

STANSTED PARISH COUNCIL**MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 26 JANUARY 2015 AT STANSTED VILLAGE HALL, MALHOUSE ROAD, STANSTED AT 8.00 pm**

PRESENT:	Cllr Harry Bott	Chairman
	Cllr John Brooker	
	Cllr Mrs Polly Falconer	From item 3
	Cllr Mrs Sheila Goodworth	
	Cllr Miss Janet Howie	From item 3
	Cllr Michael Osborne	
	Mrs Roxana Brammer	Clerk
In attendance	Cllr Matthew Balfour	Kent County Council and Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
	Cllr Mrs Ann Kemp	Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
	Cllr Martin Coffin	Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
	Mr Alex Lear	Rochester Diocese Board of Education
	Mr Kevin Shovelton	Kent County Council
	Mr Jared Nehra	Kent County Council
	Ms Tel German	Kent County Council
	Mr David Shaw	Interim Executive Board, Stansted School
	Mrs Diana Robinson	Interim Executive Board, Stansted School
	Mr Andrew Livingstone	Headteacher, Stansted School
	Rev Chris Noble	Rector
	PCSO Laura Bullen	
	65 members of the public	
	ITV Meridian Region	

Item		<i>Action point</i>
Minute no 2014/15/		
1	APOLOGIES	
341	An apology for absence was received from Cllr George Goring due to illness, which was accepted. Apologies for late arrival were received from Cllrs Mrs Falconer and Miss Howie. An apology for absence was also received from Cllr Mrs Sarah Hohler, Kent County Council.	
2	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
342	Cllr Osborne declared a personal interest in item 3 as his grandson was a pupil at the school.	
3	STANSTED SCHOOL	
343	Cllr Bott introduced the local councillors and the members of Kent County Council (KCC) and of the Interim Executive Board of the school (IEB). He intended that the Parish Council should ask questions first and then open the meeting to the members	

of the public. The same question should not be asked more than once. He then suspended the meeting to allow the representatives of the Diocese, KCC and the IEB to answer the Parish Council's questions.

The last time a meeting was held about the school, it was believed there was no intention to close the school and that the IEB had been put in to turn the school around. Then the latest Ofsted report had been received, which had not been very good and now there was consultation about closing the school.

The IEB had wanted the school to thrive. They were working with the school and had not been entirely surprised by the report. The context of the school had changed by the last inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Schools (HMI), with a roll of 35, different teaching staff, a two class structure, a new national curriculum and a new reporting basis and it was challenging to deliver this with separate year groups in each class.

The Headteacher's contract was not being extended beyond 31st March. If the school stayed open, how would the IEB deal with the situation?

The IEB would work with KCC to put in a leadership solution, but he was not in a position to say what that was.

There was an issue of confidence. It was assumed the IEB had been in school, helping the Headteacher.

The role of the IEB was different from the role of a Governing Body. The IEB stood back, taking a strategic role, helping to move things forward with the school and the local education authority. The IEB met on a monthly basis with monitoring visits in between.

The Parish Council had been assured that the IEB contained education professionals and had believed it would support the school, not consist of strategists.

The KCC improvement adviser had made 10 visits of 3 hours. Some schools did not even have an annual visit, most had 3 each year.

Had the Ofsted report been talked through with the Headteacher? Had enough support been given on the change in the curriculum?

There had been a very high level of support compared with other schools. KCC had to ensure improvement advice was properly rationed.

The Headteacher stated that they had started teaching the new curriculum in July and there was no difference in the curriculum being taught since September. The 2 class structure had already been in place. The budget in October 2014 had been the same as that of March 2014. He felt the school was being held back by the advice being given. He had asked for many things not yet in place – for example he had been waiting since June for special needs support.

The Parish Council had been given statistics that showed the school was performing better than the schools selected for the children. Past pupils were all doing well at their secondary schools.

Some aspects of the data were significantly below the national average.

The Headteacher commented that the school was 78% for reading, writing and maths and that he was still in dispute with KCC. The progress value of key stage 1 and 2 improved in 2012, 2013 and 2014.

Can KCC confirm the school is improving?

Yes. The IEB recognised the improvements. HMI said the improvements were not fast enough for the school to come out of special measures by July 2015. The IEB had considered various issues and did not feel they were serving the pupils.

