

# Haywood Engineering College Community Consultation

## 7.00p.m. Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2007

**David Dickinson** introduces the meeting, thanks everyone for their attendance both today and on 15<sup>th</sup> November and explains today's meeting format. He introduces Ian McLaughlan, Sharon Scott and Ged Rowney, who will put forward their proposals; then the alternate proposals formulated by local Heads and our 3 M.Ps. will be submitted; questions decided by the Hands of Haywood High community group will then be posed, with time for subsidiary questions.

**Ian McLaughlan:** Welcomes everyone to the meeting. Ian represents the Elected Mayor, as he takes responsibility for Children's and Young People's Services. He is keen to hear attendant's voices. Haywood's Head and provisional Chair of Governors have made their views clear. The green consultation document makes it clear that we want a school in Burslem. *Where* is a big decision. We are not asking for a merger or amalgamation. We are asking for Haywood on a new site. It is difficult to manage a refurbishment on a small site. ('If it isn't broke, don't fix it' from crowd)

We have heard that at many meetings, with people saying there are great things going on in Stoke, but there aren't enough of them. One plan is needed across the city, to make it ready for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Ged Rowney:** Introduces self as Director of Children's and Young People's Services for Stoke-on-Trent. Thanks everyone for their hospitality and the earlier meetings of the day. The city have voiced a set of proposals to consult on. People will try and say 'if it isn't broke, why fix it?'; 'is it about SERCO profit?' and so on, which are all legitimate questions which we'll try and answer.

The re-organisation is about taking things forward. It's about addressing issues - the strengths in the city, but also tackling issues. We've been offered £200 million to take things forward to 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching. Good buildings and good teaching equal a fantastic world. In the North of the city, 3 brand new buildings amount to a £60 million investment.

A governor asked about poverty, drug abuse etc. and these are all being addressed by the proposed re-organisation.

This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to offer children a wide range of facilities. The Government will not just give the money. It must be aimed at affordable transformation across the city, increasing inclusion, tackling empty school places and creating schools for all our futures.

Where are we now? There has been an improvement in A-C grades - we're 139<sup>th</sup>, not 147<sup>th</sup> - but we're still low in the country and there are still issues about the delivery of high quality outcomes. Joan Walley and I have discussed population numbers. We've worked with RENEW on housing and have all pre- & primary figures to calculate secondary numbers, with a 10% error margin. This still leads to a decrease by 3,000 children. Birth rates rose slightly in 2006/7, but this has been factored in.

Buildings are old, in disrepair and poor condition. We are looking to create a network, with young people at the heart of our thinking. This happens in some schools, but is not consistent across schools and the city. Learning methods; cultures within schools; the development of the 14-19 curriculum; work placement providers all need looking at.

*If* this goes forward - the proposals are flexible - we'll be looking at high quality leadership - again, this is in some schools but a high proportion are, or have been, in Special Measures - and a mix of autonomous faith, trust schools and academies, working with families towards development. The partnership towards transformation works with colleges, universities, businesses and school links with communities. Nationally, students will say

there are parts of schools that they don't like, so money can go into changing and improving these.

**Mr. Connolly:** We're to trust the Government with £200 million, when they can't even look after 2 little CDs?

**G Rowney:** I can't be held responsible for the CDs, but SERCO have been involved in school improvements for some time.

We are looking to use the Bank Top site for a new school to house 1200. The Councillors and Mayor want to hear your views.

We are talking to special schools about the timing and age range of changes, but the timescale proposed is that we collate all consultation comments and produce our proposals by February / March. In July, if necessary, the independent adjudicator may have to be involved; we put shadow governing bodies in place in summer 2008 and appoint new Heads in autumn. We will be ring fencing staff; engaging with governors and communities and are not expecting any compulsory redundancies at this time.

The alternate proposals are presented:

Sophie Hopwood from Project Aiming Higher introduces the team - herself, Keiron Chadwick, Lucy Welch and Tahmina Yasmin. (The team show the Project Aiming Higher presentation)

Project Aiming Higher enabled Haywood students to produce an iconic learning environment. The team designed the learning environment by visiting other architectural sites and working with architects, people in education, M.Ps. and filmmakers. Their project was presented at DfES and Building Schools for the Future events. The community and all students were involved and the learning environment will lead to the development of the whole school - why close a school with such exciting plans?

