

**Leicester City Council
Children and Young People's Services**

Riverside Business and Enterprise College Consultation

Minutes of meeting with Riverside Parents

Held on 15th June 2009, 6.30 to 8.50pm

Seating laid out for 140 people. Estimated total number present: 120.

Approximately 68 adults present including:

Parents

Allan Dunsmore(Headteacher) (Chairing the meeting)

Gareth Williams.....Vice Principal

Cllr Suleman

Cllr Coley

Peter Flack.....NUT

Support our Schools campaigner

Officers from Leicester City Council present:

Rachel Dickinson(Strategic Director, Children)

Trevor Pringle(Divisional Director, Planning & Commissioning)

Margaret Libreri.....(Divisional Director, Learning Services)

Helen Ryan(Divisional Director, Transforming the Learning Environment)

Jenny Vickers.....(Learning Services)

Jane Pierce(Directorate Support Manager & Minute Taker)

Danielle Williams.....(Participation Lead Officer, Access, Inclusion and Participation) (Part meeting)

Allan Dunsmore opened the meeting and asked parents to hold onto questions until after the officers had finished speaking.

Trevor Pringle and fellow officers introduced themselves.

Trevor Pringle spoke about the purpose of the meeting and how this had come about.

Background to the meeting

Earlier this year only 29 pupils expressed a wish to come to Riverside in September 2009 as a Year 7 pupil.

As a result Cabinet members of the City Council had asked that a review of the School be undertaken.

Following this review and a review of range of possible options it has been recommended that there are strong educational, financial and business reasons to move to close Riverside Business and Enterprise College as soon as practicably possible.

This recommendation is based upon a Business Case and Councillors have agreed that a consultation exercise be conducted on this and views be sought on this matter.

Parents were advised that this meeting gave them an opportunity to raise issues with officers in Children's Services and decide on their response to the consultation.

Trevor Pringle emphasised four key points that were important to bear in mind at this point:

1. No decision has been taken to close the school at this point in time.
2. Until such a decision is taken the City Council will continue to admit pupils to the School where parents express a preference for Riverside. (Letter, 19.5.09)
3. The City Council has, in conjunction with Schools Forum, made additional financial provision to support the continued operation of the School in 2009/10 and 2010/11 (Letter 19.5.09) – this is a significant commitment of £800k in each of these years.
4. There is no intent to close Riverside immediately and, if closure should ultimately be agreed by Cabinet, then closure would only occur in a *planned and phased fashion*. In this event, the City Council would work with staff and trade unions to secure the best outcomes for pupils and staff at the School.

(At this point, a parent interjected “**Since you are throwing money at another school, why are you not for this one?**” Mr Dunsmore asked parents to allow officers to finish their presentation of the issues and process involved before asking questions.)

Trevor Pringle explained that the format of the meeting was designed to:

1. Provide information on the process being followed and key issues from the business case
2. Allow parents to ask questions and receive answers in connection with the business case and associated questionnaire
3. Provide a final summary of process and advise how parent's responses may be made

Provision of information on the consultation process

Trevor Pringle advised that the process being followed is that detailed in recent letters to Riverside parents

- Letters dated 07.05.09, 18.05.09 and 29.05.09

Parents were advised that the City Council had also written to the school governing body, all Riverside school staff and a wide range of other consultees.

All letters and questionnaires to Riverside parents have been sent via Royal Mail to registered home addresses.

Copies of the business case are available in School, public libraries and for download at www.leicester.gov.uk/riversideconsultation

Copies of all letters to parents and staff, questionnaires and background materials are available at www.leicester.gov.uk/riversideconsultation

The consultation process being followed reflects guidance issued by the DCSF.

This consultation is the first stage of a formal 5 stage process that the City Council must follow if it determines to close Riverside Business and Enterprise College.

