculum and pastoral support you think is best for the children and young people.

Any thoughts about that?

OK, so I'd like to make some suggestions about how we might want to structure the shadow governing body.

And these are just my suggestions for your consideration. They are not set in stone in any way. My thinking has been informed by a conversation with the governance team at the Council and their view of what best practice.

So, in the first instance the shadow governing body members will operate alongside the three governing bodies for the three individual school.

In terms of staff representatives, the suggestion is for that to include your heads. So, Ros will sit on the shadow governing body alongside Phil the head of Larkrise and Mike the head at Rowdeford as three members of staff.

I am then proposing that you nominate one other staff representative.

You will want to think about who those staff governors might be before the formation of the shadow governing body in January.

And then you do the same from parent governors.

And then you can get an opportunity to co-opt expertise through co-opted governors. You can co-opt onto the shadow governing body people with the skills and expertise that you feel you need to confidently drive this amalgamation forward. Again, you might want to look to drawing skills from across all three schools so there's a degree of equity in the make-up of the shadow governing body.

With a Principal in place we will move to a single governing body.

The need for three schools is gone because you're one school.

So, then there's only one head that is on the shadow governing body and then you're down to two parent governors one staff governor one local authority governor and then you can co-opt other governors to have a minimum of seven in total. You could increase the number though. So, I've had feedback from the previous school that they'd like to run with more.

That's fine. This is purely a suggestion.

And to accommodate other people that you might want to draw on, there is the opportunity to embrace associate members. You might have particular committees that you feel are appropriate for associate members to be part of.

That's your call.

But you the governing body control this and hold the Principal to account.

Any thoughts?

So, questions on the governance?

OK.

Right.

Then I'm going to hand over to Judith.

Judith Westcott

So, I think it's one of the things that we really felt was potentially the benefit of having this maintained school. You'll be aware that most new schools in fact pretty much all new schools

are normally academies. You might know that there is something call the presumption method and that literally means central government presumes you're going to have an academy. And so, we've gone out of our way here to say that actually we wanted to do this together. And what we wanted to do was to have those senior leadership teams working together to create the vision that was going forward and have the conversations about how we can use skills well across one whole school.

But this conversation about the New School is part of the bigger SEND conversation. So, I was referring to earlier about the SEND strategy. Now as I say back in 2015 I was asked to write the SEND strategy which we did lots of consultation on at the time and set up lots of things that we've been doing for the past four or five years. That completes this Christmas. So that's the end of that timeline. Now that has involved creating lots of places all over Wiltshire.

So, you're probably aware. Exeter House has expanded. They've got about 30 new places.

Springfield has set up a whole new unit, a satellite down in the south for 32 children.

Downlands has just been out consulting about changing from 68 to 90 children.

And we have as I mentioned earlier, we have the new free school in the south as well for 150 children.

What we couldn't do was expand on this site. Or indeed on Larkrise site because you are landlocked. You have no further space in order to expand in terms of the DfE accepted rules for how much space any individual child should have. So in amongst this piece of work there's all this other work going on.

In addition to that we've been expanding Resource Base places, we've been expanding ELP vision.

And overarching that we've also changed business as far as the council is concerned. So, we now have an education directorate that we didn't have beforehand. And the Education Directorate is starting work where they are looking at inclusion as their main principle. Of all the things, I think this is really important. Of the many things that they could have spoken about and decided were most important for the education of children in Wiltshire they decided that the most important thing was SEND inclusion and that's their priority in these coming years. And you will see, I don't know if Ros got to one this morning, Helean is now running these regional

meetings every term so that all the schools can come along and engage and take forward the work that's being placed within that inclusion.

There is a piece of work that Matt Sambrook who's the head teacher at Exeter House has been seconded to work with us on three days a week around enhancing inclusion in mainstream settings.

We're also doing work with our independent schools and those schools which are sort of further afield out of county and we're asking them about what their development plans are and how they can work with us because we know we need lots of places.

So, if you look at how many EHCPs we have when I started here in Wiltshire, we had about 1200 EHCPs. We now have 3200 and it doesn't look like it's stopping yet. So, and you need to remember within that scope that of the special school places which account for about 500 of these EHCPs, the vast majority of children are out there and we want to reach them and we want to be able to create this new one school as a beacon for great practice so you can be reaching out and showing folks how to do stuff and them coming in here.

We want to see dual registered placements.

We want to see opportunities for secondment of staff going in and out, so we can share best practice.

And that really is just me sort of scraping the top edge of the things that are going forward.

The SEND strategy will be revised, and we will start with a whole new pitch about what we do and how we might work together over the next five years.

I have to say that I think what you do here and with your colleagues and Larkrise and Rowdeford will be flagship. What you do here will be leading the way.

And we want to be able to support you and enable you to be that very best. So, you indeed continue to be proud of this place and continue to take that forward into the plans that go forward for Wiltshire.

So, I just really wanted to reassure you that this isn't just one thing that we're doing on its own, there's lots of other work that's going on around you that is intended to support you and work alongside you.

Any questions you'd like to ask me about that bit?

David Paice

We are almost out of time. If you have any final thoughts later please use the online survey to send them to us.

Staff 10

Can we just go back to the shadow governing body?

How much involvement and influence will they have on the advertisement for the new head and that recruitment process?

David Paice

Complete. They are the governing body.

It is a they who control who is elected to that position.

So that's the reason that it's such an important body that we need to get right. We're making sure it's equitable so that collectively you feel empowered to make that significant call.

Anybody else?

Staff 11

I know you've just said that we can't expand here, we know we can't expand here. We all knew that we need a bigger school. But there's still that underlying question that I know you know things have changed and you've listened to people but it's still being considered that Rowde is the best option and nobody's mentioned transport. Nobody's mentioned you know again the community links, the impact it's going to have on how we get out and about. You know we have huge community links here with people around the school. The children can go out for walks. They can go to the park and go to the church and I still feel really passionately that Rowde is not the right place to build us a super special needs school.

Judith Westcott

I really appreciate what you said of sites but the whole point of keeping this site open is that you don't lose any of that.

Three sites. Sites that will continue to be three sites and if it turns out in four- or five-years' time that we're saying actually the demand here in Chippenham can't be met by the additional places at Rowdeford we will look here and we will say what more could we be doing here. So, I think it's very clear from what the cabinet wants to do, they want to take it in stages. They want to make one decision now and when they're better informed they want to make a further decision. And that's why they've made this decision first to enable you to work together to make the second set of decisions.

As David has said several times, it is the governing body over the three schools as one, who will actually be steering the strategic direction being chosen for a larger school.

Staff 11

I still don't understand why you picked Rowde.

Judith Westcott

There was a detailed report on the site appraisal analysis. Do read the cabinet report because the cabinet report will tell you about all the sites that we considered and why that one because it was most central was, where if we had to build in one place and we only have the money to build in one place one site. So, we didn't have 64 million. We had 32 million. Yes indeed.

Staff 11

Is the 32 million given to build this super school? Does that include, that money, to do the pathways round Rowde? Because you come straight out at Rowdeford school, on the left there, that path there runs out. You then have to cross that busy country lane to get to other side. The path is not wide enough for wheelchairs. And then you go around, there's no drop curbs in Rowdeford. There's none of that. Does that 32 million cover that as well?

David Paice

The whole site was, we had early stage feasibility, so the exact detail of the site would still be discussed, and it shows the best entrance and egress going in and out of the site both for cars and kids and staff. All the detail of that will need to be thought through.

Actually, on the back of the Rowdeford site there is an interesting route from the back that can get you into the centre. You want to have a look at that. Not sure. The decision about access routes is for you own.

It was over all of the sites that we looked at equitably and heads judged the sites on balance.

Rowde was the best site on balance for all of the students in the north. That is why we are where we are. Of all of the sites available, that's the one that we could expand on as the best.

You may or may not agree with it, but all sites were judged equitably. The decision to build on the Rowdeford site was judged against about 14 different sites. They were genuinely and objectively reviewed in detail. That's where we are.

Staff 12

Sorry I was just going to say if you put in the 32 million into Rowdeford and (audio loss) if everything's like here, what are you gonna do there?

David Paice

Get a new school.

Staff 12

The demand's here now. Oh.

David Paice

I disagree with that because there is a lot of demand over there if demand exceeds that and there's more demand in Chippenham. And one would have would look carefully again and go, well this is where you have four sites. So, yeah because you might need more capacity.

Staff 13

Can I ask, who is going to make the decision for the students? Are parents gonna have a say in it? Or are we just going, is the council gonna say right the provision is over there, we're shoving you over there?

David Paice

It's not just over there.

You've got three sites. This site stays open.

Staff 13

For the time being.

David Paice

For as long as you need it. The decision is then the governing body's decision in light of the demand. The local authority has as the legal responsibility to have places for the children to come into the local authority but

Staff 13

So, the parents have a say in where their children....

David Paice

Absolutely. I have just spent the last meeting with parent carers. Yes, their voice is paramount.

Staff 14

So is the designation of the schools changing in the sense that at the moment we're an SLD school and Rowdeford doesn't provide for the same pupils that we do. And if you're saying they can move there when appropriate, will it ever going to be appropriate for some of our pupils to travel an hour on a bus and whatever else that we've already told you at the other stages?

David Paice

You're moving into one school, three sites to accommodate the needs of kids predominantly with complex care. So, you've got lots of PMLD children young people here. We now have the opportunity to look at three sites. So how you manage those sites for young children and people that come to the school as three sites is for you to consider. It is up to the leadership team and the governing body to decide what is best.

Staff 14

So, you're saying further down the line a governing body is going to decide whether those pupils are going to go to that school. But then you're not gonna know what provision to spend this 32 million on. Because if you haven't got pupils like ours there, you might not need a hydrotherapy pool though. You might not need this. However, if you're going to force us to move then you're going to need a lot more than one hydrotherapy pool to meet the needs of all the pupils. So, until we know which pupils are going you can't say what you need to build.

David Paice

Well that's not true because you do know the students that are going to go there. All of the students are not going to move straightaway. You've got three schools. You've got children and young people that come to one of the schools now.

Staff 14

Yeah, we get the one school there on three sites, so how do you know what to build on that site when you don't know which pupils are going to go there.

David Paice

We're beginning to start those discussions, with conversations with Ros and Phil and Mike to think through exactly those things.

What's the right curriculum to provide for these children/young people? Which children and young people are going to be in these sites? I think particularly for 2020 and 2021 and 2022 then we have the new building and the new building needs to sit within the context of three sites. That decision is the leadership team's decision and to be empowered by and held to account by the governing body. So, you have this transition of your governing body into the shadow governing body and then the actual governing body of the New School across the three sites. Through them you can make the right decisions to address those concerns.

It's a collective vision and mission and a collective view of what's the right approach to delivering services to get right for the children young people.

Staff 14

So at the moment in 2023 we've got the option to choose to go to a school in our community with facilities that are becoming out of date or go to a brand new facility and risk their health while travelling there.

Judith Westcott

Let me respond to that one. This decision is about how we make change. So how do we develop? How do we create new places? At the moment you're in the position where all three schools are putting forward the reason why everything should stay here.

OK you have a conversation with us about Chippenham. We go to Rowdeford and they have a conversation about what's in Devizes.

But let me follow through for you if we're going to be able to move forward bringing ourselves together so that we're all thinking about I think, proposing it, let's get together to have that conversation. Regardless of the amalgamation we need to work collaboratively to ensure we have the right places for children and young people with SEND. So, if we decided not to amalgamate the schools and become one school you've still got to have that conversation. Yeah and we're saying right now we believe that that conversation is easier when you are all together than when you are all separate.

So, let us be clear that the proposal here is let's make the decision together and then we'll move on to the next decisions about what are those decisions we want to make. Because where we've got to beforehand, is all we got was people saying we just want to defend what's ours now and that wasn't helping our children any more than it was helping our decision making. And I know that's a paraphrase of where we've got to, but what I'm saying is that the overarching position if we can make decisions together, what we know is for certain, there will be more children requiring SEND places.

So, we know that that is going to happen and we've got to find a way of responding to that need with the resources we have, with the spaces we have, with the complications we have about travel and transport et cetera. All of that is going to stay the same. But we need to be able to start making decisions because we can't just keep standing here and saying we know it's going to happen but we're gonna do nothing about it. And as you've rightly said here today your senior leadership team and you here are some of the best informed people. You know about how those decisions should be made and what those decisions should be.

And therefore, we need you to be involved and we need all of you to be involved not just one group. If we'd taken you all over to Rowdeford as one school, it potentially would have all been led by the staff over at Rowdeford. That didn't feel right. So what we're doing now is enabling you all to join the conversation. And as David was saying when we have the shadow governing body followed by the governing body that's where the decisions will need to be made.

Staff 14

We have never said it's all about Chippenham. We, well, maybe I'm wrong, there might be people here that do feel that way. We've worked with Trowbridge; our parents have worked with the parents of Larkrise and we've worked with parents at Rowdeford. But what we're saying is that for the children here, this is a location in their community, for the children in Trowbridge it's in their community and for the children at Rowde they've got a different needs and yes some of our people (audio loss). There was a facility there and perhaps they might choose to go to (audio loss) the facility there. But for a lot of the children here it means traveling and putting themselves (audio loss) with school with more or the children.

Judith Westcott

I'm gonna go on record and say I apologize if I mis(audio loss) you.

But I would say I think we're better together than we are individually.

Staff 15

Can I just say something?

