

Report on Consultation

The form of consultation

The consultation was held jointly by the Council and the Catholic Diocese of Plymouth.

The consultation ran from 29 November 2010 to 7 January 2011.

The method of consultation was a consultation document and open meetings held at St Margaret Clitherow School on 7 December 2010 and Chestnut School on 13 December 2010. Two additional consultation meetings were held, one for staff of Chestnut School on 13 December 2010 and one for governors at Chestnut School 4 January 2011.

The consultation document was sent to all staff, governors and parents of all pupils at St Margaret Clitherow School and Chestnut School.

The method of response was by hard copy response form attached to the consultation paper. A facility to download and submit forms electronically was also made available. Respondents were permitted to append additional information to response forms.

The respondents were required to state their name so as to ensure that each person submitted a single response form.

During the consultation period comments were also received in the form of letters and emails.

Levels of Participation in Consultation

The open meetings were well attended; around 100 people attended the meeting on 7 December 2010 and around 60 attended the meeting on 13 December 2010. Some people attended both meetings.

The meetings for staff and governors at Chestnut School were well attended.

175 response forms were received.

44 letters and emails were received.

Summary of Response Forms received

Responses were invited to the following Options

Option One: status quo

Option Two: a "simple" closure of Chestnut Primary School

Option Three: the closure of Chestnut Primary School and the relocation and enlargement of St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School to the Chestnut site

Option Four; any other option emerging during consultation.

The numerical summary of the response forms received is set out below:

Consultation Group	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	No vote	Totals
Parent/Carer/Relative	56	21	7	31	2	117
School Staff	8	2	7	2		19
School Governor	2		4	5		11
Other	7		6	15		28
TOTALS	73	23	24	53	2	175
PERCENTAGE	42%	13%	14%	30%	1%	

Option One

This option has attracted most support. This is a mixture of respondents connected with Chestnut who wish the school to remain open and some who are connected with St Margaret Clitherow who do not wish their school to relocate, or do not wish their school to be involved in any proposal affecting Chestnut.

Option Two

This option was the least popular option numerically.

Option Three

This option attracted slightly more support than Option Two

Option Four

Option Four attracted a number of positive responses. This is the “any other option emerging” and there two main other options were circulated by specific respondents.

A proposal was submitted by Mr Callahan, a class teacher at Chestnut, for the school to re-organise into three teaching classes and continue. This proposal is contained with the consultation appendix. 32 respondents expressing support for Option Four have specifically mentioned support for Mr Callahan’s proposal.

A proposal on similar lines was submitted by Mr Henderson a Brixham Town Councillor. This is also attached in the appendix.

Other suggestions were made

- Chestnut should close and all the children should be transferred to Eden Park Primary School
- The capacity of Eden Park School should be reduced to remove surplus places
- The capacity of several Brixham schools could be reduced.

The Views of “Special Interest” Groups.

Statutory guidance on consultation identifies that certain parties must be consulted and, in addition to these, the Mayor and the Diocese decided to add two parties to the prescribed list namely, the Brixham Community Partnership and the Brixham Catholic Parish, Our Lady Star of the Sea.

Parents of pupils at St Margaret Clitherow and Chestnut Primary Schools

Notes of the meetings held on 7 December and 13 December 2010 are attached.

Governing Body at Chestnut Primary School

The Governing Body decided that it could not reach a collective view, but there are notes attached of the governors' consultation meeting held on 4 January 2011

Staff at Chestnut Primary School

No collective response was made. There are notes attached of comments made at the staff consultation meeting held on 13 December 2010 and individual staff members have also responded.

Governing Body at St Margaret Clitherow Primary School

The governing body has been considering its position with regard to the scenario where the Diocese might be invited by the Council to relocate its school. At the time of this report's publication, the governing body has not submitted a collective view about this.

Staff at St Margaret Clitherow Primary School

No collective response was made, but some individual staff members responded.

Other schools affected by the proposals

All Brixham schools were consulted and two letters were sent in response signed by all the headteachers of Brixham schools.

The CE Diocese

Completed a response form and expressed support for Option Three.

Devon County Council

No response was received.

Brixham Town Council

The Council consider this issue on 16 December 2010 and passed a minute (attached)

The local Member of Parliament, Sarah Wollaston MP

Responded by email (attached)

Brixham Community Partnership

No response was received

Brixham Catholic Parish Our Lady Star of the Sea

Responded with a letter and a petition from parishioners. The letter is attached.