There is a vision to create classrooms and learning environments to help students and teachers aim higher. Who better to design classrooms than those who'll be learning in them? Before these proposals, we discussed all sorts of ways to improve learning environments. The proposals have brought Aiming Higher to a halt and we are saddened and angry that people want to close this school.

We won't be here in 2011, but still have a vision for our school. Take a look at our creative projects and teaching methods. It's already happening. We have a future. ("Future Schools, Future Learning" presentation is shown)

**D Dickinson:** It's interesting to hear the Director speak of inclusion; ICT; Extended Schools and so on. These are all itemised in our Ofsted report for a good and improving school with outstanding features. Why ignore, patronise and insult the student voice? We've got most of the things we want here; we just want some refurbishment. Why not enable us to continue on this site?

**G Rowney:** That was a very impressive presentation. It's a lot of what we're looking at for the city. We're looking at involving the student voice. We're very keen to take all good practice from Haywood and other schools - primary links etc. - to improve the whole city and make sure things are common across the city. We want to listen to views and build on strengths.

**Community:** If some schools are failing, why don't you deal with them individually - not close every one?

**S Scott:** Under performing schools are being dealt with outside this process. The transforming process looks at the whole city. It's this proposal that we're counting - sorry,

consulting - on this evening.

**Mr. Connolly:** I'm a local person with children at this school. Do you have children at this school? No? Where will the new school be, at the Co-op? This will create more traffic; so the students will walk; this will be dangerous, so we'll have to drop them off in the traffic and be late for work.

In the mid '80s, all middle schools were shut as they were unsafe. Those buildings are now colleges.

Mixing kids in new schools causes bullying. Kids want to be with kids and teachers they know. What's it going to be to teachers with high qualifications, sod off?

**Chloe Connolly (Year 7):** We want our schools to stay open, as they're great. Spend your money on buying better things, or pack up and leave Haywood firmly alone. Goodnight, goodbye and God bless.

**Community:** The school can extend this site by using Dimensions and linking with Port Vale. Why won't you discuss this?

**G Rowney:** We're here to consult on the proposals. We're listening to views, including this one. We have to report to the Elected Mayor and Chief Executive in a paper, so they can accept, amend or alter dramatically any proposals in that paper.

**Community:** What will happen to this site if it is not used?

**I McLaughlan:** Sites that become vacant become part of the city land bank. The Local Authority have a unified plan with industrial possibilities. As the CLC and library are on-site, there is potential for community development. I have no knowledge of any intended use of this site.

**Cllr. Garner:** A few weeks ago, we Councillors met SERCO on Acreswood. They said if a green field site was used, Haywood's site would be left as green field to redress the balance. Methane pipes on the new site are being monitored by the environmental team. A second site of crock (spent coal) is being assessed. How much of the £200 million would have to be spent on fixing 'Bank Top'?

The school could use Trubshaw Cross, as well as Port Vale and Dimensions, for sport facilities. This is being considered for Brownhills, why not this site? A new school on this site would be ideal.

**Community:** Surveyors have been on Acreswood. Will you bulldoze the park, which the builders of the existing houses contributed to, as a condition of getting the houses built there in the first place? So, we can have a park, needed by residents, when builders pay for it, but not when the council want the financial benefit from the land? Where is the actual site for the new school?

**G Rowney:** We are investigating the Port Vale link. Planners say the site we've discussed has been known as Bank Top, Acreswood and other things through time. As for the methane, we have seen plans of the site and are looking into this.

**Community:** I've lived on that site for 40 years. It's now a covered tip. It seems this (current school) site would be ideal for houses, but the other site wouldn't.

Even surveyors don't know what's under the other site. Get your act together and tell people the truth about *this* site, and forget the others.

The AIT has looked at this site for a Neighbourhood Centre.

**D Dickinson:** Can we also have the Director's view on the AIT meeting proposal to build a

care home?

**G Rowney:** I've checked with the AIT. They've been told to look at possibilities for care homes in the city; I've seen plans for Joiner's Square and 7 or 8 other current school sites. The AIT can look at land that may become part of the land bank and are also looking at a range of *possible* areas for a Neighbourhood Centre.

