

By: Director - Operations

To: School Organisation Advisory Board – 7 September 2006

Subject SELSTED CHURCH OF ENGLAND (VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED) PRIMARY SCHOOL: PROPOSED CLOSURE - OUTCOME OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION.

Classification: Unrestricted

File Ref:

Summary: This report sets out the results of the public consultation. It seeks the views of the School Organisation Advisory Board on the issuing of a public notice for the closure of Selsted Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School with effect from September 2007.

Introduction

1. (1) The School Organisation Advisory Board at its meeting on 18 May 2006 supported the undertaking of a public consultation on the proposal to close Selsted Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary.

(2) Selsted CE (VC) Primary School currently has 70 children on roll (January 2006), against a net capacity of 105. The School serves the rural area North of Hawkinge. It consists of a Victorian School (now housing one class), a school house, three mobile classrooms, and a new NOF funded Sports Hall.

(3) Selsted School is in an isolated position. It does not serve an immediate village, although it has longstanding ties to the parishes of Swingfield, Densole and Acrise. Only one family with children at the school live within one mile of the school, the majority of the rest live nearer to other schools. There are alternative schools in Hawkinge and there are church schools in neighbouring villages. Closure of this school has least impact on any community. A map showing the location of the school and the distribution of its pupils is attached at Appendix 1.

Background

2. (1) In Shepway District there are 35 Primary schools with a combined capacity of 8,990 places. The District's only remaining pair of Infant and Junior Schools (in Hythe) amalgamated with effect from 1 September 2006. There are currently 8082 pupils on roll (January 2006) attending Shepway schools giving a surplus capacity of 10.1%. By 2010 it is estimated that the surplus will have risen to 12.4%.

(2) Folkestone is home to Shorncliffe Barracks which is currently the UK base for two Gurkha Regiments. This has produced some uncertainty regarding pupil rolls. One Regiment was posted in Brunei until this summer, the other in Shorncliffe. These Regiments were swapping postings, a process which was due to occur through the summer. Information provided by the Regiment regarding troop movements show that the return of 2RGR will bring 229 children aged 0-16 years into Kent. Of these 151 have been allocated housing in Folkestone or Dover. The remainder have not been housed yet, as barrack accommodation is full. These children and their families will be housed within 20 miles of Folkestone and Dover. Of the 89 children being housed in Shorncliffe Barracks 41 are of primary school age. It was expected that 95 pupils would leave Folkestone but for operational reasons there has been a delay in families leaving for Brunei. In addition, as of 1 April 2006 Gurkha servicemen's rights changed. Servicemen are now able to be accompanied by their families throughout their overseas tours. The Regiment suggests there will be about 500 pupils in total moving to Kent as a consequence of the Regiment swapping postings and this change to legislation. Barracks in Shorncliffe will fill first, then Dover, then Canterbury. We are working with the Regiment to manage this pupil movement, but the process of housing and relocating families is understandably subject to constant change. The proposals in this paper have been developed in the knowledge that it may be necessary to cease implementation.

(3) As part of the Kent Primary Strategy, Recommendation 27 states that "wherever surplus primary capacity is projected to rise above 7% in any cluster area, proposals should be brought forward to reduce it to 5%. The retention of a 5% surplus in any area (rather than zero) is considered to be 'good practice' to assist parental preferences being met, and to build in a contingency to deal with any unforeseen short-term increase in pupil numbers (for example a regiment moving). The DfES require all authorities to report annually on all schools with an excess of 25% surplus capacity (and more than 30 pupils), giving justifications why such schools are not being closed or having their net capacity reduced.

The Proposal

3. To close Selsted CE (VC) Primary School. The proposal would take effect from September 2007.

Public Consultation Process

4. (1) A consultation document, a copy of which is attached as Appendix 2, was circulated according to the County Procedures for Review. This included Local Members, District Council, Parish Councils, local libraries, schools within the two Shepway Clusters, Diocesan Board of Education, Member of Parliament and other interested parties.

(2) Approximately 800 copies of the document were circulated.

