

SAVE OUR SCHOOLS – THE EDUCATION BACKLASH

This Is Not Just Any Consultation This is a Mega Mess Consultation!

Critics of the Isle of Wight Council are asking serious questions about the competence of the Council to run this consultation, let alone successfully implement a full scale reorganisation of our education system. We examine some of the many mistakes the Council have made:

– **Summoning** all head teachers to a breakfast meeting before school on Monday 14th January to tell them whether their school was going to close before discussing it with them. Some were so upset that they wept. Is that any way to treat our teaching professionals?

– **And** then the council changed its mind as opposition to the consultation grew. They started telling schools that they could put forward business plans to save their skins, which amounts to a bun fight for survival. No wonder almost every school is choosing an option that best suits its chance of survival. So much for a co-ordinated and well led strategy for change.

So much for introducing certainty and detail into the consultation. We call it irresponsible and cruel.

– **And** then there's telling parents that they are guaranteed a place at their local school. It's just not true ... there is no guarantee and that's the law ... only a preference. If your local school is full, then it's full.

– **And** it's not for the council to decide. That's the job of the schools appeals committee.

– **And** they tell us that the capital budget is being cut by £7m. That's not true either. The civil servant in charge of the funding told

us: "There has been no reduction in primary capital grant ... Overall capital funding for IOW for the 3 year period 2005-2008 was £37.4 million. Overall funding for 2008-11 is £36.1 million..." (source: DCSF 21st Jan 2008).

– **And** then there are the savings the Council claim can be made from closing small schools. It is a popular myth put about by the council that closing small schools will improve the budgets of other larger schools. But what about increased transport costs? We have learned that the council have not even spoken to Southern Vectis about the possible transport implications of their plans. That would seem to be a bit remiss, given that they are the main bus company on the Island and the increased number of bus journeys is probably something that should be discussed with them. Standards-Not-Tiers have been told that the cost of school transport could be as much as £1,500 a year for every child that has to make a 5-mile round trip by bus. If just 2,000 of the total of 11,000 children have to have such a journey as a result of the reorganisation then that could amount to £3m in additional transport costs.

– **And** as closing small schools is likely to yield savings of between £1.5m and

£2.5m there wouldn't be any real saving at all. But of course we don't know for sure because until we choose an option we won't know how toxic it really is.

– **And** what about the consultation document itself? First we were told by its authors that it's "One per household". But that didn't seem right. So a councillor asked the same question again and this time they were told it's "One per person". So just to be absolutely sure they asked again and copied their question to the Cabinet Member for Education, Alan Wells, who replied "It's just one per family". What? One per family? So who exactly fills it in? Should family members perhaps submit business plans to compete for the right to complete the questionnaire? Should family members try to influence their designated form filler? What affect might misinformation by one family member have on the final family consultation response?

Mr Wells was driven to change his mind and it was suddenly one questionnaire per person again. He said: "Clearly I've not been updated". Mmm ...

Anyway, with luck, it'll all work out just fine and everyone will live happily ever after. Unless that is, you are one of those who loses their job as a result. But hey ho!

Which is it to be...
the poisoned apple
the poisoned orange
or the poisoned pear..?



As We Tell Our Children – Just say No!

**Manifesto Promises are Important ...
Well They Are When You Want To Be Elected**

**Remember, the electorate have longer memories than
politicians and change their minds less often too.
Abuse democracy at your peril.**

"Yes, there are potentially some points around the mandate of the proposals we are putting forward at the moment – but the reality is the fit in the spirit of what the electorate voted for last time – having a three-tier system". David Pugh, Cabinet Secretary, 17th February 2007.

"I am also impressed by your advert for the paper (which I assume is in the CP this Friday) and I hope that we will have a majority after 5th May to stop these plans". David Pugh, 27th April, 2005.

I am writing as an individual supporter of your campaign, but also in my capacity as the Prospective Conservative Candidate for Shanklin Central.

As someone who has been through Island primary, middle and huge schools, I am a strong supporter of the existing system and remain totally unconvinced of the arguments for change.

You might be interested to read a letter I wrote to the County Press on this subject outlining my concerns:
<http://www.iwcp.co.uk/ViewArticle2.aspx?SectionID=1263&ArticleID=931674>

I note that on your website you aim to publish a list outlining prospective councillors views' on the proposed changes. Therefore I am emailing you to confirm my position – I am completely opposed to these changes and will fight tooth and nail against them. My letter to the CP outlines my main concerns.

