

Standards-Not-Tiers Press Release

6th October 2008

Reorganisation could cost the council taxpayer £2.5m more each year!

Research released by SNT this week on their website www.yourschoolneedsyou.com shows that the council tax payer may need to find £2.4m each year as a result of plans to close schools on the Isle of Wight.

SNT are challenging Alan Wells' statement in last week's County Press and say closing small schools will do almost nothing to improve spend per head figures. The research shows that overall, only £34 will be released for each child, amounting to just £612,448 saved each year. Extraordinarily that is less than 10p per child per day. The loss of small schools grant and £3m additional transport costs for 648 eleven to thirteen year olds will produce an overall net loss. This doesn't include the additional transport requirements for those children of closing and amalgamating Primary schools, many of whom currently walk!

SNT said that despite requests for this information at consultation meetings, officers have so far failed to quantify the costs of reorganisation. SNT used data from the Scottish Schools Network, supplied by the National Association for Small Schools. This data is already two years old and therefore fuel price increases mean that the costs could easily be much higher.

Chairman of SNT Chris Welsford said: *"They have not done the basic maths. It is easy to say you will save money if you don't have to prove it. Alan Wells' says small schools get more than their fair share of the budget but that is meaningless rhetoric. Funding is needs based. Would he argue that we close St Marys hospital and transport patients to the mainland because funding care on the Island is too expensive and deprives mainland hospitals of their funding? Despite having had months to do so, he has not shown the public any evidence to support his argument that closing our small schools will provide a worthwhile rise in average spend per head. If he is now saying it's not the money then he needs to provide documentary evidence that his plans will raise standards. 61% of the schools he wants to close are community schools judged to be good or better by Ofsted"*.

SNT have obtained information that shows Cllr Wells policy is completely at odds with Michael Gove the Conservative Shadow Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families who said recently, of current Government education policy: *"Our children, in consequence, are now being educated in schools which aren't really community schools, in any meaningful sense of the word community, they're increasingly homogenised locations for delivering the same, centrally-agreed product, in the same, centrally-directed, fashion. We don't have a good local school in every community, we have moved to something closer to a Starbucks-style outlet delivering pre-packaged learning"*.

Mr Welsford said that he agreed with Michael Gove's comments: *"Mr Gove could easily have been describing Cllr Wells' plans to close small community based schools on the Isle of Wight in this speech. Cllr Wells needs to wake up and smell the coffee but preferably not in a new Starbucks-style school of the future, having wasted millions of pounds of council tax-payers money to get there! "*

Ends.

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