**C Chapman:** What possibilities are you looking at for this site.

**I McLaughlin:** None. I know of no plans for this site.

**Community:** Isn't it true that once this school is closed, you will fail to get planning permission for Bank Top, and Burslem will be left without a school?

**G Rowney:** Even if we were building on this site, we'd have to go for planning permission. There is no secret agenda behind this, just providing high quality education. It would be foolish for any Council not to investigate sites. This has been carried out over the last five years, as an information-gathering process.

**Community:** Kevin Lavery, SERCO CEO, said the Haywood site would stay as green field, but may have houses built on it if it remains unutilised.

**Mr. Connolly:** If you want to *change* to good quality schools with good quality education, then you need to apologise to Mr. Dickinson and the teachers, as this is already good quality. Would you like to apologise?

**G Rowney:** No, as I applaud all good practice across schools.

**Community:** Adrian Williams wrote to one of our parents, saying refurbishing this school or rebuilding on this site would cause too much disruption. There have been many refurbishments and constructions here over the past seven years - including the CLC - all managed easily. Why waste money by destroying all that?

**G Rowney:** The disruption is greater than building a new school on a new site. The CLC could remain and be developed as part of a community resource. It doesn't have to be linked to one particular school.

**Sue K, CLC Director:** We work to serve all schools across the city, but have a close relationship with our host school, sharing a vision; specialism, but also staff - including security. Have you considered the implications of a CLC without site staff?

**D Dickinson:** Perhaps the Director isn't aware of all the building work, and that not one child had their education disrupted.

**Community:** We'd rather have a few years disruption to refurbish this school, than the disruption of the children's whole school lives caused by closing this school.

**Cllr. Edwards:** Mill Hill was rebuilt on the same site. Listen to the community, as they want a refurbished school on this site.

**Community:** In the interim, Dimensions and Port Vale could host lessons, as they have the space and ICT equipped offices to do so.

Put the money you want to invest into a new school into improving this school on this site, as this is a viable site and this *is* the community.

**Community:** In the consultation booklet, it says 'close those schools which are changing status, or where education is no longer provided on that site'. Why doesn't it say on that site OR NEARBY? -then Haywood would not have to close. Does the omission of 'nearby' give you the scope to put the school wherever you like?

**G Rowney:** The document went through re-drafting and people think there's a conspiracy to change it, but it's changed because we've listened. If the document stayed the same, you'd say we weren't listening. If it changes, people say there's a conspiracy, which there isn't.

**Staff:** I've been a student here for 5 years, and on the staff for 14, and if there's one school that can cope with change, this is it.

**G Rowney:** It's not a case of saying 'this school, not that school', but about a range of possibilities for the whole city.

**Community:** My son tried to get into St. Joseph's sixth form. Haywood is very multi-cultural, St Joseph's accepted my son, then turned him down because he had a beard. We don't want to continue schools like that, we want schools like this one, here. What is your response?

**G Rowney:** There's a difficulty in discussing specific cases - I don't think it was the beard, but other issues. Good practice around inclusion should be applauded.

**Community:** The Director said to students, when he spoke to them on October 15<sup>th</sup>, that 'Stoke has a race problem'. Would closing four schools and opening only three lead not lead to racial segregation in the north of the city?

**G Rowney:** There are issues around culture and awareness. BME forums discuss racial bullying around neighbourhoods. All of our schools have strengths and issues. One of the issues is to ensure inclusion across all schools in the city.

**Staff:** The point is, St. Joseph's is single faith. We want to continue our multi-faith school on this site.

**Community:** Where does it say that Building Schools for the Future should be a reason to close over-subscribed and popular schools?

**S Scott:** BSF is governed by the organisation and re-organisation of schools, so we'll operate around these guidelines. We're required to provide choice and diversity within the BSF proposals. The Education Act spells out clearly that the Local Authority *can* close schools, even if they're popular and over-subscribed.

**Community:** Articles 6 and 7 of the new Education and Inspections Act talk about over-arching themes of choice and diversity and responding to parental opinions. To me, choice is a good selection of schools, not heavily faith-based choices. Also, parents should be at the centre of proposals and I'm sure not many parents feel this is the case.

