

Standards-Not-Tiers Press Release

10th July 2008

SNT Executive Vote Unanimously to Overturn Deceitful Tory Plans .

The seven strong SNT executive met on Tuesday 8th July, to discuss the group's stance in light of the recent announcement by the Isle of Wight County Council's Conservative ruling group that they will make any decision on wholesale schools reorganisation, subject to the agreement of the electorate at the ballot box in 2009.

The SNT executive decided unanimously to reject the move to two-tiers and reverse any decision made by the current administration which it declared to be completely at odds with any concept of democracy.

Chairman of SNT, Chris Welsford said: *"The election of the Tories in 2005 held so much promise for the improvement of our school system and should have resulted in the introduction of crucial improvements that did not involve the upheaval of wholesale reorganisation and school closures. One of our main concerns about the LibDem proposals in 2005 was the fact that many small primary schools and all our middle schools, which are after all small secondary schools, would be lost forever. Reorganisation flies in the face of current educational thinking that small schools actually deliver better results both academic and social for the communities which such schools serve. The imposition of reorganisation, school closures and the proposed abolition of the middle schools has no democratic basis and we are clearly not the only ones to feel this way".*

The SNT executive agreed that Cllr Pugh had been forced to go to the electorate with his plans because they are completely at odds with the Conservative mandate to retain the existing system until the case against it has been proved. The Isle of Wight was one of the most improved Local Authorities in England in 2007 and this demonstrates that the case for reorganisation has not been proved. Steve Beynon himself has had to admit publicly at the Cowes meeting that there is no proof that standards will improve under a two tier system.

Chris Welsford said: *"We are absolutely convinced that no sane politician would ignore their main election promise and then expect to be re-elected. There are many in the Conservative party who are seething at the behaviour of Pugh and his colleagues. If he could have carried this off without risking the election then he would have done so. Until now, we felt that there was no choice but to accept the council's decision made on the 19th March. The decision to put the matter to the electorate changes everything. No matter what we do now, uncertainty will continue. Responsibility for that lies solely with Pugh's Conservatives. As much as anything this is a matter of standing up for democracy. What is certain though, is that a vote for an Independent councillor who supports the SNT line will bring stability and calm to the education system and allow teachers to do what they are trained to do, without fear, intimidation and the unbelievable uncertainty that the last few years have brought"*

Standards-Not-Tiers will now bring forward a policy for schools that will stop any further reorganisation for being pursued during the next term of office of a supporting council. During that period of calm we will address the problems that should have been addressed over the last ten or fifteen years but were not. We will seek to safeguard community learning facilities and where a local community has their own plans for schools we will support them as we recognise that there is no further value in a one size fits all education system. Keeping education as local as possible for as long as possible will be a priority.

Members of the group will now join with other independent candidates and seek election as independent councillors on this platform. A detailed policy statement is being prepared and will be available in due course.

For further information editors should contact Chris Welsford, Chairman - Standards-Not-Tiers
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Ends.