I don't think anybody has taken into account that we have some staff who cannot travel to Rowde. We cannot lose experienced staff because they are already commuting, that's a commute too far. You can't expect families to relocate. So, it does concern me on the personnel side. Certainly, the recruitment etc. It's not an accessible location in terms of public transport. We have local staff who can't drive. This raises all sorts of issues and we will lose a significant number of experienced staff if this site shuts. They can't all move near Devizes.

Staff 15

You're not guaranteeing (audio loss)...

(Background agreement muffled)

David Paice

This site will be staying open.

There's an absolute commitment to here. That was the part of the listening to you in the pre-publication. Hence there are three sites will stay open. This decision is purely about amalgamating three sites but one school for the capital spending. All the ongoing operational moneys that comes to make this work is going to be the same.

(Muffled speech) spread through between the three schools, so the children here (muffled speech)...

One's capital, one's revenue, I think the staffing budget, and the facilities, the things that you need to make this the school work and function have an operational budget. Then the building of new spaces. We can't build here so the building money, that's where the 32 million pounds is. That's the capital.

The bricks and mortar.

Staff 16

So, you've already said that there is a proposal for expanding the Chippenham community with 7000 houses and as you can see there's already huge expansion going on in the area. So, I don't quite understand why then Rowdeford would be chosen for the 32 million pound

investment in that school in comparison to here where there needsn e expansion in the community.

David Paice

It's not an either or say it if that comes to fruition yeah, then one might go this way. It could be...do you need four sites? Five sites? Depending on the demand for the places at that time then how many more sites do you need and where are they now?

Staff 16

Is there an identified growth in the, like, is there a similar growth in Rowde? As there is in Chippenham? Is there a proposal for 7000 houses and Rowde in comparison to Chippenham?

Judith Westcott

So, at any one time the Council has to have a plan across the whole of Wiltshire. When that was set, when we started this project in 2017, we knew that there were going to be 24000 houses built across the whole of Wiltshire and we knew exactly where they're going to be. Which ones are gonna be in Devizes, which ones are gonna be in Chippenham, which ones are going to be in Trowbridge. And that guided us to understand where the growth might be and indeed where our children with SEND might be coming from. The housing infrastructure bid that we're talking about literally went in this July and it may not be successful.

So, it's something that goes up to central government and they decide whether or not they're going to fund this infrastructure bid and create this additional 7000. So, when we were making this decision we had to say well we know it's a possibility. Therefore, we don't want to nail our colours to the Devizes mast. We want to say that we want to leave the possibility for expansion in other places too.

And that's exactly what we've done. So that we're saying we consult on where all building happens later on down the line.

We won't know the outcome from that housing infrastructure bid for at least another six months. And in the meantime, we can't sit here waiting and say oh we'll just wait, and you know not do anything, we have to start offering opportunity because we know this time next year there will be more children who want places as we have had to cope with this year as well.

So, it's sort of trying to find a way of making decisions, keeping things moving, but also keeping it flexible so if we do need to build more or differently we can do.

And we're going to try and construct in a modular way so that we build it in sections. So, there might come a point where we say rather than build that last 50 places at Rowdeford we might want to say, actually we need to move that to a new build in Chippenham and we need to bring that here because that might be more sensible. But that's about being able to stay on top of it every step along the line and say where do we need things. Knowing what we know now and what we can project and predict going forward.

And it says up to 400.

And that's why it says up to 400. Because that's what we think would be appropriate on that site as a maximum. If we don't have to go, we won't. But we've allowed for the money and the capacity to go that far.

Staff 17

So, if you decide to keep the site open in Chippenham but it needs to be bigger, so, you need a bigger built in Chippenham there. Is there a place of land allocated provisionally? Well that's not ready to have houses to be built on? Can you share with us where that is?

David Paice

Yeah absolutely. In the previous pre-publication consultation which is where there were a lot of 14 or more different sites, one of the sites was Abbeyfield. So that possibly could work. So, if the housing infrastructure bid is successful that seems to me an interesting area to go. Well let's have a new school there that might work. So, there are opportunities at the moment that are in the Chippenham area that could be used for educational purposes. Indeed, Abbeyfield is being used on to expand at the moment but there's still a slice of land that was presented in the previous part of the consultation. There is a bit of land there that could work.

So were it possible, there are places in Chippenham that we could consider.

Staff 18

Are you guaranteeing to protect that land for the time being till you know what the position is in so many years time?

David Paice

Can't have guarantees on anything, but that thinking is absolutely there. That's why we're checking at each stage and we're moving it through a phased modular build that doesn't have to go up to the 400. If we don't need to go up to 400 on the Rowdeford site, we will go up to a

smaller amount and we'll put a bid in for spaces elsewhere. If we're successful it might be a free school it might be a whatever, we would need to work it through.

That seems to be an interesting area because it was it was well received as a possible site in the Chippenham area.

Judith Westcott

It's all very complicated I have to say in terms of trying to work it through and I appreciate that there's still quite a few ifs and buts about how it works through, but I think we're making another step forward here and I really do appreciate the time that you've given here today to come and spend time to talk to us and both. David and I would say if you want more time and you want to have more of a chat with us do you get in contact with us.

If you want to go on record you need to do it before the end of September but none of us are going away. We will be available, and we'll want to keep having conversations with you as we go forward.

David Paice

Yeah absolutely.

Staff 16

Regarding this leaflet, that you've admitted already has changed quite a few times, there's no date on it to say each time it's being changed. It's like xxx had another copy that has different numbers on it. And then what my colleagues were trying to point out is that it says it does state and I don't know if this is an error as it's slightly different to what you're telling us, that we're going to bring (audio loss) but that's different to what you'll telling us, which is that if we need three sites we're going to keep three sites

David Paice

There are links with the wider SEND strategy. There is a desire to get greater integration and inclusion into localities. Most of the children with education health and care plans aren't in special schools. So, there is looking again at the best ways of supporting people in their in their localities. If that works fantastically and you'll have something in Chippenham for children and young people that isn't a special school that works really well.

If that does happen we might have sufficient provision in Chippenham for the children. If not, we will look for more sites.

Inclusion is the most important thing in terms of the educational drive going forward. We want the inclusion work you do here to be part of that. A beacon of outstanding practice showcasing inclusive education.

How do you do that. And what that might represent in terms of local provision is still being thought about and worked through right now. It's part of the strategy development. We will spend lots of time with the special schools thinking about that and that agenda is not, it's not predetermined, but it might mean that you don't need as many special schools. It might. Not 100% sure.

Judith Westcott

So is there any more we can share with you now because I'm aware we're meant to be finishing.

Staff 19

One last thing. I think as Admin, we don't feel very reassured. I mean I feel like I've got a job till next September and that's it. Sharing tasks is fine but we've got a lot of expertise and it does feel like there's going to be cuts somewhere. And Admin and SLT seemed to be the prime factors and I think children are the most important thing, obviously, but it's very hard looking forward in a year's time to see where I'm going to be.

David Paice

Okay.

Thank you very much indeed for your time. Really do appreciate that. Thank you.

St Nicholas School – Governor session:

Judith Westcott

Thank you. It's lovely to see you. Thank you for coming out of an evening, I always appreciate you finding the time and it is lovely to be here again. We met with parent carers earlier on and we've met with the staff, so it's great that you can find the time here this evening. The reason I am very deliberately standing behind the microphone is that, as part of the representation consultation, all the information that we have goes up to the cabinet and then on to the schools' adjudicator and the schools' adjudicator will get a written transcript of everything that we say this evening so that then all the information goes together and there's nothing sort of missed out in that respect.

That does mean we have roving mics which we will give to you so that when you talk, what you're saying is going on record and in terms of consent in GDPR, just that you know, when you accept the mic you are accepting that you're going to be recorded. If that's okay? If you don't want to say anything at all, you're very welcome not to say anything at all. But if you want what you're saying to be included in what we send on to the schools' adjudicator and to Cabinet then you need to have the microphones.

We keep forgetting at the moment don't we, to hand them around but we will. So you won't get named, so we ask you to sign in so we know who's here and we will say to the schools' adjudicator we had X number of governors who came along but you don't have to name yourself if you want to you can do but you don't have to name yourself in terms of you know who's speaking etc. So, is there any on those practical matters that you want to ask me - anything before we start?

(No questions were asked)

I am going to hand over to David.

David Paice

Yes. Thank you. So, what I'm going to do is just explain some of the legislation and the four-week consultation process. Now, you will get a copy of the slides sent to you so don't worry about writing notes. I'll summarize the key parts.

And I'm going to ask you some questions about the main elements of the timeline. I'm going to talk through what the time line means, from your perspective as a governing body in particular, and the general process to get to the 2023 new build. So, I'll talk that through and ask you some questions as well just to get a sense of priority and your feeling.

So, we are capturing this session as Judith has said because your contribution today will go to the schools' adjudicator. But you can ask me any questions at any time, and I'll be grateful if you did as we go along. Please don't wait until the end. Questions as we go along would be would be fantastic.

And then I'll go into quite a lot of detail about the time line for a shadow governing body and the jobs that might be involved.

So, if you're comfortable with that format I'll crack on, any questions? No? OK.

If we then flip through the documentation I was talking about on this side, you'll see it's about opening and closing maintained schools. That's absolutely what we're proposing here. So that's what we're following, and I'll go through which bits are relevant, in particular. Then also part of this overarching proposal is to consider again, at some stage how many sites might be needed going forward. So, there is a commitment to do that.

And on the other part to consider is about governance and there's various handbooks. I will draw from them in terms of the guidance and the suggestions that I'm putting forward, but you might well want to read those at your leisure in detail. So just click to the next slide. That's the key part of that guidance talks about an amalgamation. The next slide picks up on that guidance. We'll focus on what we mean by an amalgamation because this is what the proposal is - it is one school, three sites.

So, this site, St Nic's, stays open and it is part of a single school, with a commitment to this staying open. Because it is a local authority-maintained school that is being proposed, actually we (the Local Authority) are the proposer. So, in the next bit, as the local authority, as the proposer, in an amalgamation we can't kind of 'mark our own homework' and say, 'well that's a great idea'.

So, somebody else needs to say 'yay' or 'nay' to a good idea or not as the case may be. So, there is an independent body - the schools' adjudicator makes that call. It came out quite clearly from the engagement work that, that is what you (or collectively those colleagues that had responded) said that's what they wanted (for the new school to be local authority maintained). The following slide then described the process timeline: the four-week representation period started at the beginning of term, so the second of September, and will continue until the end of September.

The comments that you make and the input that you make is really key. We need all of that by the end of the month because at the end of the month I'll pull all of the documentation together and then it goes to a cabinet meeting for November. Assuming that's positive, then it goes to the schools' adjudicator. So that's sort of why we are sitting here right now – we're following that process. The proposal is for a single leadership, single school across three sites - to get the best out of all three schools coming together as one. It's also to have thirty-two million pounds worth of capital invested in the bricks and mortar of a new building, buildings, facilities and that's at the Rowdeford site.

At both St. Nicholas site and at the Larkrise site there's no more space to build on. So that's where the building is proposed (at the Rowdeford site). Could I ask what you think about and capture your thoughts? Would that be OK?

Governor

Your thoughts have changed, my thoughts haven't changed. I disagree with the whole thing and I would prefer to see the investment in local areas for social inclusion for the children so that they are actually educated and spend their time in their local communities, which is where they're going to end up when they leave school. Pushing them out to Rowdeford, I don't think it's an option and I totally disagree with it.

David Paice

Thank you very much.

Governor 2

I do think the local authority hasn't understood what we mean by inclusion and being part of the community. But as regards the 32 million, how many places are you going to build for your 32 million? And are you going to get the situation where you end up with having a big school that you have to move all the children to, to be viable?

David Paice

Thanks very much for that. It's up to 400 places on the Rowdeford site. The previous proposal was just for one on site. The new proposal is to keep the three sites, so it is keeping the local provision here, as is, not moving from St Nicholas, as long as there is that requirement and it sounds like you're suggesting that need will be permanent.

Governor

Money, you're talking about 32 million, a huge amount of money, invested in a brand-new school, in a location, that ourselves, Larkrise and other schools disagree with and have done fundamentally from the beginning. What you haven't shown are any options for investment in the local area, in Chippenham, where there are currently 7000 houses being built, with no consideration for special schools.

Governor

Builders in the area on the expansion of Chippenham, in the past, whereas primary schools are being built and other schools and other provisions have been made, special needs have been totally ignored. I see this as a last-ditch effort and we've been shown on different ways of handling special needs. We've always given our clear proposals to the local authority and

participated in all the workshops that they've given, and our views have been made clear from the very beginning and have never changed. And yet, I see no documentation from the local authority which has taken our views into consideration or actually listened to governors and parents of the three schools.

Governor

So, you know, 32 million, so what are you gonna do with St. Nicholas? Is it gonna become a primary school for special needs? I don't see anything in the plans for options for the school or St. Nicholas and what it may become after Rowdeford becomes a 400-pupil school. I think we'd rather see a clear plan, with options on what may happen with our input and consultation, proper consultation with governors and parents, not being told, this is what's going to happen. Which is what's happened was which has been happening now for the last couple of years. OK?

David Paice

Thanks very much.

I think some of the other slides I can show to you will show that you will have the power to determine what provision goes across those three sites and how you manage that provision, both from shadow governing body, where there's equitable representation, from yourselves as governors from this school as well as the same equity of provision or representation on the governing body, shadow governing body from the two schools. And then as the governing body of the new school, that is absolutely in your remit and you will have responsibility for getting the leadership team on board to deliver your vision for the new school and how that fits into the localities.