(3) The document included a separate form on which respondents could express their views.

(4) A public meeting was held in the sports hall at Selsted CE (VC) Primary School on 28 June 2006. The meeting was chaired by Mr Godfrey Horne, KCC Member for Tonbridge. Miss Susan Carey (KCC Member for Elham Valley), Dr Ian Craig (Director of Operations), Mr David Adams (Area Education Officer), Mrs Val Walton (Local Education Officer), Mrs Julie Stones (Head of Operations Support) and Mrs Kendra Stanley-Berridge (Education Support Officer) were in attendance.

(5) There were 118 members of the public in attendance.

Responses to the Public Consultation

Written Responses

5. (1) In total 1745 responses were received. This included a Petition from the Selsted 'Save Our School' Action Group which contained 1596 signatures. 2 were in favour of the proposal and 1743 were against.

(2) A summary of written responses is attached as Appendix 3. Responses to the main points are included in the Area Education Officer's Comments in Section 15.

Public Meeting Responses

(2) A summary of comments, views and responses is attached as Appendix 4.

Views of the Canterbury Diocese

6. The Canterbury Diocese is not in favour of the proposal. Mr Rupert Bristow gave the following reasons (taken from letter dated 13 July 2006):

“...While the Board accepts why the future of this school should be under scrutiny, so far the evidence of the response to this proposal by the stakeholders of the community, including parents, staff, local residents, former pupils, politicians, the church locally, and the various issues that have been raised in the public meetings, have led us to the conclusion that closure would not be the right way forward.

A combination of Christian ethos, emphasis on personalised learning, recent new investment in the school buildings and community sports hall/pre school has ensured that the school is a necessary and valued ingredient of the rich educational provision of this part of Shepway. Nor is it clear whether other appropriate small church school places are easily attainable and/or available were Selsted to close. Indeed Selsted provides an important alternative for local residents to the much larger, non church schools in Hawkinge.

Support for Selsted Church of England Primary School is both widespread and deeply felt. It should be allowed to continue to bring a distinctively Christian, caring and quality education to many future generations of children, as it has done from its inception in 1871...”

Views of the Local Member

7. Miss Susan Carey, Local Member for Elham Valley, supports the Primary Strategy and the need to reduce surplus places. As Local Member, she is supporting the case against closure as made by the parents and children currently at Selsted.

Views of the Local Member of Parliament

8. Mr Michael Howard, MP for Folkestone, is opposed to the proposal and gave the following reasons (taken from letter dated 5 July 2006):

“...Selsted Church of England Primary School serves a rural area. The value which parents attach to the education of their children receive at Selsted is evident from the representations they have made against the proposal. It has an above average number of children with special needs, something which must be taken into account in assessing its academic performance and whether those children can be better cared for elsewhere.

The Education Authority places great emphasis on the difference between the school roll and the PAN. Yet the PAN was increased a relatively short time ago in order to enable the school to take more children from Hawkinge in the period prior to the opening of the Churchill School.

Moreover, Selsted is a Church of England primary school. It is not at all clear where those parents who desire that their children be educated in that environment would be able to send their children if Selsted were to be closed. There does not appear to be anything like the number of places at other Church of England Primary Schools in the area, which would be required.

Selsted has also recently been the subject of substantial investment.

In short, Selsted Church of England Primary School provides a highly valued education to the children who attend it. Parents and prospective parents have demonstrated their support for the school. It should not be closed...”

Views of the Governing Body

9. The governing body of Selsted CE (VC) Primary School do not support the proposal and made the following comment:

“...the governing body views on the proposal for closure are the same as the views of the Save Selsted School Action Committee...”

Views of Cluster Board

10. (1) Proposals to reduce surplus capacity in the Cluster have been developed in discussion with the headteachers of the schools involved, and all headteachers in the Cluster. The Cluster accepted the logic of closing Selsted CEP School, and considered a variety of options to remove 200 places in Folkestone. The Cluster did not feel able to determine which of these should be pursued.