Stage 1 = Consultation runs from 01.06.09 – 10.07.09

The meeting was advised that the City Council is consulting widely on this matter – details can be found in the letter of 29 May 2009

The City Council will publish what people say in response to this consultation in the early autumn – most likely September 2009. At this point a report will also be prepared for Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet on the consultation and next steps.

At this subsequent Cabinet meeting City Councillors will need to take a decision on whether or not to proceed to the next stage of this process i.e.

Stage 2 = Decision to publish Statutory Notice & Detailed Proposal

OR follow an alternative course of action

If a Statutory Notice and Detailed Proposal is published then there will be a further 6 week period to receive representations.

This Statutory Notice and Detailed Proposal would provide a lot of detail re the nature of any closure, timings and alternative provision for pupils etc.

This **representation period is the 3rd stage** in the 5 stage process.

This representation period would be the final opportunity for parents, staff and other organisations to express their views for consideration.

Upon completion of the six week period (**Stage 3**) for representations a further report would go to another meeting of Cabinet seeking a final **decision** upon this matter (**Stage 4**).

Implementation would follow thereafter (**Stage 5**)

Having outlined the nature of the consultation process Trevor Pringle drew attention to differing perspectives on the business case and the importance of receiving parental views on this matter.

Different views on the business case

Trevor Pringle advised parents that the City Council were aware that not everyone agrees with everything that is in the business case.

For example, the school governing body had disputed comments about management and educational standards in the School. The school Governing Body's views were included in full, unedited on the City Council consultation web site for download. The governing body's views had already been reported to City Councillors and an assurance was given that the Council will continue to draw their attention to these views in any future report.

Parents were advised that the City Council had already met with staff at the School on 9 June 2009 and received their views upon this matter. A further meeting had already been held with governing body on 11 June 2009. The views of parents were now being sought on this matter.

Trevor Pringle briefed the meeting on the key financial and business issues within the business case.

Key issue - Financial matters

Trevor Pringle advised the meeting of the following.

“Basically - the amount of money that Riverside gets depends on the number of pupils at the School.

Fewer pupils means less money is received.

Less money means that the School will find it increasingly difficult to employ sufficient staff and have money to spend on children’s education and learning.

This year only 29 pupils expressed a wish to come to Riverside School in September 2009. The School can take up to 180.

As a direct result of this Riverside School is now facing a serious financial situation as a result of low pupil numbers.

In 2007/08 the School received an extra £250k.

In 2008/09 the School received an extra £300k.

In 2009/10 the School predict that they will need an extra £815k.
This is predicted to be the same in 2010/11.

Money comes from a government grant. From April 2010 however it is likely that there will not be enough money to support Riverside School at this current level without reducing the money given to other City schools.

National guidance suggests that local authorities should review the viability of schools in this financial position.

Key issue - Business matters

Pupil numbers at Riverside are declining.

Only 29 pupils have registered initially to attend Year 7 from 1.9.09. This has now reduced to 26. Riverside has 35% of all places empty and 85% of places empty in Year 7.

Government guidance says that local authorities should consider closing schools where a school has a quarter or more (i.e. 25%) places unfilled.

Key issue – Educational matters

Margaret Libreri described the educational reasons and two key judgements which had significant impact on the school:

1. That the school is considered to be underperforming as the number of young people getting 5 A*-C including English and Maths is well below the national target of 30%
2. On progress made – the judgement is that young people at Riverside make less progress than other young people nationally, based on 2008 results.

Margaret acknowledged that staff have worked hard and that the school may get better results this summer; however the business case has to refer to 2008 published results just as the last Ofsted inspection in February 2007 referred to exam results in 2006.

Parent “What about the comparison with local schools rather than national?”

(Allan Dunsmore reminded that the meeting of the importance of giving all parents an opportunity to speak and allowing officers to reply. This meant that the meeting must be done in an orderly manner in order that everyone can have their chance to speak.)

Margaret Libreri responded to the question above, explaining that there are four other schools below the floor target in Leicester but long term results needed to be considered as well. Government expectation is that schools must be performing above 30% and continuing to improve, and as previously stated by Trevor Pringle, this will be difficult for Riverside because of falling numbers.

