

Standards-Not-Tiers Press Release

11th March 2008

People across the Isle of Wight Have Voted Heavily in Favour of retaining schools within local communities.

People who responded to the Council's questionnaire are this morning waking up to the realisation that their views are not being taken seriously as the council chooses to use their representations to press for a two tier system which under the Councils model will lead to the closure of many rural primary schools and the creation of much larger schools all round including 1800 place secondary schools that are almost twice the size of what are accepted as reasonable in most other local authorities.

Whilst 88% of respondents thought it was "fairly or very important to retain schools within local communities" and 80% thought it was "fairly or very important to reduce the need for younger pupil travel", these views were not reflected in the Council's press release or mentioned by Alan Wells in his early morning statement broadcast on Isle of Wight Radio. Instead he chose to use the questionnaire result as a vote of confidence in Option 3. The fact that Option 3 will result in fewer schools within local communities and increase the need for pupils to travel from a younger age seems to have been ignored in the Council's analysis. As people expressing this view is an even larger proportion at 88% than those who expressed their preference for option 3, must be a factor that is taken seriously.

With such conflicting views being expressed and the stakes so high in terms of the impact on all Island children, families and the economy, it seems extraordinary that the Council is unwilling to take a few addition weeks to allow a referendum to decide the question of whether we should continuing to raise standards within the current three tier system retaining small schools and avoiding a major reorganisation or embark on reorganisation to a two-tier system which emphasises the importance of small schools and community based learning. These options would better fit with the 88% response in the questionnaire favouring the retention of local community schools.

Ends.

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