**Community:** Why should the community believe that a private company running Stoke schools has any motive other than making a profit?

**S Scott:** All of the intervention team have been employed to help Local Authorities and feel we can make a difference to children and young people within Stoke-on-Trent. SERCO doesn't sponsor academies or trust schools and has no interest in being part of education, other than to improve it.

**Community:** Why spend money on glossy documents and unnecessary new schools, rather than on things for children to do out of school?

**D Dickinson:** ... and raising literacy and numeracy and working in the community?

**S Scott:** A large part of BSF will look at Extended Schools, with a large range of activities on school sites before and after school. A range of activities is being planned by Ian Kendrick and his team.

**Community:** By moving a good school which already offers these services, you are causing

more disruption again.

**G Rowney:** The proposals are about the whole city, every child and achieving the outcomes of transformation for the city.

**Community:** Is it any wonder that Stoke-on-Trent education is suffering, with people like you in charge? My three kids had a good education in Stoke, but a fourth would be going over the border.

**Community:** Why weren't the Aiming Higher proposals part of the proposals you're consulting on?

**G Rowney:** Any suggestions and good examples will be taken forward.

**Staff:** We were ignored.

**D Dickinson:** We know we were ignored, so we'll have to move on.

**Community:** Who produced the booklet? Why was it produced out of the area and with clearly contrived photography? In one picture, a girl is pictured in an adult wheelchair, in the next she is standing behind another student. Isn't this another example of treating the people of Stoke with contempt?

**G Rowney:** I take full responsibility for the wheelchair pictures. I put my hands up to that and the pictures won't be appearing elsewhere. Stock pictures often have to be used, as clearance has already been obtained for them.

**Community:** Wouldn't issuing a plain A4 consultation document, then the actual proposals in a glossy document have been more appropriate?

**Staff:** The school is unrecognisable from when I came here in the '80s. Burslem has had enough trouble, with the decline of the ceramics industry and others. We don't mind change, but on our grounds. This doesn't sound like consultation, but you telling the people in this hall what you want. You have to remember that this school is a way of life for this community, this is all they've got.

**G Rowney:** We are listening, and are picking up that message loud and clear.

**Community:** In Walsall, SERCO seemed to have managed transformation positively. What has gone wrong in Stoke? Is it because the people have not been put first? Also, as a Foundation School, Haywood should have had its land transferred to its ownership and this hasn't happened, why not?

**G Rowney:** Even if the land belongs to the school, the proposals could still go ahead. Any land belonging to schools is transferred back to the Council as land that can be considered.

**Community:** Why are you ignoring the school specialisms across the city, including our Engineering specialism? Once a school is closed, you cannot reopen a new one automatically with the same specialism - the bidding process has to begin all over again.

**S Scott:** We need to look at the current and potential specialisms with the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust. Previously, we have been able to transfer specialisms to new schools, and this is what we would aim to do here.

**D Dickinson:** Four specialisms into three schools - how?

**Community:** My son wants to be an engineer, so I moved house so he could come here. You're ripping the heart out of this community.

**Staff:** You say you're listening, but you said at another school meeting a week ago, that you will not be swayed by emotions.

**G Rowney:** I know the meeting you're referring to and we have said that huge petitions and

the loudest voice will not sway us; but will be balanced by the information and impact of the decisions for the whole city.

**Community:** Is it not true that once schools are closed there is no guarantee of a job at the same level or higher for teachers or support staff?

**G Rowney:** Nobody can be guaranteed a job at the moment, but every effort will be made to ring-fence, hopefully achieving 90%.

**Student:** The document has obviously gone out so students and the community can improve things, so why aren't you listening?

**D Dickinson:** Support staff jobs are often unique to the school, so a new school and new Head may lead to teachers and, particularly, support staff being out of jobs.

**Student:** You were talking earlier about children having stuff to do outside school. Did you know that the school has Time 4 Me club and do you know that that's open from 7.30 in the morning until 6 in the evening?

**G Rowney:** I knew about the club, but didn't know the opening hours. I would expect all new schools to offer Extended Schools activities.