Margaret Libreri stressed that the school is heading for an improvement this year but that continued improvement will be difficult and the school's capacity to continue to improve in the long term is at risk.

Allan Dunsmore explained the process to parents and the fact that the School hoped to achieve 34% A* - C at GCSE this year.

Open format – questions and answers

Parent:

“I think you’ve had this [closure] on the cards for the last 2 years and I know you won’t tell me the truth now but decisions aren’t made overnight. If you think the school is that bad, it reflects on the teachers – so you are saying the teachers are bad. My daughter has been here for 4 years and she’s doing well. You’re throwing money at Fullhurst School which is failing, the county schools are full. Fullhurst is full and continuing to fail. I’m angry about it. 4 years ago I lost my appeal [for the school of my choice] and my daughter came here. I was grateful I lost my appeal.

What about continuity for the children?”

Trevor Pringle stated he’d been watching the young people’s video before the meeting which was very creative and that he knew many young people within the Riverside School enjoyed the School. He added that the Council had invested for more than the above 2 year period and the City Council and School had hoped to see an improvement in the numbers of parents choosing to send their children to this school but that unfortunately this hasn’t happened.

“Not everyone understands [the implications] – I don’t believe that only 29 children want to come here. I personally believe we’re going through the motions”.

Trevor Pringle acknowledged comments from the floor, the pupils DVD and those views expressed in other meetings that there were unfortunately deep-seated views about the perception of the school in the community and that this was unfortunate.

A parent commented that the west side of Leicester is short-changed.

A parent described his children’s experience of Riverside and said that one is now at University with another at Gateway College. He said it was very hard that the Headteacher can’t be made permanent. At Fullhurst, the teachers don’t want to teach and at New Parks there is capacity for 1,800 pupils but only 900 are there at the minute. Does the council expect our children to go to failing schools?

Why is the Council not promoting Riverside?

Another parent said, “I have 3 boys, 1 in year 10, 1 in University and one in year 5 primary. His son was at Riverside when there were lots of issues at the school but the school has got better and regardless of what the targets say, the school is improved. My child in primary school now, should I get him to join here, at year 7?”

Another parent said “I didn’t apply for this school, I was sent a letter to say it was allocated to me – what I don’t understand is, where are you placing the 151 additional pupils?”

Trevor Pringle responded that allocation is on the basis of parental choices and their three preferences expressed. Trevor Pringle explained the nature of the admissions process, the City Council’s duty to meet parental preference wherever possible and its high performance across the Midlands to this effect. Regrettably parents were choosing to go to other schools for a range of reasons.

Even with the first choice, where are the 151 going?

Trevor Pringle replied that Admissions Service has a published list of criteria and that the Council can’t direct parents to send their children to a particular school. Children are going to schools across the city and it is ultimately down to preference. In fact only 16 out of 29 children who had registered to come to Riverside in September 2009 had identified Riverside as their first preference.

This still doesn’t explain the 151 children who haven’t been placed yet. This year, at my school, I know that lots of parents have been awarded places and this has never happened before.

Trevor Pringle once again reiterated the City Council’s need to adhere to published admissions policy arrangements and asserted that the council cannot direct the children into particular schools. In response to a further question from the floor Trevor Pringle advised that those who don’t get their preference have the right to go through an independent appeals process. During the mid term transfer process, the Council typically offer up to 4-5 schools in the city which usually have vacancies; this includes Riverside and if there is a gap in the school in the relevant year group and parents wish to go there then a placement offer is made.

When they (Local Authority) made Riverside a “super-school” then it was in trouble – all over the county super-schools are not working.

Allan Dunsmore explained that, in 1999, Riverside was formed as a super-school together with New College and Hamilton.

It brought together too many cultural backgrounds.

How come parents have rung Admissions and Riverside hasn’t even been on the list of options at Admissions?

