

Proposal to close Rumboldswyke C of E Infant School Public Meeting

School: Rumboldswyke C of E Infant School
Venue Date Time: The Assembly Rooms, Chichester
3 March 2020 18:00 – 19:30

Attendees:

Shelagh Legrave DL, Independent Chair and Facilitator
Paul Wagstaff, Director of Education and Skills (PW)
Graham Olway, Head of School Organisation, Capital Planning & Transport (GO)
Ellie Evans, Head of Pupil Entitlement (EE)
Trevor Christin, Director of Education, Diocese of Chichester (TC)
Ruth Cumming, Assistant Director of Education, Diocese of Chichester (RC)

Also present:

Nigel Jupp, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills
Dave Simmons, Deputy Cabinet Member for Education and Skills
James Richardson, Project Manager
Helen Moules, Admission Manager, South
Tracey Dunn, School Planning Officer (South and West) Notetaker
Paula Sole, School Planning Officer (Acting) Notetaker

Approx. 50 parents/carers, members of the public, teaching staff and governors were present at the meeting.

Shelagh Legrave opened the meeting introducing the panel and explaining the structure of the meeting.

The presentation started at 18:30.

Comments were invited from key members of the school or community before the floor was opened to the audience to raise their questions.

Questions		Answers	
Bill Sharp	In your recent consultation 90% of people liked Rumboldswyke so much they wanted to keep it open. Also, after they visited the school last November Ofsted said that 'the impact of the Headteacher and senior teachers work cannot be	PW	Yes - I know a lot about the monitoring visit back in December and you have taken quotes from that monitoring visit report. Yes - safeguarding issues have been rigorously addressed and behaviour is improving and work is beginning to improve the curriculum. Teachers are beginning to assess

	<p>overstated'. They also said that 'deficiencies in the leadership and safeguarding have been addressed'. They also said that teachers raised expectations and have put the emphasis back on learning. You on the other hand have remained more critical and at the Task and Finish Group in November you told Councillors there were only early signs of progress and a view you repeated last month at the Parishes Committee. What do you know about Rumboldswyke that its parents and Ofsted do not?</p>		<p>ongoing learning more accurately. Curriculum leaders are early in their work to ensure that learning in each subject builds over time. The Headteacher and Senior Teacher in fact cannot be overstated I accept that. Monitoring visit was the first visit to judge whether the actions taken so far were the appropriate actions. Some of the issues that were raised have been dealt with quite rapidly and quite rightly so. One of the things that the Local Authority and Diocesan office did was to make sure children were safe and that some of these issues were addressed quite rapidly to make sure that the education had been improved. We would have been extremely concerned and embarrassed if they hadn't of been. HT and Senior Teacher both who were on temporary contracts that we brought in to bring the school around have had an impact. Ofsted have said it is inadequate although things are starting to improve. All I am relating here is what Ofsted have said – there is still a lot more to happen and we recognise that.</p>
<p>Sarah Sharp – one of the District Councillors (Chichester South)</p>	<p>Residents have asked me to help them set up a CIO to support a legal claim against the Council because residents have come to me with their worries and concerns that this decision to close the school has been pre-decided. We've had two Freedom of Information requests in black and white from 29 April and June last year where it clearly says that the Leader of the Council (Louse Goldsmith) who is no longer there and also the lead member in charge of education were pushing to close this school. Seen a shamble of a Select Committee in the Autumn where members were trying to get this consultation pushed back. 90% of people who have replied are in support of this school and want to keep it open - then Select Committee who wanted to defer the consultation. Overturned by the Cabinet who didn't even know</p>	<p>PW</p>	<p>I am aware that Louise Goldsmith has written to you today and that she has been quite clear to you in her response about the discussions that took place around the schools in April and so I won't quote Louise on that. Aware that some of the parents are walking but past Rumboldswyke to other schools such as Kingsham. There are other schools in the east of the area such as Portfield, The March and Chichester Free School and so it would be unfair to say that there are no schools in that area. In respect of the academisation with Bishop Luffa we would be creating additional school places. We already have 250 key stage 2 places surplus within the city and so it would not be helpful to create more surplus places.</p>