**M Chadwick:** Why are you not allowing school governing bodies to use their initiative, as we have done, and make their own choices about the status of their school rather than imposing it?

**G Rowney:** We'd be hoping to utilise a range of skills of the governing and shadow governing bodies to create a level playing field across the city, to let governing bodies move forward independently across the city as a whole.

**Community:** How will you achieve this independence in academies, which are sponsored by businesses? Is it right that, of an academy governing body of 13, 7 will be the sponsors, one parent will be allowed and no teaching staff or members of the school will be allowed to have a say?

**G Rowney:** No, governing bodies are made up differently now.

**Community:** Consultation should be a community-led initiative. The whole process is upside-down and it's important to practice what you preach.

**G Rowney:** We have, by engaging all schools, partners, neighbours and neighbourhoods.

**D Dickinson:** Where's the evidence that five schools have to close and we have to have four academies in Stoke, as insisted on by Government?

**G Rowney:** We didn't say that the Government are insisting. The numbers are based on falling rolls. There is a recognition that twelve schools can give a good pattern of education across the city. It is a requirement that the city comes up with a robust plan. We've gone forward with these proposals in discussion with M.Ps. and other parties.

**Community:** Why do you keep telling the Government and the public that all Head teachers support the idea of closing all schools? This is simply not true and never has been.

**G Rowney:** What was said at the meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> July?

**Community:** Opinions have changed since 23<sup>rd</sup> July, acknowledge this.

**G Rowney:** Head teachers told me, in July, that they were all in favour of full closure. As time's gone on, that has changed.

**D Dickinson:** That wasn't said, because all Heads never supported that proposal.

**Community:** How do press figures of an increasing population fit with Stoke's decreasing population? Also, there is no evidence that academies work in the rest of the country.

**G Rowney:** There will be 3,000 less students by 2012. Stoke doesn't buck national trends, but these figures have been discussed many times. Even if huge growth began tomorrow, it wouldn't impact on secondary schools for eleven years.

As for academies, they *have* to be part of the mix. We've recommended four, where five were originally suggested. The early academies were introduced in difficult circumstances, but still show an improvement in educational attainment.

**Joan Walley:** Thanks the school for hosting the meeting. If we ever needed to remind ourselves about what really matters about communities, meetings like this do that. It's all about what we want for our children and grandchildren. We want the £200 million. We want change, but the *right* change. The consultation is flawed. Stakeholders should be brought together to understand what the city is like. The reason we're at every single meeting is we're committed to getting this right. We need consultation, but cannot have confrontation.

(To SERCO) Can we begin the process of seeing where we stand in the bigger picture? We need to see how we can develop sports facilities, the Children's Centre etc. and turn the consultation into being about what we do want, not what we don't want. I am proud of Haywood and all its students. We cannot have radical change without full consultation. We may have lost a lot of jobs in this area, but what we do have is care.

We want to bring Staffordshire-educated kids back into north Stoke-on-Trent schools. This school gives real lessons about democracy and citizenship, so SERCO and Stoke-on-Trent Council have to listen to us. I don't believe that the figures support anything other than four schools in this area. We want to win the things we want by grasping change. We want to work with you on this, not have it imposed upon us. For example, if the Government looks at having healthy children, BSF plans should look to Dimensions and Port Vale being incorporated into the school.

There's no way my constituents will support building a new school on Bank Top or Acreswood. The building of the new school mustn't be confrontational, but some movement must be allowed. We need to talk to Staffordshire University about partnership, so we can achieve education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, so we can be as proud of this school in the future as we are of what we have done here tonight.

**J Rutter** presents petitions on behalf of parents, students, staff and the community, to call for investment into this site.

**Community:** Don't schools need to be built with specialisms?

**G Rowney:** The range of specialisms and dual specialisms can be taken forward.

**Community:** What effect do you think SERCO is having on the students who are at Haywood now?

**G Rowney:** We are working in partnership to pursue issues, to ensure a positive impact on, and minimum disruption to, current students.

**D Dickinson:** I will formally close the meeting, but any individual questions can be asked by coming to the front. I am delighted that the school is working as one team, Head and staff. Ofsted should have said that the vision is shared by staff, parents, students, the community and other stakeholders. Thank you.