(2) The Cluster is committed to ensuring the pupils and staff of schools affected receive high quality support through the transition to minimise the negative impact of the proposals.

Views of Shepway District Council

11. Shepway District Council has been fully consulted. It is not in favour of the proposal and gave the following reasons (taken from letter dated 12 July 2006):

“This Council rejects the idea of closing Selsted (Church of England) Primary School purely on the grounds of finance and a low number of children on the roll at this point in time.

The Council opposes the loss of a rural school which will have a significant effect on the whole of the rural community. Selsted School is also the only Church of England faith school in proximity. Its closure would affect Parents’ choice.

Hawkinge village has and continues to expand greatly. Hawkinge Primary School is full and, whilst the Churchill School in Hawkinge currently has places available, it is understood that there is little or no capacity at Churchill School of Years 1, 2 and 3 and this situation will be made worse as the village grows. With the closure of Selsted, this will mean four, five and six-year olds having to travel several miles to Folkestone to take up available places there. This is considered to be unacceptable.

The Council submits that the closure of Selsted School is not in the best interests of the children and their parents or the community that Selsted Primary School serves...”

Views of Swingfield Parish Council

12. (1) Swingfield Parish Council is not in favour of the proposal. The Council submitted the six page statement read by Councillor Tearle, Chairman of the Parish Council, at the Public Meeting. A summary of Councillor Tearle’s comments are as follows:

- Regulations: The Secretary of State has provided protection for small schools and Church of England Schools. Closing country schools strikes at the heart of the rural fabric of our society.
- Values: We value our distinctive rural way of life and how it interacts on primary school education. Do not ‘Urbanise’ rural children. Children with special educational needs have been able to thrive in the environment created at Selsted. This would not have been achieved in a large school as the needs of the individual are less likely to be accommodated.
- Pupil Exchanges: The annual pupil exchanges with a school in Normandy adds to the richness and diversity of Selsted school.
- Statistics: Since 1991 until 2003, there has been steady continuous growth at Selsted Classrooms have doubled. The use of birth statistics have been used to justify the closure of Selsted and the expansion of the Churchill school. It is premature not to realise the impact of new housing and children will bring from the Hawkinge development.

- Location/buildings: the school was built 135 years ago originally to serve the three parishes of Denton, Wootton and Swingfield. Today Selsted school still serves its function by continuing to serve the surrounding local community. The layout of the school site is very organised and makes very good use of space, including the new community sports hall. The school house is today an integral part of the working and teaching environment of the school.
- Primary Strategy: No reference has been made to Point 32, which refers to reinvestment of capital receipts of redundant schools.

(2) To close this school without, as I have demonstrated any significant financial capital contribution, would be in my view a complete dereliction of duty and care to the tax payer.

(3) Life flourishes and is enriched by diversity, Selsted School is but part of that very diversity that enriches the people it serves. Once lost it can never be recreated.

Views of Lydden Parish Council

13. Lydden Parish Council is not in favour of the proposal and gave the following reasons (taken from letter dated 12 July 2006):

“...Some children from our Parish attend Selsted School; it has been their parent’s choice not to send them to the village school. Schools such as Selsted provide children with a secure environment in which they are able to excel. Our Parish Council is opposed to any of the closures within the Dover and Shepway area. With the present guidelines for development within the areas we can foresee in the future a need for more primary school as well as other facilities. To shut a school such as Selsted does not make sense, there will be no monetary benefits from closing the school, as we believe the school building belongs to the church and the money to build the new community hall will have to be paid back to Sports England. We would like the schools advisory board to think very carefully about the good work carried out by the staff at Selsted and weigh it up against what can be saved by closing...”

Views of Acrise and Swingfield Parochial Church Council

14. Acrise and Swingfield Parochial Church Council is not in favour of the proposal and gave the following reasons (taken from letter dated 21 June):

“...we are particularly concerned that in the proposal and its explanation nothing is made of the special value of this school as a Church of England School which meets the parental choice and wishes for a faith-based school. The nearest Church Schools would be either Elham, Lyminge, Barham which are distinct communities.