	<p>what this school was – thought it was an all-through primary. All proof that this decision was already made last April – the date of that Freedom of Information was significant. Headteacher had been asked to leave. I feel as this is showing a lot of signs of corruption. Please can people help us to raise money to take a legal case? Please can you pull this consultation – it is unfair, not democratic, not had the chance to speak at Cabinet or the Select Committee – the public have not had a chance to speak at all. We have had an offer on the table from Bishop Luffa – an outstanding/quality secondary school in this city – this is a chance of a new vision for this school. The east of the city is an important area and it needs to have a school. I know parents are getting in their cars to go to Sidlesham, Aldingbourne, Bosham and Fishbourne. We have a climate emergency leading to a breakdown in friendships in neighbours, so people won't be walking past their house to see they have taken in their milk. Please can you urgently pull this consultation and give this school a chance to investigate with Bishop Luffa viability on making a new start because we desperately need an all-through primary that parents can walk their children to. They don't want to put their children in buses at the age of 4 and so please can you listen to us?</p>		
Lana (Parent)	<p>If you just told us all the truth in April when you were going to shut the school because we wouldn't be going through this now. My son he is EHCP and I could have got that beforehand as I have been fighting for it as he now hasn't got it at the moment and now, I am one of the parents who are now worried. My son doesn't want to</p>	EE	<p>To address the question about the number of applications for Rumboldswyke last year – to say that as far as we are concerned this is still an open school and we process the applications. We don't send children in different directions. If a parent has expressed a preference for Rumboldswyke and there are spaces, then we would have sent them there. Ofsted is an individual body and therefore they have made</p>

	<p>leave that school. Can you show us the figures of how many people actually put in to attend Rumboldswyke last year? If you already know that the Ofsted was going to be inadequate can I not just see the evidence of how many people applied to go to Rumboldswyke and how many people got turned down – how do we know that people weren't stopped going to Rumboldswyke as you do decide as to where people go and it wasn't pre-determined to drop the numbers by yourself? You have no empathy and I expect all your kids went to the school they want to go to, and my son is 6 and will not go on a bus as he has special needs. My daughter unfortunately goes to Central which is the worst school I think probably in Chichester. I have to commute from one school to the other – how am I going to do that – who will pay for my fuel as a single mum?</p>	PW	<p>the judgment on the school and nothing to do with the Local Authority.</p> <p>Regarding the Ofsted inspection - the Local Authority together with the Diocese have worked together with Rumboldswyke for over 3 years to try and improve the quality. We have invested money, investment of staff, additional work and over 40 visits, together with the quality of teaching and learning. Improvements were taking place however unfortunately the leadership of the school were still too reliant on external support to drive the improvements forward. We don't manage schools directly that is for the Headteacher and Governing Body to do. Also £25,000 was donated by other schools in the area to help and try to support the improvement of the school. Had to look at alternatives for the school for the future. We had no involvement with Ofsted. The Headteacher was not asked to resign – the Headteacher was ill and took early retirement through ill-health. Despite the significant efforts of many people to help the school and get it back on track the school was unable to do so. Therefore, when Ofsted came in it was inadequate. Therefore, numbers do appear to fall. Reiterating what EE said if there are places in a school and parents choose for their children to go to that school then those places are made available. The school cannot say no they are not taking them. Not for the Local Authority to turn those children down.</p>
Linda (Resident)	<p>I am a resident and I live close by to Rumboldswyke and I see the children and the school, and I know it well. We don't need Ofsted we have the overview of past children and families who have used the whole school and gone on to Central. Why is it that each time we are given an opportunity to listen to all this again and again - we don't believe it now and we didn't believe it then. This is all about money –</p>	GO PW	<p>Concerns have been addressed by Central in becoming an academy. Regarding decrease in the numbers - the numbers on roll at the school shows very clearly that they have been dropping at infant age for a number of years and the children at the end of year 2 have to go to a junior school.</p> <p>The money for funding for schools does not come from the Local Authority it comes from Central Government. The school gets a lump sum towards the maintenance of the</p>