Responses received after the publication of the Report for Cabinet on 3 March 2011

5 responses were received supporting the continuation of Chestnut Primary School.

The headteachers of all Brixham primary schools made a further representation seeking a decision to adjust the supply of places through the closure of Chestnut primary school.

All of these responses were forwarded to the decision maker.



BRIXHAM PRIMARY CONSULTATION

Date: Tuesday 7th December 2010
Time: 6.30pm
Venue: St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School

1.	<p><u>Attendance</u></p> <p>1.1 Present on the top table</p> <p>Richard Williams (RW) - Head of Transformation, Children's Services, Torbay Council Tony Jordan (TJ) - Assistant Director, School Organisation & Policy, Torbay Council John Mannix (JM) - Director of Schools, Catholic Diocese of Plymouth Matthew Tookey (MT) - Head Teacher, St Margaret Clitherow Catherine Harris (CH) - Policy & Planning Assistant</p>
2.	<p><u>Introduction</u></p> <p>RW gave a brief introduction to the meeting, outlining its purposes and role within the consultation process. He emphasised that no decisions were yet made, and that Torbay Council would consider all other options brought forward.</p> <p>The floor was then open to questions.</p>
3.	<p><u>Questions</u></p> <p>Joe Motil (SMC Parent and Treasurer of Parents Association) – Talked about the table of birth rates on page 1 of the consultation document, saying it was unclear what it was meant to show. He questioned averaging 12 years as statistically it shows a small gap, and suggested looking at the last 20-25 years. He also raised concerns regarding what would happen when birth rates increased.</p> <p>TJ – Acknowledged comment and agreed a good point, but said that we can't predict the future. Although we could look at data further back, it wouldn't likely help. He said that although we were not sure about the future, birth rates do cycle, and this tends to bring about constant regeneration with new schools built etc. However he did say that he would make sure the decision makers looked at this point.</p> <p>RW – Emphasised they were not here to argue, but to hear the views of people so that they could be represented to politicians.</p> <p>Joe Motil – Spoke about Option 3, saying the arguments against were unclear since they talk of the disruption to the children of Chestnut. Isn't it also disrupting to the children of St Margaret Clitherow?</p> <p>TJ – Replied that any option regarding a change will be difficult for pupils and teachers at both schools, and that they were trying to present a balanced picture. He looked at point 2 on option 3, and said that St Margaret Clitherow would face the lions share under this option, and that this would maybe seem unfair, but they are trying to manage any change effectively and focus on one change, rather than managing changes within 5 or 6 schools.</p> <p>Helen Cumming (SMC Parent and Teacher) – Why is a merger of the two schools not appropriate?</p> <p>JM – It would be different if they were two community schools. He pointed out that although Catholic schools serve</p>

all children, it is the things that happen in the background that make it a faith school, as well as the history of the school. There is not a half and half option. However he said he was looking at the future but currently there were no real amalgamated schools to show a model of this.

Helen Cumming – Argued there was a model which had worked in Solihull.

JM – Agreed he would look into this, and also asked Helen Cumming to get some more information regarding this. He said that he wanted to support changes, but not at the loss of any values.

Helen Cumming – Said closing a school was very harmful, describing it as evil, and said she wanted all the pupils to keep their current teachers.

JM – This would come under the 'no change' option, and would have to be compared to the year on year instability the schools are currently facing. He emphasised that any decision would not accommodate everyone, but that he wanted to offer some security. He also said that help would be given to teachers who may face redundancy.

Helen Cumming – Stated that she was worried that any help to teachers to preserve employment would be minimal.

JM – Pointed out that with no change, 2 sets of teachers would face uncertainty, which again would be harder to manage.

John Cornish – Looking at the arguments in favour of option 3, he wanted clarification of the £80k that could be recycled back into the school funding pot.

TJ – Explained that £80k were the fixed costs of running a school, then went on to describe how funding works, and how some schools get a bigger share which is generated by the number of pupils. However £80k was a rough figure of fixed costs irrespective of pupil numbers. He also pointed out that part of the LA's job was to make sure money was spent wisely and efficiently around all schools.