We would also defend the need for a small school environment for those children whose needs would not be met in a larger school.

The continual growth of nearby Hawkinge will require more spaces in a choice of local schools not less in the future. We suspect that the projected excess of primary places over the whole of Shepway may not apply locally here in the medium to long term.

Finally, recent investment at Selsted in a new Sports Hall along with the establishment of an on-site pre-school can be seen as part of a plan for sustainability and growth which will not have been given a chance if closure takes place.

We trust that the above points will be considered carefully before a final decision is made...”

Views of the Area Education Officer

15. (1) The issue of surplus capacity in Shepway is forecast to worsen rather than improve in the foreseeable future. Within Shepway One Cluster there are six schools with above 15% surplus accommodation. Two are in Hawkinge which is a growth area, one is in East Folkestone (George Spurgen School) and two are in West Folkestone (Harcourt and Morehall). The sixth is Selsted which has the second highest surplus in the Cluster.

(2) Selsted School was last inspected in 2001. The school was found to be satisfactory and improving. However, Selsted School is one of four schools in Shepway which has been below Government floor targets for attainment in Key Stage Two SATs for the past three years. Government expects at least 65% of pupils in every school to achieve level 4 in English and Maths SATs at KS2. This is known as a floor target. Two of the other three schools in Shepway which are not achieving floor targets are in Ofsted categories as a result of under performance.

(3) The school's contextual value added for 2005 was 100.1 which placed it on the 58th centile nationally (i.e. below national average), and there is significant variation between subjects (English 101.3 versus Science 98.7; i.e. top 15% and bottom 15% nationally respectively). Further, it is expected that all pupils will progress two curriculum levels during KS2. The percentage of pupils achieving this in Maths, for example, at Selsted School was 50% in 2003, 36% in 2004 and 53% in 2005. The Local Authority is therefore supporting the school through its intensive support programme in order to help raise standards.

(4) It is welcomed that parents of pupils at Selsted believe the school is performing well and their children are thriving. However, when we consider the surplus capacity, the comparative standard of education, the fact that the school receives 31% more funding per child than the average for Kent schools, and the paucity of local pupils, it is legitimate to consider the future of the school.

(5) It is true that Selsted School caters well for pupils with special educational needs, and provides an environment within which some children flourish following less successful experiences elsewhere. However, Selsted is not unique in this respect. Schools, both large and small, provide good care and pastoral guidance for Kent's pupils. 84 primary schools in Kent have been inspected by Ofsted between September 2005 and June 2006. It is welcomed that 80% were judged as good or better in caring for and guiding and supporting pupils, the remaining schools were satisfactory. 34% of the school's roll (PLASC 2005) were identified as having special educational needs. In common with their peers, these pupils are expected to make two curriculum levels of progress during KS2 (albeit from a lower base). Residual data suggests these pupils are making broadly comparable progress with their peers.

(6) Shepway District Council has confirmed that 630 houses in Hawkinge remain unbuilt against granted planning permissions. The anticipated pupil product from these houses is already built into the forecasts. It seems unlikely that the school will be able to return to a 4 class structure due to pupil numbers in the district.

(7) There are sufficient places available at better performing local schools for all pupils from Selsted School. It is acknowledged that not all families will be able to access places in other Church Schools, despite Shepway having 47% of its school places in Church Schools (against a County average of 27%), and it has never been claimed otherwise. Legislation requires the Local Authority to have regard to the balance of Church and non-Church school places. The package of proposals in Shepway remove fewer Church school places than is proportional, and the recent creation of Hythe Bay Primary School has removed 154 community school places and replaced these with CE school places.

(8) The grant for the sports hall was to create a space for primary school PE and Arts. The repayment of this grant is a condition should the school close, although exemptions exist, for example if a replacement hall was built elsewhere, or if the hall continues to be used for its principal purpose. It is possible, therefore, for the County Council to invest in facilities at another school, to benefit the pupils there, rather than repay this grant. This would clearly be the more desirable option.

