

CONSULTATION MEETING HELD ON 15 NOVEMBER 2004

SHIPHAY PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY UNIT

The meeting was attended by about 70 people. The session began with a guided tour of the new buildings and a presentation from Elaine Gill, headteacher at Shiphay Primary School about the proposal. There then followed an open consultation session lasting 65 minutes with Cllr Lomas in the chair.

Bob (Parent)

This consultation seems to be back to front. The Council is consulting after the building has been finished. Why was consultation not carried out before building was started? There is a real risk that the building will become a white elephant.

Employee of Private Nursery

The LEA funding mechanism guarantees funding for empty places at Nursery Units attached to schools. This doesn't seem fair. This proposal will result in nurseries closing down and pre-schools closing down.

Representative of St Andrew's Pre-school

This Council is supposed to be short of money but it is planning to find money to open a new nursery when there are vacant places at local providers.

Parent

There was a meeting at the start of this process inviting other voluntary providers, including St Andrews, to offer wrap around care. Some parents can't use St Andrews because it doesn't offer wrap around care. This offer to collaborate with the school was refused and several other offers were also refused.

Georgina Gregory – Parent

My son attends private nursery before he joined Shiphay Primary School and as a parent, I would have welcomed another option to choose from with regard to pre-school education.

Employee of St Andrews Pre-school

The reason why parents expressed support for opening a nursery at the school is that they felt pressured into ticking the nursery option on the school's questionnaire because they feared they would not get a school place.

Elaine Gill – Headteacher Shiphay Primary School

Admission into the nursery and admission into the main school are separate issues. I deny that there was any pressure to tick the box in support of the nursery unit. The focus on the school's plans is on children and families and we would not want anyone to feel pressured into coming to Shiphay.

Lesley – Childminder

It is important that parents have choice but there needs to be a level playing field. The school's wrap around proposal is going to undercut childminders.

Anonymous Childminder

I received a grant and was encouraged to set up as a childminder but now I am worried I will be out of business because I can't compete. I fear other schools will be doing the same as Shiphay.

Georgina Gregory

I believe that increase in competition will keep the quality of provision high.

Karen Pollock – Shiphay Primary School

If there are vacant places in pre-schools this may be due to parental preference. People may choose not to use the facilities for all sorts of reasons but at least they have the choice.

Jeanne Cook – Pre-school Learning Alliance

My concern is over funding. There are already more children than places in Torbay. There are 186 surplus places and adding an additional 52 is a waste of funding.

Bob – Parent

The LEA must take the number of vacant places into account before reaching a decision.

Parent

There are rumours that St Andrews will close and parents will vote with their feet.

Parent

I disagree. No-one at Shiphay Primary School has said St Andrews will close.

Bob – Parent

Is there scope for any mediation between the two factions? The new building at Shiphay does not seem very large for the number of children who will be attending. Wouldn't co-operation with St Andrews provide the wrap around offer that Shiphay want?

Minister of St Andrews Church

The concerns about the future of the pre-school are understandable. Parents are concerned that they won't get such a high priority for admission to Shiphay Primary School. We have also received no information about arrangements for car parking and dropping off. There is already severe congestion around school.

Elaine Gill – Headteacher Shiphay Primary School

The school has applied for and been given funding for improvements to the car park at the top of the site and this will provide 30 extra places by the end of April.

Private Day Nursery Worker

I have twenty children aged between two and four years old and I work on a ratio of 1:8 so why are schools allowed to have a ratio 1:13.

Elaine Gill - Headteacher Shiphay Primary School

The DfES regulations provide a national standard and suggests that schools can operate with a higher ratio due to the experience and qualifications of their staff.

Mike Spalding – Parent

It is a good thing to extend choice. St Andrew's is OK for some but not good for my family. At the end of the day parental choice is a good thing and will decide the future of provision in the area.

Parent

I am aware of the issue regarding the supply of places. If wrap around care is not provided then children can end up being taken between 3 and 4 different places to have all day care. Disabled access issues are much better dealt with at Shiphay Primary School in purpose built facilities.

Parent

St Andrews is twenty-five years old in January but twelve jobs may be lost if it closes. St Andrews won't survive, it is a charity.

Denise Russell – Shiphay Primary School

This is not about job losses it is about parental choice and market forces. We can only speculate about job losses and the effect of the nursery opening.

Parent

I am on a committee for a play group and my experience is when another play group opened nearby we did not suffer job losses.

Lesley

If the nursery unit is going to be as good as it is claimed then why does it need the financial backing of the LEA.

Child Minder

There will be job losses and child minders will be under cut.

Karen Pollock

I understand that this is an emotive issue but some parents will still use child minders and other providers if this suits them.

Shelia Giles

Every parent has choice. Child minders get to know children very well and do a good job. A charge of £1 per hour for child minding will put child minders out of business. I am upset by the letter from Shiphay Primary School suggesting that their nursery unit was the only excellent venue. Other venues are equally good if not better.

Elaine Gill - Headteacher Shiphay Primary School

I deny that Shiphay Primary School said we were the only high quality provider but we are the only place planning to offer this combination of facilities.

Katie Baker

What level of qualifications will staff at Shiphay Primary School have? Will they really be as good as some of the voluntary providers?

Bob – Parent

There are already some other high quality early education places available. It doesn't make sense for St Andrews and Shiphay to fight each other. There are very few primary schools with nursery units until recently so pre-school groups must have been doing a good job until recently.

Simon – Parent and Hospital Worker

It is very difficult to find full time child care so there is not over provision in this area. There is no wrap around. I don't understand why people would be opposed to this. I

understand that people would be worried about losing their jobs but there must be a balance between the welfare of the population and a few jobs.

Child Minder

There are lots of staff from Torbay Hospital in the area and these will need child care after six pm because they work shifts and the proposals that Shiphay won't help these people.

Jean – St Andrews Pre School

There are not enough children to fill all of the available places. I am the SENCO at St Andrews and I see children in St Andrews with special needs so why can't the new building at Shiphay become a Special Education Unit. There is a need to help children who have difficulties with speech and the only unit is at Barton Primary School. There is a need to provide something for autistic children.

Parent

We should not be opening special units but we should be including children in main stream school.

SENCO – Shiphay Primary School

This school already has autistic children and we do accommodate children with learning difficulties and physical difficulties.

Tracy Hart

I was a founder member of the EYDCP. It is disturbing for me to hear of divisions between different parties. We are really all talking the same language and there is a place for child minders, a place for pre-schools. We have seen an amazing facility here at Shiphay. We should be passionate about facilities for children and primary schools can work alongside pre-schools.

School Governor

I have grandchildren who went to St Andrews and there is room for both new and old. It is time to work together.

Parent – St Andrew's Committee

Parental involvement is much greater in a pre-school than in a primary school and parents will have a lesser voice in the nursery unit at Shiphay than they do at St Andrews.

Sue – Parent

This proposal might actually reduce choice if St Andrews and other playgroups close. My child found it hard to settle into her pre-school and if she has to change because it closes then this will have a bad effect on her.