Sue Callaghan (SMC Teacher) – Pointed out that she was in a unique position since her husband worked at Chestnut, and that she wanted to come to Chestnut's defence. She said that TJ seemed concerned about Chestnut continuing a good standard of education, and urged him to look at the Ofsted reports which show that they are providing a great education for the pupils.

TJ – Emphasised that he had no concern over the current standard of education, but that he was concerned about Chestnut continuing to punch above its weight. He pointed out that smaller schools were vulnerable and more at risk as it would be harder to make any special arrangements in the future, and that it was easier and more efficient to provide help and manage fewer larger schools.

Sue Callaghan – Pointed out that parents were now not sending pupils to Chestnut due to the fear of closure, and that this will become a self fulfilling prophecy.

Parent – Said she had a special needs daughter at Chestnut, and that there had been rumours of closure for years so it was not surprising that the school had low numbers, agreeing with Sue Callaghan's point above. She also said that she had written to TJ a few times and still had not received a sensible answer regarding where to send her daughter.

Mr Morton (C Parent) – Pointed out that in 2005, both schools were declining in pupil numbers, then in 2008 Chestnut numbers began to decrease even further. Why didn't the education department do something then to arrest the threat?

TJ – Acknowledged the comment, but said that the LA couldn't produce more children. He said that uncertainty around schools can lead to falling numbers and vice versa, and pointed out that it was hard to quash rumours. He also said that at the time, Brixham schools wanted to wait and see what happened, and emphasised that now they were coming together to find a solution.

RW – Said that there were misunderstandings regarding what the LA actually does, and that they work with the schools, rather than telling them what to do.

Debbie Parry (C Parent and Governor) – Asked why Torbay can't support small special schools, and said this was

very sad. She argued that Torbay wasn't flexible, and that the Devon model should be looked at.

TJ – Pointed out that it was more difficult to provide this support, and that parts of Devon had to adapt a different approach to smaller schools due to the rural location of families.

RW – Said that Torbay did have an interest in supporting small schools.

Debbie Parry – With reference to the Chestnut site, it has developed extremely well into a progressive school model, with breakfast and after school clubs. How would people feel about the loss of this with option 2?

TJ – Emphasised that they are looking at the school place planning angle and that there might not be enough children to sustain. However confirmed that losing a site like Chestnut would be very sad, which is why the relocation of St Margaret Clitherow is being considered.

Craig Huskly (C Parent) – My 2 year old son is due to start reception class. What would happen?

RW – Confirmed in terms of the children's centre and space, there would be scope to take on Butterflies. There is no need to lose this facility.

Shaun (C Parent) – Said he was interested to know how St Margaret Clitherow parents felt.

TJ – Pointed out that it was early days and that although some parents had already presented their views, opinions and response forms etc were not going to be counted up until early January.

Roger Standard (Union) – Argued that smaller schools in Devon were often better performing.

Bill Callaghan (C Teacher) – Asked whether the Diocese had the appetite to move Chestnut to St Margaret Clitherow?

JM – If the LA closed Chestnut, then the Diocese would consider that option. He emphasised that they had a commitment to the common good, and that he was trying to evaluate what the general picture was. Would a move to Chestnut be a good thing? Would it be supported? If yes, would a Catholic background stay? Again JM emphasised that Catholic schools were about a type of provision, and that more than half of the children currently attending weren't actually Catholic, and the Diocese didn't want to offer something that wasn't wanted.

Bill Callaghan – Wanted a show of hands to get a rough idea of feeling about this.

JM – Pointed out that having a show of hands can give an inaccurate view, especially since people who are apathetic wouldn't likely be at the public consultations. He also said that despite all the good things at Chestnut, the school was still vulnerable, and contrary to the view to keep the status quo, this would make everyone vulnerable and would be sitting back to allow a train wreck to happen.

Joe Motil – Wanted to speak about funding in relation to small schools, and emphasised that parents often chosen these schools because of their size. He quoted TJ comment that small schools can be dominated by larger schools who take a larger slice of the funding as well as support and decision making, and said that it was like bullying. He said that the LA should say 'either be a good small school or a good big school', and support both.

Parent (SMC) – Said that she sympathised with Chestnut, but was concerned about relocating her daughter. Why would St Margaret Clitherow have to relocate to Chestnut, especially when Chestnut pupils leave at the end of the academic year, it would be relocating to a schools with around 20 children in it.

