

SECTION 5.2

Subject: Northview/Westrop Schools Highworth - response to statutory consultation

Dear Sir,

I am against SBC's proposal to close Northview Primary School.

My reasons are that the plans are

- This likely to result in overcrowding at the in Westrop site.
- The movement of children across the A361 is potentially unsafe as there is only one safe crossing place, and that is high up on the road by the traffic lights (or the at the lights themselves.) This is likely to result in more car traffic by parents who, understandably, want to keep their children safe from crossing such a busy road, which is environmentally unsound.

Yours faithfully

Subject: Northview School - Statutory Consultation

Dear Mr. Cheal,

I write to respond to the Statutory Consultation on the proposal to close Northview School, Highworth. I wish to register my **OPPOSITION** to the closure of Northview as well as any idea of running a split site school using Northview for a while.

My views are that this proposal has not been properly thought out and takes a "short term view" of the problems based on "prediction" of falling numbers of children attending Northview. Many people have removed their children from the school because of the threat of closure and obviously no one will consider sending their children there until this is removed.

My understanding is that there are many questions to be answered, these are:

The numbers of children in the catchment area could rise in the future - how will this be dealt with?

Are some children from Westrop going to be moved to the Northview site, how will it be decided who goes?

How will it be made safe for children to cross the A361 road, which is extremely busy ?

How will the extra children be accommodated into Westrop school and how will the school cope with teaching larger classes?

How will people park cars if they need to drop off/collect children in an already congested parking area which also serves a shopping area and a very busy surgery?

What will be done with the Northview site?

What exactly will the cost saving be taking everything into consideration - as there will be costs for road crossings as well as whatever will be needed to fit extra children into classrooms?

How will these changes effect the quality of education for the children, what guarantees will parents get?

I look forward to hearing the answers to all these questions.

Yours sincerely,

18/12/2009

SECTION 5.2

To: Gareth Cheal

Subject: Response to Statutory Consultation Northview/Westrop Schools, Highworth

Gareth,

I am against Swindon Borough Council's proposals to close Northview Primary School and to expand Westrop Primary School.

My reasons are:

1. Westrop School will be expanded to 315 children. How is this going to be achieved as the school is currently at full capacity of 192?
 2. If class sizes were increased then I think the pupils' education will suffer unless further teaching staff are provided, which I doubt, will be provided by SBC.
 3. The class rooms themselves are quite small and I cannot see how they could accommodate such a large increase in class size as proposed.
 4. If there is to be a split site with Northview how will children cross the busy A361? How safe will this be?
 5. If parents have more than one child there maybe increased traffic congestion caused by parents having to drop or collect children off at both sites.
 6. What is the benefit of closing Northview School as the proposal seems to be costing more money to SBC and therefore also council tax payers, as both sites will still be needed.
 7. What would be done with the old Northview Site? There is no clear plan or benefit to SBC or the residents of Highworth.
 8. Parking at Newburgh Place is already stretched at peak times. How would restrictions help local people using the Doctors' surgery, shop or even the school?
 9. If the old site of Northview School was sold it would probably go to property developers who would seek to put as many houses as possible without adequate parking.
 10. This is a very poorly thought out proposal which lacks any detail. These points were already raised in the previous consultation with SBC not providing any further detail. Highworth residents are not happy with these proposals.
 11. As a parent I cannot help but feel that my child's primary school education may suffer what assurance can you give that it will not?
-

Do you support the proposal to close Northview Primary school and expand Westrop primary school? No

Comments

Background

I am a local Highworth resident of 24 years. My children attended Northview primary school under the previous Head when the school was oversubscribed and a Beacon school and I was a Governor for 8 years. I was on the staffing panel who appointed the current Head teacher. At the time it was difficult to attract applicants and the post had to be readvertised. The final shortlist was very small.

As Councillors will be aware the current Head has had substantial periods of ill health and the school went into Special Measures in 2005 under his leadership (although he was seconded to another post at the time he was still responsible for the overall management and direction of the school, and for preparation for OFSTED.) From being a popular and oversubscribed school as your graph shows pupil numbers declined at Northview more rapidly than other Highworth schools directly after the OFSTED report in 2005.

Northview School was built some 30 years ago to accommodate the new houses on the Haresfield estate. At the time it was recognised that there would eventually be surplus places and the plan was to close Southfield school which is an old Victorian building difficult to adapt for current primary education. This never happened as all Highworth schools and Northview in particular became popular, taking pupils from other areas and Farringdon in particular where schools were not thought to be so good. Highworth schools are no longer oversubscribed in this way.

Of all the Highworth primary schools Northview has the best site in terms of its buildings, playing fields, environmental areas and extensive woodland. This is not only an excellent environment for the children but contributes to the community as a whole and an improved environment. It is also the only primary school in Highworth to have kitchen facilities capable of supplying hot meals in line with SBC school food policy.

There is therefore and always has been some surplus capacity in primary school places. I believe this issue should be addressed for Highworth as a whole and not by taking a short term approach to one school that is currently less popular than the others for understandable reasons, and where one school (Westrop) is applying an expansionist agenda because it fears for its own future.

The current situation

I have read all relevant documents, including Council Minutes from May 09 and attended a public meeting with Borough Officers in September 09. I appreciate that with predicted pupil numbers falling across Highworth SBC must consider the current situation carefully. However I believe that closure of Northview School is not the best option. I would propose either

- a) keeping it open for at least another 2 years to give the current improvements (see OFSTED report June 2009) a chance to bed down and to see if predicted fall in pupil numbers do materialise or
- b) Operating Northview as a Federation with Westrop with the Head teacher of Westrop overseeing both schools. This would involve little or minimum additional cost, avoid disruption for both Northview and Westrop pupils and again could be reviewed. If pupil numbers do fall as predicted in 2 years time there would be no need to build additional classrooms at Westrop and children could move to Westrop or Northview (the better site)

Reasons for proposal

Effect on pupils

Northview School currently has a higher than average number of pupils with Special Educational Needs. If they are forced to change school, without their teachers and support staff this will be detrimental to them and effect their education. These children can least manage change.

Similarly Westrop will have to have temporary class rooms and mixed age groups. This will also disrupt their education and they would be likely to have to have new teachers

Effect on local community

Highworth is rightly proud of having good schools which attract people to live here. If a school closes house prices could be affected in an already difficult climate and Highworth become a town of middle aged and elderly people with additional costs for health and social services. Currently birth rates are increasing and there are young families with school age children who live in the town and want to stay. By closing a popular school you could be contributing even further to decline in pupil numbers which would mean another school becoming unviable.

Effect on traffic

There has rightly been concern raised at effect on traffic and children crossing the busy A361. Currently children can walk to Northview without having to cross any major road. Walking to Westrop takes approx twice as long (30 mins plus) and

involves walking alongside the A361 and being exposed to traffic fumes which are injurious to health particularly young children and infants.

The likelihood is that parents who can will drive their children to school. This will mean that Northview pupils and parents will not get regular exercise - against Government advice and obesity targets. There will be increased traffic around Westrop School and busy commuter routes which will need to be managed

SBC has suggested it could put in a pedestrian crossing or provide/encourage walking busses. A pedestrian crossing would need to be costed and managed at an appropriate crossing point with good visibility - this may not be the choice of parents or pupils. Walking busses have been tried in Swindon with little success. They are dependent on volunteers and short distances to school. Since most parents work once their youngest child starts school I feel this is unlikely to make any significant difference to increased traffic

Cost

There is obviously a considerable cost in keeping Northview School open with declining numbers. However it is possible to use subsidies and small school provision to meet these costs as is seen in other rural SBC schools such as Bishopstone. Part of the school could be closed and used for other purposes such as accommodation for the new area teams.

If Northview school closes SBC will need to meet the redundancy costs/protected salary of the current 18 staff - assuming that although some may be redeployed others may not. They will also need to meet the costs of maintenance and security for an empty building and the costs of deciding how they will use this in the future. In addition there could be costs involved in legal advice re planning and/or appeals against closure.

If SBC chose to go down the Federation route these costs would not apply. This would also meet Government directives which are a presumption that rural schools should not close and that all possible alternatives, including Federation should be considered first. I do not believe the Cabinet fully considered the alternatives to closure which were put to them in May and I would strongly urge them to revisit this again, especially in view of the local opposition to the closure of Northview and the possibility of legal challenge if due process is not followed.

Democracy/listening to local people

SBC officers have assured me that the closure of Northview is not a "done deal" and that all responses to the consultation will be taken into account. I would like all cabinet members and local councillors to have carefully read and considered this response and all other response before making a decision. Nothing can be more important than the future of our children

-----Original Message-----

From: Gillian Stephens On Behalf Of Ian Bickerton

Sent: 16 December 2009 12:37

To: 'BENNETTAM@parliament.uk'

Subject: FW: letter from Michael Wills MP

Dear Michael

Thank you again for your email of 15 December.

As regards the first paragraph of your email, I am disappointed with your use of the term "gagging", after I have made it clear in previous emails that this is not the case at all.

In the particular case you have raised, as previously advised, there has been no instruction to the Acting Head or Acting Deputy Head not to take part in any activities organised by Northview Action Group. However Gill Illic did receive a question from the Acting Deputy Head as to whether they had a duty, at the request of the Governing Body, to take an active role in the campaign, given the difficult position this put them in, as they had been seconded to the School for a temporary period to ensure the good running of the School. The Acting Head and Acting Deputy Head were advised by Gill Illic that the role of the Acting Head and Acting Deputy Head was the development of the education at the School and they could not be required by the Governing Body to contribute to the campaign and that their role in relation to the campaign should be a neutral one.

In respect of the second point you have raised, Gareth Cheal's email address was out of action for one day as a result of a very large file that was sent to his account. I apologise for this. This problem was rectified on the same day and I am not aware of any problems since. We are not aware of any responses that were "lost" during that day but, if you know of any, please do let me know. We have had contact with NAG, so we know that the response referred to was not lost.

I hope this information helps.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely

Ian

Ian Bickerton

Director, Access & Provision

Cluster Lead, North Central

Swindon Borough Council

Tel: 01793 465724

Email: ibickerton@swindon.gov.uk

-----Original Message-----

From: Gillian Stephens On Behalf Of Ian Bickerton

Sent: 15 December 2009 09:26

To: 'BENNETT, Anne'

Subject: RE: letter from Michael Wills MP

Dear Michael

Thank you for your email. I will respond as quickly as possible.

Best wishes

Ian

Ian Bickerton

Director, Access & Provision

Cluster Lead, North Central

Swindon Borough Council

Tel: 01793 465724

Email: ibickerton@swindon.gov.uk

-----Original Message-----

From:]

Sent: 15 December 2009 08:17

To: Ian Bickerton

Subject: letter from Michael Wills MP

Ian Bickerton
Director of Access and Local Provision
Swindon Borough Council
Sanford House
Sanford Street
Swindon SN1 2QH Our Ref: UZZE01004/01090396

14 December 2009

Dear Ian

Re

I have been contacted by my constituent who is unhappy at your delay in responding to concerns the Northview Action Group raised about the gagging of staff at Northview.

also tells me that the email address for responses to the consultation was blocked for several days and although I understand this is now rectified she is worried that some responses may have been lost as a result. I enclose a copy of her email of 11 December giving details.