Governor

Because now you're assuming we agree with Rowdeford school and what I'm saying is we do not agree Rowdeford school and want to see investment in Chippenham, in a school. Not St. Nicholas becoming a satellite of a large school in Rowdeford. We fundamentally disagree with the major build at Rowdeford and would like to see investment in Chippenham.

Governor 2

I totally agree with what x is xsaying about us not having been listened to and you say 'oh yes, it'll be great' and there'll be this ghost governing body and we'll be able to do what we want and decide who goes where. But we've got no evidence of that. In fact, our evidence from the past three years has been that we've spent a lot of time, all of us, heads and governors, doing work to tell you what is needed, and we just have been ignored. How is that going to be different in the future?

David Paice

In the new proposal there are three sites rather than one site, the proposal has changed because we've heard you want three sites. So that is absolutely the commitment - to three sites. This site stays open.

What is happening, it is worth reflecting on, is that it is up to up to 400 places. It is not absolutely in concrete there are 400 places going to be built on the Rowdeford site. So, in fact, what that means is that the shadow governing body and the governing body together with the leadership team, and informed by evidence from the local authority, would think about where need at the moment is. Overall the proposal is this, of the 14 sites, with the availability to expand, this one got the highest score which is why it's going forward as the proposal but it's also going forward with a degree of let's be very reflective, as you say, there is a bid that is in place at the moment that would add significantly to the housing growth if successful here in Chippenham. So, we might not choose to build all 400 places on the Rowdeford site if indeed that's right.

So, it is a modularised, phased build that is being proposed. That then one could be a little bit more sensitive so maybe we can look at this, maybe there will be more demand elsewhere. So, there is a degree of flexibility in light of demand. So, it's absolutely demand driven.

Governor 3

I think that's the key issue. It keeps changing. Invest 32 million. I think at one point it was 24 million, so I think there's got to be trust in how much money is actually being committed and where does that money need to be committed to, to make sure that the three sites function to meet the needs of the children within Wiltshire. And, you know, with inclusion at the forefront, obviously, but that reads as invest in new places on the Rowdeford site. We've made it clear that we don't think for our local area and the children here, that that is the right site necessarily.

Governor 3

We are committed to working with, for those children, that's right. But that reads as 32 million into the Rowdeford site (lost audio), we need to look at the three sites. Where's the other money going to come, to make, to give quality, to the other children with special needs in this area?

David Paice

Thanks very much. The proposal now is that you have 32 million pounds for up to 400 places on the Rowdeford site. That is it. That doesn't mean though, that if there is significant demand elsewhere as, within the south at the moment, there's a free school bid that's been successful

thus far for 150 places. So, if demand is demonstrable we'll bid for more funding. So, if more requirement comes forward, we'll look at that.

But what we're saying is on the Rowdeford site and only the Rowdeford site, there is a commitment up to that amount. Because it can be modularised and phased, there is a commitment, this proposal is the Cabinet have committed to go forward with a consultation and have committed to 32 million pounds, subject to this being a positive representation period. So, let's go back to Cabinet for that to come in.

Judith Westcott

What we know is we need more places. Where we've been in the past is having three separate groups of people each arguing why the investment should be in our home town.

So, the conversation that you have here, is the same conversation that we have in Devizes and the same conversation that we have in Trowbridge about how we move things forward. The proposal here is trying to separate out where the buildings are from how we make decisions. So, the key part of this proposal is bringing the senior leadership team together.

That your head teachers and you as governors are able to look at it and be able to say that, together, we're collectively looking about how we grow, rather than individually in terms of patch based. What we also know is that there is a limited amount of money at this point in time. So as David said, there's nothing stopping us, at some later point, in the next round of free schools, asking for additional money from the DFE. But at this point in time we only have this and at this point in time the only land that's available to us to create that expansion on, is the piece of land over at Rowdeford.

Which is why we're going ahead at this point in time, taking forward the places at Rowdeford. Having said that, as David said, we're saying up to 400. So, for example, if that housing investment bid is successful and we do end up with more demand in Chippenham, we might want to say, actually, let's not build 50 of those at Rowdeford. By doing it by modular build, we will get opportunities to keep reflecting on that decision as we go forward. And we might say actually here in Chippenham, and we want to build a new school site. In order to take that forward and make that decision we need to work together collectively. At the moment with three separate school leadership teams it is difficult to get a consensus because you are coming from three separate perspectives.

Governor 2

I think it was four years ago when we were first asked to get together all the special schools and we worked together. We spent a year working together. We put together a document showing how we could meet special needs in Wiltshire and how we could all work together. And it was just totally ignored. So, to start saying now that there's gonna be all these opportunities for us to work together...

Judith Westcott

I'm going to have to say, it wasn't ignored. A lot of time and attention went into looking at that document. Some of the difficulties with that document were that most of the expansion was identifying the buildings that we already have. And as far as DFE are concerned, they simply won't allow us to do that. They did approve building at Rowdeford site, and that's why we want to build on that and it takes us forward in terms of building the extra places we need in Wiltshire.

Governor 2

You've got it in black and white there, invest 32 million for new places on the Rowdeford site by 2023. How do you think that makes various other schools feel? We are asked all the time to take more children, Ros has terrible difficulty. We know that this is a small site, however, if you put that down there and we agree to it, we don't agree to it. So, we can't say yes to anything like that. You've got it in black and white. It is not great. Yes. If you want to say that part of that money is going to it, that's different.

Governor 3

I think it's because, I do agree, it's because it's in black and white and that's how it's perceived. You've put forward and I think there's nothing to say that we wouldn't all work together to look where the need is and where the investment needs to go. But that's not what it says in black and white. So, it's causing great anxiety, great angst, uncertainty. So, I would just plead that that's clarified a little bit more. It's not clear. It doesn't, it says it will be 32 million for new places at Rowdeford.

Governor 2

Yeah. We need it to be absolutely clear where you're going because over these four years we've been let down by the local authority an awful lot and we've ended up really not being able to trust what people were saying. So, your reasoning about how, yes it would be modular and we may not spend all the money et cetera but that's you saying that David. And who knows what's going to, what somebody is going to say tomorrow. Because we really have felt that we've been let down and we haven't been able to trust things the local authority has said to us.

Governor 4

Can I just say that I had a different understanding from the cabinet meeting about the 32 million investment? Yes, it says on there on the Rowdeford site, but I thought that included the Resource Bases for the primary and secondary schools because I thought that was mentioned on it that that would be included in the 32 million.

Governor 4

And the other question I have, I'm just a bit, I feel a bit misled or maybe I don't understand it, but so, on the 14-page document about pupil numbers and admissions, it says that the agreed places for September for St. Nicholas, Larkrise, Rowdeford et cetera at three hundred and forty places. And then for 2023, the places proposed for the new school is 400. But I thought that the new school is going to be three sites. So that would mean to me that only 60 would be built. How it is written.

It says that the combined places for the three existing schools is currently 293. This proposal seeks to expand provision further, so we can accommodate up to 400 pupils. But it's unclear that 400 places would be built on the Rowdeford site. Does that make sense? So, to me it reads, we are having 60 additional places at Rowdeford and I thought 'hey! we can do so much more with 32 million pounds for our schools that we have in Chippenham and Trowbridge as well'. Those are, just the clarifications maybe, because that's unclear.

Governor 2

You said, if need is perceived in Chippenham, I presume that's in Trowbridge as well, then we will build a new school. But at what point are you going to be starting to investigate whether there will be a need. Because we have suffered very much from having told the local authority, all the years I've been a governor, that there would not be enough places, that this situation when we would be full would arise, and we haven't been listened to. So, is that going to happen again? Are you going to wait till there's 8 thousand more houses in Chippenham and we've got, I don't know how many children with special needs, and then start saying well we've got to do something about this or are you going to be proactive and do something about it very soon?

David Paice

I'm going to try to address all of those questions but if I don't answer or didn't answer the right thing, go 'hang on, I didn't say that, I said X' so, I'll come back to you. I am going to do this in this order because that's what I can remember. In terms of proactive review, I'm delighted to say that I'm working with the heads actively regarding this, because this is not a done deal, the amalgamation. And we have to ensure that we know there are going to be more places coming through and working with Ros and Phil and Mike to consider the art of the possible, working particularly with the three heads but with all of the heads really. Where might children go? What

could we do to accommodate children coming through? There is a real challenge for next September in terms of places. So, we're actively looking at that now.

That is happening now. Already discussions have taken place. But then we must ask, what will happen in 2021? 2022? And we're sort of doing parallel bits of work. If this goes ahead and is acceptable, what would we do in the case of an amalgamation? If not, how else might we manage that accommodation requirement and ways of working to support children best? So, we're having those conversations right now with the three heads in particular but also thinking that very carefully through with a collection of teams and engaging with the Resource Bases. We're looking at what's not working, what is working and how do we develop that? So, we are jumping ahead to some of the other slides. We'll see how this is, this particular amalgamation proposal, is part of a wider jigsaw. It's just one piece of a much bigger jigsaw puzzle. The bases, just come back as I think you asked about bases, the 32 million pounds is not to do with the bases.

So, there's no siphoning off of cash for any additional work that might be needed to either create new bases or refurbish existing bases or whatever it may be. The 32 million pounds has been committed, for discussion, as part of the proposal, purely for amalgamation and purely for the build, and the proposal is that the buildings are the capital element which is the 32 million pounds is on the Rowdeford site.

So that is that funding bit. You asked me another question though, there were bases and there was something else around... (audio lost, governor not used microphone)

Ah, yes, that is very good point, thank you. What we're committed to is up to 400 places and these sites staying open recognizing that the sites are, you've got too many kids. That's just what you're saying.

You keep telling the local authority "we're getting full" so, the overcrowding was very much part of and I think that's one of the drivers for this review. The key driver really, to reduce overcrowding and increase capacity but because we're sticking to three sites with a reduction in capacity to give you more space. That, say, you reduced to 50, not saying you would do, but you're going to get a reduction whatever is appropriate to give you the right space for the children and young people here in this building.

That gives you a bit more bit more breathing space but if you're keeping the three sites, so you got 400 there, plus sites here in terms of total overall capacity.

Governor 4

So, the 32 million will be only spent on the Rowdeford site. There will be no resources here. Nothing from that money. St Nicholas will not see a penny, right?

David Paice

Of capital, no. The proposal is no. In terms of operational moneys, so anything else that say 'well, actually there does need to be something in terms of redevelopment' no, we can't build anything here because we're trying to give you a bit more space for the children that do come. So, we can't add, you know, have more children coming into the space. So, we're trying to have less children coming into the space. There's no additional capital money. In terms of operational moneys, what you do year to year, it's a different budget. Though, you still get all of that money, it's not you're not getting any money. There's a difference between capital building and operational spend. And there's also a review of, which I'll touch on later on, what is the appropriate operational spend on occupational therapists, the support, all of that is still a different matter and you have absolutely every right to say hang on we need this, that.

But in terms of getting physical buildings to accommodate more, that's the Rowdeford bit.

Judith Westcott

This thing about different budgets is quite a tricky one in terms of where it comes from (split-second audio loss) very unusual right now, that a council is finding millions of pounds for schools. So, you'll be aware that we've been successful in a bid in the south, for a new school which is one hundred and fifty places, 12 million pounds, it's all from the DFE. So that budget normally it's the DFE that supports the capital funding to do up schools and to create additional places.

So, when we take this forward, it's about ensuring that we use the pots that we have available in the right way. So, it's not about not spending here. It's just that that particular pot has come down a particular line which can only be spent in that particular way. So, we don't have the licence to say oh well we'll spend it on doing up three buildings. We can't use it in that particular way.

Governor 2

Where have you got, is the 32 million the money you've got? Or have you had already an architect and have you had a new school at Rowdeford costed?

David Paice

We had a feasibility study done. The original feasibility was not for 400 and so there will be different costs so as for less children. What we've taken is the basis of that feasibility and that kind of risk analysis and added an amount of money against risk to come up with a projection for up to four hundred places which is both remodelling elements of the site and creating new places. So, a hundred and fifty re-model plus 250 actual new build. That can be done within the funding envelope of thirty-two million pounds. For which the Cabinet agreed 'we'll give you 32 million pounds subject to the proposal going ahead'. That capital has come from the local authority as opposed to having to go to the DFE and saying can we have X amount of money? Where opportunities for DFE funding arise we'll put a bid, in as was the case for the southern school.

Governor 5

On a different tact, in a way, I'd like to ask, to me the whole idea of having one school on three different sites in a rural county like, this I'm trying to get my head round how that would work in terms of students. Like the children's welfare and just the quality of their education. So, a head teacher has to understand the children and young people in their school, I not just the type of children and young people, but the actual children and young people that they have in their school. If they're right. If they're going to drive things forward for those children, those children's futures.

So, you know the idea of having one (school). I don't know what a leadership structure might look like under this proposal but the idea of having a Principal, or whatever you call it, on top you know who would have, I don't see how that person would have this knowledge of so many children who are so different, so many complex needs. And so instead of the idea of having a single school where everything's concentrated in one site which I didn't think was practical, I still don't know, I think the risk is that actually the knowledge about the children and young people just gets dissipated across the sites and it's, it's a mess and it doesn't work for the children.

David Paice

Now, over the last few years though, in actual fact, this model has become quite commonplace in academies. So, you have multi academy trusts which are often made up of several schools. You know some quite large. Some have over 70 schools and still a single chief executive officer over all of those and some can be multi regional as well. Many though are kind of more localized in a similar place to this, so it's not uncommon.

