

EDUCATIONAL PROVISION IN GAMLINGAY: PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

NOTES of Consultation Meeting for Gamlingay Village College Parents
7.00 pm, Wednesday 27 April 2011, at the Village College

Cambridgeshire County Council Panel Members:

Hazel Belchamber, Head of Infrastructure
Guy Dickens, Head of Standards and Effectiveness (11-19)
Gayle Gorman, Director of Learning
Councillor David Harty, Cabinet Member for Learning
Sian Phillips, Education Officer – note-taker.

Hazel Belchamber gave a brief presentation which outlined:

- the reasons for the consultation;
- the options being put forward;
- the decision-making process and timescales; and
- answers to some of the questions that had already been raised.

It was agreed that a copy of this presentation should be made available, together with the notes of the meeting.

At the conclusion of the presentation, parents were able to contribute their questions and comments. These contributions, which were a combination of questions and points of view, are summarised below, together with any answers provided.

1. Question – It is known locally that Croydon Hill, the most direct route to Bassingbourn, is dangerous, but other surrounding roads are also a danger – with 47 slight injuries, 18 serious injuries and 7 deaths. What are we going to do to address this issue?

Answer – Colleagues in the relevant Highways Section will be asked to assess the feasibility and safety of the possible routes.

2. Question – The Council's consultation process is characterised by incompetence and rush. The DfE guidance on consultation stipulates that six clear weeks, excluding school holidays, should be devoted to this process. The Council's consultation is, therefore, illegal.

Answer - The DfE guidance is advisory not statutory. The timescale for the consultation process aims to provide a degree of clarity on the way forward for parents before the end of the Summer term 2011.

3. Question – Why is Option 3 included? It is not a true option, as the County Council is extremely unlikely to be able to deliver the new school in Cambourne by September 2013.

Answer – Concerted action is being taken by the local authority to deliver this school by the September 2013 target date. The option would not have been included if it was not considered to be deliverable by that date.

4. Question – Why is the status quo not included?

Answer – Doing nothing is not an option. Option 1, which includes the possibility of federation arrangements, is the nearest to this.

5. Question – Why did the local authority not act earlier on Gamlingay Village College performance?

Answer – Significant support and guidance were provided to the Head and Chair of Governors, but these were not acted on. The action now being taken is set out in the local authority's Statement of Action to Ofsted.

6. A parent expressed the view that the Ofsted report for Millfield Primary School, in Littleport, was worse than that for Gamlingay.

7. Gamlingay Village College deserves the opportunity to turn things around.

8. Question – What will happen to Gamlingay Village College pupils who live in Central Bedfordshire?

Answer – Cambridgeshire will liaise with the relevant officers in Central Bedfordshire to determine future arrangements, if significant change is agreed.

9. Question – Are more details available of the implementation arrangements for each option?

Answer – These will be outlined in the report to the 14 June meeting of the County Council's Cabinet.

10. The school should be provided with the chance to improve.

11. Question – As a parent of a daughter in Year 9, where will she be educated in the future?

Answer – This would depend on the decision on which option to pursue.

12. Question – What happens in the intermediate period, if there is no change until September 2012?

Answer – The action outlined in the local authority's Statement of Action will

be followed.

13. If there is transition to post-16 education from Bassingbourn, this will be a more expensive option, as transport will have to be provided at this point.
14. Why should Gamlingay children be entrusted to Cambourne, which is not yet built, or Bassingbourn, which is only a satisfactory school, accessed via a dangerous route?
15. The local authority has allowed Gamlingay Village College to fail. Why is the school not given the opportunity to improve, as St Neots Community College was?
16. Why have the Contextual Value Added Scores not been included in the school table? Is it because they favour Stratton Upper School, not Bassingbourn Village College?
17. A Gamlingay Village College teacher expressed the view that there was a good standard of teaching at the Village College and asked whether the First School would be able to cope with the whole primary age range, as most were Infant-trained.
18. The older sister of a 4 year old girl expressed the opinion that her sister should be able to access the same excellent three-tier education in Gamlingay and Stratton that she had been able to – which had enabled her to attend university.
19. Local people should be able to access a range of appropriate education in their local area.
20. The view was expressed that the mood had changed in Gamlingay because local people were angry because they felt that the local authority had let the school down with the issuing of the consultation document proposing closure.
21. Question – How will Gamlingay children be able to access after-school activities?

Answer – This would be discussed with Bassingbourn Village College, if it was agreed that this option should be taken forward.

22. Question – Why was the parental survey undertaken in January?

Answer – This was the result of a previous process – the County Councillor Review of Secondary education in South West Cambridge, the conclusion of which was the retention of the status quo in Gamlingay. However, it had been agreed that there should be a parental survey to inform future long-term planning. Unfortunately, this had coincided with the Ofsted inspection and its aftermath, but it was emphasised that the two processes were separate.

23. The view was expressed that none of the options were satisfactory, the schools should, therefore, be left as they are at present.
24. A show of hands was requested by a parent for a fourth option – that of giving Gamlingay Village College time to improve. No count was made.
25. Question – How will the school be supported in the interim period?
- Answer – The action plan runs until at least September 2012, with a significant level of investment in support.
26. Gamlingay was once a secondary school, with a catchment area covering the Gransdens and Toft. This could be done again.
27. The view was expressed that the local authority had already made a decision on the way forward.
28. A parent indicated that she wished for her parental survey form to be returned. She had voted for the two-tier approach, but had not realised that this would not be in Gamlingay.
29. Question – Would it be possible for the governing body to put forward a fourth or fifth option?

Answer – Yes – this is the purpose of a consultation process.