I share her concerns and I should be grateful for your response.

Yours sincerely
Michael Wills
MP for North Swindon

-----Original Message-----

From:

Sent: 11 December 2009 11:51

To: WIERONIEY, Alexis

Subject: Highworth Consultation

Dear Michael

I assume that you have not forwarded a response from Ian Bickerton on the issue of the 'gagging' of Northview's leadership staff because you have not received one - I wonder why this question has not been answered yet? Of course the consultation is due to end next Friday so I expect he will leave it until then.....

As the cynic I clearly am I have another point for you - the email address given by SBC for electronic responses has been out of action for an unspecified period this week. This was discovered when a member of the public tried to send in an email response which was rejected and he had the tenacity to try the alternative and sent his email to the Northview Action Group (supporting.northview@googlemail.com). They then tried to email and found it bouncing back and raised the issue with SBC - apparently Gareth Cheal is off sick and no-one realised his email box might get full while he was away - despite it being the only email address given for electronic responses on this issue. We are now left wondering how many other responses were rejected by Gareth's full mailbox before the problem was discovered - we are told that it is now rectified.

Over 200 people have sent in a response to the statutory consultation via Northview School so far - this of course does not include any responses made by individuals directly to SBC. Many people in the town are taking their responses to the school to use the internal mail - saving postage and postal disruption! We hope that SBC will listen to the people this time.

If you are around on Saturday morning Friends of Northview are holding a coffee morning in the Church Room at St Michael's - do drop in for a coffee!

-----Original Message-----

From: Gillian Stephens **On Behalf Of** Ian Bickerton

Sent: 03 December 2009 14:43

To: 'BENNETTAM@parliament.uk'

Subject: Letter from Michael Wills MP,

Dear Michael

Thank you again for your further email to me dated 2 December regarding email correspondence you have had with . I am sorry to hear of the concerns raised by and I set out below responses to the points that have been raised.

There is no requirement in the School Organisation Regulations to notify personally all those who responded during the pre-statutory consultation phase that the Local Authority has decided to move to the statutory consultation. There has been a significant amount of publicity around this decision, that was taken by Swindon Cabinet on 20 October, including - as mentioned in my email to you dated 2 December - a statutory notice being published on 9 November in the Swindon Advertiser, in Council offices, at the Highworth Library and Highworth Recreation Centre and both inside and outside Westrop and Northview Primary Schools. This is the practice that we have followed with all proposed school reorganisations, including the establishment of Swindon Academy, and it is not intended, therefore, to write to individuals.

As also explained in my last email to you, the statutory notice was published in accordance with the legislation in the School Standards & Framework Act 1998 for a statutory six-week period, in which anyone could submit letters of objection to or support for the proposal. There is no scope within these regulations for extending the consultation period.

As points out, there was extensive publicity around the consultation for the proposed establishment of Swindon Academy. However, there has also been extensive publicity for and consultation on the proposal for Highworth, as described above. Again, as mentioned in my last email, an extensive pre-statutory consultation was carried out during the summer, which included a number of meetings with staff, Governors and parents of both Northview and Westrop Primary Schools and also drop-in sessions for the local community. During the pre-statutory consultation, all residents in Highworth were sent a letter informing them of this proposal. The first letter was issued in July at the start of the pre-statutory consultation period and a second letter was sent to all residents in late August/early September to remind them of the proposal and the community drop-in sessions, which were held in mid-September.

As regards the wording of the public notice, this has been worded in line with the School Organisation Regulations and was also checked with the Department for Children, Schools & Families before it was issued.

As also explained in my last email to you, I am not aware of any attempts by officers to "undermine" or "block" meetings of parents or to prevent staff being involved in consultation meetings. Indeed, as you will be aware, the Local Authority organised meetings with both staff and parents, both in advance of the pre-statutory consultation period and during it, and throughout this process we have been very keen to hear the views of all stakeholders on this proposal.

On the question of "rural" schools, you will be aware that this has been very clearly highlighted in both reports to Cabinet and also in the consultation document that was widely distributed at the beginning of the pre-statutory consultation stage. The fact that Northview Primary School is designated as a "rural" school will need to be very carefully considered in the decision-making, when the Cabinet Panel meets on 3 February 2010. The DCSF School Organisation Decision-making Guidance states that the Cabinet Panel has to take into account the regulations for rural schools.

Finally, you will recall that Cabinet, when they first considered this proposal in May 2009, had a lengthy discussion about different options for addressing the reduction in pupil numbers in

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the Highworth area. The options were set out in the report to the May Cabinet meeting and these included federating Northview and Westrop Schools. (These options were also included in the October report.) Having carefully considered the options, including federation, at the May meeting, Cabinet decided to consult on a proposal to close Northview Primary School and expand Westrop Primary School, as they felt that this could more effectively address the ongoing reduction in pupil numbers in the area.

I hope that you find this information useful.

Best wishes
Ian

Ian Bickerton
Director, Access & Provision
Cluster Lead, North Central
Swindon Borough Council
Tel: 01793 465724
Email: ibickerton@swindon.gov.uk

-----Original Message-----

From: Ian Bickerton
Sent: 02 December 2009 09:09
To: BENNETT, Anne
Subject: RE: Letter from Michael Wills MP

Dear Michael

Thank you for your further Email and I will reply to you as soon as possible.

Ian Bickerton
Director, Access & Provision - Children Services
North Central Cluster Lead
Swindon Borough Council
Tel: 01793 465724
Email: ibickerton@swindon.gov.uk

If you wish to receive a response by email, please be aware that emails that you send to us and those that we may send to you are not secure - external emails can be intercepted. If you would prefer a response by post, please send an email to confirm this.

From: BENNETT, Anne [mailto:BENNETTAM@parliament.uk]
Sent: 02 December 2009 09:06
To: Ian Bickerton
Subject: Letter from Michael Wills MP

Ian Bickerton
Director of Local Provision
Swindon Borough Council
ibickerton@swindon.gov.uk
DURR01004/01090516

Our Ref:

01 December 2009

Dear Ian

Re

I have been contacted by my constituent who is concerned that although she formally objected to the closure of Northview School, she was not informed that the council had proceeded to the statutory consultation on the proposed closure, despite clearly being an interested party.

I am concerned to hear this, and I should be grateful if you could let me know whether or not all those who responded to the original consultation have been informed that the statutory consultation process has now started and been invited to take part, and if not I should be grateful if you could confirm this will now be done, and the closing date for the consultation period will be extended to allow people time to respond.

tells me that she was involved in the process to close Headlands School, and she is concerned that fewer people appear to be being personally notified of this consultation process than was the case when Headlands closed, and she would like to know the reason for the apparently discrepancy.

is also concerned about the wording of the notice posted outside Northview School as friends of Northview School believe it to be misleading, and the apparent refusal to allow members of Northview School staff to be involved in the fight to save their school. You will be aware that I have written about both these matters already, and I should be grateful for a response to these concerns at the earliest opportunity.

Further, believes that the decision to close Northview contradicts the Government's policy on keeping rural schools open. I should be grateful for your response.

Finally, tells me that when she responded to the original consultation, she suggested that federation of Northview and Westrop would be the way forward, and would cause far less disruption and bad feeling in the community. I understand that her suggestion was not received any kind of response. I enclose a copy of her email of 30 November giving details. I should be grateful if this constructive and helpful suggestion could now be properly considered, and if you could let me know your response.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely
Michael Wills
MP for North Swindon

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From:
Sent: 30 November 2009 23:15
To: BENNETT, Anne
Cc:
Subject: RE: letter from Michael Wills MP

Dear Michael

Thank you for copying me into your letter re Northview School. I knew the Council had proceeded to Statutory Council from the Cabinet minutes, but as one of the many people who formally objected and sent in written evidence I was very surprised not to have been officially informed by SBC. I think this is extremely discourteous to say the least.

I have been to Northview school today and seen a notice posted on the gate dated 9 11 09 which states that the school will close on 31 8 2010 and that any objections should be made within 6 weeks of date of the notice. This means that objections must be in by 21 12 09, just before Christmas. There is also a notice from the friends of Northview stating that the notice is misleading as it is still a proposal to close Northview and not a definite decision.

Please can you advise ASAP on the following?

1. The notice is misleading and inaccurate. Should it therefore not be withdrawn and reissued properly? Have SBC acted within the law?
2. Provision for school closure is covered by the Education Act 2006 and I don't have a copy. Legally does SBC not have to consult everyone in Highworth and not just parents at the 2 affected schools? When the closure was first mooted letters were sent to all households. I was also involved in the process to close Headlands school through statutory consultation. Letters were sent twice to all households and the process was delayed as some households had not received notification. Surely SBC is not following due legal process if it does not consult again with all residents?
3. Government advice is to protect small rural schools from closure and where it may be necessary to consider federation as an alternative. I suggested this in my letter but it seems to have been ignored. Is there any legislation which would oblige SBC to consider these points?
4. Federation with Westrop School would be a far cheaper and humane alternative to closure. It would save the costs of redundancy/redeployment, the educational disadvantages of disrupting children at both schools, the increased traffic and the costs of building mobiles. If SBC prediction re birth rate are right there would eventually be no children left at Northview say within 2 to 3 years through natural movement and Westrop school could be the main school with no additional cost of classrooms, disruption etc
5. I am very surprised to hear that SBC are preventing some teaching staff from being involved in the statutory consultation. This is contrary to what they originally said and in all published material to date. Surely it is contrary to good HR practice and possibly illegal to attempt to gag employees in this way?
6. Do you know of any charitable or campaigning organization which has successfully campaigned against rural school closure which may be able to offer advice?
7. I appreciate you can not be involved in SBC decisions but I am sure a letter from you pointing out that all respondents were opposed to closure(see cabinet minutes) and suggesting Federation as a viable alternative would be appreciated. It would also be an indication that unlike our Conservative councilors, 2 of whom could not even be bothered to turn up to the cabinet meeting that you continue to listen to the views of local residents and are concerned about the future of Highworth

Many thanks for all your help in this issue and all you have done in the past. We are so lucky to have had you as our MP and I really appreciate your hard work for us all

Best wishes

From: BENNETT, Anne [mailto:BENNETTAM@parliament.uk]
Sent: 27 November 2009 13:27
To: BENNETT, Anne
Subject: letter from Michael Wills MP

Northview Primary School

Our Ref:

NORT01011/01090344

27 November 2009

Dear

Following receipt of an email from a parent, I am enclosing a copy of a letter I have sent to the Director of Local Provision on your behalf and I will contact you as soon as I receive a reply.

I was also asked whether I had any influence upon who will be on the Cabinet panel which decides the fate of Northview next February. I am afraid that this is a matter for Swindon Borough Councillors to decide, and is not one in which I can interfere. Moreover, this council is now so politically partisan that, on principle, they tend to ignore anything I say, no matter how reasonable and non-political.

With regard to whether I will be able to attend the meeting, I am afraid that it is too early to say whether parliamentary duties will tie me to Westminster, or whether I will be able to attend. I will however put the date in my diary, and if I can, I will be there.