Trevor Pringle responded that he’d heard similar statements from members of staff and that he had asked for details to allow the investigation of individual circumstances. This matter was being explored by Helen Ryan. Trevor Pringle assured parents that the Council would not turn children away from Riverside if they wished to go there and there was a vacancy in the relevant year group. Trevor Pringle asked that parents direct any specific issues to his colleague, Helen Ryan, who would then investigate.

So, if we rang [admissions] tomorrow, there’d be places available?

Trevor Pringle responded “Yes”.

(They are admitting this week, because I've tried – comment from the floor)

A parent said, “there is no chance of my children going to New College because all the teachers are drafted in and can't speak English. Will my children have to go to an under-performing school where ½ the teachers can't speak English, so where would my children go?”

Trevor Pringle reiterated that no decision has been made to close the school, but in the consultation, the council are asking about their areas of concern and the things that Leicester City Council can do to help parents. Trevor Pringle urged parents to put their queries and concerns on the questionnaire.

Parent asked, “What is the council's plan for the use of the land after closure of the school? The East Midlands Regional plan gives housing numbers and the government have allocated 25,600 new houses but the council has opted to increase the number to 39,800. The council will make a lot of money off the sale of land.”

Rachel Dickinson responded that in the time she has been at Leicester City Council, (having been appointed to Strategic Director, Investing in Children, from Derby) just over two weeks, that the Council is looking at the business case for Riverside and the land is not a factor in this issue. “This city like any other city does have targets but the concern is about pupil numbers and educational outcomes for children in the local authority. I have not heard anything of the issues you are indicating.”

My child's educational needs were not met at Fullhurst and since coming to Riverside they've flourished. If this school is closed what are the opportunities for special needs children? Where do I send my son if the school is closed?

Trevor Pringle drew parent's attention back to the fact that any such decision involves a five stage process and if a decision is made at Cabinet to close the school, then detailed proposals will need to be drawn up at the next stage and these will include proposals for children with special educational needs.

It still makes it an awkward decision as to whether to start our children here at this school.

Allan Dunsmore empathised, describing the situation like being “between a rock and a hard place and if you start the consultation on closure it's a self-fulfilling prophesy to close”.

My son has autistic spectrum and was at a flagship county school which failed him miserably, but thanks to this school he is doing well. [If closure happened], he would likely be excluded [at another school] since special educational needs provision in this city as a whole is abysmal. I'd choose home education above any other school in this city. What happens to children with special educational needs? In a school not too far away from here, they are not doing well and don't learn a thing.

I left Riverside last year and every year I was here it improved. Leicester City Council is not making people aware enough of the improvements. For those parents who have not expressed a preference, why not send the children here?

Trevor Pringle responded to the latter point that Leicester City performs extremely well within the Midlands at meeting parental preference and where people do not indicate a preference are written to as part of the process and reminded that they need to express a preference.

What percentage of parents in the city did not express a preference?

Trevor Pringle responded that he did not have that statistic to hand however, "In Leicester City, between 86 and 92% of parents get their first choice placement depending upon the sector. This is the best performance in the Midlands."

Has the catchment area of Riverside changed in the last 2-3 years?

Trevor Pringle replied that neither the catchment nor the priority for Riverside School has changed and that residence within either did not guarantee a place at any particular school.

What about our preference? Are we going to be listened to if we say no to closure?"

Trevor Pringle assured parents that their views expressed will be drawn to the attention of Cabinet and Children's Services Scrutiny as it is a political decision and it is important that elected members are fully informed.

£11m is being spent on agency staff but we can't fund a school – you are putting a price on our child's education and value.

Approximately 2 years ago, we received a letter that indicated maybe Riverside was putting together an all through school, with the infant and junior schools. Is there no will from the Infant and Junior schools to refer parents to Riverside because they don't want closure either?

What are you doing in the next 2 years to protect the teachers? I took my daughter out of this school as soon as the news broke. How many teachers are leaving this school?