It's increasingly common to do this sort of thing and you know that's where you get the multi academy trust. How you manage it, that is where you as governors moving into the shadow governing body, need to be confident that actually the structure is right. So that you don't lose

the understanding of children in those buildings and sites here. There are a number of ways of addressing that but that's for you to consider supported by the experience that will come from the heads. I'll show you the kind of proposal or suggestion for the shadow governing body. We're working very closely with the heads right now to think how this might be and think through well where else is it done? So how else could that work?

Governor

I totally agree with the senior leadership team and a common team (audio lost) worked closely with the (audio lost) best practice and everything else amongst the schools.

I understand when the academy, when you've got financial situations, there are savings to be made through a common steering group and a common board across the schools. And I have no qualms with that at all. I just cannot understand with a large school at Rowdeford being built with brand new facilities and keeping the other two schools open, at what point would you choose which children go where? How did the children left at the existing schools share the new facilities and medical staff, teaching learning staff, the facilities there, how are they shared around the county?

I really cannot see, and I've not seen anything in the documentation which states how it'll work. Now had they put options like St. Nicholas will become primary, secondary children go in there, who will be returned at a date which will then allow them to integrate into the local community, in preparation for their adulthood, some kind of structure to it, I could live with that or at least something we could assess. I have seen nothing about how the children and it is the children were talking about, how they're going to be controlled.

Judith Westcott

I think this is this is exactly where you are so important. So, when we make this decision to bring the senior leadership team together, it's exactly that conversation that we need to have. And what I think we all find quite hard with this process is, when we think about what we need to decide about now, actually all of us are thinking about the next set of decisions that we have to make. So, this decision is actually quite limited, it says we think we're better together.

But then once we are all together, it's then being able to have those conversations about well what does the senior leadership team look like? You know, who do we want? What skills do we want where? What kind of relationship we want with our children? With our parent carers? How do we do that? How best bring all those skills and experience together? So, for example, Rowdeford, at the moment, are just about starting to think about post 16. Now you guys have been doing post 16 for many years and so there might be a conversation about saying do we

want some oversight for schools thinking about what does post 16 look like and that's just a possibility. You might say, that's not the way we want to go about it, we're thinking about it like this. But when you're together you can have those conversations about thinking about how you can use the skills, experience and knowledge you have to be able to take that forward. And I think as you rightly said, the heads have been demonstrating that they can do that, that's something that works, that's been able to take them forward and this is that next step to say let's make that formal so that actually then you can make decisions on that basis because right now you are in a position where you can't make that legal set of confirmed decisions together.

And by bringing it together it allows you to actually ratify that together as you go forward. And I appreciate your concerns which are about this big school here, do the others get left behind? But that's the whole point of being together. If you were all separate and we just built at Rowdeford, you wouldn't have any say in that conversation. Now if you come in together as a group of governors and bring the head teachers together you are going to be part of that conversation from word off.

Governor 4

You're addressing the governors, the heads et cetera who are all important, but the really important people are the children and their families. And that's where I really you, you haven't understood, you haven't understood that for people who have a child with special needs it's been very hard for a long time and they want a bit of backing and the backing they get is from their community. And you're going to take some of those children, some of whom have probably got siblings say I'll take care of them. Some have got siblings. We've got schools all around us here for parents to know that their child with special needs. xxx you think that's really. I think it's almost cruel because it's not taking the children or their families, you're not making them the most important thing you're making, well we all realize finance. But we do work. Ros does work with and it does what, yeah. A few times a week. And the older children are walking around and the younger children know them. It's a family and that helped the general family that they know that their kids know the people around them.

Governor

What you just said that the second stage is to say that's a top down approach that you've taken from the beginning. The bottom up approach and what we would have preferred is that was the first stage where the children are assessed first, and needs are addressed and then we look at where schools and investment should be put. What's been clear from the very beginning is the local authority have taken an approach whereby they have looked at the situation and they've taken the easy way out which is to build a big school. They will put everything in it, will find some money and we'll put it all together.

Now you may say that's a bit harsh, but this is the view we have. The way we've been addressed, all the information we've been given, all our options have been ignored and all we say is we see it is a continuation of a top down approach. This meeting, this evening, is for you to sell it to us to say, OK let's do the second stage. You know this is it as far as I'm concerned, what you say here is, it's a fait accompli. You say there's options and everything else. Past experience has been when we've heard this before, the options have been ignored. Our comments have been ignored and they've steamrolled ahead with the main proposal. So, when you said the second stage, yes bring this on board and what we'll do is we'll make it happen for you the way you want it. I'm sorry that's not going to happen. You know you're not going to win us over with this proposal.

Governor 4

And I think that I don't think the local authority got the community thing.

I just it's, so my child just started Fairfield. I know it's no personal thing here, but you know I was a parent you feel should just not have Fairfield in so to me, I had no choice. Local authority wouldn't fund the place so she's there. I got a coffee shop and I remember when we talked about Rowdeford. You know look I thought everybody was and it's not about that goes to Fairfield and so far, she's not been once out in the community because it's on the outskirts. It's not community. She's not in the community. She's Student Enterprise, washing cars. That is not an independent living skill. She is doing things that has to make her more independent. She's not out in the community. And this is the whole, the main point here is that there's gonna be lots of money invested at the Rowdeford site when it's not where the investment should have been. And I know it's old ground Chippenham and Trowbridge and because it's community and you know I always keep saying but it's OK. The one coffee shop around for her.

You know at the Rowdeford site, but you know the egg man doesn't knock on my door and says would you like to buy some eggs, I have to go to the shop and buy them. It's not the real world. And you're creating a false world not a world that's real. So how can then, how can our children or children with SEND, all these complex needs ever know how to do it when actually they're in this bubble, that's not real.

Governor 2

Children learn by living in their community. They can't transfer skills, they can't learn how to be in a post office at Rowdeford and then learn how to use their local one. They need to become familiar with their local settings and they need help from people who get to know them and

understand them who are their neighbours and friends. And every time we say inclusion and community, somebody would say something that showed that you just didn't get what that was.

Judith Westcott

The plan was that it was all going to be at Rowdeford. Right now, you've got this, you've got the plan where we are now talking three sites. Now I appreciate, and both David and I have discussed it, trust has been eroded over time. And I really appreciate that as we sit here now and say honest gov, this is what we're going to do, that you're sitting thinking do we really believe them? Do we really think that that's what they're going to do? And I really appreciate that. And yet we've got to keep building, we've got to start finding a way of working together, to start build back the trust and we can only take small steps as we do that. And the reality is, if there is a commitment now to those three sites, there is no rush to saying it's all got to even be built on that site.

And I have to say that in terms of that the legal way we say that has to be very careful and precise. So I can't tell you that there's been a huge change of decision and it's all going to be built in Trowbridge and Chippenham, I can't tell you that, but I can tell you that the door has been opened now, the door has been opened for us to have further conversations and to see what we can do differently. And I know that that's a long journey and we can't do it any other way than finding a way of having these conversations together.

Governor 3

Yes, I get that and you're right it is going to take a long time for trust to be rebuilt. But I think the governors, certainly our governing body, are happy to try to work with you to achieve that. But I think we're still feeling that you haven't really got what integration and community are all about. And there's too much about, well, there'll be three sites, well we appreciate that you don't want to lose St Nic's. I don't care if we lose St Nic's, I want to have proper education for our children in Chippenham.

Judith Westcott

The bit we haven't been able to do yet for you which is talking about the bigger picture. So, interestingly, when I first started in the local authority four years ago I was asked to write a SEND strategy. I've been asked this time to write an inclusion strategy which I think is quite interesting in terms of that subtle change (muffeld) in terms of what we're trying to look at. So, when we talk about the changes being made here, I think David's trying to find me the slide, that one, go back one.

So, if you see that little bit, this is the bit that we are talking about here today. But it's part of a whole bigger picture.

So, in addition to that satellite sight over in the South, because we couldn't keep carting everybody up, Exeter House is expanded by 20 places. We've got this whole new school in the South, 150 places. We're saying it doesn't mean that all the children have to travel up North. In addition to that Resource Bases are going up this year by 20 plus, learning provision is already gone so when we look at this there's a whole saying how do we work together. And Ros has been chatting with us, with Phil and Mike about how we connect much better to our Resource Bases because as you say this is about all our Resource Bases, as well as how do we offer children lots of support, different levels of involvement in mainstream schools.

Talk about dual placements. Talk about how we can do mix and match. I think we've got started and I know from your position it must feel like nobody's listening. Well years ago,, this wouldn't have been called an inclusion strategy.

So, you are making a difference you are building things and all those places and all that provision that's coming is a result of us keep on having this conversation. So, I know it feels slow and the wheels of government are slow, but you are making a difference.

Governor 2

Well, obviously we haven't seen your inclusion strategy yet. Well, I haven't but I suppose my question is "Is this an inclusion strategy? Because well, I won't say anything about the previous SEND strategy I don't want you to hear what I think of it, but I do.

I mean we've got to feel sure that inclusion and community are going to be at the heart of your thrust.

Judith Westcott

Please see the WPCC website - they are, you will see on the site, they're advertising for that consultation and the engagement is much, much more. It's not as formal as this because it's not a DFE process but early October and we will be encouraging everyone to talk. And how do we use you know physio services, all the rest of it. We get to talk about Oxford Health and all the campuses and mental health support, we get to talk about what's happening in our 239 mainstream schools and get to talk about what's happening in those independent special schools so that we can think about how it works together going forward.

So, I really would encourage you to get involved in that. But remember you are just about to be working on a real flagship development of provision.

Governor 2

This is kind of off the point but you're on school's forum and so am I. And this is obviously going to cost money. So where is that money coming from because schools or am already say or we can't spend we can't have any more money spent on the high needs budget. We've got to get the high needs right.

Judith Westcott

One of the problems we have at the moment is we don't have enough places here in county. We're having to go out of county to independent special schools. If I can stop those children having to all go out of county but go to Rowdeford, and I know appreciate your concerns about Rowdeford, but actually if it was a choice between shall we go up to Hampshire, Dorset, Somerset or could I be in Devizes.

It's a real step forward if we can be placing here and in terms of cost an independent special school place on average costs me an extra £50,000 for every place so every time I cross the border. So, if we can ensure that those children come back we then have the money available to spend in county in our own resources.

Governor 2

Yes, I think this going off to talk about finance. We need to get back to what you do want to talk about because I do think there's been too much on that. Well if we can keep people back in county and we can put all these people who want to go to lots of different special schools all in Rowdeford, then that's going to put the high needs budget right. And I don't think it is.

Judith Westcott

At Schools Forum you'll see us presenting, there were about six or seven ideas being talked up at the moment which could potentially make key changes. The reality is on a 38-million-pound budget which is 4.5 million overspent there is not going to be one solution. We're going to have to think about four or five different things at the very least. As you say, I don't want to use this here because you'll get lots of opportunity in the SEND strategy to talk about it, but I think we have to keep remembering that this is part of the picture.

And when we move forward we have to be able to keep being able to talk in the round, as I say, 239 schools who were all tackling this and remember of all the EHCPs that we have right now,

about 500 of those children are in special schools and all the rest are in mainstream and we build that practice.

We've got to get to a place where our mainstream schools open the doors and are saying we welcome our children with SEND because if we really want to get local, we've got to get that joint practice going between our mainstream schools, our Resource Bases, our enhanced learning provision and what's happening here. And that when we looked at the whole we have to think about, say for example here in Chippenham, it is about all of those places not just the special school places.

I'm aware David's got a number of slides which I think it really would be helpful to talk to you about some of the thinking around the governance structures and the timeline so that you get a feel for that. Is that OK?

David Paice
Let's head back.

So, I'm going to go through this because I think we've sort of covered most of the where's the places. I think I'll go straight into the governance and structure of the shadow governance. So, if we could just go through the next one here. Thank you very much.

So, the way this is going to pan out is that if we don't get any green light at all there could be a complete lock, so from November we take your points on board. We've listened really carefully, and the Cabinet will make a decision and that's not a guarantee. Yes, there will be a review of all of the evidence base. Well let's hope we don't squander the opportunity of thirty-two million pounds. So, if there is a green light at Cabinet in November then it would have to go to the schools' adjudicator.

We therefore would not hear until Christmas, there or there about.

And there's no guarantee, no commitment to it being a six or five week wait, it could take as long as it takes. But we will continue to press that. And last time we managed to get a very, very short turnaround. So, we were really diligent in working with the DFE to get the Secretary of State to sign it off. We'll try and do the same thing to ensure that it's as speedy as it can be.

So, in actual fact completely business as usual. No change at all, three schools, separate schools. That still means though we've still got the issue of more places that need to be provided. So, whether or not it's an amalgamation or any other form of collaboration -

collaboration gives us a bit of creativity. So, I'm delighted to be working with Ros and Phil and Mike to think this through. You know we don't want to be in a situation where we haven't got places in September. It's coming September 2020 and then '21 and '22. So, it comes back to your earlier point of what children should be going where.

We're working right now with the district specialist centres to think well who is coming through into year zero here. Are they the right children? What would be the right curriculum? Is there any opportunity to start working from using the expertise here? In terms of you have a sixth form, you have primary provision. They don't at Rowdeford. What could be done regardless of whether or not there is an amalgamation?

How could we best meet the needs of the children and young people?

Governor 2

We are thinking do you mean that you're working with the head teachers? Or is this somebody at County Hall that's thinking?