	<p>this is about the cuts that have to be endured by Local Authorities which have been imposed by Central Government. This is your way of making the budget balance for you and to spread the pain over quite a small insignificant number of people. Central is so awful that even members of staff don't even want their own children to go there. You are making us pay in our own community for your own failure. How can you look in the mirror after you trot this out on auto pilot? We have a solution with Bishop Luffa. Capitation for all key stage 2 places will go to Bishop Luffa and you are worried.</p>	TC	<p>school. Any major development then that is a capital build and yes, the Local Authority does have to support that. The money for operating a school comes directly from them. Regarding the quality of Central that has been raised and has been quite chequered. The school was in fact inspected last year and, in the report, it says that parents are supportive and positive of the improvements being made. It talks about good leadership and talks about children behaving well and good personal development.</p> <p>The Diocese would echo that although Central does have a long way to go but the report was a very positive step in that journey.</p>
Claire (Teacher)	<p>I am the only permanent teacher at Rumboldswyke, and this is quite difficult and intimidating for me as I am going to lose my job. Paul Wagstaff you talked about inadequate teaching - I want to know when you or anyone from the County Council came to observe me. When I was observed by Ofsted my teaching was deemed good, so I want to know where I come into that because I was not inadequate? You failed to notice any of that.</p>	PW	<p>Over the last 2/3 years there have been a range of people who came to observe at the school. You may have been observed by one of the advisers I don't know. I made comments about the quality of teaching which was not directed at you. I have taken out of the Ofsted report what the key points and highlights were. We were not talking about individual teachers. Those are the words of the independent adjudicator who came in from Ofsted who attended the school they are not my words. In Chichester, 91.2% of schools in Chichester are either deemed good or outstanding which is the highest it has been for a long time. Important that we get the very best for every child in this authority. As I said before the support has been going into Rumboldswyke for over 2 years with only one purpose in mind to improve the outcomes for the children to get the best start in life.</p>
Emily (Parent)	<p>My daughter is very happy at Rumboldswyke and has no issues at all and is learning very well and so I am very pleased. What I want to know is why other schools are given the opportunity to improve their Ofsted over a number of years yet</p>	PW	<p>That is due to the fact that the Ofsted regulations and the Regional Schools Commissioner's regulations says that when a school is deemed inadequate it has two choices - one is to close and one is to academise. Therefore, there is a clear protocol set out by the Government which was revised last year stating that this is what has to happen. We have</p>

	Rumboldswyke has not been given that chance?		confirmation from the Regional Schools Commissioner to say that even if the school went through another inspection and was deemed not to be inadequate then that would still not be enough to avoid the school being academised or closed.
Councillor Jamie Fitzjohn (Member for Chichester South)	<p>Thanked the teacher for her work and that this does not reflect on her.</p> <p>Also, someone did actually speak at that Select Committee and I know as that was me. I spoke on behalf of Rumboldswyke for 10 minutes.</p> <p>Mr. Olway you have just said that this school numbers have been declining over the past 3 years which is right as Central has been inadequate for the past 4 years. Every parent would have concerns about this.</p> <p>I agree with Mr. Wagstaff that money does not come to West Sussex County Council – it does go through to the school. The school does get additional funding for SEND which is being looked into as to whether this is actually received. All funding goes to the schools and they have to manage that.</p> <p>My question is that I have seen that email from the late Mark Jenner of the 29 April but only saw it recently. I asked back in November at the last meeting why can't we ask Ofsted to come in and reinspect and I was told that County could not ask and influence and have no control to ask Ofsted to visit. Why in the email of 29 April (that Mr. Wagstaff you were copied into) that Mr. Jenner requested that Ofsted do not make a visit during a consultation period because we are aiming to close the school then surely if you can make a request to not visit you can make a request to visit?</p>	PW	<p>The rules of Ofsted are that if a school is going through a consultation process the inspection can be deferred and it would wait for the end of that. There is no similar article within Ofsted that allows you to then ask for an inspection once it has actually taken place. So, prior to an inspection if a school is on the verge of a consultation process and consulting on the closure because it is actually going through that process then one can ask Ofsted to defer. That is not the same as once a school is inadequate and then ask for an inspection to take place so the two are separate.</p>