We are not giving any incentive for pupils to stay or for teachers to stay.

If you knew children were not coming here to Riverside, why didn't you put money into the school at that time to make it more attractive?

Trevor Pringle responded, "this consultation is part of a process to enable members take an informed decision. In the Frequently asked questions, there is a section about what the Council would do to retain teachers and skills in the event of closure. Like other authorities the City Council would look to develop a range of retention packages including salary enhancements and secondments. Trevor Pringle reminded parents however that the City Council was not at that stage yet and advised parents to look at the Frequently Asked Questions part of the Business Case where a number of these issues were addressed. The Headteacher was asked to make this available to parents who wished to look at this specific part of the business case.

(Allan Dunsmore stated, "The School will continue to improve and we'll hit the 34% target* and to do that I need the co-operation of everyone. I've lost 7 teachers, of which 3 were going anyway and I've replaced them. I guarantee there will be no let-off in Standards. I will be the last person out if this school does close. Those here will bust a gut for the children in this school because they deserve it."

* Mr Dunsmore qualified his statement about achieving 34% in the next year in year 10.)

With regard to the question about relationships with local primary schools and previous statements about an all through school influencing such heads recommendations to their parents for schools for secondary transfer, Trevor Pringle responded that he had heard this view expressed now in a number of meetings. This will be recorded as part of the consultation record and draw to the attention of elected members. Ultimately however at the end of the day parents were able to express a preference based on a range of factors that were important to them.

Will you keep those children here or if the children have to travel, will LCC pay their travel expenses? You've got to re-educate them close to where they live. We only live up the road now and although it's a busy road to cross its fine but if we've got to get him to another school...

Trevor Pringle responded that the Riverside School Governors too were raising this as an issue as well and that consideration of this type of issue would need to be contained within any Detailed Proposal if a decision to proceed is taken. Attention was again drawn to the FAQ section of the Business Case and Trevor Pringle read out the section in connection with this (Section 13).

But you have children going to school in their local community and you're going to break it up.

Trevor Pringle responded that unfortunately local parents are themselves not sending their children to Riverside School.

If schools are full elsewhere, why not bring them here to Riverside?

Trevor Pringle again reminded the meeting that the City Council had to respond to parental preference and could not simply direct parents to schools. It was important to understand parents' views and those of young people in this matter.

At this point, Trevor Pringle introduced Danielle Williams who will be working with pupils and young people over the next fortnight to give them the opportunity to respond on the Business Case and talk about issues that they may be concerned about , such as travel and bullying.

My grandchildren are happy in school and that's an achievement. I read your document and I hardly recognise this school in your business case. Quoting from the business case "...fragility in leadership in some subjects...progress unsatisfactory over the last 3 years..." Why was this not picked up earlier? As a council you should pick it up straightaway.

Trevor Pringle responded that the City Council had, in addition to the additional resources mentioned earlier in the meeting provided a wide range of support to the school in terms of the curriculum and leadership and management. In response to a further point from the floor about the quality of the Riverside buildings Helen Ryan confirmed that Riverside still featured in Leicester City Council's Building Schools For the Future plans and had been previously identified as a re-build project.

I'm not a parent but I am a member of "support our schools" campaign:

What are the costs to close the school?

If no decision has been made to close the school, then what are the alternatives? You could make it a more inclusive school – why are you not considering the alternatives?

Trevor Pringle responded by describing the six different options explored in the business case

- a) Maintain status quo with the probability that the School will continue to decline, become unviable and be categorised as failing by OfSTED.
- b) Provide continued increased financial and other support to the School to ensure it remains viable and achieves sufficient improvements.
- c) Federate with a school that is judged to be good or better on the basis of an OfSTED inspection and pupil performance and implement revised governance, leadership and management arrangements.