During my campaign thus far I have spoken to so many parents who are opposed to these changes and cannot understand what the council is playing at.

I only left Sandown High School just over six years ago and therefore am a relatively recent "graduate" of Island schools – I feel I have first-hand experience of the Island's education system. Your slogan sums up what needs to be concentrated on – Standards, Not Tiers! A determined focus on improving standards has to be the main priority.

Best of luck with your campaign. If elected, I will be among the leading cheerleaders for your cause!

With all good wishes

David

DAVID PUGH – Prospective Conservative Candidate, Shanklin Central

Big Schools Nightmare for the Isle of Wight

Under all options, the size of Island schools is set to increase dramatically.

Primary schools will be 50% bigger under option one and twice the size under option three, growing to an unbelievable three times the current size under option two.

Midle Schools will double in size under option one and be completely abolished under options two and three.

Our already big secondary schools, would grow to a super-massive average of

1,500 places under options two and three; twice the size advocated by most secondary school teachers and not fit for a modern education system. Even Hampshire County Council thinks that 800 to 1,200 places is big enough.

It is possible that some of our secondary schools would be smaller than this. Cowes, for example, is set at 1,000 places, but this would mean the remaining schools could be far bigger, possibly as big as 1,800 places or more!

At a time when most educationalists, the Conservative Party and the Government are looking at ways to reduce school sizes, we are about to be forced to go the other way and make our schools much, much bigger – that's madness!

And it's official. Evidence from around the world is growing to support claims that smaller schools produce better results and offer many other advantages besides.

Council 'Artificially Inflate' Surplus Places to Ensure Maximum School Closures

Surplus place measurements are crucial to the decision as to whether schools should stay open. The surplus places measurement has been artificially inflated, not by school governors, but by the Council insisting on using admissions data, when the Government say they should use the lower capacity data to calculate surplus places. That means that the true surplus place figure of 16% across the county (October 2007) is doubled to 30% in the Council's information

for the consultation – that's misleading! Of course we can't hit the Government targets of 10% across the county. And to make matters worse, the Council has spent the last 7 years doing almost nothing to address the surplus place problem. They could have been addressing this problem by removing mobile classrooms and allocating school space to pre-schools and other community based activities. Instead they simply fiddled the figures until this was discovered last sum-

mer and the capacities of many school were suddenly increased, making matters even worse. Do they want to close schools rather than address the issues in other ways? Yes, because that way they can release large sums of cash from the sale of school buildings. And no matter what they say, leading educationalists all agree, such capital is not protected and does not have to be used for educational purposes.

Opposition to Plans to Close 50% of Island Schools – Overwhelming!

The tide of serious opposition has turned against the Isle of Wight Council's plans to close the majority of schools on the Island. The most recent and probably most significant of organisations to say no to all three of the councils options, is the Isle of Wight Association of Local Councils, representing all parish and town councils. They voted last night, to reject the plans and plump instead for plans that do not involve mass school closures.

Opposition to the plans comes from:

- The Isle of Wight Association of Local Councils.
- The Rural Community Council.
- The National Association for Small Schools.
- Members of the Conservative Non Aligned Group.
- Most Opposition Councillors.

- Jim Knight MP Schools Minister (Labour) UNISON.
- Michael Gove MP Shadow Schools Minister (Conservative).
- National Association of Headteachers (IW).
- Standards-Not-Tiers.
- WightPAPER.
- Parents Voice.
- SOS and their many supporters.

The Matrix is science fiction but without the science!

The Matrix, on which so many have based their consultation document responses, has seen its scores change frequently during the last month for no apparent reason. The Council refuses to tell us why. How can people's responses be truly informed?

It's Official – It's an Elected Dictatorship

How can we as electors feel confident that our express wishes will not be spun into policy that bears no resemblance to our understanding of the political mandate that we voted for? Many see this as a form of temporary and sometimes recurrent dictatorship, in which election

promises only matter at the ballot box.

In the United States this is a question that is being addressed right now, through the introduction of "recall elections".

Here on the Isle of Wight we cannot implement a

recall election. We have instead taken the unprecedented step of announcing a future election challenge to Conservative councillors who defy the electorate and vote in favour of these undemocratically arrived at plans in March.