<p>Councillor Jamie Fitzjohn (Member for Chichester South)</p>	<p>You said tonight that you knew the school would be deemed inadequate. You also in the email that went on 29 April and you emailed to the RSC on 14 June you stated that the County Council were looking to close that school. So, if you knew the Ofsted report was going to be inadequate it very much helps your hand to close the school. Three times in writing I have requested for evidence of the money and the time and the support that has been given to this school over the last 4 years. To date - tonight is the first time I have heard any of that evidence. I still want the written evidence showing dates/times and all the all the money that has been spent and I would like to see it in writing as I have made three written requests?</p>	<p>PW</p>	<p>I can give you an overview and put that in writing to you. Through the School Effectiveness Strategy, we have a programme whereby we categorise schools according to how successful they are. So, we have regular visits from what we call Link Advisers who work with the school to assess how well a school is performing with its data and obviously with its teaching/learning. They work with the Headteacher to monitor the quality of teaching/learning. In general terms, the standard would be three visits per year which is called adviser input – for Rumboldswyke we have got the number of days of adviser time that has been spent over those years. So rather than 9 days over 3 years then you look at the 39 days of adviser support, training, working with the Headteacher, working with teachers, working with the subject leaders to try and improve standards and working on site so those have all been logged and there are details of every one of those visits. We also had additional funding from other schools which is over and above all this. Where a school is struggling, we go to other Headteachers in the area to ask for additional funding and we have done this twice. So, if you look at this which is hugely disproportionate from what we would normally expect we have invested this time to make sure every child gets the very best. One of the challenges we have had with Rumboldswyke over the last few years is that all of that support going in that has been disproportionate has had hardly any or low impact. In the inspection report in May it was clear that it helped teachers to improve teaching and learning and children were achieving better but the problem was that the school leadership team was too reliant on external parties providing that when it should have been left to run it.</p>
<p>Zeb (Parent)</p>	<p>According to the table you have on spaces in various years – why is it when parents ring the schools, they say they haven't got any places they will say there aren't any yet you are saying there are? Secondly, the large property build</p>	<p>PW</p>	<p>We can confirm that the figures are correct and that schools have those places. We have actually checked with schools today and spoken to them. Schools have organised their classes at this moment in time although they do have those spaces. If they organise their school accordingly for</p>

	<p>called Whitehouse Farm – how many properties are going to be built there?</p>	<p>EE</p> <p>GO</p>	<p>September, then the spaces will be there. They will need to reorganise so that the spaces will be there.</p> <p>If the schools were organised in such a way to fill their capacity – remember legislation is that you can't exceed an infant class of 30. So, if schools have organised themselves in such a way because they themselves have low pupil numbers then that is the availability that they have with the current teaching staff they have. The pupil admission number tells us that there are more spaces. So, from September if the schools are to take additional children, because of the outcome of the consultation and no-one is pre-determining that. If the schools are to take additional numbers, then those schools will reorganise. We have had confirmation, this morning, from the Headteachers the numbers that they have available in their schools. Schools will be telling you at this moment in time the numbers that they are working to and not numbers in September. We are not squeezing pupils in because the pupil admission number tells us that they have room to fit those pupils in.</p> <p>We are fully aware of the amount of development around the Chichester area. In our Planning School Places booklet last year which was issued around January/February 2019 and similarly one that is about to come out any day, we have clearly stated in there about the west of Chichester and this development of up to 1600 homes. We have sought from the developer's financial contributions and a site for a 1fe (30 children per class) and expandable up to 2fe primary school for that site. This has been discussed for the past six years and have seen that the new access road has been started. We continually talk to developers as to when that may be needed. We are aware of new developments and are trying to get investment from developers to get primary and secondary provision for those children that come from those developments in due course.</p>
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<p>Parent</p>	<p>On the east side of Chichester – I feel there have been no satisfactory answer regarding the Cathedral Park development and the Shopwyke development there have been no sufficient comments about that? I am also confused about the Key Stage 2 places – mention over 250 places – not clear where they are apart from Central. This is a key thing about the Bishop Luffa offer and the opportunity for Rumboldswyke to become an all-through school which you very clearly mention is what you actually want – you want all-through primary schools which is part of your agenda. We could have a successful all-through primary supported by a highly regarded Trust – they have made that offer – they want to invest – they want to grow Rumboldswyke. You should take that opportunity by making it work - you could show that you support academisation – you gave us two options -90% supported academisation. You could encourage it and make it happen.</p>	<p>PW GO</p>	<p>You asked about the other school. Kingsham Primary School has a capacity of 45 per year group. Got good Ofsted across the board and not currently full. Got clear response from the Trust which runs Kingsham to say they have space from September.</p> <p>In terms of the east of Chichester provision we have already stated in our Planning School Places booklet that we are taking account of developments at Westhampnett, Shopwyke and Tangmere. We are looking at an extra provision of an extra school in the Tangmere area. There are schools there – we have The March and the Chichester Free School. Not true to say that we are withdrawing education provision from the east of the city. To confirm that I am a Trustee of the University of Chichester Academy Trust and Kingsham Academy is part of that and so are a number of other people in the room also happen to be governors. I confirm that I have no dealings in the matters involving Kingsham Primary School or any other West Sussex schools that are part of the Trust and so there is no conflict of interest in that regard.</p>
<p>Parent</p>	<p>Regarding the development to the west of Chichester I can say that the initial planning consent is for some 3000 homes so unsure where the 1600 has come from? So, the Council or developers are hiding how many houses are going in there. Regarding Shopwyke Lakes there are nearly 400 going up there with another phase to go for another 200. Then Redrow opposite another 300. Bartholomew's there is nearly 200 on that and then at Westhampnett there is 400. I have spoken to developers who I have worked for in the past and asked the Project Manager if they would build a school for nothing and they have all said no. Why would a</p>	<p>GO</p>	<p>I am not prepared to answer a question about what I may or may not do about my own children. However, if you would like to give us the figures you are suggesting I will raise those with Chichester District Council as we get our figures from them. If the figures are going to be different, we will raise that with them and we will put a response on the website about the number of houses there. In terms of the comment about whether a developer will build a school for £2m – I would love a school to be built for £2m but sadly they are far more expensive than that. Taxpayers money is not being wasted.</p>