Another parent queried where above parent had obtained these figures, and was answered with 'a reliable source'.

Parent – Raised concerns over the response form, and suggested respondents should have been asked to rank the options. She thinks that people will put 'no change', and then the decision will be taken from their hands.

RW – Acknowledged this point and agreed to look at this.

Cllr Ellery – Asked who will make the final decision? He said that he supports what people were saying about the rumour mill. He doesn't want a school to close, and didn't become a Councillor for this. All size schools have a

place, especially when they have different specialisms. He asked why he hadn't seen the option of amalgamating headships etc, and said it was all about money. He argued that mixing children of different faiths worked very well, and asked why the Diocese were worried about merging with a community school.

RW – Acknowledged the option of a federation between the two schools under one headship, asking this to be logged.

TJ – Detailed the decision making process and confirmed that the final decision would be the Mayors. He explained that the Mayor would want to hear from the Brixham Town Council, and would also be speaking to Councillors. The Mayor also takes advice from his cabinet, and emphasised that it is not the Council that decide. TJ also confirmed that the decision is due to be made at Cabinet on 15th February.

Joe Motil – Stated his disappointment regarding the Mayor not being here since he was the decision maker, and said that his cabinet was not the Mayors boss, the people were.

TJ – Agreed this to be a fair point but said that the Mayor wanted him to gather all the information together so that he can make a decision in a dispassionate way. He pointed out that the purpose of the consultation was to debate the options, not to put the Mayor on the spot.

JM – Answering Cllr Ellery's second comment, he said he had been misunderstood regarding the difficulty of joining a community school with a faith school. He explained he originally meant that there is no legal entity as a half Catholic school. You cannot remove the ideas and values of a Catholic school and then merge with a community school since it would not be a Catholic school. He emphasised that he was open to other options though.

Vicky (SMC Parent) – Stated that the idea of a federation sounds great as everyone can stay at what site they originally chose.

RW – Pointed out that this option had been logged and would be considered.

TJ – Agreed that the federation of the two schools could be a solution, but that it would be a different organisation, and added that they work with the family of schools in Brixham who had previously said that they didn't think coming together as a federation would help falling numbers. He pointed out that the Council couldn't force schools to do something they didn't want, but now he could go back to them to say that some parents supported this.

RW – Reiterated the council's role, saying that they worked with schools who are independent and that it was a partnership.

Parent – Is that because the LA is pushing for bigger schools?

TJ – Emphasised that the council is more strategic than operational. Years ago, the council wanted bigger schools, but this view could be changed to promote a bigger number of smaller schools rather than a small number of bigger schools. However he did argue the point that larger schools were easier to manage.

Jackie Stockman (Town Council and grandmother) – Raised concern that parents were now deciding what schools to send their children to next year (decisions regarding preferred place due in January), and that these schools may not be chosen due to the uncertainty around them. She said she was also concerned that the Mayor would be making the final decision, and that the findings of the consultation would not be listened to.

RW – Pointed out that the decision making process couldn't be changed. He also emphasised that the situation was not about cuts, but about the efficiency of funding that it received. However he acknowledged the point made, and made sure it was logged.

Brian Holden – What happens to the site if it closes?

TJ – Reiterating what it said in the consultation document, said this matter would need a separate consultation. He said that the Chestnut site was owned by the council, and if St Margaret Clitherow were to relocate, they would pass the asset back to the council, therefore it is a decision for the LA. He also emphasised that he wanted this consultation to be about place planning and said there was no hidden agenda.

Parent – Raised concern that the site could be sold for housing.

TJ – Explained there were strict guidelines about old school buildings, and that whatever happened with the site it would still need to be within education.

Bill Callaghan – Quoted the Mayor speaking on the radio saying he would look after the vulnerable. He also mentioned Sarah Woollaston (MP for South Hams) and Adrian Saunders (MP for Torbay), and said that the government promised a pupil premium. He also asked for the minutes to be sent to Michael Gove (Secretary of State for Education).

Craig Huskley – said that although not a Catholic family, his son was very happy at St Margaret Clitherow. He also pointed out that the options in the consultation document didn't look at Chestnut pupils relocating to St Margaret Clitherow. He then went on to talk about the mixing children of different and no faith, and said that this already existed within the school.

