

**DRAFT PRIMARY STRATEGY FOR CHANGE
CONSULTATION 4 – 31 JULY**

1. BACKGROUND

On 4 July 2008 a consultation exercise was launched to gain views on the draft Primary Strategy for Change document.

Views were sought from a variety of audiences with a number of mechanisms used to promote the consultation exercise including:-

- Council website – the draft Strategy, an executive summary, supporting information and a consultation response form were posted on the website. The information could be accessed via the homepage. A direct link to the documents was also emailed out directly to all schools with an invitation to Headteachers and staff to respond. This email was followed up by a further email from the Director of Children's Services urging Headteachers and staff to take the opportunity to respond, along with a poster advertising the strategy and the website.
- A direct mailing was sent out to all school Governors.
- Information was sent to the Diocese of Durham and the RC Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle.
- Information was also sent to Unison.
- A press release was issued for the general public and parents, advising that the strategy could be accessed via the website, in local libraries, in Council customer service centres or by telephoning the Council's contact centre for a copy to be posted out.
- Posters were displayed in local libraries advertising the strategy and where it could be accessed.
- Information was also made available on the Customer Service Centre bus at the Airshow.

2. RESPONSES

A total of nine response forms were received.

Additionally letters were received from Unison and The Diocese of Durham and an email response from a head teacher, indicating that they fully supported the strategy.

- Q1** Seven response forms received were from Governors (one of these respondents indicated that they were also a parent/carer). One of the responses received was from a Headteacher and a further response form was received from the RC Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle.

Responses came from various schools across the city:-

- Easington Lane Primary
- Hetton Lyons Primary
- Blackfell Primary
- Redby Primary
- Hylton Castle Primary
- Southwick Primary
- New Silksworth Infants
- Houghton Community Nursery & Bernard Gilpin School

Q2 Do you agree with the conclusions reached in part 2 of the strategy?

Yes = 8

No = 1 (no reason given)

Comments:-

The condition of Hylton Castle Primary School – school fabric – leaves much to be desired. The heating boiler is always at risk of failure during the winter – disruption of school period results. This cannot go on!

Especially health and childhood obesity, behavioural issues and condition of school buildings. Agree with baseline analysis and long term aims for next 14 years re:- new school buildings and improvements.

It is not possible to disagree with facts. However it should be noted that although many of the schemes e.g. Children's Centres came in within budgets. There were many cost-cutting exercises which reduced the ability of some settings to deliver as much as the community demands. On paper the analysis sounds very good but we should not be so congratulatory that we miss the areas of errors, waste and penny-pinching that have occurred.

All objectives are desirable and some essential.

The Diocese has been fully involved in the whole process. Discussions on surplus places were valuable and open. We agree fully with the conclusions reached.

Q3 Do you agree with the long term aims set out in part 3 of the strategy?

Yes = 8

No = 1 (no reason given)

Comments:-

Not all parents/carers of the children have a positive attitude and help their children, i.e. homework, interest in school subjects – their weaknesses etc) subsequently some children have a “couldn’t care very much attitude” towards core subjects – literacy, numeracy, science.

Especially to reduce surplus places and diversity of provision. Vital that schools are community facing schools, vital that schools maximise community usage, re-surplus. Healthy schools, modern school for 21st century, good facilities, ICT facilities etc.

All objectives are laudable but items 4, 5 and 6 are heavily dependent on social factors.

I firmly believe that what is being proposed is helpful to the long term vision of the council. However we must take into account changing factors that the DCSF have not taken account of when planning changes.

Fully agree.

Q4 Do you agree with the method for achieving those aims?

Yes = 7

No = 1 (no reason given)

Don't Know = 1

Comments:-

Especially to eradicate deficiencies in the condition of city's primary schools.

I am unsure of the effectiveness of some of the methods of achieving the aims. Using the DCSF method of calculating space is an out of date method that does not take account of the needs of an inclusive school nor an EYs provision where more space is required for the new EYFS curriculum than is allowed for in its out of date formula!

Fully agree.

Q5 Do you agree with the method used to identify the priority schools for the first two years of the strategy?

Yes = 7

No = 3

Comments:-

We fully agree and are delighted to see St Joseph's named as one of the two schools to be replaced in the first years.

I feel that Catholic Schools receive enough assistance from the Church.

I still maintain that Hylton Castle Primary School is a high priority – for a complete rebuild.

Providing that casual factors i.e. “recruitment of foreign nurses” can be fully justified.

The method used to identify priority schools is sound and well thought through. I agree with the increase of number and range of extended schools, and to expand community facilities. The £10m must be well spent.

Q6 Overall do you support the aims of the strategy?

Yes = 8

No = 1 (No reason given)

Comments:-

I support the aims of this strategy as they seem clear and to the point.

The strategy is necessary to produce an improvement in the economic and cultural potential of the area. The scale of the enterprise is vast and although at the present time funding is available; long term support for the plan may be less certain. A fall-back position should be identified.

Fully support.

Further comments received:-

- Document was not as clear as I would have liked, but as this is the first time I have given my comments to such a consultation document I hope my comments have been helpful. I would welcome any feedback on my comments.
- In particular for Hylton Castle Primary School the following are urgent needs:-
 - Nurture Group Funding
 - Capital Allocation to make older schools more attractive to young people and their families
 - Larger budgets to schools in deprived areas such as ours – to provide lower pupil/teacher ratios

- An audit review of the needs of schools – money allocated on a needs base e.g. decaying buildings, schools where repair bills for faulty boilers for example, impact on the allocation given to improving the environment, replacing furniture!
- Subsidies to encourage community use of school.
- We must be very careful when considering the removal of surplus places that we do not create a situation where we are unable to meet requirements of the DDA, Inclusion Agenda and EYFS.

Also federating schools could add to the stress levels on Headteachers which are already unacceptably high and result in more schools having difficulty recruiting senior leaders. Again the rhetoric is good but we must not forget to take account of the practical issues which could affect the successful implementation of the strategy.

- The consultation document is to my view overly comprehensive and charged with repetitive detail. Much patience is needed to negotiate the plethora of acronyms used. This leads to a breakdown in the rhythm of reading and creates much frustration to the readers.
- The Primary Strategy for Change has been prepared in an open and transparent way. Full consultation has taken place at school, governor and diocesan level.
- Overall I do support the strategy. Something needs to be done about the education in the city to bring not only the education standards but the building standards up to date. Too many of our buildings are falling to pieces and not enough is being spent on them to bring them back up to a workable standard. My only concern would be that schools which are not identified as a priority will be left and little funding will be given to them.

