

Standards-Not-Tiers Press Release

4th March 2008

Massive Referendum leafleting Campaign Launched Today Coincides With the Unravelling of Council Spin on Surplus Places

Standards-Not-Tiers have launched a campaign to coordinate a massive leafleting campaign that will inform people of the need to persuade their local councillor to agree to the new option 4 at the vote of the full Council on Wednesday 19th March.

The campaign supports the cross party opposition to the current three education consultation options that the Council have proposed as part of the schools reorganisation.

A spokesperson for Standards-Not-Tiers said: "Option 4 will give us all the right to vote in a Referendum, for either a 2-Tier or a 3-Tier system that does not involve the closure of so many schools. All the main pressure groups, political opposition and many others have agreed that if the existing three options are rejected and option 4 is chosen and it is put to a referendum then they will support the outcome. That will settle the matter once and for all."

The first wave of leaflets will be distributed this week in wards where Councillors are in conflict with their parish or town councils over the consultation.

The leafleting campaign coincides with new evidence from the DCSF that shows that the Isle of Wight Council is incorrectly interpreting the DCSF guidance on surplus places to justify the closure of small rural schools. In a conversation with Peter Connell the programme manager for the Primary Capital Programme at the DCSF, Chris Welsford, Chairman of Standards-Not-Tiers was yesterday told that the awarding of funding is not dependent on the Isle of Wight Council reducing surplus places in anything like the inflexible way that they describe. Mr Connell said that far from being a reason to close schools, the PCP is designed to offer Local Authorities the opportunity to build new schools and refurbish existing ones. The Strategy for reducing Surplus Places is not a measure to be used in isolation and the target of 10% surplus places across the authority is not designed to force every authority to comply. Many authorities will quite understandably not be able to meet such a target particularly where they have many rural schools. In this case the guidelines regarding rural communities and the presumption against the closure of rural schools will take precedent unless we are looking at failing primary schools, which is not the case on the Isle of Wight.

Ends.

For further information editors should contact
Chris Welsford, Chairman - Standards-Not-Tiers
07854 744 062 or 01983 853 600