

Standards-Not-Tiers Press Release

6th March 2008

Referendum Is The Only Way Forward As Council Leader Admits He Got It Wrong

The whole consultation and people's responses to it, has been based on a falsehood put forward by leading councillors and education officers and should now be shelved for good. The only way that this can be settled is to go to a referendum and for David Pugh Alan Wells and Steve Beynon to be replaced. What they have done is disgraceful and cannot be tolerated.

In a disastrous climb down David Pugh admitted on Isle of Wight Radio this morning that the council's grounds for mass school closures have been based on misunderstanding by the council of the rules governing the granting of Primary Capital Plan funding. In an interview for Isle of Wight Radio News Cllr Pugh said that the council would not lose the £8.3m of PCP funding that they had previously said that they would if they did not immediately address the 10% overall and 25% individual school surplus place target.

Chris Welsford, Speaking for Standards Not Tiers said that the whole basis and rationale behind the current consultation has been publicly undermined, drawing into question the validity of any response that people have made in respect of the three options. "This means that voting for any of these options on March the 19th would be wrong. Realistically a referendum on the basic question of whether we stay as we are or go two-tier has to be put simply and clearly to the people to decide. There can be no confidence in the ability of the councillors Pugh, Wells and the Director of Children's Services Steve Beynon to continue to manage this process. They have demonstrated a contempt for the general public who trusted them to put forward ideas based on facts; facts that have now been shown to be misleading and inaccurate.

"They have added months to the misery of the schools. This should have been settled in October last year but Pugh and Wells changed everything and now they have admitted that they didn't even understand the basic rules under which they could apply for the primary school funding.

"People attended consultation meetings, asked questions, read the County Press and listened to numerous radio interviews to all three of these people who we are expected to trust with the future of our children's education and they misled us.

"They are in a position of trust and to make such a fundamental mistake, despite being told consistently that they had got it wrong, beggars believe. Standards-Not-Tiers have consistently argued that the PCP funding is not dependent on reducing surplus places. The Council have insisted that it is and have made this the principle reason for school closures. This has only come out because of this organisation's conversation with Peter Connell, the manager of the PCP programme, in which he agreed that our understanding of the surplus place situation was correct and the council had got it wrong. The council is paid to get fundamental issues like this right. To base plans for a radical reorganisation on misleading data and false understanding is wrong and all three of them must be replaced with people who actually know what they are doing and can be trusted".

Ends.

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