- d) Establish flexible collaborative arrangements amongst other local authority maintained schools.
- e) Continue to explore the option of Riverside becoming part of a collaborative Academy and other potential Academies in the City.
- f) Consult upon phased school closure.

Trevor Pringle advised the meeting that:

- (a) was not supported by any stakeholder
- (b), (c) and (d) was supported by school governors, staff and trades unions
- (e) was supported by the school governing body but opposed by staff and unions
- (f) was not supported by any stakeholder

You talk about the “under-performing” school in your report and I don’t see that. My girl went to school in the county and was bullied. And she came here without an option ...you talk about 36% of kids come here as mid-term transfers and cause turbulence. She loves coming here and she’s doing alright despite her being one of the children who is causing turbulence. What does that mean? How do you qualify how this turbulence impacts on other children in the school?

Trevor Pringle advised that each year in Leicester around 3,000 children transfer schools due to a number of reasons:

- Movement around the City
- Movement into the city etc
- Things not working out

and “turbulence” is the term described commonly used by City teachers in a wide range of City schools who experience this. In some City schools sometimes up to 50% of the children who start the year in a particular class are not the same ones who end it.

There was no other place for my daughter to go and Riverside has done a bloody good job.

If the school is not the worst educationally in the city, then why close it? We’ve got three more children queuing up to go to Riverside. We don’t want them to take buses across town; we want them to walk to school.

We’re in BSF phase 2 or 3 now and according to the business plan we’ll be in phase 6. We’ll need a new school [for the city] in 5 years time, so why are you closing Riverside down?

Your Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not correct according to the Department for Children, Schools and Families and legally it doesn’t stand [as a document] so your consultation is flawed.

Trevor Pringle once again revisited the matter of parental preference, low numbers, financial concerns and the need for the City Council to consider closure under the DSCF guidance mentioned at the start of the meeting.

With regard to the issues relating to EIA Trevor Pringle responded that the current consultation complies with DCSF guidelines and the initial EIA within the report was designed to draw members and readers attention to key issues for consideration. Trevor Pringle advised that upon the completion of the current consultation the City Council will be more informed about people views and concerns and that this will enable a more fulsome assessment to be undertaken as part of a future report.

Where is the local Councillor? Can he not be bothered to come here to our meeting?

Officers were unable to comment on this particular point however Margaret Libreri advised that herself and Jenny Vickers would be attending a ward meeting tomorrow (16.6.09) at which the relevant councillors would be present.

We're the local constituents; please pass on our question as to why the local councillor isn't here."

At New College, the numbers are dwindling from 1,800 to 900 and it's the same scenario [as Riverside] but the City council is pouring money into that school and they are wasting money at Fullhurst. My young daughter said to me, thanks for ruining my life, Dad". It's because of councillors and Leicester City Council people taking these decisions. Have you had a consultation with the pupils?

Gareth Williams spoke about the adult questionnaire being made child-friendly, that it had been discussed at the Student Council today and changes had been made.

I'm concerned that there will be leading questions with answers being directed.

Trevor Pringle showed a copy of the young people's questionnaire to the audience and described the additional text on the back and stating that the questions were simply expanded to make them more understandable. They were not leading questions. Trevor Pringle added that the Council had a duty to listen to what the young people think of the future and that they are entitled to have their say and that their views will be presented as part of any subsequent report.

The way this has been dealt with is disgusting – I can't understand how there is an additional cost of £800k since the numbers of children are going down?

Trevor Pringle replied that it was the cost of providing a full curriculum.

I've got 2 boys at school in years 7 and 9 and my third son is one of the "29". We live off Wigston Lane which is within walking distance. Lots of local primary schools have severe hangups in recommending their year 6 to go to Riverside. I've taken it up with a senior teacher (not the Headteacher) in Montrose and asked why Montrose doesn't like Riverside? The senior teacher claimed not to be aware of the issue. My son is one of only 2 children at Montrose who are coming to Riverside.