In the meantime, if you feel I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Michael Wills
MP for North Swindon

Ian Bickerton
Director of Local Provision
Swindon Borough Council
ibickerton@swindon.gov.uk
NORT01011/01090344

Our Ref:

27 November 2009

Dear Ian

Re Northview Primary School

I have been contacted by a constituent who informs me that notices have gone up outside Northview about the proposed closure but that a notice that was reported to have been put up by the main gate at Westrop (which they believe is the only site most parents are likely to see such a notice) has now disappeared.

I understand that this has been reported to your department, but as yet a replacement has not been put up. Parents are concerned that this will mean that Westrop parents are not aware of the consultation process and the timescale for responses. You will be aware of my concerns to ensure that the consultation process is followed correctly and I should be grateful for your confirmation by return that this notice has now been replaced.

Parents are also asking, in view of the fact the notice was missing, whether the consultation period could be extended to allow any responses received late because of the missing notice to be included. I should be grateful for your confirmation that you will extend the period as requested.

I was concerned to hear parents report that their efforts to arrange a joint meeting with parents from Westrop to help better explain the proposals so that parents can understand and respond to them are being undermined by officers. Further they tell me that the Head and Deputy Head at Northview have both been told they cannot be involved in these meetings and the fight to keep the school open. I am disturbed to hear this. For this consultation to be meaningful, parents need to understand what is proposed, and I am therefore surprised that there should be any attempt to block efforts to facilitate this. This decision to close Northview or to keep it open will have a huge impact on Highworth, and it is important that local residents feel involved in making that decision, and understand the issues at stake. Without it they will struggle as a community to accept and own the final decision, whatever it is. I should therefore be grateful for your confirmation that there will be no further attempts to block these meetings, and that should they wish to do so, you will allow the teachers of Northview to attend and participate in the meetings.

I can only remind you of my repeated warnings that if this process is seen to be biased it will do great damage to community relations in Highworth and the council will be culpable.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely
Michael Wills
MP for North Swindon

-----Original Message-----

From: Gillian Stephens **On Behalf Of** Ian Bickerton

Sent: 18 December 2009 16:27

To:

Subject: FW: SBC complaint re Northview.doc

Dear

Thank you again for your letter dated 13 December 2009. In responding to the issues raised in your letter, I have used the same numbering as in your letter.

1. As regards your email of 29 September, I am able to confirm that this was made available to Cabinet Members, along with all other consultation responses. The email you sent was part of a consultation process that clearly stated that the Local Authority was very keen to hear the views of people directly involved in the two Schools and of the local community on the proposal and that these would be reported to Swindon's Cabinet. The consultation brochure contained a target timescale that informed consultees of what would happen at the different stages of the consultation and the response form also explained what would happen to the responses received during the pre-statutory consultation.

2.a. The School Organisation (Establishment & Discontinuance of Schools) England 2007 Regulations state that proposals must be published in at least one newspaper circulated in the area served by the school, posted at or near the main entrance to the school or, if there is more than one entrance, all of them and posted in a conspicuous place in the areas served by the school. The relevant DCSF guidance on that Regulation states that a Statutory Notice containing specified information must be published in a local newspaper and also posted at the main entrance to the school (or all the entrances if there is more than one entrance) and at some other conspicuous place in the area served by the school (eg, the local Library, Community Centre, Post Office, etc).

You will see from the above Regulations and guidance that, in addition to publishing the Notice in a newspaper and at the school, the other requirement is only to publish the Notice in "a conspicuous place". In practice, the Local Authority went beyond that duty in publishing the Notice in the Highworth Library, the Rec and the Council offices. The Notice was placed in a conspicuous place, namely, a noticeboard in those buildings. The Local Authority, therefore, has complied with the Regulations and guidance. My previous reply referred to display at Council offices and did not refer to the Highworth Town Council offices. The Swindon Borough Council offices where notices were published were the Civic Offices and the offices of the Children Services Directorate at Sanford House.

When the Academy/Headlands consultation was carried out, letters were sent only to local households at the pre-statutory consultation stage and not after publication of notices.

2.b.c.d. A substantial level of information was provided to Cabinet to make a decision to proceed with statutory proposals. The above Regulations and guidance do not set out any specific requirements as to the information to be provided to Cabinet following a pre-statutory consultation.

The Regulations and guidance do set out specific factors that must be considered by the Cabinet Panel when it makes its final decision on the proposals, following the period of publication of the statutory proposals. The factors to be considered are as follows:

- The effect on standards and school improvement;
- The need for places;
- The impact on the community and travel;
- Community cohesion and race equality;
- Travel and accessibility for all;
- Equal opportunities issues;

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- Rural schools and site;
- Specific age provision issues;
- Special Educational Needs provision;
- Other issues, such as views of interested parties.

I can confirm that a report covering all of these issues and budget implications will be provided to the Cabinet Panel at least one week before their decision and that report will be available at the same time for access by any member of the public. The Cabinet Panel will, I am sure, carefully consider before reaching a decision all the above factors, including any representations made by any person during the statutory representation period.

The Council does not agree to withdraw the published notices as, for the reasons set out above at 2a, we are satisfied that it has complied with the relevant Regulations.

I hope this information is useful.

Yours sincerely
Ian Bickerton

Ian Bickerton
Director, Access & Provision
Cluster Lead, North Central
Swindon Borough Council
Tel: 01793 465724
Email: ibickerton@swindon.gov.uk

-----Original Message-----

From: Ian Bickerton
Sent: 14 December 2009 08:32
To:
Subject: RE: SBC complaint re Northview.doc

Dear

Thank you for your Email dated 13 December, and I will respond as soon as I can.

Ian Bickerton
Director, Access & Provision - Children Services
North Central Cluster Lead
Swindon Borough Council
Tel: 01793 465724
Email: ibickerton@swindon.gov.uk

If you wish to receive a response by email, please be aware that emails that you send to us and those that we may send to you are not secure - external emails can be intercepted. If you would prefer a response by post, please send an email to confirm this.

SECTION 5.2

From:
Sent: 13 December 2009 22:55
To: Ian Bickerton
Subject: SBC complaint re Northview.doc
Importance: High

Dear Mr. Bickerton

Please find enclosed a formal complaint about procedures in relation to the proposed closure of Northview Primary School. Hard copy to follow.

Please note that I have also requested the withdrawal or reissue and extension of response date of formal notices re proposed closure on the grounds that you have breached Statutory Regulations by failing to display these notices in a prominent place in the community. In view of the fact that the current closure date for objections is 18 12 09 I would be grateful for your attention to this as a matter of urgency.

I look forward to hearing from you

Yours sincerely

Thanks Ian,

At last an acceptance that the impact of the threat of closure on numbers although the response in the minute does not in any way agree with the response to my question in the public session before the meeting, and is not the response given at any other time during formal and informal questions at any other stage of the process by Member or Officers. I look forward to SBC's response to the community in the light of overwhelming objection to the closure of Northview and expansion of Westrop from all sides. I do appreciate the time taken to respond and wish you all well in this festive season. I will applaud Swindon's response to the weather in comparison to my exciting journeys through Hampshire this week.
Regards

SECTION 5.2

From: Gillian Stephens **On Behalf Of** Ian Bickerton
Sent: 23 December 2009 09:12
To:
Cc: Roderick Bluh; Gareth Cheal
Subject: FW: Response to Statutory Consultation

Dear Mr

Thank you for your email dated 16 December to Gareth Cheal. I will ensure that this is taken into account as part of the statutory consultation on the proposed school reorganisation in Highworth.

The two reports that were considered by Cabinet in May and October 2009 tried objectively and fairly to set out the position, particularly regarding the reduction in Primary pupil numbers across Highworth. The report to Cabinet in May included information about the standards at Northview Primary School over recent years and the significant level of support that had been provided to the School by the Local Authority over this period. Appendix 1 in both reports sets out the reduction in pupil numbers at Northview but also highlights the forecast decrease in pupil numbers in Highworth as a whole during the coming years. As will be seen from this Appendix, there are currently overall four forms of entry at Primary level in the schools in Highworth but there will soon be a demand for less than three forms of entry.

As I am sure you are aware, legally, parents have a right to express a preference for any school and, if there are places available, to be offered that school. Unfortunately, a number of parents have chosen not to send their children to Northview Primary School, even though over the last few years standards at the School have been good, generally in line with or above national averages. This trend started well in advance of the consultation that we have carried out on the proposed school reorganisation - for example, there was only one first preference expressed for Northview Primary School at the closing date for parents for Primary applications in November 2008. However, it may well be the case that, as a result of the consultation process on the proposed closure, the number of pupils at the School has declined further. This was acknowledged by Cllr Perkins at the Cabinet meeting in October, when the following was minuted: "He recognised that the problems of the School in the past and the current proposals had impacted on the popularity of the School with parents.....".

The final decision on the proposed school reorganisation, including the proposed closure of Northview Primary School, will be taken at a Cabinet Panel meeting on 3 February 2010. Again, the information provided for the Panel will be comprehensive and objective and will include the response to the statutory consultation. I am sure that the Cabinet Panel in reaching their decision will wish to take account of all the views expressed, as well as a range of other information.

I hope that you find this information useful.

Yours sincerely
Ian Bickerton

Ian Bickerton
Director, Access & Provision
Cluster Lead, North Central
Swindon Borough Council
Tel: 01793 465724
Email: ibickerton@swindon.gov.uk

From:
Sent: 16 December 2009 13:08
To: Gareth Cheal
Cc: Roderick Bluh
Subject: Response to Statutory Consultation

**Response to Statutory Consultation
Northview/Westrop Schools, Highworth**

From
Name.....
Address.....
.....Postcode.....

To: Mr Gareth Cheal
Swindon Borough Council
Sanford House
Sanford Street
Swindon
SN1 1QH

Tick I am against Swindon Borough Council's proposals to close Northview Primary School and to expand Westrop Primary School by 105 places (15 in each year group), with the possibility of using the Northview site for year 5 and 6 pupils from both Westrop and Northview.

No Tick I support ~~Swindon Borough Council's proposals to close Northview Primary School and to expand Westrop Primary School by 105 places (15 in each year group), with the possibility of using the Northview site for year 5 and 6 pupils from both Westrop and Northview.~~

My reasons are: *(please continue overleaf if necessary)*

SBC has directed the transfer of children from Northview over the past 3 years through scant support and planting of rumours.

Although this is understandably denied the facts presented to the Cabinet meetings highlight that what sum may see as social engineering on a grand scale has taken place in Highworth affecting the pupils of Northview. The charts of roll numbers presented at the 2 cabinet meetings show that Northview was a well performing school with good academic attainment up to 2005/6. There was also the start of an equitable reduction in roll numbers across all schools. Since this time child transfers away from Northview and a reduction in pupil applicants to join the school has been seen. The difference in 6 months data in the 2 reports submitted to Cabinet are clear in that they categorically show during the Pre-consultation that there has been a big swing down in roll numbers at Northview. This cannot be due to catchment birth changes when you deal with intakes for years where children are already born! Cllr Perkins either lied or was ignorant to the facts when his oral evidence stated that this was purely as a reduction in pupil numbers in catchment. This was total denial of the councils own statistical evidence that pupils were leaving Northview because of, originally the fear of closure and since December 2008 officer confirmation of the councils preference for closure. The Cabinet has been remiss in not debating and taking Cllr Perkins to task in his inability to factually report on an issue which is affecting children, staff and community. He was also unable to comment on all the transfers approved by his department - there is a fact based question to which an accurate response would prove why numbers have declined at Northview. This has been ignored as not relevant by Member and officers in their reports and in response to questions. Again this is unacceptable and it is disappointing that Cabinet should vote on the basis of incorrect explanation of the report before them on 2 occasions.