David Paice

I'm sitting down ,spending time with Ros and Mike and we've had a few conversations. So, it's nothing to do with this process, completely separate to this process. How do we cover things off to ensure that we are all ready and prepared?

So, we're thinking that through to cover all eventualities and working that through we're all set. We're thinking through the time line for ensuring that September starts well. If it were an amalgamation it is also very tight. So, beginning to think that through in terms of what is the vision and how would it operate? And that's when you get to the questions that xxx was talking about which was what is this actually going to look like? What groupings? Where? What is your proposal? Is it primary here? What is it? We need to have those conversations, we need to think it through.

Because we kind of want to know what kind of future operating models are going to be such that we could actually phase it. So that detail is being worked up, will be worked up so that you can go, with a degree of confidence into a shadow governing body knowing, I now understand where we want to be. We have an agreement about the vision, we have a good view of what our mission is and we have a pretty good idea of where we want to get to in phases. So, what's going to happen in September 2020? What's going on in 2021? What could be? What is the art of the possible here? And there are many options that you could take but that is a decision to be taken with the heads.

How could we manage this, and the flexibility only comes by working collaboratively? Otherwise we're very restricted and there are no more spaces here. If we think across three schools plus all of the work that's happening in terms of the resource spaces, the relooking again about provision, seeing things in the wider jigsaw that Judith was talking about that then opens up opportunities that we absolutely would need to know to ensure the right kids go into the right route. How can we manage that? Their parent carers need to be involved because if you're thinking of any changes at all, even where you'd be expecting a transition, that would need to be fully discussed with parents and most importantly the children would themselves.

I'm sure there is a question about meeting the children. We are absolutely coming to meet children here to try and get the voice of the children and young people going to Poplar as well. Absolutely, it's crucial to get their voice. We were listening very carefully in speaking with the parent carer community - they are absolutely crucial. So, it's impossible to be top down. You know you can't do it, would never fit. It absolutely has to be a collective and it's quite complex. I totally agree with various options as you say and you as governors would need to go over these options. I am happy with that.

Governor 5

Now I can see from September '20, there's a new school on three sites with one Principal but three different leadership teams?

David Paice

The first bit is absolutely right.

If things go well and you are successful in going out to recruit. Usually the job advert would go out in February.

You'll then review applications in March, interview April. Which is doable but tight for a September start. I couldn't start any earlier than that. So that that's why in September 2020 a new school is a suggestion and an aspiration. But in the proposal, we've given us until '21. So, if you're not successful, or collectively are not successful, in getting the Principal that we feel can take us on the journey we want to go on and it's going to slip, we have until '21.

You would move from a shadow governing body with the Principal in a single school across three sites.

Governor 5

What about leadership teams of the current schools?

Governor 2

I don't understand what the shadow governing body is yet.

David Paice

This is a suggestion for the makeup of a shadow governing body.

So, you're still doing your jobs now. You stay exactly as you are being governors, but we would ask that you would put forward candidates to become part of a shadow governing body in addition to the work that you do now. The suggestion is that that would have an equitable makeup from the three schools. So, you would have in this case three head teachers as part of this group and then another staff governor from each school making six. So, there is one from each and then one parent from each of your three parent governors.

And then it's up to you with your skill set collectively. You sit down with the other governors and think well this is what we're trying to achieve. Are we comfortable that we've got the legal expertise? If there's a lawyer amongst you that's comfortable doing that, that's okay. Or do you get HR advice or whatever? If there are gaps in the governance strength that you have you can co-opt people that have those and that is quite standard.

So, you can plug gaps too with the co-opted governors and then you might get what you need. I'm not sure I can make the full commitment but there are certain committees that we would want to put forward as well. And that's where you can have associate members. That's kind of having the full governing body in terms of a shadow governing body would be a suggestion I have to say that when we did when we spoke last week at Rowdeford they went it looks a bit small to me. So, you know we've already had one set of governors...

Governor

Reference regarding the shadow governing body obviously a governing body has terms of reference on what it does for the schools. But what you're wanting the shadow governing body is also to work on recommendations and initiatives innovation associated with it.

So, will it be a new set of terms of reference for the shadow governing body?

The Council (muffled) can lead who comes and advises and does training you might have been along some of the training et cetera.

Judith Westcott

So, they've done this together and they've run the shadow governance. There are templates that you can use as a terms of reference or develop one from scratch if you want.

So, yes you are dead right, you would need to identify there are some things that are kind of a start which was the guidance that the DFE gave about how shadow governing bodies look at that. We can read, and we can understand the bits of advice and support that goes forward.

But from a legal position the governing bodies of the three schools have the power until the school is one body so that all the decisions made by that shadow body have to be to be authorized. When you then have the one school, then you create your full governing body as it is going forward. You may use the same people (from the Shadow Governing Body) or you might say I've done my time, I'm quite tired. Or you may say actually we do want other people? We need different people at this point in time.

Governor 2

Can I just ask, you've got a parent governor from each school, you've got a staff governor from a school and a head teacher from each school? That's clear and then you've got four other governors. Are you going to have an election or you going to say we've got to have at least one from every school or what you going to do?

David Paice

This is for you to decide, these are purely suggestions and you can have a view as to what you feel is appropriate. This is for you as governors to take ownership of.

But individually here, you as a governing body can decide, do we want to have elections or are we comfortable from a governance perspective? I said exactly the same to the staff, if you feel, actually we're very comfortable with our staff representative and X is going to be it and you don't have to have an election, that's your choice. Same here. Really in terms of that view you decide as a governing body whether you want elections or you're very happy to co-op people.

So, for the co-opted it is really important that we get a parental voice and a staffing voice. That's almost a given. And it doesn't have to be four. But you know this will be somebody that's making a commitment and therefore their expertise would be required all the time. And in a full governing body meeting you would want them to be there and you'd want to think that that's appropriate. Every single meeting, they would happen quite regularly. Do we need them there all the time? If you don't need them there all the time, then actually they become associates

because we can have committees set up and they can report back. So, it's about the practicalities of getting people there. Every single meeting is a full governing body that you will then make a choice. But you don't have to have four, that is just a suggestion as to giving a balance because you also want in a full governing body, from a voting perspective and getting people's voices heard. This is quite useful as quite small group, I've been listening, able to listen to what you say, and you are able to have enough time to say it. If it was triple the amount, it might be more difficult to actually have a meaningful meeting.

Governor 2

(muffled) governors and obviously the head teachers across the schools and then you've got this odd number (muffled) I just wondered why?

Judith Westcott

Part of the reason for the odd number is it is part of that going towards being one governing body. So, understanding that you want a degree of equity in terms of the way it is structured, but also you want to say what are the skills because we're going towards one vision and that isn't always about three lawyers. You know you don't need three lawyers' opinions, you might just say we need one and that's all we need. So, I think it's understanding that the skill sets beyond that kind of bit which is about equity is maybe to do with skills that you want to draw in and only you will know as you go forward, dependent on who the other members are and what's actually helpful to you.

David Paice

Yes, so the next bit is and when you've gone from three schools needing to be equitable but then you go to one school, so you are just one school. So, there are no longer three teachers there. There's one and you don't need three staff it's two. So, what we then have to follow is still to have one local authority governor, that's fine, two parent governors. So those key (muffled) you definitely have to have five. Then you've got to have another two to make it quorate.

So, the suggestion here is to co-opt again roughly four but it doesn't have to be four, it can be as many as you like. You have to have at least two or more co-opted governors, in addition to those kinds of guys that you have to have. Seven is often bit too small, people feel, in terms of have we got the right skill set across seven people, so you might have a bit more.

So, my suggestion, which is purely suggestion, is it's there or thereabouts. And again, in terms of committees with specific skill sets at a specific time, there'll be associates as a suggestion. This is being suggested now so that you can reflect on that, have a discussion, have a think,

and then, what I would be asking is for you to consider, would you mind doing the same thing that the heads are doing?

Come and start talking, thinking things through outside of the formality here. It's just regardless of what we do, we have to consider this is a possibility. And you might not want this as a possibility at all, but it might be a possibility. There's certainly a head of steam that thinks it's the best of the options that we had but we also need to think carefully about what we do if we don't. So, there's a whole very good reason for bringing governors of the three schools together to talk informally about potentials.

Judith Westcott

Whatever goes ahead, (muffled) so finding the time and build in that time and because we're talking about such huge, significant changes here. It feels like that's really important whatever the outcome is of how we go forward. We could have waited until the schools' adjudicator had made a decision and lost this sort of 3/4 month period. But we felt actually getting opportunities to start talking informally now would really help all of us so that when/ if we get the green light that actually we'd all be in a better position to say 'we know what we're doing here, we kind of understand what the remit is, what the commitment might be and how we can move this forward'. Not least to say that some of the decisions are quite crunchy, quite soon.

So, if you're talking about appointing a head, you will want to be on board and you will want to feel you know you're looking for the same sort of person.

Governor 4

(muffled) one of my questions, but I suppose that's going to come when the new head, the Principal is going to be appointed. Where is that Principal going to spend the time? Is it going to be at the new site or is it going to be nicely spread out, so this new Principal has an opportunity to learn about all sites?

Judith Westcott

I think it's really important to say that if you look at the way Multi Academy Trusts work now, say, for example, you can have a multiple multi academy trust, the executive head over that group has offices in more than one of the buildings. And in fact they've created a separate site in order to take that forward. So, the executive head having that kind of strategic lead over what does it look like to work together, as a slightly different remit to what you might be talking about in terms of how do we make this site work here and be able to blend those two things together?

And I think as you come together the questions you're going to want to ask yourself about 'how does this work?' and 'how does that work?' when we are together and 'what do we think?' needs to be there. And I do think definitely in the first few years visibility is going to be really important and that's going to be something that you're going to want to feel that you've got regular access to someone to talk to. When you've kind of got used to the conversations you've had, and you start saying I know what it feels like, I know the kind of views that my head might have on this I know what to expect.

David Paice

Is there anything else you'd like to say? Do you feel any more reassured or no, I haven't changed my mind, my position at all? And that's okay too. This is important.

Governor

If it's a hearts and minds exercise by the local authority, it's welcome, if it's genuine but please be aware of the lack of trust we've had over the last four years, you've got a huge hurdle on that but I think if you can get across and it's plausible and it looks as if we will have a say in how all this works and there is a good chance of getting what is best for our children and the school then, yes you can get us on board but it's long way to go.

Governor 2

What xxx says is absolutely right. It's quite hard to have belief when you feel you've been let down so often. But we are willing to work with you as long as we feel that you are working towards the best interests of all the children not just the ones who are here.

Judith Westcott

Thank you for coming. I say a huge thank you for your time here today but also for where you have got everything to. And I know as you say it sometimes doesn't feel like it's made much difference, but you are making a difference and things are changing and they are moving forward. And I would just say thank you hugely for all you give and all your dedication to our young people and children.

St Nicholas School – Parent session at 7:30pm

Judith Westcott

OK. So, we're deliberately sitting here with mics so that everything gets recorded today. I realise that it's a bit clumsy at times but there we are. So, first of all, thank you very much for coming. We do appreciate you've come out of your way this evening and it's really good that you found the time to join us here. We, as I say, are recording and we're recording because everything that we talk about today goes forward to the Wiltshire Cabinet meetings which are council and then it goes on to somebody called the schools' adjudicator, who is many miles away and they will want to know all the things that we've spoken about and talked about. And so, all of our conversation gets transcribed and then sent to the schools' adjudicator at the end of the day. When you speak, I'll hand the mic over to you. It's not as daunting as it seems and by taking on the mic, that's you giving your consent to be recorded. Okay? So, it just helps us in terms of being able to inform the whole of the conversation to the schools' adjudicator.

I'm Judith Westcott. I'm the acting head of Children's Commissioning. David, you introduce yourself.

David Paice

Yes, I'm an independent consultant that has been brought in to support the local authority. I have a background in building special schools. So, I've worked for central government, building special schools. And I've been a Director of Education twice, so I've been in schools. So just additional capacity to help through this consultation period. That's my background. There's a degree of independence, that said the local authority are paying me. So, a bit of independence, I'm not a full-time member of Wiltshire Council.

Emily

I should point out that that mic is not on at the moment, but I picked you up on the other one.

Judith Westcott

You have picked me up? OK. I'm back. Yeah. Is that good? You'll have picked up on the idea that this is the one (holds out microphone) I will hand round, and we've got Emily with us. Emily is learning sound recording skills as we go along. Normally she works as part of my team, mostly childcare work in fact but is helping out here today. So, if that's all okay I'm going to hand over to David and hover by the door for the next five minutes.

David Paice

What I'm going to do is I'm going to talk about that timetable in a bit of detail and explain what that means to you as a parent, parent carers. I'm going to look at this from two angles. There's

the law that we have to go through for this proposal. Any changes to schools, any closing opening new schools, this legislation that you need to follow. And then there's also legislation or guidance around governance of the schools.

As a parent carer, you may or may not be a governor, but you'll want your voice to be heard through a representative, from a parent's perspective. I'm going to talk about the governance of the school too. And this is part of a consultation exercise, as Judith was saying, so I'm going to ask some questions to make sure that your voice is heard, verbatim, every single word will go to a schools' adjudicator and I'll explain why it has to be that way, because of the process. So, if we could just go to the next slide.

The legislations are there, you'll get these slides and you can very easily download that legislation, or we can do it for you. But it's all publicly available on the website so you'll see which bits we're referring to. I'll take you to the highlights both from opening and closing maintained schools and on the other side what you'd have to do in terms of governance, being a governor. Let's go to the next slide. That's it. So that's the document, that is key to this proposal. Flip to the next one.

