

Appendix A

Shevington Parish Council **Matters Raised by Members of the Public** **30 June 2016**

The Council engaged with members of the public in relation to the following:

Consultation to Reduce School Places in the Shevington Area

The majority of the members of the public present consisted of representatives of the parents, staff and governors of the schools under the Shevington Federation umbrella. The following points were included in the exchange between them, the Council and Dist Cllr Collins:

- One parish councillor had made a statement which had been published in a local paper. In reply to a question from a resident about whether the statement had expressed the councillor's personal opinion or whether it was that of the Council, the councillor reported that what had been printed in the newspaper was incorrect – it was not what the parish councillor had meant to say.
- Another parish councillor observed that two of the schools were in West Ward. Bearing in mind the recent judgement by Ofsted that one of the two was 'Outstanding', Wigan Council's proposals needed to be reviewed.
- It was asserted that the figures quoted in the consultation document were incorrect. If that were the case, the pre-consultation was flawed.
- Dist Cllr Collins informed those present that the current exercise had no legal basis. It was simply a feedback exercise. Its purpose was to determine whether there was a case for taking things further to the next stage.
- It was reported that at one of the meetings with parents held by Wigan Council the officers had said that it could not be assumed that families moving into new housing in the area would also move their children to the local schools.
- It was observed that a great deal of damage was being done by the pre-consultation. Despite the 'Outstanding' judgement, people were unlikely to apply for places for their children at a school that was under threat of closure.
- A Federation governor reported that the number of children attending one of the schools and the birth rate in the area had both been in decline year after year for a number of years. The numbers just did not stack up.
- A resident observed that it was a question of the value put on education. Smaller classes meant better educational outcomes. The number of children admitted should be distributed equally between the three schools. The standard number at Millbrook Community Primary School needed to be capped.
- Another resident pointed out that the numbers attending Shevington Vale Community Primary School had increased over the years.
- The Federation governor informed those present that it was the LA who controlled admissions, not the schools.

- Another parent observed that when the new houses were built in Standish the LA would prefer to expand existing schools in Standish rather than accommodate the new children in Shevington schools.
- The Federation governor informed those present that the LA were willing to build extra classrooms at the other two schools to accommodate additional children.
- A parent commented that the whole exercise had been the subject of bad timing. An 'Outstanding' judgement meant that children who had not been admitted to the other two schools in the past might wish to return from schools outside the area.
- Dist Cllr Collins expressed the view that the pre-consultation document had been badly phrased. The district councillors were putting together a strong case to support their opinion. It would be much more difficult to change a formal consultation.
- A parish councillor expressed the view that the exercise was detrimental to the children in Reception at Shevington Community Primary School, because the school's 'Outstanding' judgement could not be advertised.
- A parent reported that the parents of children at the Federation schools were working together with a view to keeping all three schools open. A feasibility study had been carried out as part of the Standish Infrastructure Report published in 2013. The report contained a proposal to build a one form entry primary school in Standish.
- The reduction of places in the Shevington area could have a knock-on effect on Shevington High School, as it was possible that many children would apply for admission to schools in West Lancashire.
- A parish council co-opted committee member observed that the proposals had to be fought tooth and nail. The residents might not win, but, nevertheless, the proposals needed to be fought.
- The schools in the surrounding areas were already over-subscribed. Parents on the new estates were more likely to send children to schools in Shevington than sit in a traffic jam on the way to Standish.
- A parish councillor observed that the problems of the past at Shevington Community Primary School appeared to have been resolved.
- The Federation governor informed those present that there were many governors fighting the proposed changes.
- Shevington High School had offered to hold a meeting of parents of children at all three schools whenever they wanted one.
- In reply to an assertion that a decision had already been taken, Dist Cllr Collins assured those present that a decision had not already been made. Only the Cabinet could make that decision. The Portfolio holder was Cllr Joanne Platt. The district councillors had concerns about the conduct and structure of the pre-

consultation and would include all the concerns that they had identified in their report.

- A question about interest shown by developers in the land at Miles Lane posed by one parish councillor was answered by another parish councillor, who pointed out that a FOI enquiry sent to the LA could establish that.
- Dist Cllr Collins informed those present that the district councillors were supporting the initiative to keep all three schools open. They would be attending a meeting with the LA and would provide feedback once they had been.
- A parish councillor pointed out that the Parish Council were here to serve the community of Shevington Parish and needed to do something. In the light of this the councillor suggested that a meeting should take place between the Council and Wigan Council officers, on whom it would have to be impressed that all three schools should remain open and that the consultation had to be stopped.
- Another parish councillor observed that he had been educated at Shevington Community Primary School and had been a governor at all three schools. He was saddened by these events and was fully behind the fight to support the schools. At his request Dist Cllr Collins agreed to find out whether the pre-consultation document had been released under the authority of Dist Cllr Platt or the Cabinet and to clarify whether they could 'call-in' the document for examination by the appropriate scrutiny committee. He asked Dist Cllr Collins to inform the Cabinet that the process had to stop.