There are numerous other reasons why the school should not close but the fundamental objection is because SBC have warped an equitable reduction in roll numbers across all schools to manipulate the closure of Northview. Demographic statistics prove this, investments in the other schools prove this, and temporary fixes only to staff issues at Northview prove this. Add to this a distorted catchment plan for Highworth to slant demographics in favour of the other schools, no consistent or senior representation for Northview School on steering groups, basic transport and safety issues, and public health/community issues there seems to be a total disregard of what Highworth thinks about the councils plans because the council has already made up its mind.

An observation on the Public Meetings, Statutory Pre-consultation, and Formal consultation is that all of this has been undertaken with a weighting towards closure – surely the consultation should have been about all options and not just what the council wanted to happen. On this basis all steps of the consultation have been flawed because Officers advised the public at the informal public meetings that *'their recommendation would be to close Northview'* ahead of any the pre-statutory

SECTION 5.2

or statutory stages, the whole process could be liable to legal challenge on process grounds. Again I reiterate that the reports to Cabinet show that the approach by Officers drove children out of Northview yet the cause and effect of the councils actions has been blatantly overlooked in their own chambers due to Cllr Perkins inaccurate oral evidence.

If all schools in Highworth had been treated evenly and equitably this matter would not be before the council at all.

The damage done by the council to Northview may now be irretrievable but whatever happens there should be internal repercussions within the council for what has been done to children, staff and residents.

Please do not close Northview School.

I do request a formal written, response to this response as no satisfactory explanation of Member or Officer actions has been provided to date.

Signature.....

Please note that responses must be received by **18th December 2009** at the latest
In order to save postage and avoid postal disruption you may drop this form in at Northview School and the office will forward it to SBC using the internal mail system.

13 12 09

**Formal complaint re SBC procedure in relation to Statutory
Consultation on proposals to close Northview Primary School
Highworth and officer reports to Cabinet**

**Request for Statutory Consultation Notices to be withdrawn or
reissued due to failure to post in a prominent place contrary to
statutory regulations**

CC

**Mr G Jones Chief Executive Swindon Borough Council
Rt. Hon Michael Wills MP**

Dear Mr Bickerton

I wish to make a formal complaint about SBC procedure in relation to the proposed closure of Northview Primary School Highworth. The reasons for my complaint are as follows:

1. Failure to acknowledge my email of 29 9 09 to Ms T Outhwaite (copy attached) about proposals to close Northview school, contrary to SBC procedures. As a result of this failure I do not know whether my comments were ever included in the list of objections which were made available to Cabinet Members
2. Failure to fully comply with DFES Statutory Regulations: The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) England 2007 particularly in relation to:
 - a. Failure to display notices in a prominent place in the area served by the community, **contrary to statutory regulations**. In your recent email on my behalf to Michael Wills MP you stated that notices had been displayed in The Rec, Highworth library and the Town Council Office. This is untrue. No notice has been displayed in the window of the Town Council office in Gilberts Alley where all other public notices are displayed including SBC ones. Notices are displayed at the library and The Rec but these are not obvious or prominent and you would have to be making a special visit and an effort to look at the notice boards to see them

This failure to properly display notices is very significant and denies the over 2000 local objectors their last chance to have their say before a decision is made. I only knew about this stage in proposals fortuitously because I had previously written to Michael Wills and he copied me into an email. I know of several other people who are in a similar position and who did not know that the proposed closure had got to such an advanced stage including parents.

This failure to communicate and inform local residents is surprising considering that previous information was good and letters were sent to all local households. Letters were also sent twice to local households when there was a similar proposal to close Headland school and I am at a loss to understand why the same procedure was not followed in this case.

- b. Failure to fully provide evidence of impact of proposals on **standards, diversity and quality** of education in the area affected, **contrary to Statutory Regulations**. You have published an Equality Impact Assessment but you have not addressed standards or quality of education for current and future Northview area pupils. I believe that if proposed closure goes ahead ECM outcomes (Children Act 2004) will be adversely affected as follows:
- **Be healthy** – pupils more likely to be driven to school affecting obesity. Changing schools having a negative affect on mental health particularly of vulnerable children, especially at a time when mental health difficulties in children are increasing
 - **Stay safe** – children walking exposed to car fumes, dangerous road crossing and no budget identified for proposed mitigating measures
 - **Enjoy and achieve** – likely adverse affect on standards of children forced out of small classes and/or moved in to mixed age groups
 - **Make a positive contribution** – creating a “them and us” attitude in the community with one area perceived as better than the other. Issues of integration of Northview children in to a well established school.
 - **Achieve economic well being** – likely adverse outcomes as indicated above impacting on future performance, especially bearing in mind that Northview pupils have a higher than average number receiving free school meals (FSM) and are therefore the most economically disadvantaged. These children will be most adversely affected by any imposed change and least likely to have resilience factors to compensate for the risks factors they already have.
- c. Failure to provide evidence of Special Educational Needs of children affected **contrary to Statutory Regulations**. As you will be aware, Northview pupils have a higher than average number of pupils with SEN. By failing to mention this in your report to Cabinet members you have not only breached Statutory regulations but denied members the opportunity to be fully informed and to consider the particularly adverse affect a move will have on these pupils
- d. Failure to provide full evidence of impact on community and failure to have any substantive budget or properly worked out plans for measures to militate against these **contrary to Statutory Regulations**. In your Equality Impact assessment you state that the closure of Northview will primarily affect the local catchment area and will in part be compensated for by the Children’s

SECTION 5.2

Centre at Westrop School. This is disingenuous. As you are well aware, the Children's Centre is for the whole of Highworth and it is available to all families whether Northview closes or not.

Furthermore the closure of Northview will affect: local childminders who are already losing business, our local shop, patients and people wishing to access the surgery and police station because of traffic congestion, local residents in surrounding areas to Westrop if traffic regulations are enforced, all current and future residents because of the likely affect on house prices throughout the town because of the closure of a local school and all commuters in and out of Highworth because of increased traffic. None of this is mentioned in your report.

My estimates of the costs of closure of Northview are £249K using figures quoted in your reports. These costs exclude redundancy, site security, site maintenance, change of use and any future planning regulations for Northview. You have acknowledged that you have no identified budget for traffic management or improving road safety.

You are therefore asking Cabinet members to make a final and permanent decision about the future of all Highworth children without the full facts in front of them, without a fully costed budget, without considering the impact on the whole community of Highworth, without having any fully thought out proposals for future use of Northview site and where you have breached Statutory Regulations in four significant areas. I think this is completely unacceptable, hence my complaint.

In view of the fact that you have also failed to publish notices in a prominent place in the community I am also formally asking you to withdraw these notices or reissue them in a more appropriate manner and extend the deadline for consultation by a further 6 weeks

I look forward to hearing from you

Yours sincerely

I am against Swindon Borough Council's proposals to close Northview Primary school and to expand Westrop Primary school by 105 places, with the possibility of using the Northview site for year 5 and 6 pupils from both Westrop and Northview.

My reasons are:

- The reasons in my original response still stand – copy attached. In particular SBC has dismissed too readily alternatives to closure, especially federation and has presented biased and incomplete advice to Cabinet members. It has failed to point out that the reasons for Northviews relative unpopularity compared to the other Highworth schools are temporary and historical under the leadership of the previous Head who is leaving, and that it now has an excellent OFSTED report - July 09. It has also failed to point out that there will still be demand for school places from across Highworth and in particular from the Northview catchment area. The reason the other Heads are in favour of the proposals unlike 99% of all other respondents is that they want more than their fair-share of pupils as this affects the funding a school gets and ultimately their salary.

18/12/2009

Page 2 of 3

- SBC has failed to carry out the final stage of the Statutory Consultation in an appropriate manner and has breached Statutory Regulations re the closure of schools 2007. I have made a formal complaint about this – copy attached. In particular SBC has failed to publish notices in a prominent place in Highworth, depriving local residents of their final chance to comment on proposals, has failed to publish the number of children with SEN who would be affected, has presented a biased and incomplete Equality Impact Assessment and has no costed budget for the minimum £249K these proposals would cost.
 - SBC has failed to demonstrate that closure of Northview and expansion of Westrop is in the educational interests of pupils in the area. I have provided clear evidence to the contrary in my formal complaint and shown how children would do worse on every ECM outcome
 - I have formally requested that Cabinet members consider Federation at least in the short term as a pragmatic and cost efficient measure of dealing with falling numbers which would lead to minimal if any additional costs and give an opportunity to see whether falling pupil numbers do in fact materialise. This approach has been supported by Michael Wills MP in email correspondence with Ian Bickerton.
 - Unfortunately this request has been refused without any good reason and I have been advised that SBC will not consider any amendments. SBC have therefore clearly demonstrated that they have not listened to the wishes of local people, that they have not planned with forethought and that they are cavalier about breaching Statutory Guidance. They must be well aware that if they continue in this vein there is a real possibility of legal action and application for Judicial Review. I would therefore strongly urge Cabinet members to reject both current proposals and to think seriously again about alternatives. DFES Guidance clearly states that rural primary schools should only be closed when all other alternatives have been fully explored and where closure can be demonstrated to be in the best interests of children concerned.
 - Neither has been demonstrated in this case. Highworth's children and future generations have only one chance. I urge members to take a considered view and vote against these proposals
-

Mr Heal

I understand that a second public consultation is now underway into Swindon Borough Council's proposed closure of Northview School.

This seems to be an ill-conceived proposal and I would like to register my opposition.

I have already signed a petition (earlier this year) and would like to make the following points:

- It appears that Westrop school will not have sufficient capacity to accommodate the children who currently attend Northview school; what provision will be put in place to resolve this?
- The school building at Northview is in excellent condition and it's a waste to demolish it.
- It's not clear what will happen to the "redundant" site at Northview - is it likely to be left derelict (for example as the hospital site at Wroughton was for some considerable time) as this is unsatisfactory for local residents and I don't believe it's what the community in Highworth wants.
- A split-site school appears to have been proposed - having children move schools an extra time during primary education will be detrimental - it's an established fact that changing schools sets children's learning back several months.
- Have future pupil numbers been projected and taken into account - especially in view of the growing number of children travelling from north Swindon to attend Highworth schools? (Perhaps formal action in making it easier for these children to get to school in Highworth (such as better subsidised transport arrangements) could help?)
Warneford school's reputation in this region has resulted in families outside Highworth looking for primary "feeder school" facilities in Highworth to ensure their children can go to Warneford and closing Northview school could impact on Warneford pupil numbers too.
- It doesn't make sense for children to be crossing the main Highworth to Lechlade road to attend a school on the "wrong" side of this busy and dangerous road. A pedestrian crossing is unlikely to make this any safer given the lack of care many drivers show at such crossings and a bridge/underpass isn't feasible.
- Have the views of the parents of pupils at both schools been taken into consideration?