In that document it talks about amalgamations. So, on that timeline it talks about an amalgamation, you're bringing three schools together as one. Though we'll hear closing schools, this site is (remains) open. So, in actual fact is you're not closing anything at all but by name you are. So, there is a number associated with the school that, for administrative purposes, will go. It will become one school. But in terms of continuity, exactly the same as it is now. This is the same building. So that's a key part. But it's called an amalgamation. A couple of ways of cutting an amalgamation. We're choosing the local authority being the proposer of this because that's what you asked for and particularly staff are more comfortable because it doesn't change their terms and conditions in any way. The local authority is still the employer so there's no TUPE. So, the staff should feel much more comfortable about, that's not changing them in any way, to get more continuity.

But because we are the proposer of this, you're not allowed to mark your own homework because you'd go "that's a great proposal, oh great!" If we were marking, it would go great. Thank you very much. To avoid any bias, everything has to go to the schools' adjudicator. It will be a single person that will be given that case. But they're part of a team of a dozen or so schools' adjudicators who will review the whole evidence of 'is this a good idea or not?' And they will listen because they'll have these scripts, everything you say they read. That's the evidence that goes forward.

So as part of that we're in this four-week consultation window. So, all of September we are seeing all of the schools, all parents like yourself, in the three schools and open to everybody else who wish, feel that they want to put something forward, absolutely. We're collecting all of that opinion and that goes forward. After September though, that's the end of us getting the evidence. But what we then have to do, is pull a report together.

(new parent arrives)

Good evening. I'll just give quick recap, we haven't gone far, we haven't gone far at all. So, I'm just explaining why we're here and that we have to be here, it's a four-week consultation, it's part of a proposal. And there's a timeline which I hope sir that you've seen?

Parent

Uh huh.

David Paice

Great. All I'm doing is going into detail on that proposal and just clarifying it. It finishes at the end of this month. Any questions with that bit of why we're doing, what we're doing?

Emily

Just for the benefit of the gentleman that's just come in (explain) about the recording.

David Paice

Ah good point. Thank you, Emily. The reason we're recording this is not to amplify, there's no amplification of voice. What we're doing is we're capturing the voice file because then we put it into a program and it then transcribes every word that's heard, and that transcription goes completely to an independent body, an independent schools' adjudicator and it's their decision, they will listen. And so, to make sure we absolutely accurately get everything you say, we're transcribing it.

There are laws, GDPR, if you say, 'could I say something?' you're giving us your consent to be able to take that, use that information, process the data that you're giving us for this purpose. So, you know if you want to say something, please be assured that we're going to use it, if that's okay? Yeah. Thanks very much for that.

So, if we head to the next one (slide). My question to you here is, we're talking about this amalgamation, I'll be very keen to get your sense of it. We're bringing the three schools' leadership teams together, having one leadership team. So, there'll be only one head instead of

three heads, bringing together, benefiting from the expertise across the various schools. You're an all-through school, you have primary as well as post 16 here. Rowdeford hasn't, so they're going to get the expertise of the people who have done those things. They're looking forward to that, as positive. So, there's building on best practice about that leadership structure.

There's then, we need more places. We've got money to build more places, there's no space here. There's a perception, there's overcrowding in both here at St Nicholas and also even more so, in actual fact at Larkrise too. So, we can't build on those sites. The site that we got the proposal is for Rowdeford and is 32 million pounds of capital and that capital is not coming from the Department it's coming from the Local Authority. The local authority is saying, we will commit 32 million pounds for up to 400 places on the Rowdeford site. Now you're not closing these sites, so you will still have places here. Hopefully less places. Same space therefore less overcrowding here. How many pupils would come here would be up for discussion but hopefully less than here now. So, they have those that do come, have more space. That's the idea for overcrowding but there absolutely is a commitment to keeping this space open. In addition to the increased number of places available in Rowdeford, but Rowdeford is the only site that we're building on.

And then the final bit of that one is, at a later stage, because we're acutely aware that there is the significant growth in Chippenham anyway that we're aware of. We're now aware that there could be 7000 more houses that might get the green light and that would significantly increase the demand in Chippenham. So, the up to 400 places means that we're going to say, you don't have to go to 400 at Rowdeford, one might think during this process, if that deal goes ahead, might not know for another six months, if it does, then one might think 'well, do we need more provision in Rowdeford?' So it might not be three sites it might be four sites or five or whatever it may be.

But we will come back and consult on that. How many sites do you want? Do you want to go to just one, two, three, four? However many. There's also a commitment to do that piece (of work) too.

But would love to get your thoughts on that. So, the question is, what do you think about that? I'm going to turn this (microphone) on now.

Parent

I'm probably going to speak slightly differently from a lot of the other parents, but this is effectively where we were three years ago, when we started the proposal which is fantastic and I'm absolutely wholeheartedly behind this. So long as we still carry on with choice. Which is

another thing. But I understand economies of scale. And so, this St. Nicholas site becomes a smaller school with fewer numbers but very much more high dependency pupils I can understand that. And Rowdeford would probably move to children on the autism spectrum and things like that. I understand that. I absolutely agree that, going forward we need the leadership team. We're in the implementation phase now. Although we keep on talking about consultation, the Secretary of State said, "go forward". So, we're in implementation, so you need a project leader. So, you need to get the SLT in. And to back that SLT up, you need a very good broad section of governance. So, you need to go out and get those in. What else, what else, what else, what else? Sorry there's so much there!

So, that would be my main thing, get the SLT in and I know it says by 31st of August 2021 but economies of scale mean you're going to hopefully recruit the absolute best and you're going to be paying at the level where you will get experts and beacons in this field. So, that's what I would recommend. So, we don't settle for something that we can get or someone who is local perhaps or someone who's in this area, one of the three schools. If we're going to pay the kind of money which I expect we're going to pay for this because this is going to be looked at by all other rural areas in this country, you get someone in who's an absolute beacon.

The other thing and I know you have not got to it yet is, reading through the 14 pages (referring to full proposal) (it) doesn't talk about MLD very much. So Rowdeford is an MLD institution. OK. Is that where we're going to go, more into the outreach side and MLD pupils are going to be mostly placed outside of the (inaudible) spectrum and supported by the structure or are they going to be taught at Rowdeford as they are at the moment? It was the elephant in the room for me.

You know, I was one of the first, along with the Sherwoods, supporting 'Save Rowdeford from closing' and for us this works quite well I believe. But the MLD side doesn't seem to be very well represented.

David Paice

Yeah.

Parent

Lots of questions there and I do apologise

David Paice

No, no, no. The idea of which of the sites, for which kind of need or which provision where and what sites, is a decision for you, as parent carers, to take a key role in through the governance.

Working and asking the leadership teams, the leader here, Ros here and her leadership team, to play an active role. And I'm really delighted to say that I'm working quite closely with Ros and Mike and Phil now, to think things through of exactly that nature. What might happen here. What is the vision for this. What's the future operating model for the site. We're having those conversations regardless of the amalgamation.

More kids are going to come through. So, we've got some real issues about what's going to happen next September 20, 21, 22. We have, so aside from this statutory piece, there's informal conversations being had and work to grapple with that. So, it's not for me to say what one should or shouldn't do. We absolutely need to best meet your requirements as a parent, your children, your young people. So, working with you, thinking what is better than we have now. And that's going to be an ongoing conversation.

The three schools are working very collaboratively right now. We get a bit of wriggle room in terms of space. If we went through with a proposal, you not only get a bit of space by working collaboratively, you get 32 million pounds to deliver some great spaces. That's a significant capital investment, if we went through with it with the proposal. I do have to say, very few local authorities have the money to be able to put on the table. It is a significant investment that's being made. If that is the collective decision.

I'll come to the governance so that you feel more confident that your voice as parent carers is captured in the governance as it goes forward. So, I will come back. So, I will leave a little bit out, but I will come back and explain that there'll be a shadow governing body, that you will want to engage with, to make sure that they are delivering for you what you feel is right. And then an actual governing body and there's the recruitment of the Principal and indeed the consideration of getting that SLT on board, of which you'll have to be really comfortable with, with what you're looking for in your SLT, to be able to go out to market and say, 'right, I do want to recruit that outstanding CEO or Principal from nationally'.

I'm really excited by the project myself, I don't live here but it's a really exciting piece. You will attract people who are interested in special education. I live in Leicestershire. I just happen to be interested in this sort of thing. So, the opportunity to come down was exciting and I think a Principal would take the same thing, you can look at national and international field. What you are aspiring to here and the proposal is cutting edge. It's really beacon stuff. So yeah, I think I think you will. I just can't give you what that structure would be right now. As a mechanism, a process, the timeliness of that process, we're up-front about that now and I'll come back to that in a minute if that's okay.

Any thoughts on this? OK.

Parent

So, having been born in a large unitary council, Birmingham. Okay so I can understand. We've been really spoilt, actually, with St Nic's because we have a very inclusive, very diverse, very integrated school, where my son is at the higher ends of with severe autism but at higher end is a capability with other children who are, who do not follow the normal curriculum that way. And he can mix with them, play with them, and they can go out into society. So, we've been hugely blessed to have a school like that.

Now. The reason why I mentioned a large unitary council is you wouldn't get that in Birmingham or Leicester. So, in a large city you will have, perhaps within three or four miles of each other, which will come under a multi school senior leadership team, you'll have one unit that will deal with autism, one unit that will deal with SEMH, one unit that will deal with children with very life limiting conditions and they wouldn't mix well. So, economies of scale, you will get far better provision at each site for those specific needs.

But we go against the core ethos of integration, inclusivity and diversity. And going out into the society, trying to reach that panacea. I know, I know, it's a real hard ask but that's really what we want.

Judith Westcott

So, one of the things that we need to do, is to show you how this bit of work fits in with everything else that we're doing at the moment. When I first started at the local authority, I was asked to write a SEND strategy, that comes to an end this Christmas. And if you follow the WPCC stuff, you'll see that there's notification coming out about consultation on the SEND and Inclusion strategy. And that's the real, I think, move forward by the local authority at the moment, to understand about how SEND is actually an inclusive approach and how we build this forward.

So, I'll talk to you about all the things we are doing with Resource Bases, what we're doing with the 239 mainstream schools, with our secondary schools in terms of Enhanced Provision and the extra provision which is coming on board. Interestingly Wiltshire Council has an education department again. We haven't had a specific education department for a few years, it was held underneath other parts of the business. But that is a real driver at the moment, about understanding education is something that happens in our community. We're working closely with our health colleagues, at the point of, not just at birth, but all the way with our kids here, leaving school here and going out into the community as young adults. And so, I think there is a

will. I can describe to you a bit more about how that goes forward but I think it's a really important point that when you talk about economies of scale, you're also talking about the benefits of big and how you can then, as you say, create lots of different versions of 'how do we work together'? And we don't have to prescribe that, we don't have to go down that route of, 'OK, you've got ASD, you're all in that school'.

Actually, we've got choices right now. And that's where, I think, the work that we do with the three heads, at the moment, and indeed the governing bodies, is just so fundamental to saying, there were no assumptions we have to make here about what our 32-million-pound investment and all the work together gets to. But we have to kind of make the decision we're going to do it together. That, here today, is the proposal on the table. We think we're better doing that together, than doing it as three individual schools. That if we can get the senior leadership team talking together, we think we can create more capacity, more innovation, more opportunity for young people. Whereas if we stay as three individual schools or indeed had we gone down where we were at the former stage of, we'll take it all to Rowde, we would have lost that diversity.

Parent

So, if there's anything I'm slightly concerned by, is at a later date bringing the three sites together. As we see year on year more need for places, everyone understands there'll be an extra 400 places but there's also lots of housing development, not only in Chippenham but all across Wiltshire which would go all the way to Devizes and Rowde. I just worry about the massive amount of places that are needed for all special needs children not, not just the ones in these schools but also before they come to school. So, special needs nursery settings, so that they can, you know, transition into school a little easier. We were quite blessed that Springboard in Chippenham, and I'd say, 90 percent of the children who are here, probably went there. And yeah, just like to know what the plans are really going forward. Because I don't see how you can close these sites even in later than 2023. Yeah.

David Paice

You're probably right. It's just that that is part of the proposal. One is acutely aware, absolutely as you say, it's likely demand's going to go up. So, although there is a commitment to go 'could we go to one?' it would seem very unlikely that that is going to be a possibility. But if at the same time some of the other proposals around, if you've had Springboard in terms of very early years, then you have bases in terms of primary that are not special schools in their own right, but elements of special schools are there, it's mainstream. And there's inclusion in mainstream. So, there's a lot of work that's going on to embrace localities, so you don't have to come to a special school. You might be actually very well received in a Base. That might be better, might.

And then there's more of that then you might not need as many special schools, if that works really well. But we don't know if it does. So, there's a scenario that everything comes incredibly inclusive and you move back to the comprehensive, all schools accommodate all children, well then you wouldn't need as many special schools because they are well accommodated in their locality, in the kind of new iteration of Bases. Whether that is in primary or secondary. But that's not where we're at right now. But it might be that. So, we've talked about the next iteration of the SEND strategy which is really focusing on inclusion. Inclusion is the really big push around having an Education Directorate which is significantly around that agenda. The desire is that we have much more inclusion across all schools and settings but proof's in the pudding. So, by 2023 we'll go out, we're committed to by 2023, when you know you've got Rowdeford, you know you've got these. One might go 'well, I think you might need more, rather than less. And the Chippenham growth might mean actually we really do need that. And we're saying only up to 400 places. The growth is definitely in Chippenham or it's in Trowbridge or it's somewhere else but it maybe we don't need everybody going into Devizes or Rowde, we won't go to 400, will go to 350 or 300. Every year, absolutely, we'll constantly look at numbers and think about the phased build.