There were hideous consequences of past decisions made by KCC. The other issue was the falling roll. There was evidence that a former member of staff had been behind much of it. An insensitive letter had been sent to parents about the guarantee of a place at another school and the fact they were being given a short time to accept, while the consultation was underway. Everyone had been made to feel bullied. Prospective parents of children for entry in September 2015 had received telephone calls, asking them to withdraw the school from their choices.

KCC apologised that parents had been bullied by the latter. This had not been the intention. Past experience showed that when a school was under threat of closure, parents were worried about where their children would go and they had attempted to pre-empt this. Numbers had been declining since 2011, from 78 to 35, which indicated parents had no confidence in the school. The letter had been to add a level of assurance. Concerning the reception round, KCC had a duty to make the situation fully clear. Applications were now closed and the national offer day was at the beginning of April. There was a refusal to give the exact number of applications but it was in single figures.

When would the decision be made?

It would go to the KCC Council meeting on 15th April, then a final decision would be made in June.

Would the representative of the Diocese Board of Education like to make any comments?

The Diocese had a member on the IEB, which had to take a view of the judgement of HMI. In the view of the Diocese, KCC and the IEB the quality of education would not be able to be sustained at the level the children deserved. The stance of the Diocese was that it was an informed view. If anybody disagreed, it was suggested that Ofsted and HMI be challenged.

Some ten years ago a big capital investment had been made in the school, paid for by council tax payers.. How did the asset fit in to the scenario?

The building did not belong to KCC.

There had been an interim head, who had proved inadequate and this had effectively shortened the 2 year period for the school to come out of special measures. Extra time should be given to compensate.

The closure would be due to the number of pupils and available budget. They were stuck with the 2 year timetable to come out of special measures, whatever the circumstances.

The Chairman then invited members of the public to ask questions.

At the meeting with the parents, the IEB had said they had been surprised at the Ofsted report. They were now saying they had not been surprised.

On further inspection, the IEB had agreed with the report.

A former parent stated that when his children had attended the school, they had thrived with the 2 class structure. He referred to the designation for rural primary schools. It was the Department's policy to protect small rural schools. If the school closed it would create a "hole" of 30 square miles with no education.

The Headteacher said that in the document about rural primary schools, there was a presumption against closure. He considered that asking prospective parents not to apply went against that.

A grandparent of 3 pupils said he felt their parents were being blackmailed.

Why was the diocese inspection so overdue?

A church school used to be inspected 3 weeks after an Ofsted inspection. This had changed and inspections were now done every five years. The school was now in the inspection window.

This showed lack of support.

Support would follow after an inspection.

A parish of 400 electors had raised a considerable sum of money for the church extension. It was felt the diocese was accepting with one hand and taking away with the other.

Both Platt and Trottiscliffe schools needed re-building and Culverstone had a temporary classroom. It was difficult to see why KCC wanted to close a modern school and keep the others open.

The diocese was responsible for 89 schools. Were any others in special measures?

No, only Stansted. The Diocese Academy Trust was a separate entity from the Diocese Board of Education. Even if the Trust could have sponsored the school as an academy, the Department for Education would not have allowed it.

Why had other schools been allowed to increase their numbers? Parents have been bullied with offers of help with uniforms and transport. The school improvement adviser had agreed the school had improved, why was she agreeing with closure?

KCC again apologised for the parents feeling bullied.

KCC should consider extending the Headteacher's contract and measures should be put in place to keep the school operating.

The children were happy in the school.

Everyone should be thinking ahead and giving stability to the school.

A parent of 2 children continued to stand by the school and felt she was being pressured to remove her children from the school they loved.

KCC urged people to use the consultation process.

Cllr Mrs Kemp said that she had been Chairman of the Governors at Trottiscliffe School when it had been faced with closure but the school had been turned round. It proved it could be done.

A member of the public thanked the Parish Council for calling the meeting, which the IEB, KCC and the Diocese had all failed to do.

Cllr Bott said that the Parish Council would draft a response to the consultation for a final response to be submitted before the closing date. He suggested that councillors also respond as individuals. He then reconvened the meeting.

4 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

344 No matters were raised.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 10.12 pm

SignedChairman

On theday of2015

DRAFT