	<p>developer build a school worth £2m for nothing? So somewhere along the line someone has to pay for that school. Also, some people are afraid to ask this question. If you had a child in school that had 30 children in a class where they were struggling and needed more help would you rather send your child to a smaller school where they would get more help? Can you answer yes or no to that question as a parent?</p>		
<p>Councillor Jamie Fitzjohn (Member for Chichester South)</p>	<p>I have given all numbers back in January. I have emailed them to Mr. Wagstaff and presented them at the Children and Young People Select Committee and presented them to the Cabinet Member. Issue we have which is part of the confusion is that when you access children at school it is only based on planned development – which has planning permission. Can only plan school places on permitted and not what they intend to build. This is where the discrepancy comes from.</p>		<p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>Mark Nicholds (Director of Resources – Bishop Luffa School)</p>	<p>I know that Rumboldswyke has had a huge positive impact on its local community. So, if we have Rumboldswyke School we would provide a consistent school ethos which would be attractive to parents and children from the age of four through to 18. We don't want to jeopardise pupil numbers in other schools, but figures show that only a few pupils go to the local junior school - that being Central. We will plan to grow numbers organically from within the primary school from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 so therefore there is not an impact on other schools. It is not for me to argue about the number of places that will be needed for the future, but no-one can deny the amount of</p>		<p>Comment noted.</p>

	<p>building going on in and around Chichester. So, what we are proposing is a church school which serves one community well and I would ask you to reconsider.</p>		
Resident	<p>One of the challenges independent schools like this face, or in this case Rumboldswyke, at a general election is the threat from Labour having done terrible things to most of our primary schools severely disrupting social mobility nationwide. They are now threatening the same to independent schools. Parents have the right to choose – this isn't North Korea. Independent schools come in many forms not just private schools. They also consist of religious schools, special schools and those in need of home support and charity schools for the vulnerable. With that in mind - Mr. Wagstaff one of your concerns both here and Clapham and Patching School is that too many children are coming from outside the catchment area and you think that this is undesirable. But, could it not just as well as been seen as a positive as a sign that these schools are actually doing something above average and so actually attracting parents in. Have you considered this in terms of parental choice?</p>	PW	<p>In relation to this, parental choice is quite a big issue but there is mention of people travelling into schools looking for schools of choice and certainly in terms of diversity and provision. I am very keen to see this diversity and provision and certainly in West Sussex we have a huge diverse provision in different schools from church schools, academies, free schools, maintained schools, etc. so the diversity is there. What we would say for schools to be financially and educationally viable they really need to meet the needs of the children in the areas in which they live. It has been mentioned by Sarah Sharp that we are in a climate emergency and so we should be reducing emissions by people being able to walk to school – it is a struggle to find that balance. We certainly have a diverse range of schools in Chichester.</p>
Adrian Moss (District Councillor – Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee)	<p>I know Rumboldswyke very well and I was hoping that you would come to our Overview and Scrutiny Committee to give us your words, but you have declined to do that which is a great disappointment, so I am here now. I have known Rumboldswyke for a long time and a very good friend of mine was Headteacher there for many years. What I know about that school is that it nurtured young people and often</p>		<p>Comment noted.</p>

	<p>nurtured young people who wouldn't have been so well nurtured at bigger schools and that is really important. I have just listened to Mark Nicholds put in a plea – he couldn't have given a better or more inspiring plea of what they could do with Rumboldswyke to bring the young people on and really give them a real chance so please listen – listen to these people here and listen to people like Mark and understand that Chichester deserves some small schools where people can be nurtured and loved and given the chance to do really well.</p>		
	<p>Meeting closed 19:30</p>		

N.B. These notes are not a verbatim record of the discussions but reflect the general tone of the questions and answers received during the meeting.