

PROPOSED NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL AT GOAT LEES, ASHFORD

Summary of the Public Meeting held on 20 July 2010 at Goat Lees Community Hall

Approximately 60 people attended the public meeting including parents, governors and other interested parties. Mrs Elizabeth Tweed, KCC Member for Ashford Central also attended.

Question	Answer
<p>Have either of you had experience of starting a school from zero? Including the building and the hierarchy within the school – the headteachers and staff etc.</p>	<p>Collaboration: Phoenix PS arose from the amalgamation of Bybrook IS & JS about 10 years ago. I was appointed Headteacher 4 years ago. I entered at the Design Competition stage when the design had been agreed. We – staff, parents, the local community and children - have seen the build through from the demolition of the old school building to the new Phoenix PS about 18 months ago. It is now a flourishing and successful primary school.</p> <p>ABC: No. Never set a school up from scratch like this before. We do have experience in construction, design and build etc.</p>
<p>Having dealt with Kennington JS I notice for sports you choose to use Arsenal Football Club, Middlesex Cricket Schools rather than utilising the local clubs. Within the Ashford community you have a lot of sports clubs with CRB checks and funding that schools do not use. What will you do to address that?</p>	<p>Collaboration: [Lady Joanna Thornhill] We have within the Ashford area a very good sports development team and the pathway to sport has accelerated greatly since the introduction of that sports partnership.</p> <p>My school is out in the sticks {so we do not use the Ashford clubs}. But, we do use the local facilities and the coaching and professional coaching that is available. Three days per week the juniors are engaged in tennis coaching linked with the local tennis club. The support for that has been from the school in terms of funding and also from the Lawn Tennis Association who have also sponsored us to do that. I take your point and it's a very good one. You will find that as a group of headteachers, although the evidence points to the contrary, there is a very competitive sporting edge in us too and therefore a great love of sport.</p> <p>Collaboration: [Kennington JS] We have clubs going on almost every night at Kennington, most of them run by the teaching staff and supported by teaching assistants. We give the children a very wide provision of sport. The only outside group is football coaching from Elite which is paid for by parents. We have links with the hockey club, we have had tennis coaching. We have had the cricket club come in. I'm personally associated with the Ashford and District Sports Association. I've been secretary for the last 25 years and we run competitive tournaments for football, netball and athletics and work in close collaboration with the Mid Kent school sports partnership that provide Intra-school sports and cross-country events. We submit results to a central place where they work out who has become a champion at long-jump or throwing etc. So sport is a high priority. We try to be very inclusive. We would look to support the school at Goat Lees in sports – in terms of the schools sports association - that it</p>

	<p>would be inclusive as well as competitive in terms of competing for trophies.</p>
<p>Having listened to the two proposals tonight the only thing that really worries me is the Ashford Baptist Church. While I like all the ideas, all the things they do, I am worried that it will put off certain people when they think it's backed by a Christian set up. I have had personal experience of faith schools. Having a faith background may put off a lot of people.</p>	<p>ABC – I accept what you say and when we put the proposal together we honestly believe that when it comes to schools with a faith ethos and background, my experience has been that parents thoroughly enjoy them. I'm sorry that your worry is that it may be the other way inclined. My expectation is that faith schools provide an additional element in the life of the school, one that is greatly appreciated and actually enriches the life of the children who are there.</p>
<p>The main purpose of the school is education and I'd like to know from both of you how you intend to appoint the key personnel such as the headteacher and make sure they have some local connection? And to make sure the calibre is correct – to try and make sure the school is managed correctly. How would you appoint the headteacher?</p>	<p>Collaboration: One of the key differences between the bids is the way we see the school governance and the approach to governance.</p> <p>With our bid we are a foundation school without a foundation. We are not seeking an over-riding part of the governance within the school. We will not have the majority. We're there to support and develop the school for the local community but have a strong view that it's your school, it's your community, it's your community school. We are there to support. We're there to provide what I think is best practice and advice. It's going to be your boys and girls that come to the school and it's going to be your headteacher that determines the direction, the ethos, the style, the approach. What we would do as part of the governance is to establish a temporary governing body. We see that being drawn from prospective parents and the local community. Community people who have expertise and a strong interest in the development of a school. They're not there because they get paid for it but because they want the best for the local community and the community of children.</p> <p>We are part of that team as a minority number of governors. I think it would be for the temporary governing body to draw together what they felt was the best team for choosing the headteacher. It would be for that group of people to determine what that process would look like and how they were going to involve local people within that.</p> <p>We work collaboratively as headteachers and I think we would be in the strongest of positions to make a judgment on what sort of qualities, skills, attributes would make for you an outstanding headteacher.</p> <p>What do we want out of this? Actually we want what I hope you want, and that's a school that's going to serve your community and develop an ethos around it as part of your particular footprint in this area.</p> <p>ABC: Our answer would be very similar to the Collaboration's answer. It is laid down. There is a route that we would follow in setting up a new school. There will need to be a temporary governing body and we have had advice already as to how that would take place. We've had a</p>