(9) It is recognised that Selsted School was built in 1871 to serve a rural area and that it was placed at the intersection of three parishes. This may have been an appropriate planning decision for that time and the economic and social structures which existed. However, this does not represent a sensible location for service provision in the 21st century.

(10) The case is made that there is a place for small schools and small classes. This is true. However, class sizes are controlled by schools and their budgets. For example Selsted School reduced from four to three classes for financial reasons. This increased class sizes.

Equality Issues

16. Selsted School has a low percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups. The proposal is not believed to impact disproportionately on any minority ethnic group.

Accommodation Issues and Resource Implications

Capital Requirements

17. (1) KCC owns Selsted School's playing fields and the sports hall. The school buildings are owned by trustees, therefore the majority of capital receipt will not necessarily be available to KCC to re-invest elsewhere. The Sports Hall was funded by NOF for Primary School PE and Sports initiative. Discussion with Sport England regarding a potential repayment of £575k grant money are ongoing.

Revenue

(2) The average cost per pupil including SEN funding, (delegated budget) for the school is £3,697 (Kent average is £2,819). The cost per pupil without the SEN element is £3,250 against a Kent average of £2,453. If pupils attended schools with an average per pupil unit cost, £61.5k would be available education elsewhere. Additionally, annual savings of £22k (premises costs) would be made if the school closes.

Human

(3) Staff would need to seek alternative employment in the event of closure. The Local Authority and Cluster would actively support any redeployment of staff where appropriate positions in other schools become available.

Transport and Environmental Impact including Community Implications

18. (1) Selsted School is isolated with little housing in the immediate locality. Its sports hall houses a private nursery and is generally available for community use. However, the school has very little in the way of an immediate community. Depending upon the outcome of the proposal and the fate of the sports hall the nursery may need help in relocating.

(2) The existence of the school creates its own school community. However, I do not believe it is this community the Government sought to protect with the presumption against the closure of rural schools.

(3) The majority of pupils live nearer to alternative schools. Assuming pupils attend these schools there would be less travel.

School Improvement Implications

19. (1) Comments are made in Section 15 regarding standards at Selsted CEP School. In broad terms attainment in KS1 has improved over the past three years, moving towards national average, whilst attainment in KS2 has been stable and below national average.

(2) Places exist at other better performing schools for the pupils.

Links to Primary Strategy

20. This proposal is consistent with recommendations 27,28,29,30 and 31 of the Primary Strategy 2006.

Proposed Timetable

21. If it is decided that a public notice should be issued in respect of the proposal, the following timetable could apply:

Cabinet Member decision	September/October 2006
Public Notice issued	4 October 2006
End of Public Notice period	15 November 2006
Report to Kent School	5 December 2006
Organisation Committee (if required)	
Implementation	September 2007 or September 2008

22. The views of the School Organisation Advisory Board are sought on:

- (a) the issuing of a public notice for the closure of Selsted Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School;
- (b) subject to approval of the proposal following the end of the objection period, the resources necessary to implement the scheme being provided on the basis identified in this report.

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The Local Member is Miss S Carey

Background Documents:
None

Previous Committee Reports:
Report to School Organisation Advisory Board on 18 May 2006

Other Sources of Information:
LEA School Organisation Plan
Kent Primary Strategy 2006

Appendix 3

Proposed Closure of Selsted Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School

Summary of Written Responses

Consultation documents distributed 800
Responses received 1,747

	Support	Against	Undecided	Total
Children at the school:		1		1
Parent of child at the school:	1	40		41
Member of staff at the school:		9		9
Governor of the school:		0		0
Parent of a child at another school		10		10
Children from another school		19		19
Member of staff at another school		4		4
Governor from other school		2		2
Other interested party	1	64		65
PETITION – From Selsted ‘ <i>Save our School Action Group</i> ’ (comprised of signatures)		1,596		1,596
TOTALS	2	1,745		1,747