I look forward to your comments.

Dear Sir

Re: The new consultation on the closure of Northview School.

I'm led to believe that this Consultation is the "Statutory" Consultation where as the previous Consultation was just testing the temperature of the bath water and any views, objections or valid comments put forward by the affected people will be disregarded unless submitted again to the Statutory Consultation for consideration.

As my views have not changed since the original Consultation I am attaching a copy of my original submission for consideration by the new Statutory Consultation.

I also gather that a number of ideas have been proposed by the Council for the use of Northview if, despite the objections of the majority of the people in Highworth, closure takes place. From what I have seen of them they are going to result in addition expenditure, rather than reduce it and possible put some of the youngest of the school pupils lives at risk.

Yours sincerely

Submission to the Pre Statutory Consultation

I disagree with this proposal for the following reasons.

1) This will result in a poorer education for the children of both schools. Only the most experience of teachers are capable of handling mixed ability, mixed aged and overcrowded classes.

2) Congestion and Road Safety

Congestion around the entrance to Westrop School is already bad at start and end of the school day. The proposed measure will only exasperate this as no responsible parent from the far East side of Highworth will allow a child of 5 to walk to and from school having to cross a main road, at times in the dark and poor weather. The traffic on the A361 will also be grossly effected as parents attempt to turn into or out of Station Road or St Michael's Avenue. This will cause tail backs both up and down the hill. This will result in the type of accidents which occurred in Highworth during the summers of the 1970's when the A361 was a designated Holiday Route. Putting extra pedestrian crossing on the hill will only exasperate this.

Traffic, particularly from the Industrial Estate to the North of Highworth will then start using Roundhills Mead Road as a rat run causing increased congestion at its junction with Brewery St & High Street and the Brewery St Swindon Road Roundabout.

A large No of Highworth children have to cross Brewery Street when going to the schools to the South of the town, deaths have already occurred, can we afford more just to save a few £'s on the Education Budget.

3) Economics.

There will be short term saving if this proposal is adopted, but only to the Education Budget.

The required outlay to improve safe access to Westrop school for children from East Highworth and to the other schools in addition to the modifications required to the road junctions to reduce congestion will far out way this.

Also the outlay on the maintenance of the empty North View School will reduce any saving. If the site is sold what will happen to it. If housing is built this will result in more children. Turning it into a satellite 6th form College will require expensive modifications to the building as it was deigned initially for small children, not 6 foot plus teenagers.

The young population of Highworth is static at the moment but it will increase once again in the future as the parents of children who filled the schools in the 80s and 90s retire and sell their homes

10/12/2009

SECTION 5.2

To: Mr Gareth Cheal
Swindon Borough Council
Sanford House
Sanford Street
Swindon
SN1 1QH

I am against Swindon Borough Council's proposals to close Northview Primary School and to expand Westrop Primary School by 105 places (15 in each year group), with the possibility of using the Northview site for year 5 and 6 pupils from both Westrop and Northview.

My reasons are:

My son starts school next September and I'd love for him to attend Westrop Primary School as do/did my niece and nephew but I have major concerns regarding class sizes etc and the attention each individual pupil will receive. The school simply isn't big enough and I've read somewhere that you would need to use up some of the playing field to accommodate mobile classrooms, I had the unfortunate honour of being in a mobile classroom when I was a child and they simply aren't comfortable, in winter freezing and in summer absolutely boiling I would hate for my Son to have to go through this. I also think it will be a real shame to eat up more of the playing field as in recent months some of the land has been used up by the new Childrens Centre.

My Son's education is obviously very important to me and I think you jeopardise the education he will receive by expanding Westrop class sizes which obviously makes me very concerned and because of this I object to the above proposal.

Dear Sir

I am against Swindon Borough Council's proposals to close Northview Primary School and to expand Westrop Primary school by 105 places (15 in each year group), with the possibility of using the Northview site for year 5 and 6 pupils from both Westrop and Northview.

My reasons are:

Children walking to school will have to cross a busy main road and this will cause parents who live near Northview school to drive their children to Westrop causing major traffic congestion.

Also is is very short sighted - it would be better to build up Northview School again for the local area to use and to attract children from outside the area as it used to. Northview was once a centre of excellence "a beacon school" and could be again. It used to attract children from a wide area and as there are shortages of school places in central Swindon the excellent school building and grounds could be properly utilised by those who need good school places.

Highworth needs to attract young families in order to stay vibrant and alive and having good schools in the area is vital.

Please re-consider your intentions to close this valuable school.

For the att. of Mr. Chial.

If the proposed closure of Northview School takes place, & the expansion of Westrop School goes ahead, can you clarify for me & many other worried pensioners in Highworth where we will park for the Doctors Surgery in Newburgh Place.

From the beginning of this year since the already expanding Westrop School has taken place it is becoming more & more difficult to find parking spaces.

(My being in the vicinity
at 3.00h in the afternoon)
Will you make more car parking
in the school grounds.
More than the half a dozen
spaces there now.

A reply would be much
appreciated & if this is not
your department perhaps you
can point me in the right
direction as I do feel this
needs to be addressed urgently.

Dear Richard

Many thanks for your prompt response to my emails. I will have another look at the national consultation report of May 2011 but I don't recall any indication of 'fast-track'.

However, looking this is A, this is government policy for most schools B. I will have money in account in the event of closing Northdown and putting extra resources into Hooton. -this is surely what SBC are interested in? I will continue to improve resources for children rather than damage them as proposed by some like Brian Woods. I think this is SBC's goal. SBC are not interested in this but how I want to see the school continued as a school as far as I can have a go this weekend at substituting this in school books, getting back to you with any practical ideas - (but would you not point out that Federation is gov policy and if another they should follow it) and I will be writing directly to SBC as well.

Regards

We will consider the notice 'Northdown school will close on 31.8.2012' is misleading and erroneous. The school may close following Council decision in February, what is the point of misleading consultation responses with no date given for that response if the notice presents the situation as a fact already?

Dear Sir

Re: The new consultation on the closure of Northview School.

I'm led to believe that this Consultation is the "Statutory" Consultation where as the previous Consultation was just testing the temperature of the bath water and any views, objections or valid comments put forward by the affected people will be disregarded unless submitted again to the Statutory Consultation for consideration.

As my views have not changed since the original Consultation I am attaching a copy of my original submission for consideration by the new Statutory Consultation.

I also gather that a number of ideas have been proposed by the Council for the use of Northview if, despite the objections of the majority of the people in Highworth, closure takes place. From what I have seen of them they are going to result in addition expenditure, rather than reduce it and possible put some of the youngest of the school pupils lives at risk.

Yours sincerely

Submission to the Pre Statutory Consultation

I disagree with this proposal for the following reasons.

1) This will result in a poorer education for the children of both schools. Only the most experience of teachers are capable of handling mixed ability, mixed aged and overcrowded classes.

2) Congestion and Road Safety

Congestion around the entrance to Westrop School is already bad at start and end of the school day. The proposed measure will only exasperate this as no responsible parent from the far East side of Highworth will allow a child of 5 to walk to and from school having to cross a main road, at times in the dark and poor weather. The traffic on the A361 will also be grossly effected as parents attempt to turn into or out of Station Road or St Michael's Avenue. This will cause tail backs both up and down the hill. This will result in the type of accidents which occurred in Highworth during the summers of the 1970's when the A361 was a designated Holiday Route. Putting extra pedestrian crossing on the hill will only exasperate this.

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A large No of Highworth children have to cross Brewery Street when going to the schools to the South of the town, deaths have already occurred, can we afford more just to save a few £'s on the Education Budget.

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The required outlay to improve safe access to Westrop school for children from East Highworth and to the other schools in addition to the modifications required to the road junctions to reduce congestion will far out way this.

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The young population of Highworth is static at the moment but it will increase once again in the future as the parents of children who filled the schools in the 80s and 90s retire and sell their homes

10/12/2009

on to young families. Couples who have put on hold having a family will as the economic situation improves and a they get older will have children.

To: Gareth Cheal

Subject: Response to Statutory Consultation Northview / Westrop Schools Highworth

Dear Mr Cheal,

I'm writing to respond to the Statutory consultation about the closure of Northview School in Highworth.

I am against Swindon Borough Councils proposals in this matter. My reasons are:

- Road safety, additional children needing to cross the busy A361 will mean additional risks to them and other road users.
- Lack of transparency of how new parking restrictions in Newburgh place will work. The current restrictions do not seem to be enforced, despite the proximity of the police station (usually empty though) and additional numbers arriving /leaving during the school run will make doctor's around those times something to be avoided.
- Lack of transparency around the fate of the Northview site.

Finally, I must protest that Swindon borough Council have not widely publicised this consultation. I heard only from a leaflet delivered to my house today, apparently you posted four notices for the whole of Highworth which may strictly speaking meet your legal obligations but is hardly what I would call transparent government. Such actions only serve to fuel suspicions as to the true motives and plans of the council for the Northview site.

SECTION 5.2

To
Mr Gareth Cheal
Swindon Borough Council
Sandford House
Sandford Street
Swindon
SN1 1UR

I am AGAINST Swindon Borough Council's proposals to close Northview Primary School and to expand Westrop Primary School by 105 places (15 in each year group), with the possibility of using the Northview site for Year 5 and 6 pupils from both Westrop and Northview.

My reasons are:-

A) ROAD SAFETY / AVOIDING TRAFFIC JAMS ON A361

Most of the children going to Northview live on the East of the A361, and would have to cross the A361 to get to Westrop. This creates two problems:-

1) Road Safety. Risk of a young child walking between home & school being injured by a car on the A361 (They often exceed the speed limit on sections where children are likely to cross).

2) Traffic gridlock at A361/St Michaels Avenue junction and A361/Station Road Junction. It is highly likely that there will be a significant increase in parents driving their children to school in the morning, rather than letting them walk to school. The majority of these cars will be travelling South on the A361, and turning right into St Michaels Avenue or Station Road. Because of the volume of traffic heading North on the A361 at this time, it will mean that cars trying to turn right into one of these two roads will have to wait for the traffic lights to change to red before they can cross. This means that all the cars on the A361 southbound will have to wait for the car to turn right before they can reach the traffic lights. I have already experienced this problem on a number of occasions, where the southbound traffic is stationary when the lights are green, because they can't get passed cars turning right into these two roads. Then after the car has turned right, about 4 or 5 cars get to the traffic lights before the next car turning right blocks the traffic for a further cycle of the traffic lights. The volume of cars doing this between 08:30 & 09:00 will increase significantly on bad weather days. This frustration will distract drivers, so they are less likely to see a small child trying to cross between these stationary vehicles.