So, it is a proposal that this is a modular design, phased, so that you can really think 'do we need it, do we need more?' And if it might be, they actually need more schools, therefore we'll have more of a demand over there. So, I can still be sensitive to demand going forward. I mean you just build things and they take a little while to go forward.

So, we're committed to it. Well, we will do this, up to this is possible. We've got that in the bag. But let's see what else happens that changes the landscape.

Judith Westcott

But I think the other bit that that allows for is if we change our mind as we go along, we still can do, if we build modular, it gives us options along the way but we can also say 'what does it look like when we work closely with our Resource Bases?' or 'what does it look like when we work closely with our mainstream?' And indeed, when we talk about our independent special schools, are they able to flex around what they're doing as well? Our main problem, at the moment, is I have about 120 youngsters who will go out of the county to have their special school provision and not all of them need that as because of the degree of complexity. it's actually we just don't have enough here. I don't have enough places to give every child.

Parent

How many of those are in Swindon?

Judith Westcott

It's probably reasonably proportionate across Dorset, Swindon, Hampshire. Our biggest numbers, I would say, are in Three Ways at Bath and at Critchill in Frome. Those and Ninelands, we do use as well. But obviously those local authorities get a bit narked as well with us, they say 'we designed our own places and you're using all of our places, can we have them back please?' So, we do want to ensure that we build so that our children can stay local. And I know a lot of people have talked about well it's quite a long drive to Devizes but it's an even longer drive to go up to Swindon or to have to go to Hampshire and all the rest of it.

And so, we're saying we do really want to be able to build our expertise here in Wiltshire, so that our children can stay in Wiltshire and enjoy Wiltshire too. Clearly if they're right on the boundaries and getting to Swindon is quicker than getting to us, then that's fine, we'll do the deal. There are a number of children on the Swindon border that come over to us. And we do deals with them all the time, where we sort of say, you know, it's a quid pro quo, 'we'll have six of yours, we'll have six of yours'. And that kind of works quite well. But at the moment they're quite annoyed with us because they're saying, 'well you've kind of blown the agreement, you're using more of our places than you used to and taking more'.

And my other problem is, when we use independent special schools, roughly speaking it costs us £50,000 more, just to go into a special school and that's regardless of need. That's just because that's what they charge. And when I think about that, that's £50,000, taking into account a whole bunch of our children are funded around £20,000, I'm thinking 'for every one child I place out, that's two and half children that could be here locally'. So, getting those places is a really important thing and as David said, that's kind of regardless of what we might do together. We've got to do that anyway. We've got to create more places. But I think we're very clear that we should create those places together.

And you should be able to have that conversation about if you are doing that, we can do this, or you know if that's going on, we all need to do a bit of that you know. So that we can understand how it goes forward, so that everybody gets that option. As David said the Resource Bases are also really important because if you're living out in Mere, you might be saying 'actually, I'd rather go to my local school and have high level support there than go all the way into any of our schools' because they feel a long way for everyone.

So, giving those options to parents and children I think is really part of what we're trying to do here.

Parent

(audio loss) Rowdeford site and what happens during that transition period where you've still got some children in this site and the dilution of services that then, you know, for the children that are left here?

Judith Westcott

I think we have to keep reminding ourselves, we'll only do that, if, almost by voting by their feet, people say, 'we don't want to come here' and that conversation or those decisions have to emerge over time. We're assuming, as it stands, at the moment, and that's why we've put this proposal forward, that there will be at least 50 children here. So, we do want to give the option of saying actually there shouldn't be 79 children here because they're all a bit squished and squashed in. We think we should get down to 50 and then this site becomes a great site as a physical building again. Larkrise was built for 48 children, we have 101 children in there right now and that's just not right. That's just not right. So, we do want to create that addition. So, when we have that consultation and that's why we do need to consult on it, everybody needs to be able to have gone with the train. At the moment it feels like there's a load of us standing on the platform watching as the train goes by. We actually all want to get on the train, so that when we get to that decision point, we all can say, you know, 'it feels right. It's the right thing to be doing for all of our children'.

Parent

It's as if you're, if you say, for example, there's a lot of therapy at the new site, then you're in many ways, it's not a choice but you're forcing people's hands to say 'well, I guess that's because my child is (muffled) more of a medical management child and needs therapy so if (audio loss)'. . . not really a choice.

Judith Westcott

I think I agree with you, that there's degrees to which there are economies of scale. So, there's a contract we have with Virgin Care, it's not run by the NHS anymore, as you'll know. So Virgin Care run our community care at the moment. There's about £12 million annually invested in that. And when they decide, where they're going to send their staff, they do it by children. So, you end up with a member of staff here, quite regularly, who's in OT on the basis that there were lots of children here because of what it says in their EHCP, mean they get the time. What becomes difficult, is that child out in Mere who might need four or five hours and that's quite hard because then I'm losing time on that contract, in terms of that member staff driving there and back and what's going on there.

So, when we look at the whole of Wiltshire and I contract manage that and it would be part of the SEND strategy, we have to say, 'how do you spend £12 million as best as you can to ensure

that everybody gets the provision that they need?' When we go to Rowdeford, we won't say 'well, we'll move all the provision over there'. It will still be worked out on how many children need that support in that base. Having said that, what we know is, if a member of staff has got to be here for that child, that child, that child and that child, at some point you start saying 'well, that's a day, every week, you'll turn up there on Monday'.

And what we're aware of is, the benefits that come from the conversations held in the corridor, that if you've got an OT, there's a physio and your paediatrician, they're all based on site because there are so many children there, at some point they talk to each other and your children benefit every time they talk to each other, your children benefit. So, they start talking about 'this is the equipment they need but how does that work with their medication?' and 'how does that work with the curriculum that they're doing?' and 'how does that work with their aspirations for Post 16?'

We did put forward; our first proposal was everything on one site because we could see how that was really going to help move things forward. But equally so, that doesn't work with keeping local. So, we've had to say, 'how do we balance the benefits of everybody being together with the benefits of staying local'? Which is why we committed to say 'stick with three sites because that gives you the best of both worlds.' So, you get a bit of both. But I do think parents and young people will get the opportunity then to look at all three sites and say, 'which one works best for me?' I need to make that decision based on what that means for travel. What that means for community. What that means for medical help. What that means for the curriculum. You can look at that and say, 'this is the best fit for me and my child going forward'. Whereas, at the moment, because we've got so few places, actually you're almost in the position where it's 'well, Larkrise is the only one that's got a place this year and that's where you're going, end of story'. And we've got to move beyond that because that's not fair to you or to your children.

Parent

There's no OT on site, there's no school nurse, there's no wheelchair service, there's no continence clinic, it goes on. If it stays open, we need those services back. There're children here with complex needs, ambulances are called here left right and centre and I presume they still, they still are. We need it back. It's not fair.

Judith Westcott

I need you to talk to me about it. So, I contract manage and I need to know these things. So, I've been having a conversation with Ros lately and I've been to all three heads and said 'Please tell me about this' because whether we like it or not, I sit in an office in Trowbridge and I don't know that unless somebody tells me that. And so, I've been saying to Ros, you need to tell

me how many hours you're getting. How many times are people coming in. Now, sometimes that means, because the staff are now doing 'out and about'. So sometimes, it's because they're out in Mere. You know, when they're having a conversation with somebody out in Mere, they can't also be here. So, it's not that, as I say, that we necessarily have a dedicated member staff here. They have their staff team and they come as the need for the children arises. So, but that conversation has to happen because when we develop these services, what we can't do is end up leaving these two schools as the kind of 'poor relations' in terms of what's going forward. So, we have to keep that conversation and again that's why we need our SLT talking to each other and talking to us, the local authority, so that we can change things.

I can't change the contract unless Ros tells me 'do you realize Judith, they're not turning up' or 'they're not here' or whatever it is. Then I can act and then I can evidence, and I can say actually 'I'm not too happy with that. You know, we're giving you 12 million. We'd like our money's worth.' And that's a little naive on the basis that probably all these things cost more than we really want them to, but it does mean we can have the conversation.

Parent

It just seems to me, the school nurse left, and everything went with that. I don't know if anyone else feels the same, but it's gone.

Judith Westcott

They are still visiting but I have to say, I need the hours, I need Ros to tell me exactly how many times they are turning up and what's going on, so that then I can bring the challenge back. So, I've got all that from Exeter House and I was able to take them figures and I was able to show them the hard facts, this is where it's at. And they're now shifting. So now they're bringing it back.

Parent

I think even speech and language has been dropped, a member of staff's gone. To me it's not acceptable. When my son started in 2015, everything was here, this school was right and now I feel, I don't think this is the right school for him.

Judith Westcott

If your children's EHCP is saying that is what they need and that needs to be what's delivered and, you know, David and I would both accept money is really tight, money is really hard. You know, there's never enough money to go round. You know, despite what the Government's just been telling us about the huge millions, it is really tight. But that doesn't mean to say we can't be creative and prioritize and ensure that the right children are getting the support that's needed.

And we need to be able to keep working on that. And this project, the weight of having the SLT, this big school. When you were talking about the weight of being big, that is really important. Sometimes, you've got to come in big to be able to negotiate at the table and say 'actually, I'm not just talking about 60 children, I'm talking about 400 children who aren't getting this. I expect you to change.' Being able to have that negotiating power at the table and to have that executive head/principal in place, who actually knows how to have that conversation and is used to having that kind of conversation about big levels of service and can demand and say 'Actually, I expect to see the speech and language therapist here, onsite, in base, three days a week'.

David Paice

And I've got some other questions, if I may. The next slide. There are a number of drivers and it would be really helpful just to get a sense from you as to which are the most important.

So, there is a clear need for places. So, that was a key driver. And to reduce overcrowding here. Also, we talked about improving standards with a unified team, bringing everybody together, appreciating and building on what goes bes, across three and sharing that best practice. That was key driver.

Also, it's not just here and the other two schools but all schools and settings. So, big push to do more outreach, to empower all areas to have great schools, more inclusion, Bases, developing our enhanced learning provision and secondary. That was a key part of the work here. So, it's pushing it out. So, within that there's professional development, that's a key part, not only professional development for the staff here, to be able to share best practice so they can all do the very best for your children but also supporting staff development outside in the Bases, in the Enhanced Learning Provision, in mainstream. So big, big, push on professional development.

(We've) just talked about health and care and to ensure that that's enhanced too. The Bases, and we'll come and talk a little bit more about that. But, there is a particular look in secondary around replicating the Bases that work well, seemingly in primary. To have a similar sort of model, where more students are having a dedicated base at secondary. So, there is thinking about Bases and how the work that you do here can support that. And then finally Post 16 provision. So, the proposal is that on the Rowde site, got Post 16 provision here, and is popular here as well, but in addition to that, you're not going to close, but in addition to that there'll be an extra provision on the Rowdeford Site too.

They were the main drivers. What do you feel is the most important that we need to either, it's not been addressed, or we actually need to build on that, that's key?

Parent

You mentioned the increased access to health and care support in schools and not just here but when you put it in the Resource Bases, 100 new places, brilliant. I have a massive issue with Resource Bases. I live in Calne which is a large town, which has two policemen. So, if we were in New York with 14,000 people we would have 78 policemen. This is how we do things in England because we are rural. Okay. There is one Resource Base, in a very underfunded school. Which is where my youngest is at. We can't use our primary school Resource Bases as a template. They need to get better and secondary schools do need it. Everything else feeds off this. Because more the teachers know about SEN, and it's very, you know, once you've seen one autistic child you've seen one autistic child...

Judith Westcott

I don't know if you're aware but teacher training, they get one week on SEND. And when you think about the spectrum of needs that go...

Parent

Postgraduates, that can be reduced down to a one-day course.

Judith Westcott

Yeah. And when you think about how diverse all your children are and how different they are and being able to ensure that, actually, we bring far more training available to everyone so that our kids are getting the support. I think it's such an important point. You know, some of our small schools, they may only see one child with ASD and then they don't get another child for three or four years.

By then all the staff have changed, all the teachers have changed and all that expertise, even as small as it was, has been lost. And then if they get a child, say for example, with complex needs around cognitive difficulties, they're going from scratch again. And so, I think it's really important that our schools are able to offer that outreach, there's so much expertise here that needs to be built upon and shared in a way that doesn't mean these children lose out but actually means there is that inclusivity going on all the time.

And I have to say there's something also about our special school teachers here spending time in mainstream to understand what the difference is, you know. What was that experience like? Because at the end of the day all your children will grow up and become young adults and they will be out in society, meeting, spending time with all those kids and they've got to be able to do that and enjoy that. And that will be a positive part of becoming a young adult. And we want to

be able to ensure that our teachers get that and remember what it feels like to be working with children who don't necessarily have SEND.

David Paice

Any other thoughts on the kind of priorities? Thank you.

Parent

I'm lucky enough to live with an autistic person and I work with them as well. I work at Springfield and I've been there for nearly three years. I'm looking at doing teacher training myself, so I know autism, I know the children, I know what it's like. But Resource Bases, the children we see come in to Springfields are mainly from Castlemeads or the Manor and that placements have failed, and they've missed out. On national education, reception education, because they're misunderstood, and people don't know how to deal with their additional needs. So, I believe that, it says there, invest in Post 16 special education, that you need really before school and then these children who are Resource Bases might benefit. From just going straight to a special school or the children who, you know, could go to a special needs nursery and then thrive in a Resource Base instead.