Montrose promotes Lancaster Boys and Leysland High School and [another school] but not Riverside. The reason was that no teachers or Riverside representatives come to Montrose to promote Riverside. I wish that the Council and Riverside would promote itself more effectively than it has done in the past and I hope it's not too late. This school is well loved by all. It should be promoted to Montrose and Granby.

Allan Dunsmore replied, "That scenario has been evident for many years and we've had very few resources to promote transitional work. Montrose and Granby have never been the highest senders of children to this school and you could argue we haven't promoted it enough.

Teacher: My remit is to do transition work and I have been to both Granby and Montrose – both Headteachers are anti- Riverside.

By the time my son comes here, the school would be re-built if we'd been further up the list and we wouldn't be having this conversation tonight because if you'd invested in this school 2-3 years ago, you'd never be closing the school down.

Helen Ryan responded that it was a difficult one to comment on and that new schools are attractive for parents. Parents make their decisions however on a range of factors. Helen Ryan confirmed the BSF funding envelope (£240m) and that she had not been in posts at the time when decisions about the sequencing of schools had been decided upon.

Money is being ploughed into Fullhurst and even if it nose-dived you wouldn't close it [because it's a new school].

Pupil: What are your plans to keep the school open?

Trevor Pringle responded that the City Council had had to work with the independent School's Forum and argue the corner to make £800k funding available to keep Riverside going. This money is allocated from the dedicated schools grant and its deployment at Riverside was not automatic nor guaranteed by any means.

What are you going to do?

Trevor Pringle responded that in addition to the additional funds discussed earlier in the meeting there is a whole raft of measures that colleagues in Learning Services have been undertaking. A further £700k of extra funding comes into the school for a range of curriculum measures and there are a range of things happening.

If building work on this school was accelerated over the next 2 years it would renew the interest in the school and make it a more popular and sustainable school. And the emphasis is on sustainable communities.

In the report, it makes reference to the issue of the river flooding over the road and I can only remember one week in the last 4 years where it was an issue. And if it was such an issue, you wouldn't have planned BSF investment.

Why not accelerate the rebuilding of this school to make it more attractive and pull people in?

Trevor Pringle responded that these observations would be included in the consultation outcome report.

Any plans for consultation with prospective parents?

At Fullhurst, they've built a school centre for non-academic pupils if they did a similar thing here it would raise the school.

Allan Dunsmore responded that the idea for the Braunstone School Centre actually started in Riverside, but because the BCA funded the centre, it needed to be built on a Braunstone site and hence is located at Fullhurst.

Allan Dunsmore commented: Perhaps the Council could consider building a school centre here at Riverside.

Trevor Pringle reiterated the nature of the current consultation and the coverage, including prospective parents in all other City Schools.

How are you monitoring the feedback to the consultation?

Trevor Pringle replied that officers will be collecting all the consultation responses including those from individual forms, online questionnaires and opinion and feedback form sessions like these. They will be compiled and included in a report to our elected members in September – they will be

put before the Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet. Trevor Pringle assured parents that the City Council would report accurately on what people have said in the consultation.

What contingency plans have you if you have a mass exodus of children from this school? What if we give a vote of no-confidence? What if we decided en masse to home educate our children?

What's the reason to pump in £800k a year?

Allan Dunsmore replied that the money is needed to maintain staffing levels.

Parent said, "thanks to Allan Dunsmore and his staff for acting with the greatest dignity for what must be for them a total nightmare, unlike the Councillors and officers of Leicester City Council.

The business case is a series of assertions to reach a conclusion that's already been decided. The document circulated (on peach paper) tonight is untrue. There is nonsense in this business case.

[If you were basing judgement on] educational standards – on that basis you'd be closing ½ the school s in the city. [Parent described her children's educational achievements]. My 14 year old daughter was traumatised when she read the Leicester Mercury and came home to me to ask why the school was closing and I had no idea. Letters had been distributed at school and not gone by Royal Mail.

Is there a guarantee that this school will be open in 2011 - which are the two years of my child's GCSEs and the most important of her life?