TJ – Pointed out that under option 2 this would probably happen by default, however St Margaret Clitherow wouldn't be able to take all of the pupils at Chestnut, and therefore this presented more risk.

Sylvia Shaw (Parishioner and grandmother) – Asked about the possibility of building a new school that could accommodate all 210 children and more.

RW – Acknowledged and logged the option of a complete new site as an option.

Gareth Brown (SMC Parent and teacher under the Devon model) – Said that he choose to send his child to this school because of the faith aspect, and raised concern that Torbay Council was thinking big was better, and that at year 4, most would rather go to a smaller school. He then went on to say that there were many reasons for the decline in pupil numbers, but at the same time as this decline, other Brixham school numbers were increasing, arguing that this had a lot to do with the restructuring a few years ago. Also, forecasting the next 4 years, he suggested the primary pupils numbers would increase, and that if forecasting trends continue, there would be a problem in the next 10-20 years rather than now. This would lead to lots of money being spent to build a new school in the future.

RW – Pointed out that the consultation was finishing how they started, and asked for any new points before they closed the meeting.

Glenn Page (Chestnut Headteacher) – Said that it was interesting to hear different views on the matter, and thanked the nice comments regarding the good standard of education at Chestnut, but agreed with the earlier comment that they were punching above their weight, and although they were doing well, it had been very hard. He emphasised that the no change option was not an option, arguing if Chestnut stayed open, he'll soon be gone, and there would be a financial disaster in employing a new head who would likely be made redundant soon after. He urged 'something has got to change', and said that it would be hard to sustain the way the school has been going with teachers putting in many extra hours, and in a way he was relieved that something will now happen after a long time of speculation and uncertainty. He ended by saying again 'Something has got to change, and we need to accept that it will be different'.

RW – Emphasised to everyone that they all needed to consider the best outcomes for the children.

Stuart – Proposed that people write to the Mayor as he has an obligation to listen to the views of the people.

Joe Motil – ended the consultation meeting saying 'it's clear what the parents want, make it happen!'

Minutes recorded by Catherine Harris, Policy and Planning Assistant

BRIXHAM PRIMARY CONSULTATION

Date: Monday 13th December 2010
Time: 6.30pm
Venue: Chestnut Primary School

<p>1.</p> <p>1.1</p>	<p><u>Attendance</u></p> <p>Present on the top table</p> <p>Richard Williams (RW) - Head of Transformation, Children’s Services, Torbay Council Tony Jordan (TJ) - Assistant Director, School Organisation & Policy, Torbay Council John Mannix (JM) - Director of Schools, Catholic Diocese of Plymouth Catherine Harris (CH) - Policy and Planning Assistant</p> <p>Also in attendance - Mayor Nick Bye and Cllr Anna Tolchard</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p><u>Introduction</u></p> <p>After a brief introduction by Head Teacher Glenn Page, RW referred to the meeting at St Margaret Clitherow last week, and emphasised that the value of small schools had been strongly made, and that he had received many emails regarding this. He emphasised that in this second consultation, they were again there to hear people’s views and consider what the options were. He also explained that since the last meeting, people had come forward with alternative options, and so they were developing an expanding list, including the idea of a federation and the possibility of Chestnut moving to St Margaret Clitherow. He pointed out that all options will go to the decision makers, and added that although the Mayor was in attendance, he was there to listen.</p> <p>The floor was then open to questions.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p><u>Questions</u></p> <p>Neil Pierce (SMC Parent) – Referring to Glenn Page’s statement last week and newspaper article, he asked whether the 3 original options were still relevant as it seems that the closure of Chestnut was a definite.</p> <p>RW – Emphasised that all the options were relevant.</p> <p>Glenn Page – Clarified what he had meant when he said ‘the option of no change is not an option’, and explained that Chestnut as it is now would be very different by September.</p> <p>David Greenway (SMC Parent) – Spoke about the idea of federation which was talked about at the last meeting with regards to joining a Catholic school with a community school. He asked whether it would be possible to join with Eden Park, and suggested a 12 month review with this so that the suitability could be assessed.</p> <p>RW – Acknowledging the point, he agreed to log the idea of a federation with another school.</p> <p>David Greenway – Pointed out that Chestnut had all the facilities which were missing from Eden Park, for example a playing field.</p> <p>TJ – Agreed that federation could be a possibility, but that it was a voluntary agreement of 2 governing bodies and this would require appetite and enthusiasm from both schools. He pointed out that the LA has worked with the family of schools in Brixham, and although there was some appetite for collaboration, there wasn’t any for joint headships. The question could be asked whether Torbay Council should take more of a lead role in this and promote this as a better model, and added that he would put this forward to the decision makers.</p> <p>Zoe Oxenbury (C Parent) – Referring to Eden Park, she said that they had a similar number of open spaces, and</p>

that maybe some of their funding should come to Chestnut.

