

Appendix B – Public Meetings Notes

Note of Public Meeting held at Wilton Primary School – 13th September 2016

16 persons were in attendance comprising parents of pupils from Spectrum Support and staff from Spectrum Support.

The meeting was chaired by Councillor Sandy Aitchison – Portfolio Holder for Education. The panel comprised Donna Manson - Service Director Children and Young People, Christian Robertson – Senior Lead Officer Inclusion and Additional Needs, Sarah Fitch – Manager Complex Needs and Claire Turnbull – Headteacher Wilton Primary. The panel gave a presentation and answered questions.

Points raised by the meeting attendees were:

All attendees were very positive about the facility being provided and valued the investment.

Parents were reassured that the curriculum being offered to their children in the current provision would be continued. For example, access to a pool for swimming would continue and how best to deliver this will be discussed on an individual basis. Parents were advised that the new school would be right next to the primary school and a five minute walk from the High School. The walk to the high school is through a safe pedestrian route and there are plans for a new playground area to be shared with the new school and the primary school. This would allow the children to be outside in a safe environment. Both the primary school and high school are excited to be welcoming this new purpose built school to their community and looking forward to establishing close links.

A number of queries relating to transport and previous issues were raised. Donna Manson highlighted that Scottish Borders Council is to provide a plan for transport door to door for each of the individual children. It is important that there is a detailed plan and a backup plan with transport particularly for those with additional needs. Mrs Manson gave assurance that over the coming months the individual timetable will be discussed with families.

Mrs Manson also spoke about difficulties when weather affected travel and highlighted that localised decisions will be made working in partnership with bus companies and taxi services to ensure minimum disruption where possible and a commitment was made to improve arrangements for Additional Support Needs Pupils as part of the Emergency Plan.

Questions were raised regarding staffing provision and ratios as well as pupil numbers.

Reassurance was given that the existing staff from Wilton and St Ronan's Spectrum Support Provision will be relocated to the new purpose built school in Earlston. There is to be no reduction in the number of staff. The children receiving support from Wilton and St Ronan's will transfer to the new school and it is also hoped that a child currently receiving provision out with the authority may attend the school perhaps one day a week. As the school is established it is expected that new applications would be received but these would only be accepted if it meets the needs of the child. Perhaps an additional five children could be accommodated but if so the school would be staffed accordingly.

It was highlighted that by establishing the building as a school Scottish Borders would be able to attract National Groups/Bodies to use the school in the evenings to meet and provide support for parents.

During the summer there may be the same number of children or a new intake. Children have different needs, it may be they are placed in their local mainstream school or have some time in each.

When asked about the planned management structure, it was identified that there is a need to look very carefully at this, at what other specialist schools have in place and what we currently have before making a decision about this.

A local elected member commented on this being about the children and a key issue is that this is purpose built for a reason. He felt that the centralised location of this school made complete sense in this case. Councillor Aitchison added that he appreciates that centralised locations can cause difficulties for outlying areas and highlighted events where this can cause some difficulty for these schools attending.

Parents were informed that they would be able to make visits to the facility in advance of the opening.

Following the meeting, parents attending reported being reassured by what they had heard and by the responses to their questions. A report in the local paper quoted a family likewise.

Note of Public Meeting held at St.Ronan's Primary School – 15th September 2016, 7-9pm

Members of the public present - 0

The meeting was to be chaired by Councillor Sandy Aitchison – Portfolio Holder for Education. The panel comprised Donna Manson - Service Director Children and Young People, Christian Robertson – Senior Lead Officer Inclusion and Additional Needs, Sarah Fitch – Manager Complex Needs and Keith Belleville, Headteacher of St.Ronan's Primary School

Noted that the meeting had been publicised in the local press, online through Scottish Borders Council website and notifications were issued by the school via letter to notify parents of the meeting. Donna Manson would have provided an overview of the background to the proposal as set out in the proposal paper. The proposal is to discontinue the Spectrum support provision at St.Ronan's Primary School and relocate the children using the facility to the new ASN build in the village of Earlston.

Due to there being no attendees no issues were raised.

Staff remained on site until 8pm

Note of Public Meeting held at Earlston Primary School – 14th September 2016

18 persons were in attendance comprising parents of pupils from Spectrum Support, staff from Spectrum Support, staff from Earlston High School and members of the local community.

The meeting was chaired by Councillor Sandy Aitchison – Portfolio Holder for Education. The panel comprised Donna Manson - Service Director Children and Young People, Christian Robertson – Senior Lead Officer Inclusion and Additional Needs, Sarah Fitch – Manager Complex Needs, Susan Graham – Headteacher Earlston Primary and Justin Sinclair – Headteacher Earlston High School. The panel gave a presentation and answered questions.

Points raised by the meeting attendees were:

Attendees were positive about the facility being provided and complimentary of the design.

Points and queries raised were:

A parent asked - with regards to Early Intervention, is there going to be a nursery provision? The response was that there is no barrier to providing nursery provision but the individual children's needs would have to be considered. Transport for the child would also need to be taken into account and as currently, there would be discussion with families to find the best model for the child whether it be local provision or specialist provision.

There was a question about whether in relation to the proposal document page 16 which states *"A purpose built learning environment which provides our children and young people with profound and complex needs with an environment which will support their learning and wellbeing"*, whether there would be children attending with a broader range of difficulties than currently.

Mrs Manson replied that it is interesting how some families label their child where as other don't wish this and that this building is seen as a safe, secure managed environment with staff who are highly trained, who focus on meeting challenges and accept that some children don't fit into a simple box. This descriptor is to capture the families that fall into the gaps. However reassurance was given that rather than a dilution of the service, the establishment of this school is a great enhancement to the current provision in Scottish Borders.

The capacity of the building being 50 was questioned. There are 3 classrooms that can accommodate about 8 children in each depending on the activity. However, this provision could be made available beyond the school day for National Groups to use as it is a safe environment with purpose built playground which could provide a chat/social session for parents and children. Spectrum Outreach Teachers might want to use this building to bring the children together on occasion and it is a flexible resource which has space to be this way ie. Other groups of children could use the building at different times.

Reassurance about the relationship with mainstream settings was sought and it was confirmed that the school nearest home will always be the mainstream school and wherever the child is enrolled for mainstream, that school takes control of the Child Support Plan but works jointly with the spectrum staff to support the child and parents.

Parents asked when the school would open and concern was raised about transition planning and transport issues.

Transitional plans which will be put in place and will involve families were described. It was explained Education do not have ownership of transport but in the audience was a Transport Officer who was recording concerns over transport. Carla Upton confirmed that she recently took up post and is committed

to improving the service and working closely with Education is looking at developing a 3/5 year plan to provide better continuity of service and staffing.

When asked about staffing ratios, Mrs Manson replied that changes are not anticipated but there is a wish to ensure the resource is more mobile and equitable. If rolls do change, a more flexible allocation of staff may be needed. Scottish Borders ratios are better than other local authorities/organisations. The ratio of staff to children during a day depends on the child's needs and the activity that they are doing.

In closing, Justin Sinclair confirmed that the Earlston community are very supportive of the schools in their village and he knew that the community would welcome the new school.

Susan Graham added that Earlston Primary School is really looking forward to establishing close working links with the new school. Staff and children alike are excited to have a new school right next door.

Councillor Aitchison closed the meeting by asking two ladies in the public meeting if they could remember their time at school in Earlston. The ladies commented that Education has changed somewhat since then but stated Education in Earlston had always had a good reputation.