

School Closure

We have received two reports – one from Cllr I Whiteley and one from Vicky Galligan of the ‘Save Our Federation Schools’ group.

Vicky Galligan’s is as follows:

“The scrutiny meeting at Wigan Council took place on January 17th, with members of our committee present. Members of the Children’s Services department were questioned for nearly an hour and half over the proposal to close Shevington CPS.

The scrutiny committee asked lots of questions: transport provision, staffing, budget deficit, buildings, transition of children (key year groups, class sizes), accuracy of data, governors etc.

The decision went to a vote and sadly the vote was carried to take the proposal for closure to Cabinet on the 26th of January. Not unexpected but still very sad to see.

More details are on the Wigan Council website: <https://wigan.gov.uk/Council/Councillors-and-Committees/index.aspx>”

Below is the report from Cllr Whiteley:

Report: Scrutiny Committee re closure Shevington Primary School. Tues 17 thJan.

20 or so Cllrs present. They questioned James W and Alan L and Julie H for 1 hour and a half.

They showed:

Good understanding of the issues and an impressive concern for children and families , teaching staff and assistants..also for cleaners , kitchen staff , caretakers .

Some of these jobs could be absorbed into the new arrangement up at Vale. But not all!

They questioned:

1. The accuracy of data and the source of birth rate projections.

Julie Hough said tried and tested models are used and Wigan's predictions are 96- 98% accurate historically.

2. The role of the Federation and the reasons for the consistent drop in pupil nos. over the years and in an Outstanding School ... Why had this not been addressed earlier?

JW: The Federation had been good for all three schools. Shevington's ageing population was the cause of fall in school population.. Since impending possible closure had been announced yes there had been further fall in pupil numbers.

3.The deficit... Why so large ? This was a projection up to 2020 and across the Federation. to 2020 if the status quo remains.

4.Where would capital come from to provide transport, school crossing patrol , pavement widening? JW: there is a budget for use in these circumstances.

5.The status of building and the land if the school closed..

JW: The school building would be closed... There would be consultation in the community re how it would be used. There are no plans to build on the land!Hmm!

Comment by one Cllr. The irony of having to create a new school if a housing estate bursting with young children suddenly blossoms on that land.

6. Transition and accuracy of time frame for new build at the Vale

JW Alan L .All care would be taken to ease the transition particularly for Year 6. Important stage in their development.

AL ...The new build was assured by October.. But it was admitted these time frames are not always reliable ... There would be a plan B in place.

7.Some School Class sizes at Vale would be bigger than average. How would this be managed?

School staffing will be the concern of the head and the governors. Many schools have more than 30 pupils. This would affect only one age group.

8.Transport issues ..

The walk was a long one for small children. They had investigated bus transport options

Children would receive a bus pass.One councillor insisted that it should be children and parents receiving bus passes. She had to put the question several time in different ways to get the answer ... Yes parents would also receive a bus pass.

All families who had transport issues would be spoken to individually and their problems resolved!

9.Special Needs Children

They would also be communicated with directly and their needs addressed.

Finally the committee endorsed the proposal to close the school .

Proposal to close goes to Cabinet on 26 th Jan.

Ira Whiteley 18th Jan 2017