RW – With regards to funding, he said the LA needed to look at vacancies, and pointed out that the situation wasn't 'us or them'.

Zoe Oxenbury – Pointed out that the infants were taught in a separate building at Eden Park, and suggested if this were to change it would save costs.

TJ – Emphasised that the number of places was important and reducing places at Eden Park would not quickly boost the roll at Chestnut. The LA needed to look at the best structure for education, and although he liked the idea of joining the 2 schools from an organisational point of view, this is a dispassionate view.

Glenn Page – Talked about the idea of a federation with Eden Park, and said that a while ago this was looked at proactively, but that appetite cooled very rapidly. He also emphasised that he was very keen on any federation that would work.

Andrew Wilson (SMC Parent) – Spoke about the time he had invested in looking at schools and deciding where to send his children, but that his final decision on St Margaret Clitherow was actually straight forward particularly because of its size and ethos etc. Referring to the consultation document, he said that someone needed to sell this to him, and asked why his children needed to be uprooted to another school. He also argued that the consultation seemed unorganised and rushed and didn't inspire confidence. He added that with regards to option 3 where St Margaret Clitherow would relocate to Chestnut, some parents may not transfer their children and that Torbay Council should write to them and ask this question before doing anything.

A Chestnut parent added that he agreed with the above.

RW – With regards to the consultation process, he answered that this was the point of the meeting, rather than simply writing parents a letter which was dispassionate.

JM – Said that he understood the sentiment Andrew Wilson had made, and that although he had made a good choice, things were now different. He added that people should understand that the options Torbay Council were presenting were there because they had been made available, and although people often get angry with the prospect of change, we needed to plan for the future. He pointed out that in the past, disfavoured making difficult decisions often caused the train wreck to happen, and this would bring about redundancies etc and forced change. However he also emphasised that this wasn't the last chance and they had not reached the formal consultation stage, adding that they were sketching out different options, and putting them in the public domain so that things didn't happen behind closed doors.

Andrew Wilson – Said that the LA made decisions regarding Chestnut since it was a community school, but since the Diocese were the decision makers of St Margaret Clitherow, *they* had to explain why it was in their interest to move.

JM – Answered that there was a misunderstanding with regards to 'The Diocese', and added that it's no more than its schools and parishes and does not have another agenda. He emphasised that Diocese schools should be offered to as many people as possible, and that they were not tied to locations since you can re-site a Catholic school and still retain the same values. He ended by saying that they were here to serve the community, but that they wouldn't go blindly, and added that he thought Chestnut was a very good school which demonstrates much passion.

Emma Gardner (C Parent) – Said she was confused by the comment that Chestnut facing these problems was not a cost issue.

RW – Answered that it was about numbers. It's not about cost cutting, but how the LA can use the funding received most effectively.

Liz Morton (C Parent) – Asked why numbers were the argument as in 2008 there were an equal number of empty places at Furzeham, but that Chestnut had lost 42 pupils since 2009.

Mr Morton added that in 2008, Chestnut was faring better than St Margaret Clitherow, but when the rumours started, some parents started to take their children from the school. He added that he thought Chestnut was being picked on due to the rumours.

Parent – Referred to TJ’s statement at the last week’s meeting when he asked ‘what could we have done about the rumours?’, and the parent said Torbay Council should have written a letter to parents at the time.

TJ – Pointed out that schools weren’t penalised for low numbers, but that they could only receive a set amount of money for each child that attended. He compared the situation to house hold budgets, and said it was not about the numbers of empty places, but about the money the occupants brought it, and how schools with low pupil numbers are fragile. With regards to sending out letters to quash rumours, he said it’s a chicken and the egg situation, and added that the LA didn’t know in advance what parents would do. He also pointed out that rumours had been circulating and parents transferring children some time before the council were aware of the problem.