Judith Westcott

Well quite. Okay. I do think that is such an important point, such an important point in terms of, we're about to start a piece of work which is an inclusion strategy, SEND inclusion strategy. I'll show you a slide later. Actually, it goes right down to every school feeling that the children in their community are theirs and that actually they're welcoming and open an understanding of the wonderful people who are children with ASD. And I think we've still got to do that cultural change across the country which is understanding, that it's okay to be different.

Not only is it okay to be different but actually you bring something unique and different and amazing into our community because you see life different. My own son has dyslexia and it's fascinating whenever I do a challenge with him and I do a piece of work and I try and explain to him how he should go about that piece of work and he comes at it entirely differently and comes up with entirely different approaches. We need that community, we need that diversity in our lives. Sorry, I'm a bit passionate on my part.

Parent

My child is kind of more complex medically and I think it's not forgetting that. I think there's a lot of discussion about Resource Bases and that is something that is not appropriate for my child and it's how his post 16, for him, what's that going to look like? He doesn't really fit. He's taught in a class where he's the one with the physical needs but nobody else is and that works very

well. But he does have medical needs and physical needs and how that looks. Because he's kind of at the end of his education really.

Judith Westcott

Important to do preparation for adulthood, as well you know.

Parent

Who knows what that will look like.

Judith Westcott

Yeah. Yeah. Being ready and what that involves and that's why we need to be working with our colleges, Wiltshire College, with Fairfield and with our own schools, to ensure that we're offering children those opportunities which really do enable them to have a great life. At the point at which they leave schools rather than just a sort of, well, you know, we'll putter around town a bit actually. There's so much more to life than that.

Parent

I have a concern which relates to the Post 16. Obviously, we're looking that we need to increase our schools to take on more children. At the end of that, we're going to have more again, at Post 16. So, then we can come to another problem. Where are they going to go? Fairfield has upped their numbers this year.

Judith Westcott

Absolutely. And that's where we need to work with our adult colleagues as well. So, we need to work very closely with adult teams, to ensure that there are great opportunities going forward for our young people. And so that's the other part of the conversation we're having, which is saying, it's not just about inclusion, it's about preparation for adulthood and preparation for adulthood is not just something you do with your lead worker or with your SENCO here. It's actually about stuff that we need to do. Your local authority, how we work with our health bodies, how do you ensure that you know your son is able to continue. So, things like, you know, if they've enjoyed the pool here? How do we ensure that you continue to get access to the pool, if they've enjoyed certain sorts of therapy, how to ensure that that continues to ensure that the mobility is kept as good as it can be? All those discussions need to go forward and that's why putting this in context and again, going back, I know I'm banging on a bit, but the senior leadership team is actually able to come and have those conversations, as opposed to just being a small voice in a big sea.

David Paice

Yeah. Okay then, I'll move on. The next one after this is the governance, that I'd just like to explain. So, these are these are the dates. If this is business as usual up until Christmas, actually in terms of what's the provision here? This is open. It's continuity of provision. Business as usual going forward but we just we don't get the green light. So, that is, I think I mentioned until Christmas, in terms of, is where this is going to be an amalgamation or not.

We absolutely are planning for, if not, what else? So, having conversations right now with three heads, Mike, Ros and Phil to think through. Where are the next cohort going to go or what's the provision happening? But it'll go in November, the cabinet make their decision. And as it was previously, open to the public, full Cabinet meeting, paper presented. They then say 'yes', they're happy with this or not. If you're making lots of objections, then they might reconsider. Seemingly, we'll move forward on that basis.

Then we have to go to the schools' adjudicator, so we're then at Christmas time. Thinking that through, after Christmas then, we're likely to be into a position where, we are going to plan, how do you bring the schools together? How do you amalgamate? And the key bit there is your school is business as usual. So, the governing body, your parent carer representative on the governing body here will stay doing that. This continues as usual for the whole year. But there will be some request to say, well, could you put forward a representative onto the shadow governing bodies and only going to be a representation here?

You'll also have representation, equitable representation, you as parents here will want to have representation on this shadow governing body, for the single school, getting ready for that. And, if I just flip to the next slide, it explains the kind of equity bit here. So, a parent from this school is on a governing body, there's one from then the other schools as well. And then they'll have staff represented in exactly the same equitable way. So, the head, as a member of staff would be there and another member of staff from St Nic's together with the same from Rowdeford and the same from Larkrise. So that's completely equitable then. Might not exactly be the same person but same number. There is just going to be one local authority representative. Then you have a situation where you go, well, what are the skill sets that we need to make this work? How are we going to think it through? So, then you have the co-opted governors in addition to that. And this is purely a suggestion. So, you might think, 'oh I might want more than that'. You have to have seven. We've got more than that. You might want slightly more co-opted governors, or you might want to go, well, 'I don't need them to turn up every time because this is the governing body'. You turn up to full governing body meetings but you might not be there all the time but it's really important that for a period of time, for a particular focus, I will set up a committee to really think that through and come back with a proposal.

So, then you have associate members too and that's for discussion. So, you need to think about who you want to represent you on that shadow governing body. They have a really big job to do, in a really quick space of time because we need to get the Principal on board by April. So, this is January to April. You've gone from no shadowing governing at all, to we know exactly what we want. Really confident of what we are looking for, for the combined three sites, as they're going to be in 2023, how we're going to operate it, what the curriculum could be like, how we're going to manage that.

With the new site of up to 400 plus here. What might that look like. So, you each have thought that through which we have a bit of work to be doing thinking that through now, so that you can go into the shadow governing body hitting the ground running because we would have to then have either elections or what the terms of reference to make this right. That's January. Then confidently being able to put a job description out by the end of February because you need to give people four weeks' notice to go apply for the role and then have all of the applicants considered. You'll want to interview them in April because they can't start, assuming that she or he is successful, in April. They couldn't start until September. So that's the earliest that we can start. And that's the aspiration. We want to start fresh, this time next year, it'll be one school, single leadership team, Principal in place. Exactly what you said, you've got to get your SLT on board as quickly as you can. So that is the desire. The proposal though is, we give ourselves, up until 2021.

Say you're not successful, if you don't get the Principal first time round, you have to go out again and then they couldn't start until January. So, we've just given us a little bit of wriggle room. But the aspiration, if you were able to work through now, thinking through what you want, in exactly the way you were saying, we need that clarity, if we can make that really clear and start thinking it through, that is, that's the process.

Judith Westcott

And there are options then because obviously when we talk about the senior leadership team, it's not just an executive head or Principal. It's also going to be about what does the assistant head, the deputy heads and all the rest of it and they might want to do a reconfiguration. So, there might want to be conversations about, actually we'd like a health lead in our school, as one of the assistants, we might want a social care lead or whatever else. So, it's that choice. As David was saying, there's actually quite a lot of quick work to be able to say, 'what does this look like?' so that we can afford it. So, there's the whole revenue situation they've got to do but also, more importantly, that the vision that everyone's talking about, can actually be led, not only by one person but by the team that is now across the three schools. We expect there will no

doubt need to be some sort of sense, a person, of who you talk to when your child comes to St. Nicholas and this is the person you talk to at Larkrise. That has lots of permutations of how that might be achieved, going forward and how that conversation works. And so, it's quite a lot of work to achieve in quite a short time.

(Parent apologises for having to leave).

David Paice

I'm conscious that I may have waffled a little bit, but that, that's key. Any thoughts on that bit, the Shadow Governing Body? All right. The only change I'll mention now, I'll be super quick because we've almost run out of time, I'm happy to stay on as long as you like. The actual governing body, because there were three schools, equitably represented, that's why you had quite a high number of staff. Now you don't. It's one school, back to a standard model. Where there are five key roles and proportion of those is, one Principal, two parent governors, one staff, one local authority. That's just the nature of what you're going to have to work with. Then you can co-opt, I'm suggesting for that, but you might well have a different number, too big and you might, we're having a great conversation here and you can feel that you have your voice heard, get to triple that number and it's quite difficult to do it. So, I wouldn't recommend lots of co-opted governors but that's for you to consider, so that you feel that actually the governors are representing your views.

You're okay with that? Brilliant.

We've talked quite a lot about the jigsaw, just conscious that we've almost finished but there's a lot happening to change and enhance special educational needs and disabilities and all inclusion agenda is writ large. So really, it's a matter of asking, what do you think? Any more thoughts?

Parent

I have to say [name of parent] and I have both been very heavily involved with Springboard in the past. [Name of parent] carried it on with Springfield Academy.

Parent

I am the treasurer now for Coral Cove playgroup which benefits special needs children, but it's actually designed to, it was set up by Wiltshire Council originally to benefit mainstream children, working with children with additional needs. So, we're still very heavily involved in it. However, I'm also involved with the specialist district special and they are desperately struggling to recruit the right people. And that's the big problem. I don't mean Springboard, but I mean (muffled)

people like that. I think. Personally, I do believe that the authority needs to get involved and actually do some scrutiny.

No names mentioned but I know the staff turnover is because of the wrong staff, because they have to just take what they can get.

Judith Westcott

Yeah and that is hard isn't it. And I have to say, when we talk about the big picture, one of the big pictures that we have to take into account in Wiltshire is, if you look at our population, we are skewed towards 50 pluses quite considerably. That makes it really hard then when we're wanting to, not only that we kind of don't attract the 20 somethings, when you go and do your OTs training in Bristol, that's where the training happens, we don't have a university here as such and so a lot of young OTs and speech therapists say, 'I'll stay in Bristol, thank you very much. That's where I was trained, don't particularly want to come into Wiltshire'. I think it's a real issue that we're not going to tackle on the basis of any individual service because it's so much bigger than that in terms of how we really do work with trainers, with recruiters, how we support, how we do CPD, how do we enable people to get involved in the services that we run, and dare I say the word, the Brexit word. I think at the moment it's particularly apparent because we have lost a lot of sort of other folk who might have been working with us.

Parent

They get into this role, not just because it's there but because it's a vocation. Yes, because it means something. So yeah, yeah, I do understand. I also do rugby refereeing. The demographic of my referees, I appoint them, is 50 plus. I need younger guys and I go over to Bristol, Banes, Somerset, everywhere that's got a university, even Dorset and Bournemouth. They've all got younger people than we have, Wiltshire is just, but then we have this huge hole in the middle with the plain, with the Army.

Judith Westcott

It could be quite interesting what the Army does, you'll know we've had Army rebasing this summer. So huge cohorts of the army coming in. Now that may be to our benefit in the long run, that's bringing younger people in, who are enjoying Wiltshire....

Parent

It only brings in £300 per year, per child, for service children. But you could ask them for a direct cash injection?

Judith Westcott

Yeah. Well we have. So, and that's been really good. We have had quite a lot of new money but because of the army coming in, so they've built schools for us, they've given us funding for SEND. We've also had the benefit a whole bunch of childminders.

So, we've really up in number of childminders that we now have in Wiltshire because a lot of the wives or in some cases husbands of Army representatives coming over there wanting to find jobs and they're wanting to find work that fits around their childcare needs. So, I think there are some possibilities, but I think you did right in saying you can't look at this in isolation. We've got to look at the district specialist centres. We've got to look at the colleges, we've got to look at what the health visiting service looks like.

Our Children's Centres, in particular, speak about the Rise, Children's Centres have been enormously important to us, in being able to work with particularly vulnerable families, at a very early stage. Because, as you know, it's one thing to have a child with a history but it's even harder when, actually, your family is really struggling as well. And, you know, you don't feel comfortable with the way things are in the first place, so I think really being able to layer up that support is very important.

David Paice

Any other thoughts?

Judith Westcott

It is getting late; the beeps keep telling us. (audible beeps in the background)

David Paice

We might be stuck here until tomorrow! Has that been useful?

Judith Westcott

Now, you'll be aware that online you can also (have a) say. We have captured all that that you have said, and I know one or two of you have done lots of listening and nodding but maybe not said so much. So, if you do want to say something and we would keep saying you don't have to be positive about this, you don't just have to say, 'we like this idea', you're very welcome to talk about the things that are worrying you and that need to be looked at going forward as well. Because as you say, it's only through having the conversation that we get to do something about it.

Parent

Since September and my son's class has dropped to two members of staff and I'm not happy about that and I don't know if that's because people don't want to apply for jobs here because they're worried. But to me, you know, this school needs more staff.

Judith Westcott

I think the hardest thing for staff is uncertainty, so they can cope with knowing that, 'okay, you're telling me I'm going to have to work somewhere else, I'm have to change my job or I'm going to be working with different people', they can cope with all of that. What they really don't like is, we have no idea what's going to be happening to you in a year's time. So that's one of the reasons we kind of separated out the decisions, about buildings, from the SLT, by bringing people together I think we can start. It's quite interesting talking to the assistant here, he was sort of saying, 'actually, this is a career opportunity for me. I can see how this gives me new choices and builds my career and now I want to stay'. In a way, I think, we wouldn't have had that a little while back. So, I think going back to [name of parent]'s comment in the first place, the sense of being in the implementation phase, actually here and now, by making these decisions, we are helping our staff to feel good about being here.

Thank you all for coming. Thank you so much. And you know, I do appreciate you coming out and the time that you've given. It really does help us, and it will help and ensure that we get decisions made. So, thank you so much.