	<p>consultant all the way through this procedure and that support will continue, to ensure that the right route is taken and that the best advice is taken. We need to include David Adams in this as the LA will also be very supportive at this stage because obviously they have a vested interest in ensuring that the very best appointment is made. So there would be good advice all round. That is why a Parent council is set up at the earliest possibility to ensure that the parental local voice is heard and that the church does not overwhelm that voice. The church will probably have local parents and local people that we know can be drawn into that first temporary governing body.</p>
<p>My question is for both of you. What's the main reason why you want to go for this school? You have both talked about being eco-friendly and serving the community but by the sounds of it the Headteachers already have schools and serve the community that way. Similarly ABC sounds like it's doing a lot for the community (which I think is brilliant for both of you) so I just want to know why you wanted to go for this school? What is going to be different about it from the things you already have?</p>	<p>Collaboration [Lady Joanna Thornhill]: We all come from this, as headteachers, from a very personal perspective. For me education made a huge difference. I know that might sound corny but I can remember school being for me the bastion of where I felt comfortable, where I felt excited, where I felt valued. Where I became somebody of worth. That led for me into teaching - why did I come into teaching? Because I wanted to do something for others, like somebody had done for me many years ago. As a class teacher every year I made (I hope) a difference to a group of 30 individuals in front of me. I hope in some small way I've done that within the context of my teaching and my headship. I hope I enhanced their life chances and broadened the way that they thought. I came into headship because I'd got to the point where I wanted to make a wider difference to a larger number of children. I wanted to expand upon the success that people told me I had as a class teacher.</p> <p>Why do we want to engage in this? Personally it's because I'd like to go another stretch. It's part and parcel of what we already do. We've moved a long way from having that very parochial view of supporting the 30 children in front of us, or in our case 420 children in a school. It is that there is a responsibility and a desire to have an impact on a much wider group of children.</p> <p>Many of my pupils come from this estate already so I hope I'm already making a difference. Why are we putting a bid forward for a school that's actually going to take some of those children? Because it's much better for them to be in the local community school. I don't want to lose them but making a difference, making life skills, making life chances for children is what we do and I think this, as a group of headteachers, is our rationale for sitting here. I think we have all of the attributes to make a significant difference to the start of a school. Normally a school starts off with support from the LA but is left pretty much to the headteacher and the governors' own devices. Where we see this working in terms of the philosophy I've outlined and the rationale for us bidding is we can hopefully make your school, your children's school, get off to the best possible start, and therefore be the best school it can be. Not 5 or 6 years down the line but right from the offset.</p> <p>ABC: I think our answer is very similar to what has already been said in that we want the best school there. The reason</p>

	<p>why we do it is because that is what we do. You saw some of the things that we do which as a church we pioneer within Ashford and we will do the same again because we engage with local communities. We want to be there to be part of what is going on. That's why the street pastors you see are going on, that's why the holiday club is so well supported and why the camp is so well supported. We want the best for the children and ultimately all we are saying is we believe we will do it better.</p>
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