The business case – where are the risks and the mitigation against those risks, where is the scoring? There is nothing about risks, nothing mentioned.

I want to know:

- 1. How much money is spent on Specialist consultants to deal with Fullhurst?**
- 2. Babington has 132 unfilled places – can they expect to be the next to be closed down?**
- 3. What about the additional costs – I would need to be appointed with an additional worker because my daughter will become truant. I'm fuming – I shouted at Ross Willmott because I was fuming and I was called rude and ignorant. I'm proud of everyone here, and perhaps we should have voiced the good things about this school before. Councillors don't care, with the exception of the Liberal Democrats at the back. I'm appalled at the position this council have put me and my child in. It's a disgrace.**

Jenny Vickers acknowledged attainment levels of parent's children and congratulated them, but said that overall the data tells us that too many children are not doing well enough.

Margaret Libreri added that it sounded like the parents attending tonight had children who have had a very good experience of the school and had done very well, however she reminded parents that at the start she had emphasised it is about the overall progress and the continued progress of the school.

The key figures are that 2/3 of children between KS3 and GCSE are not making the expected two levels of progress in maths. 9 out of 10 pupils did not make the expected progress between 2006 and 2008.

Allan Dunsmore added that the figures for this year are totally different but they are not the published figures and won't be finalised until August/September 2009.

Is Riverside the only school where poor figures apply?

Rachel Dickinson replied that the council has a responsibility to take into account both educational outcomes on the basis of latest figures available and low numbers of pupils and issues within the overall business case.

Any other secondary schools in the same position as Riverside in this City and are you looking to close them too?

Rachel Dickinson responded that Riverside is the only school facing such a combination of issues.

Allan Dunsmore added that with regard to standards other schools in the city are in a worst situation but with Riverside is in the school with the lowest number of 29 pupils entering year 7 in September 2009.

Trevor Pringle responded that he could not give the guarantee that the school will be open in 2011 – this is a matter for decision by Cabinet – however Schools Forum and Leicester City Council have given the funding to allow continued operation over the next two years. Trevor Pringle acknowledged that there are children in the school now within examination cohorts and that this is an issue that members will clearly need to consider carefully.

An assurance was given that this matter and the concerns expressed would be drawn to the attention of elected members.

I have two sons and this is damaging the reputation of Riverside – aren't you bothered?

Allan Dunsmore stated that Trevor Pringle and officer colleagues have been asked to do a specific job and he is not personally responsible for the decision. It is the councillors that are to be held accountable for that decision, not officers.

Council procedures are very complicated but if this is referred to the Scrutiny Committee, then you need to make sure you send in your questions to them.

Can we ask that Councillors have a meeting with us, the parents?

[Support our schools" campaigner] Since officers give advice to the Councillors and are the experts, I would say they are using the raw data but not interpreting it. They should go back to the data. What are the reasons for the fall in numbers and it is not all to do with quality. Go back to the Councillors and say there is a strong case to re-consider the decision. You have a moral and political responsibility to give a view. In my view it's been a convincing case to keep the school open.

Trevor Pringle stated there are many reasons why parents choose schools and we acknowledge comments from the floor to that effect. Trevor Pringle confirmed that the record of this present meeting will be available, that parent's views will be recorded and reported. He urged parents to complete and return questionnaires so their views can be captured and analysed. Trevor Pringle reminded meeting that the deadline is 10th July and responses received after that date will not be accepted.

Trevor Pringle reiterated that it is very important that members of the Cabinet who will take the decision are fully informed of parental views and concerns.

APPENDIX B

Allan Dunsmore suggested arranging a school meeting with parents to clarify issues and agree a collective response in addition to their individual responses. He also informed parents that there would be a series of workshops in the library during the week.

A parent stated that they came from Peterborough in October 2006 and his two children had done very well. Nowadays there is too much liberty for students and teachers have no authority.

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm.