

Notes of Public Consultation Meeting concerning Caedmon College and Eskdale School.

Meeting held on 8 March 2023 at 12:30pm at Whitby Pavilion, West Cliff, Whitby

Present: Christina Zanelli (Co-Chair of Governors, Whitby Secondary Partnership (WSP)); Su Crossland (Co-Chair of Governors, WSP), Mark Taylor (Vice Chair of Governors, WSP); Jamie Henshaw (Executive Headteacher, WSP) County Cllr Annabel Wilkinson (Executive Member for Education, Learning and Skills, NYCC); Stuart Carlton (Corporate Director, Children and Young Peoples Service, NYCC); Howard Emmett (Assistant Director, Strategic Resources, NYCC); Amanda Newbold (Assistant Director, Education and Skills, NYCC), John Lee (Strategic Planning Officer, NYCC); School staff, pupils, parents, residents and other interested parties.

Apologies: None

65 people were present.

AGENDA

12:30	Meeting Opens – Brief welcome	Assistant Director, Education and Skills, NYCC
12:30	Opening Remarks	Executive Member for Education, Learning and Skills, NYCC
12:35	A Presentation on the Whitby Secondary Partnership on; <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Proposal• Background to the proposal• How can people comment	Co-Chairs of Governors Whitby Secondary Partnership (WSP), Executive Headteacher, WSP, Local Authority Officer
13:00	Questions and Answers	Executive Member for Education Learning and Skills
	Closing Remarks	
14:35	Meeting Closes	

1. Welcome

Amanda Newbold, the Assistant Director, Education and Skills, NYCC, opened the public meeting at 12.30 pm and she welcomed those present.

2. Executive Member's Opening Remarks

Cllr Annabel Wilkinson, introduced herself as the Executive Member for Education, Learning and Skills at NYCC.

Cllr Wilkinson outlined the agenda, saying that the Co-Chairs and the Executive Headteacher of the Whitby Secondary Partnership would make a slide presentation on the proposal. She said there would be an opportunity to hear people's views in the question and answer session following their presentation.

3. Presentation from the Whitby Secondary Partnership.

The Whitby Secondary Partnership presented several Powerpoint slides, which included explaining the proposal and the proposal's background. Other slides covered pupil numbers and financial issues, while final slides covered consultation timescale and details on how to respond to the consultation.

The proposal to amalgamate Caedmon College Whitby and Eskdale School was outlined. It was explained that this proposal would result in the technical closure of Eskdale School and Eskdale site and an increase in the planned admission number for Caedmon College.

The slides explained how the background to the amalgamation proposal has three parts, the falling roll, the financial position and ambitions for a more comprehensive curricula choice and the best education for children in Whitby.

Su Crossland, the WSP Co-Chair of Governors, spoke about the formation of the Whitby Secondary Partnership, which brought together the previous bodies of the two schools under a single federated governing body and an executive headteacher responsible for both schools.

Ms Crossland outlined the capacities in the two schools and that there were over 40% surplus places between them. She then presented slides which showed that this surplus was the result of the decline in pupil numbers in both schools over time and explained how the lack of a critical mass impacted their finances.

Christina Zanelli, WSP Co-Chair of Governors, then spoke about finance. She presented a slide outlining the current and forecast financial position of Eskdale and another slide on the financial forecasts of Caedmon. These predicted increased deficits.

Ms Zanelli said both schools had received Notices of Financial Concern, which restricted their ability to provide an ambitious curriculum. A third slide presented by Ms Zanelli showed the improved forecast position of the amalgamated school.

The Executive Headteacher of the Whitby Secondary Partnership, Jamie Henshaw, then spoke about the vision of the amalgamated school. The vision covered three aspects: Standards; Pastoral and Inclusion; and Curriculum Improvement.

Mr Henshaw said the vision included a seven-year curriculum road map that is a blend of both academic and vocational choices. He said that in the vision there is a direct pathway between KS4 and KS5 and that a curriculum will be provided that is highly engaging. There would be a dedicated pastoral team and inclusion will see teams work together in an inclusion hub.

Mark Taylor, the Vice Chair of Governors of WSP, then presented slides on staff, school sites and on admissions. He explained that if the schools amalgamated, governors would undertake a detailed review of staff structures and create a new staffing model to fit the needs of a newly enlarged, amalgamated school.

Mr Taylor spoke about the school sites and explained that the Normanby site had been chosen because it is the only one of the three sites which offers an opportunity to accommodate all 11-16 pupils on one site. He further explained that the Scoresby site currently operates as the Sixth Form College and its facilities have been adapted specifically for that purpose.

Finally, Mr Taylor spoke about proposed changes to the admission arrangements. The proposal would include an increase in the Published Admissions Number (PAN) for the

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amalgamated school. He explained that the current PAN of Eskdale is 110 and for Caedmon is 184. It is proposed to increase the PAN to 240 in the newly amalgamated school.

Mr John Lee, a Strategic Planning Officer, NYCC, then outlined the consultation's timescales and he emphasised that a two-stage consultation process would take place before any decisions on the proposals are taken. All views expressed at this public meeting would form part of the report which is considered when the decision on whether to proceed to the second statutory consultation is taken. The statutory consultation would be a further 4-week period when there would be a further opportunity for comments and responses.

Mr Lee then handed over to Cllr Wilkinson, who chaired the question and answer session.

4. Questions and Answers – chaired by Cllr Annabel Wilkinson.

Cllr Annabel Wilkinson, the Executive Member for Education, Learning and Skills, invited questions from those present.

A parent and 'Keep choice in Whitby and save Eskdale', campaign group, stated she was disappointed the Governors had not attended the Town Council meeting to hear her child speak at the meeting the previous evening. Further questions were raised regarding the Federated Governing Body, and this was not configured as set out in DfE guidelines in terms of number of governors required to make decisions. Who is responsible for making sure the school is run within DfE guidelines?

The governing body need to be clear, transparent, open, and honest. There was a request for an FOI regarding confidential Governing Body minutes and this had taken 6 weeks to come through. Further questions were raised regarding the clerking of meetings.

Christina Zanelli responded saying that the Governing Body would be advised by Veritau and said a clerk had minuted the meeting in question.

A parent questioned the forecasted sixth form numbers presented and said this was an issue if the numbers did not materialise.

Christina Zanelli responded saying no money is paid from Eskdale to the Sixth Form. Closing the Sixth Form would not affect the budget deficit at Eskdale.

Former Headteacher of Eskdale School stated he was dismayed at the whole proposal and questioned if four governors were quorate? He was dismayed that this one proposal does not match parents desire for choice, and this has caused a lot of upset and anxiety in the community. There was choice through 'Every Child Matters'. Moving children to a split site is questionable if anyone has any experience of the effort that is needed. Walking time is 35 minutes to get to the sports field and the lesson is 25 minutes. Three into two does not work. The proposal should be two 11-16 schools and to remove the idea of a Sixth Form.

A former Governor at Eskdale School and Federation. He totally agreed with everything that the former Headteacher had said. You need a sixth form of at least 300 to flourish, currently, there are 130 Sixth Form pupils. Where do pupils go if they don't fit in? He proposed that that the Sixth Form should be moved back to the Normanby site and that in turn gives room for expansion and choice at secondary level. We do need a Sixth Form as some pupils do not want to travel. Pupils must be given more choice post 16. He would like to see the body of work looking at alternative proposals before the meeting this evening.

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Christina Zanelli said that Governors had looked long and hard look at the situation, but the option proposed by the former headteacher would not address the financial challenges at Eskdale.

The former governor added that he had served on the finance Committee and Eskdale always ran a tight budget. There had been several bad appointments with 'significant pay outs'. You are still talking about two separate budgets. The shared governing body needs to get back to been aspirational.

A former parent stated that both schools are subject to notice of financial concern but only one school seems to have financial issues. He commented that Eskdale School seemed to have significant higher current staff costs when compared to previous years There had also been 'significant pay outs' to staff. The conclusion of this is that we will end up with two headteachers and one very expensive Executive Head.

Cllr Annabel Wilkinson said we will look into the points you have raised.

The former parent responded asking if this staffing cost difference could be explained?

Mark Taylor said he would need to go away and look at this.

A member of the community said the decision was immense and asked if we were equipped to make such a momentous decision. We all have vested interests which need to put aside. We are custodians of education and Whitby has been short-changed for years. Should an independent inspector decide after information presented from both sides? The decision seems to have been made and called for an independent review adding a that a brand new academy school should be built. The decision process needs to be looked at to ensure that it is not *ultra vires*.

Cllr Annabel Wilkinson said that no decision has been taken

A former governor at Caedmon had fought off federation and had to resign. He said he was appalled at the lack of clarity and this is nothing to do with children. The elephant in the room is the Sixth Form which had funding from NYCC and the opportunity areas. He added he was concerned about vulnerable children and that Rachel De Sousa (Children's' Commissioner) said that money was to go to the most vulnerable. He was dismayed to hear of seven layers of management and that no other options had been looked at.