If this closure does go ahead, I strongly recommend that a No Right Turn at peak traffic hours is introduced from the A361 Southbound and these two roads. (Drivers can turn right down Grove Hill, but this is a very long way round, and they will only do this if they are not allowed to use the shorter route). One downside of routing all this traffic for Westrop school via Grove Hill, is that it will make it more dangerous for the existing Westrop children to cross St Michaels Avenue.

B) CLASS SIZES v SAVINGS

With smaller class sizes, children get a better education. Why do you want to compromise children's education by enlarging class sizes above those that Westrop was designed for. How are the extra children going to be crammed into the classrooms at Westrop? Are you planning to move all the internal walls to create fewer, but larger classrooms? How much will this building alteration cost? Will you be employing more teaching assistants to help the teacher manage the larger classes? If you are still planning to "overflow" onto the Northview site, what are the actual savings, since you will still need to heat / light & maintain the same amount of buildings. I understand that Northview has just had a kitchen installed, and it is a far newer building than Westrop, so this should be cheaper to maintain and can offer meals that Westrop can't offer.

C) WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS FOR THE NORTHVIEW SITE

As stated above, if you plan to still use the site as an "Overflow", how much will all this disruption save?

If you are not planning to keep Northview open for years 5 & 6; what will you do with the site? It can't be used for commercial purposes, because the road access is not suitable. If it is maintained as a community hall (the next best use if the school closes completely) how much will the council save by the closure of the school? If it is sold for housing, it is likely to attract young families, which in turn will overload Westrop with even more children to educate.

D) HOW MUCH WILL IT COST EVERY RATEPAYER IN HIGHWORTH TO KEEP WESTROP & NORTHVIEW OPEN

From the points above, I don't think there will be that much to be saved by making the proposed change. Rather than keep cutting back, and reducing standards, why can't you consider increasing the community charge for Highworth residents to allow the schools to continue as they are, delivering a good education to small class sizes. If the children get more 1 to 1 attention from the teachers, they are less likely to "drop out" and cause problems to the people of Highworth in later life. Less vandalism, due to better education, can reduce the community charge which should balance things out over the years.

Sent: 18 December 2009 16:36

To: Gareth Cheal

Subject: Northview/Westrop Schools

Sir

WE are against the proposals to close Northview School and enlarge Westrop School for the following reasons

There will be increased traffic in the Newburgh Place area that is already congested. The current parking restrictions are ignored unless a parking warden is present. Parking for the Doctors surgery is difficult now at school start and finish times with the extra traffic it will become impossible.

Extra traffic at the already difficult St Michaels Road/ A361 junction causing further congestion on the roads as will the extra use of the pelican crossing with the increased use of children needing to cross the A361

The current Westrop site is not large enough to accommodate an extra 105 Children

Sent: 18 December 2009 16:55

To: Gareth Cheal

Subject: Highworth Schools Consultations Responses

Dear Mr Cheal,

Kindly note the following as my responses to the current two consultations concerning Highworth Schools.

- 1) I do not support the proposal to expand Westrop Primary School by 105 places. My principal reasons for opposing this proposal are a) the absence of credible plans to explain how the infrastructure of the current school would be able to accommodate the proposed pupil numbers, and what adaptations or additions would be undertaken; and b) that the demographic evidence presented to the Swindon Borough Council Cabinet does not demonstrate a demand for the proposed expansion and hence the additional costs of expansion would be wasted resources that could be better applied elsewhere.
- 2) I do not support the proposal to close Northview Primary School. My principal reasons for opposing this proposal are a) that the financial case presented in support of the proposal under-reports the costs that would be incurred in other departmental budgets outside Education and does not represent good value for money when taken across the entire Council budget; b) that there are no realistic proposals from Westrop School to guarantee the continuing provision of the same or better standard of education for the children currently at Northview School; and c) that inadequate attention has been given to addressing the additional risks to the safety of children that would be presented if the proposal were to be put into practice.

Please acknowledge receipt of these responses.

Councillor Peter Greenhalgh
Cabinet Member
Swindon Borough Council

Dear Councillor Greenhalgh

Comments attached to Pre-statutory consultation response form regarding the proposal to close Northview Primary School and expansion of Westrop Primary School from Sept 2010.

I object to the proposal based on the following grounds:

Strategic Planning

Northview was constructed in 1985 and within in 24 years you plan to close and demolish the school. The maintenance costs comparison between Westrop built many years earlier (1960's) with its historic flat roof compared to Northview with a pitched roof- your asset management philosophy seems rather distorted and myopic.

Management

You have destroyed Northview by blighting it with closure and allowing poor management to continue instead of intervention and dealing with its problems. This would allow it to re-establish itself and grow once more attracting children from out of County and Swindon based on its excellent facilities and once outstanding educational reputation. This can be re established if the educational department were to support it.

Population Predictions

The population is not getting any smaller and whilst the short term birth rate may be in a dip it is no basis to assume a trend. It does not take into account migratory movements in population or the long term view of community assets and the changing needs of education. It is sensible to take a long term view and retain the school and integrate a play group such as Vorda Play Group into the site providing multi use facility and feeder to the school.

Traffic Management and Road Crossing

Pre dating the construction of Northview the dangers of crossing the A361 were well known to residents. During the construction of Sevenfields when children were expected to cross the road to get to Westrop, the council proposed to construct a bridge as the only safe route across the A361. This being required following 3 serious accidents, 2 resulting in death of Julia Randel outside St Micheals Hall aged 13 and one opposite Sevenfields of a 3yr old crossing the road to his brother. The third was Neil Kennedy who was 12 when he was knocked down and still remains in his wheelchair and known to me.

Traffic volumes and speeds have increased.

You are now proposing to force children of a very tender age with unpredictable behaviour to cross the same road. A zebra crossing is inappropriate and a safe crossing ie bridge / underpass is the only acceptable alternative. I do not believe any risk assessment would stand up in court allowing either a zebra crossing or pelican crossing as an acceptable method of crossing this road by under 11 year old school children. You have a duty of care as public servants to protect vulnerable children from imported risk.

The obvious solution is to maintain Northview thus removing the children from having to cross the A road to get to school.

An unwanted result of slowing the traffic on the A361 is to use the Roundhills Mead as a rat run therefore placing at risk children crossing opposite the co-op to Warneford and Southfields. So many near misses have already occurred as with minor injuries involving children.

You have a duty of care to protect children and pedestrians if your proposal results in a road traffic accident / death this could be tantamount to Corporate Manslaughter.

Yours sincerely

Subject: Proposed closure of Northview School in Highworth

Dear Mr Cheal

I have recently received a flyer through my door which has highlighted some concerns I have over the proposed closure of Northview school.

I chose to send my child to Westrop Primary school due to it's location as it is a 10 minute walk from my house. I now hear rumours that should Northview close, some of the pupils from Westrop will be relocated to Northview such as Years 5 & 6. I have another child who will be attending Westrop in the next couple of years and I am not at all happy at the thought of having to collect one child from Westrop and then having to travel over the other side of Highworth to collect my second child. This completely defeats the object of choosing Westrop in the first place. If you are still going to use the school to provide education then why not leave Northview as it is! My son is very happy at Westrop and receives an excellent standard of education. Why disrupt his final years at this school?

I also have concerns over the safety of children crossing an extremely busy main road. If Northview does close are the council going to put measures in place to safeguard the children?

I don't feel enough consideration has been given to the disruption this will cause to parents, pupils and the general community in Highworth if this school should close.

I am sure these points have been made by many other residents in Highworth and hope that they will be seriously considered at the next consultation.

Kind regards

SECTION 5.2

Sent: 15 December 2009 14:45
To: Gareth Cheal
Subject: Keep Northview School Open

As previously notified, I believe that schools should be kept open as to close them will limit availability of school places in future and change the demographics of the area - in this case, Highworth - which will move towards becoming 'an old people's town' and eventually cease to have the facilities that are currently available in this lovely community.

Families, with limited choice of schools, may well chose to move from the area and, once the recession is over - I guess we will be coming out of recession some time next year - parents will feel more comfortable with increasing the size of their families and in a few years' time more school places will be needed, not less.

As cost is always an issue, I suggest there are attempts to raise funds in a variety of ways, with help from the general public. The opportunities are endless.

Hope my comments help.

14 December 2009

Dear Ian

Re

I have been contacted by my constituent who is unhappy at your delay in responding to concerns the Northview Action Group raised about the gagging of staff at Northview.

Mrs also tells me that the email address for responses to the consultation was blocked for several days and although I understand this is now rectified she is worried that some responses may have been lost as a result. I enclose a copy of her email of 11 December giving details.

I share her concerns and I should be grateful for your response.

Yours sincerely
Michael Wills
MP for North Swindon

Dear Michael
I assume that you have not forwarded a response from Ian Bickerton on the issue of the 'gagging' of Northview's leadership staff because you have not received one - I wonder why this question has not been answered yet? Of course the consultation is due to end next Friday so I expect he will leave it until then.....

SECTION 5.2

As the cynic I clearly am I have another point for you - the email address given by SBC for electronic responses has been out of action for an unspecified period this week. This was discovered when a member of the public tried to send in an email response which was rejected and he had the tenacity to try the alternative and sent his email to the Northview Action Group (supporting.northview@googlemail.com). They then tried to email and found it bouncing back and raised the issue with SBC - apparently Gareth Cheal is off sick and no-one realised his email box might get full while he was away - despite it being the only email address given for electronic responses on this issue. We are now left wondering how many other responses were rejected by Gareth's full mailbox before the problem was discovered - we are told that it is now rectified.

Over 200 people have sent in a response to the statutory consultation via Northview School so far - this of course does not include any responses made by individuals directly to SBC. Many people in the town are taking their responses to the school to use the internal mail - saving postage and postal disruption! We hope that SBC will listen to the people this time.

If you are around on Saturday morning Friends of Northview are holding a coffee morning in the Church Room at St Michael's - do drop in for a coffee!

Sent: 14 December 2009 14:19
To: Gareth Cheal
Subject: Northview School Highworth

Dear Sir

I am against Swindon Borough Council's proposals to close Northview Primary School and to expand Westrop Primary school by 105 places (15 in each year group), with the possibility of using the Northview site for year 5 and 6 pupils from both Westrop and Northview.

My reasons are:

Children walking to school will have to cross a busy main road and this will cause parents who live near Northview school to drive their children to Westrop causing major traffic congestion.

Also is is very short sighted - it would be better to build up Northview School again for the local area to use and to attract children from outside the area as it used to. Northview was once a centre of excellence "a beacon school" and could be again. It used to attract children from a wide area and as there are shortages of school places in central Swindon the excellent school building and grounds could be properly utilised by those who need good school places.

Highworth needs to attract young families in order to stay vibrant and alive and having good schools in the area is vital.

Please re-consider your intentions to close this valuable school.

SECTION 5.2

I am against Swindon Borough Council's proposals to close Northview Primary School and to expand Westrop Primary school by 105 places, with the possibility of using the Northview site for year 5 and 6 pupils from both Westrop and Northview.

My Reasons are my son is at Westrop school and i am not happy for him to have to possible have to go to Northview school in year5/6 and cross the busy A361.

While you might have room in the grounds to put extra class rooms, you cannot extend the school hall, which is only just big enough now.

To: Mr Gareth Cheal
Swindon Borough Council
Sanford House
Sanford Street
Swindon
SN1 1QH

I am against Swindon Borough Council's proposals to close Northview Primary School and to expand Westrop Primary School by 105 places (15 in each year group), with the possibility of using the Northview site for year 5 and 6 pupils from both Westrop and Northview.

My reasons are: There are a lot of children under school age living on the estate where Northview School is located and a few pregnant women too. My next-door neighbour's daughter is nearly aged two. As the houses in that area are relatively cheap like mine, then a lot of young couples buy and raise families. If you did some research, the thought of closure or change wouldn't be an option. Also the traffic around Westrop School and surrounding area at 3 O'clock is horrendous already. This E-mail is probably a waste of my time as Swindon Councillors have always hated Highworth.

Subject: Northview/Westrop Schools Highworth - response to statutory consultation

Dear Sir,

I am against SBC's proposal to close Northview Primary School.

My reasons are that the plans are

- This likely to result in overcrowding at the in Westrop site.
- The movement of children across the A361 is potentially unsafe as there is only one safe crossing place, and that is high up on the road by the traffic lights (or the at the lights themselves.) This is likely to result in more car traffic by parents who, understandably, want to keep their children safe from crossing such a busy road, which is environmentally unsound.

Yours faithfully

SECTION 5.2

To: Gareth Cheal
Subject: Northview School proposals

Dear Sir,

I wish to register my rejection of the proposal to close Northview School. The reasons are as follows:

Despite an almost total rejection by respondents to your first pre- statutory consultation, you have not answered the points raised.

What is to happen to the site of Northview if the move comes about?

What is proposed for the children who live on the east side of the A361 to cross this busy road?

How will the extra parking needed at Westrop be accommodated?

How will Westrop School accommodate these extra children? At what cost, precisely?

To a layman, the whole scheme seems very poorly thought out. We need to be given the real reasons for this move and most importantly, how much it will all cost us with exact details.

Your faithfully

Dear Mr Cheal

I would register my vote **against** the proposal to close Northview School and transfer the pupils to Westrop School

My major concern is that of Road Safety. With the current role at Westrop a significant number of children are delivered and collected by motor vehicle. The car park is totally inadequate to take routine daily parking for access to the Doctors surgery and shops. At the morning arrival this leads to vehicles parked on double yellow lines. Westrop has just been extended to accommodate the Ladybird Centre which has exacerbated the current position. It is further compounded by the 40 foot articulated vehicles delivering to Tesco Express. Taking into account the access required by emergency vehicles to & from the Police Station and the Doctors Surgery the current situation is dangerous. To compound this by transferring 105 children from the other side of the town, who by definition are more likely to come by vehicle, creates a potential for serious injury.

I am involved in a voluntary role with children in sport and am endlessly pressured regarding the Safety of children. I would have expected a Risk Analysis of this situation would have highlighted the potential risks to children (and accompanying adults). I note that this was countered at a meeting by claiming the School Car Park was being extended. This has been carried out and only contains the staff vehicles with no spare capacity.

Yours sincerely

Sent: 15 December 2009 15:37
To: Gareth Cheal
Subject: Northview/Westrop Schools Highworth.

I am against Swindon Borough Council's proposals to close Northview Primary School and to expand Westrop Primary School by 105 places (15 in each year group), with the possibility of using the Northview site for year 5 and 6 pupils from both Westrop and Northview.

SECTION 5.2

Dear Sir,

My wife and I are strictly against Swindon Borough Council's proposals to close Northview Primary School and to expand Westrop Primary School by 105 places for the following reasons:

Currently the parking area available for Westrop is woefully inadequate. At school times the area is jam-packed with cars, most of which park on the double yellow lines outside Tesco making the area dangerous for pedestrians. By expanding the school even more cars will travel into the area causing more parking problems. The illegal parking in this area is not enforced as it is despite being opposite the Police Station. Can you imagine what it will be like when even more vehicles park in the area?

In addition to this access to St. Michaels Avenue from Lechade Road is restricted at the best of times for vehicle access. With more vehicles using the road congestion will increase.

With the increase of pupils how can it be possible to provide an adequate education with such large class numbers? Could you control and teach a class of 35 small children?

Yours sincerely,

To: Gareth Cheal
Subject: Northview School

I am against Swindon Borough Council's proposals to close Northview primary school. Please listen to the people of Highworth, who actually live here and believe that the present plans are ill thought out and unwise.

Subject: Northview School, Highworth

Dear Sir

I would like to reiterate the concerns I have already expressed about Swindon Council's desire to close Northview Primary School in Highworth.

It is difficult to understand why the council should wish to close an attractive and (relatively) recently built school and send children across a busy road to an already very overcrowded primary school.

As far as I am aware, the Council has never given a clear explanation of what they will do with the empty school and site if their proposal goes ahead. This presumably is either because they have not considered what to do with an empty building, or perhaps they have other plans which for some reason they do not see fit to divulge.

There is **perhaps** a certain logic in keeping Northview running for year 5 and 6 pupils, but this still sends children to and fro across an extremely busy road.

To provide a reasonable standard of education at Westrop more teachers would need to be employed, more buildings would need to be provided - all of which would reduce any savings the council may have made.

So why not just leave things as they are? Please think again and let common sense prevail (ie keep the school open as it is now).

With best wishes

Subject: Proposed Closure of Northview School

Dear Mr Cheal

I wish to express my objection to the proposed closure of Northview School for the following reasons.

1. Closing a modern school with a good teaching staff seems to me to be economically unjustified.
2. Making parents and children take a perilous journey across busy main roads is potentially dangerous.
3. SBC should be encouraging parents to school their children at Northview so that we have a levelling out across the available schools in Highworth.

Subject: RE: Local education

I too am a resident of Highworth – I have lived here since March 1974.

Thank you for your email.

Fundamentally I oppose any closure of any school - particularly one where there is so much support in Northview – however it does seem that financially Northview just isn't viable given the data I have read.

You ask for my specific yes/no – **I oppose the closure of Northview.**

I hope this helps.

Yours

To: Gareth Cheal

Subject: Result of Statutory Consultation - Northview/Westrop Schools, Highworth

Dear Mr Cheal

My husband and I are Highworth residents, living locally to Northview School.

We are against Swindon Borough Councils proposals to close Northview Primary School and expand Westrop Primary School by 105 places (15 in each year group), with the possibility of using the Northview site for year 5 and 6 pupils from both Westrop and Northview.

Our reasons are that we do not feel that there are sufficient, clear explanations as to what is actually planned. The roads around Westrop School will be even more congested if all pupils are located there. Also if Northview is closed what will happen to the site. Although it is said that it is 'unlikely' that houses will be built it is not definite and there would be more cars using our already very busy roads in this part of Highworth and filtering onto the ring road.

Regards

To: Gareth Cheal

Subject: Northview School

We are against the closure of Northview School.

SECTION 5.2

To: Gareth Cheal
Subject: Northview Primary School

I am against Swindon Borough Council's proposals to close Northview Primary School and to expand Westrop Primary because Northview Primary is a superb school with many new additions that have enhanced a pupils education. To close the school and expand another is absolutely ridiculous when all the resources are already at Northview. If there has been such a reduction in younger children in Highworth, why not make Northview a junior school instead of primary, there must still be a high number of junior age pupils?

To expect parents to travel across Highworth, especially crossing the busy Lechlade Road, to take their children to an already full primary school is unfair to the parents but also to the pupils.

What sort of education are they going to get from overcrowded classrooms and overworked staff? I understand that new staff will be employed, but there are already superb staff at Northview, doing an excellent job at educating these pupils.

If I was a parent moving to the Roundhills Mead area, I would expect there to be a primary school to accomodate my children. I would want to be able to walk my children to school safely and to know that they were in a safe secure environment, which Northview is, and where all the facilities needed to educate and nurture my child were in place.

Both of my children did get educated at Northview and I was an employee for approx 18 years. It saddens me that such a thriving school, which once had Beacon Status, has been reduced to proposed closure. I am also angered that head teachers at the other schools in Highworth would wish Northview to close. I would have expected the cluster heads to have supported Northview in their time of need to help it to remain open. Northview has been supportive to them in the past!

To: Gareth Cheal
Subject: Northview School Consultation

Dear Mr Cheal

I would like to register my opposition to the closure of Northview School and transferring pupils to Westrop. For one thing the classrooms themselves at Westrop are not big enough to accommodate extra children. The results of Westrop now are no more than average compared with those across England (despite the demographics) and this ill-thought out proposal will do nothing for the education of Highworth children.

Incidentally, I am not directly affected as my youngest child is currently in Year 6.

Regards

To: Gareth Cheal
Subject: Northview School

Dear Mr Cheal

I write to say I am against Swindon Borough Council's proposals to close Northview School and to expand Westrop Primary School by 105 places (15 in each year group) with the possibility of using the Northview site for year 5 and 6 pupils from both Westrop and Northview.

My reasons are lack of publicity inasmuch as the statutory were not conspicuously displayed, and certainly not outside the Council Offices in Highworth or the Post Office where there is likely to be the greatest footfall.

This is the newest school, and there is no indication of how it is proposed to manage it as a split site, or accommodating extra pupils and staff at Westrop. There is also likely to be a greater traffic issue at Westrop and Newburgh Place.

Do staff become amalgamated at the schools and where they have been specifically recruited by Northview are there likely to be teacher redundancies - does their employment transfer across?

If the school does close what happens to the site? and how do you provide extra accommodation at Westrop?

Thanks for reading my comments

SECTION 5.2

To: Gareth Cheal
Subject: Northview School - Statutory Consultation

Dear Mr. Cheal,

I write to respond to the Statutory Consultation on the proposal to close Northview School, Highworth. I wish to register my **OPPOSITION** to the closure of Northview as well as any idea of running a split site school using Northview for a while.

My views are that this proposal has not been properly thought out and takes a "short term view" of the problems based on "prediction" of falling numbers of children attending Northview. Many people have removed their children from the school because of the threat of closure and obviously no one will consider sending their children there until this is removed.

My understanding is that there are many questions to be answered, these are:

The numbers of children in the catchment area could rise in the future - how will this be dealt with?

Are some children from Westrop going to be moved to the Northview site, how will it be decided who goes?

How will it be made safe for children to cross the A361 road, which is extremely busy ?

How will the extra children be accommodated into Westrop school and how will the school cope with teaching larger classes?

How will people park cars if they need to drop off/collect children in an already congested parking area which also serves a shopping area and a very busy surgery?

What will be done with the Northview site?

What exactly will the cost saving be taking everything into consideration - as there will be costs for road crossings as well as whatever will be needed to fit extra children into classrooms?

How will these changes effect the quality of education for the children, what guarantees will parents get?

I look forward to hearing the answers to all these questions.

Yours sincerely,

18/12/2009

SECTION 5.2

Highworth
Swindon
SN6 7NZ

Rt. Honorable Michael Wills
MP for Swindon North
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

6th October 2009

Dear Rt. Honorable Michael Wills

RE Closure of Northview School

Thank you for your letter of 28th September 2009 regarding assisting a response from Swindon Borough Council. I would like to take you up on your kind offer as I doubt very much any of the elected members which my letter has been addressed will respond. They do not wish to hear the facts of the case nor take responsibility for their actions and the potential risk they expose our children to when crossing A361 to get to school. I was please to hear the Prime Minister speech last week reinforcing the importance of our schools and families; the current proposal is rather incredulous and not supporting government policy.

To remove flexibility and close a perfectly good school and expand Westrop with Porto cabins on the basis of reducing cost and falling numbers is very short sighted given overall population growth predictions. Prime sites like Northview are impossible to replace once sold to developers. Green space like the London Parks should be protected for all to enjoy. The Council has allowed the school to fail by their lack of intervention, which is an outrageous management ethos. The final nail in the coffin is the 2010 admissions refers as follows " Please be aware that there is a statutory consultation process underway regarding the proposals to closure the school from July 2010" This further blighting the school. The resultant is less choice for our children and many parents have taken there children out of Northview to surrounding schools out of the borough to Oxfordshire - Shrivenham, Watchfield and Gloucestershire - Kempford all adding to our carbon footprint and reducing the pupil funding to Swindon.

A pilot scheme during the summer where a local play group used part of the building was successful allowing pre school children space to play out side and enjoy green space not currently available to them. They were also able to enjoy hot school meals from the one year old kitchens. This multi occupancy use of the building provides a natural feeder to the school and income generation. Why has this not been adopted?

I think the Council should look hard at reducing their internal costs and number of temporary staff overhead before balancing there books by closure of Schools. 30+ Class sizes is no solution to educating our children.

I look forward to hearing from you once a formal response has been obtained from the Council.

Yours sincerely

SECTION 5.2

From: STONE, Charles [mailto:STONECO@parliament.uk]
Sent: 08 October 2009 09:02
To: 'gperkins@swindon.gov.uk'
Subject:

Councillor Garry Perkins
Lead Member Children's Services
Swindon Borough Council
By email

Our Ref:

07 October 2009

Dear Garry

Re
I have been contacted by my constituent [redacted] who has sent me a copy of his email of 27 September addressed to you, Councillor Greenhalgh and Tricia Devaney in Children's Services, responding to the proposal to close Northview School. I enclose a further copy for ease of reference.

[redacted] has written to me again as he would like a response to his comments from an elected member, and he fears that he will not receive one. In his letter he also gives further reasons why he thinks the decision to close the school is wrong, and he suggests that a more imaginative use of the Northview School buildings outside of school time, such as the recent summer play scheme, would provide valuable extra income for the council that could make the school viable again. I enclose a copy of his letter dated 6 October giving details.

I am concerned that [redacted] feels that his response to the pre statutory consultation process will be ignored, and you will be aware of my concerns that if parents are left feeling like this, it will be damaging for future community cohesion in Highworth. I should therefore be grateful if you could send me a copy of your constructive response to [redacted] two letters.

Yours sincerely
Michael Wills
MP for North Swindon

-----Original Message-----

From: BENNETT, Anne [mailto:BENNETTAM@parliament.uk]
Sent: 07 December 2009 09:10
To: Ian Bickerton
Subject: FW: Letter from Michael Wills MP

Ian Bickerton
Director of Access and Provision
Swindon Borough Council
ibickerton@swindon.gov.uk

Our Ref:

04 December 2009

Dear Ian

Re

Thank you for your email of 3 December. I have been contacted again by my constituent [redacted] who continues to believe that the option of federating Westrop School and Northview is preferable to closing Northview.

[redacted] believes that it will save money and so fulfill the requirements of Swindon Borough Council while also fulfilling government policy for rural schools and also improving outcomes for children, things that the closure of Northview School will fail to achieve.

This would seem to me to be a much more sensible way forward and I am surprised that the council appears determined to go against both government policy and the expressed wishes of the great majority of the population in Highworth by closing this school.

I should therefore be grateful if you could ensure that the possibility of federating the two schools is put before councillors again when they make the decision in February about whether or not to close Northview, and that it is properly costed and assessed so that councillors have a real choice about how primary education in Highworth should be delivered in the future.

If you persist in ruling out such an option, I should be grateful if you could set out in detail your arguments for so doing.

Yours sincerely
Michael Wills
MP for North Swindon

SECTION 5.2

Ian Bickerton
Director of Access and Provision
Swindon Borough Council
ibickerton@swindon.gov.uk

Our Ref: NORT01011/01090344

03 December 2009

Dear Ian

Re Northview School

Thank you for your email of 2 December. I have been contacted by a constituent who remains concerned about the Northview School staff being advised they cannot take part in the campaign to keep the school open.

My constituent informs me that a member of SBC staff, Gill Illie, told the Head and Deputy of Northview that they were not to take part in any activities organized by the Northview Action Group. I should be grateful if you could investigate and let me know whether such instructions were issued, and if so explain why.

I should also be grateful if you could confirm to me that staff at Northview School or any other school are free to take part in the consultation and campaign as they see fit and that they will not face any disciplinary measures for doing so.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely
Michael Willis
MP for North Swindon

From:
Sent: 10 December 2009 19:30
To: Anthony Peake
Subject: Re: Lack of response

Mr Peake

I am getting alot of responses saying there are 4 forms of entry or 120 reception places available please can you tell me where the fourth school is in Highworth as I am only aware of Northview, Westrop and Eastrop that have reception classes as Southfields is a Junior School starting at year 3.

Yours sincerely

----- Original Message -----

From:
To: anthony.p@tac.papf.com
Sent: Thursday, December 03, 2009 7:48 PM
Subject: Child welfare & education

Dear Mr Peake

I am a resident of Highworth and also a parent.

The proposal to close or split Northview Primary School is one that will impact hugely on our local community. I have little doubt that our local children will be deeply affected if the proposal goes ahead. They will be in larger classrooms impacting on the amount of help they can have from teachers, educated in portacabins, their lives will be disrupted and they will have to cross main roads. These are just a few of the ways the proposal will impact on our children which I believe will deeply effect their education and thus impact on their welfare.

I ask YOU as a town councillor how you feel about the proposal? Are you in support of this or do you feel that perhaps the school should stay open and perhaps our borough council could use some of the money for our community instead of play parks in 'economically deprived areas', is child education a lower priority than play parks?

I eagerly await your response.

Yours sincerely

**Response to Statutory Consultation
Northview/Westrop Schools, Highworth**

From
Name.....
Address.....
..... Postcode.....

To: Mr Gareth Cheal
Swindon Borough Council
Sanford House
Sanford Street
Swindon
SN1 1QH

☐ I am against Swindon Borough Council's proposals to close Northview Primary School and to expand Westrop Primary School by 105 places (15 in each year group), with the possibility of using the Northview site for year 5 and 6 pupils from both Westrop and Northview.

☐ I support Swindon Borough Council's proposals to close Northview Primary School and to expand Westrop Primary School by 105 places (15 in each year group), with the possibility of using the Northview site for year 5 and 6 pupils from both Westrop and Northview.

My reasons are: *(please continue overleaf if necessary)*

.....
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.....
.....

Signature.....

Please note that responses must be received by 18th December 2009 at the latest

In order to save postage and avoid postal disruption you may drop this form in at Northview School and the office will forward it to SBC using the internal mail system.

Alternatively responses can be sent by email to gcheal@swindon.gov.uk

21 DEC 2009

23968

4 College Farm Cottages

Inglesham

Swindon

SN6 7QU

13th December 2009

Dear Mr Bickerton

Proposed Closure of Northview Primary School

The governors of Westrop Primary School have welcomed and appreciated the Local Authority's commitment to fully engaging with all interested parties in resolving the problem of falling rolls at Northview Primary School. We acknowledge that although there are many issues to be resolved, the interests of the children have always been paramount. In this spirit the governing body at Westrop are concerned, from reading leaflets distributed locally, that if the closure goes ahead, there is a suggestion that Westrop might operate on a split site basis with some children being educated on the Northview site. The Governing Body is unanimously opposed to this. Having consulted the headteacher and drawing on the not inconsiderable experience of governors, the suggestion is opposed for the following reasons:

- It is not an effective use of resources including manpower for travelling and working time. We are very aware of the importance of the 'work/life' balance for staff and this suggestion does nothing to enhance it.
- It does not give due cognizance to recent developments at Westrop including the opening of the Ladybird Children's Centre, the building of new classrooms and the opening of a new library.
- Considerable extra costs would be incurred with no proportionate gains for the children.
- Running a split site school does nothing to further the educational needs of the children.
- The demands on senior staff to engender a 'team' spirit and sense of 'unity' – essential in any school for successful whole school planning and ensuring a shared sense of direction – are made that much more difficult.
- The quality of school provision and continuous school improvement are easier to drive forward on one site.
- Westrop is proud of its 'whole school' policy involving all staff and pupils across all year groups in joint ventures, projects and links – many reaching across and beyond the local community and therefore very important in further enhancing our 'community cohesion' policy. A split site would make this aspect of the school's work more difficult to maintain and improve.

Yours sincerely

Graham Stephens

Chair of Governors - Westrop Primary School

St Andrew's CE Primary School
Linley Road
Blunsdon
SWINDON
Wiltshire
SN26 7AP
Head Teacher: Mrs Jane S Wheatley MA BA

7 2 0 0 9

18.12.09

Dear Gareth

Statutory Consultation re Proposed Closure of Northview Primary School

The Highworth and Blunsdon Cluster Head Teachers (with the exception of the Head Teacher of Northview Primary School) wish to make it clear that they hold their original view re the closure of Northview Primary School.

Whilst accepting that it is a difficult decision, particularly for the people involved with Northview Primary, we firmly believe that the closure of Northview Primary is in the long term best interests of all the pupils of Highworth.

The expansion of Westrop Primary School, to one and a half form entry, affords a natural solution to the problem of falling pupil numbers and our preference is for all pupils concerned to be educated on the Westrop site.

Yours sincerely



Jane Wheatley

For, and on behalf of: John Saunders (Highworth Warnford); Paul White (Southfield Junior); Sue Marshall (Eastrop Infant) and Janet Urban (Westrop Primary).

**Response to Statutory Consultation
Northview/Westrop Schools, Highworth**

From
Name.....

Address...

.....t

To: Mr Gareth Cheal
Swindon Borough Council
Sanford House
Sanford Street
Swindon
SN1 1QH

- 6 DEC 2009

26416.

- ☐ I am against Swindon Borough Council's proposals to close Northview Primary School and to expand Westrop Primary School by 105 places (15 in each year group), with the possibility of using the Northview site for year 5 and 6 pupils from both Westrop and Northview.
- ☒ I support Swindon Borough Council's proposals to close Northview Primary School and to expand Westrop Primary School by 105 places (15 in each year group), with the possibility of using the Northview site for year 5 and 6 pupils from both Westrop and Northview.

My reasons are: (please continue overleaf if necessary)

We feel there are a character Pelican
Crossings on this route
To keep Northview School open would
not be cost efficient
Too many children taken to school
in vehicles - they need the exercise hence
Vehicle users the ones causing parking problems

Signature....

Please note that responses must be received by 18th December 2009 at the latest

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