RW – Bringing back the tenor of the meeting, he said they were there to talk about options regarding the way forward. He emphasised that we have to do something and that this was an opportunity to explore all options.

Bill Callaghan (C Teacher) – Said that 2 children had visited the school on Friday and although the parent had decided that they would start attending in January, because it was not before the 7th January, they wouldn’t receive money for them from the LA since the budgets would be fixed by this time. He then went on to talk about how the age of children can also have an impact on when they start school and therefore the budget the school receives, but argued that it shouldn’t be about the child’s age, but about their ability. He also went on to talk about what made Chestnut unique, and said it was clear that parents of both schools wanted the children to stay where they are. He brought another option to the table of having a 3 class structure (which was emailed to Torbay Council) and argued that they could have a fresh start in September.

Parent (SMC) – Said she felt very pressurised to move her child and added that her child was very anxious. With regards to available spaces she pointed out that Eden Park and Furzeham were both currently full, which would cause issues if Chestnut closed and parents didn’t want their children to attend St Margaret Clitherow.

TJ – Acknowledged this point but said that if Chestnut did close, Torbay Council would manage transfers, and schools might be able to re-organise to accommodate more pupils. He also added that Torbay Council would support schools in doing this but that they were not at this stage yet.

Louisa Bow (C Parent) – Stated that the main reason people weren’t putting their children into reception at Chestnut was because of the rumours, and went on to talk about all the good work Chestnut has done with her daughter who has really come out of herself since joining, adding ‘before she started she wouldn’t really talk, now she can’t stop!’

Mike Williams (C Parent) – Said that Shaun (another parent) had asked last week for a show of hands to assess how people felt and was told it wasn’t relevant. He asked if their voices would be heard in the next process and whether the votes were important. He emphasised that people wanted to know that their voice was being heard and asked whether this was the last chance to speak. Also, with regards to a merger of the schools, he said children approaching their 11+ would suffer at this emotional upheaval and that it would be too much for them.

RW – Talked about the voting process and emphasised that it was in the very early stages. He pointed out that once decisions were made regarding what the options were, it would then go to formal consultation, and whatever decision is made, this will then start another process.

JM – Questioned the issues regarding the strategy that parents would adopt and asked whether a vote would show this. He also emphasised that people could contact them directly so this was not the last chance to speak up.

Parent (C) – Stated that her eldest son was at Eden Park but that they couldn’t cope with him. Her doctor recommended Chestnut and said they had been absolutely fabulous. Her son had a great start, was excelling and now reading. She added that she hadn’t spent 5 years stopping her son slipping through the net so that that he could be squeezed in at another school, and wanted to know what her options were as with her son’s behaviour, she didn’t want him turned away.

RW – Said that any move would be managed, not squeezed, and added that they were there to look at all the options.

Parent (C) – Stated that his children love it at Chestnut and it had a very good nursery. As a parent he had to decide where to send his new child by 15th January and asked what he should do.

RW – Reiterated that no decision had yet been made and therefore Chestnut would still be an option he could choose.

Donna Nisbett (C Parent) – Asked whether a new document would be circulated pointing out all options, including the new ones that had been brought forward.

RW – Explained at the beginning of this, they had to write a document to test opinion, and at the end of the consultation, all of the material would be brought together before a meeting with the Mayor, and if a new proposal came out of this, the Mayor would decide if further consultation or documentation were needed. He emphasised it was a matter for the decision makers.

Donna Nisbett – Pointed out that it was difficult to vote for another option when nothing was on the board. Initially she thought option 1 was not an option so thought she would go with option 3 as St Margaret Clitherow seemed to have a similar ethos and she had been very impressed with the school. She then went on to talk about the great facilities at Chestnut, including outside space, a pond, parking etc, and said under option 3, the pupils of Chestnut would still have continuity, even if it was under a different name and that it would still be a small school with both sets of pupils. She finished by saying that she thought option 3 could work, but now she was thinking about option 4 but was worried as it wasn't clear what this would be.

RW – Pointed that alternatives under option 4 needed to be discussed.

Nicola Sevington (C Parent) – Said it seemed like 'them or us' but that this was not the case. She pointed out that Chestnut had more special needs children, and that this had helped her son who did not have special needs, and that all the children were treated as individuals. She also said that she didn't want her child to go to a Roman Catholic school and be pushed towards a religion.

