

Minutes of a virtual Meeting (via zoom) and in the Council Offices of the Greenfields School (Sunnydale Site) Working Party held on Tuesday, 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2021.

Present: Councillor D Reynolds in the Chair  
Councillors K Ambrosini, S Quinn, S Townsend, L Cockfield, L Deakin, M Johnson,  
L Mather and D Childs

In attendance: T Bellas (Town Clerk)

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Graham and R Nicholson.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

None declared.

3. **To discuss a strategy to encourage residents to be part of the statutory consultation process on Greenfields School (Sunnydale Site)**

Cllr K Ambrosini provided a brief history of Greenfields School (Sunnydale Site) in terms of the deterioration of the school building, quality of secondary education and the number of students accessing the school as well as the potential impact on future students accessing secondary education in Shildon, leading up to the temporary closure of the site due to the results of a condition survey with students transferred to the Greenfields School at Newton Aycliffe.

Discussions were held on how to encourage parents/children/general public to be part of the consultation process on a proposal which would seek the views of members of the public on any decision to close Greenfield School (Sunnydale Site). Members of the Working party were aware that no decision had been made or solution proposed by Durham County Council at the time of the meeting.

The following Proposal and decisions were agreed to be **recommended** for consideration by the Town Council:-

a) Proposal

Shildon Town Council want to see a new, high quality secondary school built in Shildon that is of sufficient size to educate the young people of our town and the surrounding area.

The school will be modern, it will be well led and will inspire children to achieve and realise their full potential. A significant number of children in our town come from homes where there is high deprivation and a lack of aspiration; we want to nurture these children and help them to aspire and learn so that they can become fulfilled and enriched. We want them to feel a sense of pride in their town, and we believe that by giving them a brand new facility that can be utilised alongside existing facilities such

as the Athletics Track and the Leisure Centre will enhance their prospects in life and will encourage healthier and happier lifestyles.

### **Vision**

**School size** – The new school would need to be big enough to accommodate around 500 children. This is roughly the size of the secondary school at Staindrop. These children would come from Shildon, the Dene Valley villages, Middridge and potentially the Bishop Auckland and Newton Aycliffe areas.

**Leadership, governance and teaching** – The leadership team will have, and will demand, high standards by everyone that is involved in the school. This will be a brand new school with a new identity and a new outlook. The leadership team and governing body will not only promote high expectations for all, they will challenge staff and students to do their best, work hard and achieve well. High expectations will underpin everything, including excellent behaviour, good manners, high standards of appearance, punctuality and attendance. This will create an ethos of mutual respect and cooperation where children will feel safe and will thrive. They will be well cared for and nurtured. Taking a pride in themselves, their work, their school and their town will also be key.

**Transition and links with the primary schools** – Shildon currently has 3 primary schools: Timothy Hackworth Primary (Capacity 420), Thornhill Primary (Capacity 210) and St John's C of E Primary (Capacity 210). Two of these schools are graded as Outstanding by Ofsted and the other is graded as Good. In nearby Coundon Grange, little over a mile and a half away from Shildon, is Prince Bishops Primary School (Capacity 240) which is also graded as Outstanding. Given that these schools are attended by significant numbers of children living in high levels of deprivation, the schools are performing terrifically and are proving to be offering our children the highest standards of education possible. Therefore, it is our belief that the children of this town and the surrounding area should be offered that same level of secondary education. A new Shildon secondary school would have to forge immediate links with these primary schools and would need to offer children opportunities to visit and take part in activities so that the children feel comfortable going there. Information can then be gathered about children and their families so that positive bonds are forged and can be developed when children eventually move to their new school. Ideally, the children currently being educated in the town would move to this new school and would continue their friendships, as well as forming new ones.

**Healthy lifestyles and a greener way of life** – We have huge problems with our children being more inactive than ever before. Currently, secondary children in this town have no alternative but to travel by car, on buses or trains to school due to their schools being out of town. The current Sunnydale Campus site is located right next to Sunnydale Leisure Centre and a short distance from the Athletics Track. These facilities are of a high standard and should be utilised by the children of this town on a regular basis in order for children to become healthier and adopt more positive habits. A school in Shildon would mean that children from the town could then avoid having to use buses and other forms of transport; instead, they could walk or cycle to school. Initiatives and rewards could be offered and new and better habits formed. This would also be a contribution to our greener and more efficient world that we are all striving for.

**Summary**

Children get one chance at education and giving our children the best education is the best gift that we can give them. From the day they start their education, our children need to be taught to aim high and be resilient. They need to feel safe and know that their teachers and support staff trust them and believe in them. Their families also need support and need to know that they will be listened to and their opinions heard. Shildon is a wonderful town full of wonderful people and the potential here is endless. We need the children of this town to understand the importance of this town's history and how its future can be shaped by us all.

- b. Subject to (a) above agreed, that the Town Council prepare a survey to gauge public opinion on the position of the Town Council to retain secondary education in Shildon.
- c. Subject to (a) above agreed, that a communication strategy be produced in order to provide a framework to communicate and engage with the public.