Comments in Favour of the Proposal

Viability

- My child is at the school because he could not get a place at his local school. The Churchill school would have been my first choice (1)
- Selsted is wasting money which could be spent on other schools (1)

Education and Standards

- No confidence in the standard of education which children are receiving at Selsted – a child was recently moved to another school (1)

Not in Favour of the Proposal

Impact on Children/Rural Local Community

- These children are our future. Closing a small rural school will have a truly a negative affect on them educationally and emotionally as well as on the community (25)
- Concern about the impact of closure on the Buttercups pre-school, after school club and the holiday club (3)
- Future generations will miss out on the advantages that caring rural communities bring – where everyone is known and respected (3)
- Selsted is a community/it may not be in the ‘heart’ of a village, but it does serve local Parishes and many communities (Selsted, Densole, Denton, Swingfield and Hawkinge) and its closure will have a detrimental effect on the inhabitants in the surrounding area (26)

- The school has an excellent reputation/it is a local tradition – many generations of families have been educated at Selsted (20)
- Continuous erosion of rural community facilities – no church, no pubs, no village shops (2)
- Process is too drawn out and detrimental to children’s education.

Buildings

- Huge financial investment which has recently been made to the school (new car park, early years play area and new sports hall) would be wasted if the school was closed (19)
- Concern about what will happen to the site if the school is closed and the impact on local businesses (3)

Ethos/Values

- Selsted is the only Church of England School in the immediate area/lack of spaces in other Church schools/no choice for parents of Christian faith/increased travelling (30)
- The Church ethos of the school, lack of bullying and strong church connection is why many parents chose to send their children to Selsted (34)
- The school’s beautiful setting and assets are unique and cannot be found elsewhere in the area (9)
- Pupils self regulate behaviour. Family ethos.

Education and Standards

- School caters for children of all abilities, including SEN, with a caring/family-orientated environment, where each child is treated as an individual with good moral standards. These elements are not found in larger schools (47)
- Improving/successful school with good standards (12)
- Small rural schools and small classes are of high importance to parents (17)
- Teaching staff enthusiastic and dedicated/wonderful headteacher/Excellent SEN facilities/excellent SENCO (27)
- Relationship between school and parents is excellent (1)
- Children at smaller, rural schools tend to be more caring, mature and respectful directly as a result of the way in which they have been taught (12)
- No evidence suggests that mixed-age classes makes a school ineffective (3)
- Negative impact on the 3 years successful twinning partnership with Aviron School in France (2)

Housing/Transport Development

- No confidence in the predicted birth rate statistics/what will happen in the Hawkinge area when the new housing generates more children than expected. Where will these children go to school? (26)
- The new Hawkinge by-pass will mean faster/improved links to Folkestone and surrounding areas, and could bring more children to Selsted school (5)
- Transport in the Hawkinge area would increase as a result of the closure (2)
- Regeneration of Shepway requires school places (1)
- Wait for housing to be completed, then review situation (1)

Viability

- Short-sighted situation to saving money/not confident that all alternatives have been considered in order to save money (7)
- Saving money is coming before the education of the children (10)
- School has not been widely advertised enough – there is no school sign on the Canterbury Road (2)
- Loss of parental choice/no places in nearby Church of England schools (7)
- Hawkinge does not need two primary schools. Why not close Hawkinge primary and relocate its pupils to Selsted (1)
- Challenge the local authority as to why they continue to financially support failing schools (2)

PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY

**Proposed Closure of Selsted Church of England
(Voluntary Controlled) Primary School**

Summary of the public meeting on 28 June 2006
held in the Sports Hall at Selsted Primary School

Issue or Comment	Response
Community (Sports Hall)	
<p>Selsted School is part of our heritage; destroying a heritage leads to devastation. Churchill School was being sold to us tonight, but roads to Churchill School were dangerous.</p>	
<p>The KCC view that Selsted School is not part of a community was wrong, 16 pupils from twinning school in France are coming to stay with host families and would be joining in school activities in July. The school is also actively involved with the Hawkinge Partnership.</p>	<p>You need to ask the question whether this school fits within the traditional view of a community. This was the only rural closure proposal in Shepway.</p>
<p>Selsted School has been heavily involved with its community and the new sports hall has dramatically changed the quality of learning. The sports hall was being used every day, and had given a great boost to the school and the community.</p>	
<p>What were the financial implications regarding the investment in the school? The sports hall fund would have to be repaid if school were to close.</p>	<p>The funding clause would mean that KCC would have to refund the sum of money which is the region of £575k to Sport England.</p> <p>Discussions are currently taking place with the funding body.</p>
Standards	
<p>Children are excelling in all areas. SAT's at age 7 this year have had good achievements – 25% Level 3 in Maths. SEN level overall would be 80% next year. It is vital to keep Selsted School open to cope with SEN.</p> <p>Parents recognised that Selsted provided a well-rounded education with good standards of behaviour. Mixing key stages has proven to be very effective, despite KCC's view of mixed aged classes.</p>	

Small Schools	
Children lacking confidence are better served at small schools such as Selsted rather than in larger schools. The school environment had greatly improved children who had struggled in other schools. The argument that small schools are detrimental to childrens' best interests is wrong. Children know all the staff and this has brought a feeling of stability to the pupils.	
Viability	
All staff convinced that closing the school is wrong. Other counties are far more innovative than Kent in dealing with the issue of falling rolls. Staff are of the opinion that closure is wrong on educational, financial and community grounds.	There is 'Reverter' on the school, neither Church or LEA can financially benefit from the sale of the school and site.
The education budget showed that the difference in cost of closing a school and keeping it open amounted to only a few pence per pupil. An alternative course of action would be to leave the budget the same and provide even better education facilities for all pupils in Kent.	To keep KCC's budget the same is not achievable. Most funding comes from national taxes, not local ones. It is the National Government who determines the schools' budget. To keep the same budget as now would be disproportionate cost to the local tax payer. KCC could not take this decision. There were 14,000 surplus places, and it cost £3.5 million to maintain empty school buildings.
If there were surplus places in other schools, why did Selsted school have 70 pupils?	In 2003 the school had 93 pupils. In 2006 it had 70 pupils. With 11 pupils leaving this year and 6 joining in year R, this brought the total down to 65 pupils, which meant the school's budget was even smaller.
Councillor Carey had implied to parents to start taking their children out of Selsted school. This would most certainly make the school less viable straight away. There was clearly a need for assurance from KCC that a final decision would be made on the basis of the school roll at the time of the announcement of the proposed closure.	

Parental Choice	
<p>If Selsted closes, there are not enough Church of England school places within a five mile radius. Parental choice would be removed if Selsted were to close. Also, transporting the children out to other schools will have an environment impact.</p> <p>Elham Primary is the nearest Church School. They currently have no available places.</p>	<p>Places did exist in other Church schools although it was accepted options were limited and it may be difficult to obtain places for siblings. Parents would be asked to express preferences. Parents were entitled to appeal if places were refused. In reality, KCC were aware of such dilemmas and would help the family.</p> <p>Elham Primary School governing body are the admissions authority not the local authority if places were refused.</p>
Housing	
<p>The figures as detailed within the proposed closure document were from 2004 records. Those from 2005 were now available; these showed that birth rates were now increasing. Planning Permission had been granted for 760 new homes in Hawkinge, this could mean 120 new pupils. If schools were to close now, they would need to be replaced in the future. How can this be intelligent planning?</p>	<p>Net figures had been falling net since 1990; 2003-04 had shown an upturn, but one could not be sure that this would be a consistent trend since in 2005 the trend nationally had been higher. In Kent however, the figures for 2005 were down again.</p>
<p>Selsted is now in a growth area. The school should remain open until all the houses have been built in Hawkinge before deciding upon closure.</p>	<p>Churchill School in Hawkinge had expanded 2 classes for Year 1, 2 classes for Year 3. The school has 14 classrooms and these could be opened if they had the funding. These could be opened if Selsted School closed; the capacity is there.</p>