A parent said the question had not been answered as to why we can't keep two schools and have a sixth form?

Mark Taylor responded saying that 880 pupils split between 2x440 sites which wasn't sustainable.

A member of the audience asked where is the evidence for this?

A former governor said that the question he asked about the seven tiers had still not been answered.

Jamie Henshaw replied that the structure is typical of what you would find in a secondary school.

Amanda Newbold added each school has their own structure. It is not a seven-layer tier and comprises: a senior, middle and teaching staff structure at each school who report to the Executive Headteacher.

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A parent said that a former headteacher had run a brilliant school and we could have that again. 85k saving on this proposal is 1% of the budget. You have not taken into account the mental health of pupils and staff. Some pupils need small schools and choice is needed. Things have been difficult for children post pandemic. Some numbers are not adding up. Moving the Sixth Form back to where it was is the solution.

A parent said she was concerned about the Sixth Form. Some pupils need to stay in Whitby. Some students have to travel for more choice but not everyone wants to travel and that should be taken into consideration.

Cllr Neil Swannick said he had not spoken earlier as wanted to hear people's views as there are strong feelings about this proposal. He commented that lots of views had been expressed. He empathised with the challenges getting pupils back into during Covid and now being asked to potentially change school site. He said a number of proposals have been put forward and all of these needs to be carefully considered, one proposal is for two smaller schools and to lose the Sixth Form and all of these comments should play into the decision. The overriding issue is of finances.

In 2016, no solution was found to educational proposals made at that time for Whitby. Twelve years' ago, there was Building Schools for the Future DfE Programme and Whitby should have had a new school rather than discussing outdated buildings at this meeting tonight.

Cllr Neil Swannick said that he would support one new combined school newly built on the Scoresby Site and this would focus our minds for the future. One new school is needed to unite the people of Whitby. We need a year for site selection and a brand-new school with good facilities.

Cllr Annabel Wilkinson thanked Cllr Neil Swannick and said that she couldn't speculate about 10-12 years ago.

A parent had attended parents evening at Eskdale yesterday evening and raised concerned about what happens to year 10 pupils? Her child wants to stay at Eskdale. What is the best advice for her child? In January, there was an email from the school saying it was closing, then allocated space at Eskdale, what is going on? There has been a lot of disruption to education due to Covid and this situation is unsettling.

Jamie Henshaw replied that regarding transition, year 9 pupils have had options evenings. The curriculum will be aligned and there will be the same option choices at both schools. It will be the same exam boards and teachers will be teaching the same curriculum. In terms of the new year 7 cohort, they will look at how much of their time will be spent on the new site. They want to minimise disruption. Teachers at both schools share the same dedication to delivering a high-quality curriculum for both year groups.

Cllr Annabel Wilkinson replied saying if your child is still distressed you must speak to school staff.

Jamie Henshaw replied saying that an exact timeline for the transition had not yet been produced in detail as they are waiting for a decision to be made. He agreed that providing a dedicated pastoral system is important, so pupils know who they can talk to.

A parent said there is probably a better solution for schooling in the area and that the timing is appalling following Covid. No matter how good the transition is, it will take time to adjust.

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A former secondary school teacher and governor said there were much smaller leadership structures when he started teaching and he was curious why an Executive Headteacher was needed? A further question was asked regarding if the Headteacher at Eskdale knew on appointment that the role could be made redundant within 12 months?

Amanda Newbold replied saying staffing structures sit with the Governing Body. It is common across North Yorkshire and across the country to appoint an Executive Headteacher for a federation and we have many schools in North Yorkshire that are federated with an Executive Headteacher in place.

A member of the audience said this is a re-organisation by the back door and not an amalgamation.

Christina Zanelli replied saying the Governing Body did make the decision and as Amanda Newbold said, you need a central person bringing policy and procedure together. The new Head at Eskdale would have seen budget positions and would have understood the challenges. The Governing body are waiting for the outcomes of the decision before any restructure.

A parent said that teachers found out about the consultation at the same time as parents and this was unacceptable.

A member of the Whitby Community Network asked if Caedmon School applied for a new School and why was Pickering Secondary successful? There are also concerns regarding sixth form numbers going forward and potential loss of another site and impact on sports facilities.

Cllr Annabel Wilkinson said that under the Local Government Reorganisation, with one authority, North Yorkshire Council will have responsibility for Leisure facilities.

The Chair, Cllr Wilkinson, drew the meeting to a close and thanked everyone for their thoughtful questions.

Cllr Wilkinson assured those present that all their comments would be included in the minutes and considered in the final report.

The Meeting Closed at 14:35pm