RW – Asked what made Chestnut work.

Parent (C) – Answered it was the time and effort given to children on individual basis, with lots of 1 – 1, and it had a real community feel.

Another parent said it worked because special needs children were integrated with 'normal' children, and it was a great unique mixture.

JM – Going back to Nicola Sevington's comment, said the church probably hadn't done itself many favours in the past, but said that every child should be given a choice, and added the no faith option was still a choice. He added that at Diocese schools today do not ram religion down the throats of its children, which hadn't always been the case in the past, and that now it was more about a model of living.

Bill Callaghan – Pointed to the nativity scene at Chestnut and emphasised that although it wasn't a faith school, it still had faith.

Joy Hallis (Nursery parent) – Said that her child was due to start school in September and that she had to chose what school to send her to by 15th January. She wants to choose Chestnut since it's a small school which she feels would be good for her energetic boys, and then asked what would happen to the community whose children were coming of school age.

RW – Pointed out that the meeting was not about the closure of the building, but managing places. Chestnut would maybe close, but could be opened it a different way. He also added that the ethos of one school can be the ethos of another and that it wasn't exclusive.

Parent (C) – Said that her daughter was very disabled and couldn't be 'plonked' in another school as it would be very unsettling. She added that the teachers at Chestnut knew how each child ticked.

Cllr Ellery – Said there was an overwhelming theme here and that Torbay Council shouldn't look at the size of the school but what it achieves. He believes there is a place for both schools in Brixham and that they were both very special. He stated that we've got to find a way forward and now there were serious options to consider. He added that he still thought a joint headship could work, and urged that all options be considered.

RW – Acknowledged this point and emphasised all options would be looked at.

Joslin (SMC Parent) – Asked ‘why our two schools?’ and questioned whether schools could each take a percentage of children.

TJ – Explained the LA couldn’t reduce places if there was room to accommodate pupils as this was against the law. Places would have to be made available to parents and therefore this is not an option.

Vicky (SMC Parent) – Pointed out that in 2005 there was a reorganisation of Brixham C of E, and that Torbay Council created this problem, adding that it feels like it has been coming for a while.

TJ – Explained that in 2005, arrangements were made regarding Eden Park and C of E infants, and an all through primary school was created. He emphasised that Torbay Council were responding to what parents wanted, and made a change after much criticism. He pointed out that a lot of people were happy with this change, but that now other schools were having problems. However he emphasised that we needed to be constantly proactive regarding change.

RW – Responding to the comment that ‘Torbay Council had created the problem’, he pointed out that in 2005 a consultation regarding possible changes occurred, and that the council would have talked to parents and changes would have been made in response to the discussion.

Parent (C) – Again referring to the Glenn Page’s comment that no change was not an option, said that other people at the school were coming together to form a plan which could work and keep both schools open. He pointed out that once stability was back, the school could then expand.

Teacher – Argued that the time frame was very tight, particularly with Christmas around the corner, and asked if the council could give parents a second choice regarding which school to send their children to.

TJ – Pointed out that the council needed to set deadlines within a timescale so that people would know when to put their responses in by. He explained that the 15th February had been the date chosen for a decision, but that the Mayor could decide he wanted more information and prolong a decision. He acknowledged there was an issue regarding second choice and agreed to investigate this.

Grandfather & swimming coach (SMC) – Pointed out that he thought the school was fantastic, and although the Mayor has a difficult decision to make, he hopes he will bear in mind how helpful the school has been. He also asked, how many parents at St Margaret Clitherow would actually transfer their children to Chestnut under option 3, and pointed out that he had spoken to them and a lot have said they will not. He agreed that this could just be hear say, but if it wasn’t, the restructured school would continue to have low numbers and we would be in the same position. He urged Torbay Council not to make the same mistake as they did in the last consultation, adding that people may change their minds in the future.

Cathy Cooper (SMC Parent) – Stated that she moved house so that her and her children could walk to school, and that if St Margarets were to relocate to Chestnut, travel could be a problem. She also asked whether Torbay Council knew the numbers of parents that would relocate their children under option 3.

RW – Replied that they didn’t have the numbers as they are still in the process of assessing the issue.

Neil Pearce (SMC Parent) – Referring to Bill Callaghan’s alternative option of a 3 year class system, asked what the panel thought about this.

RW – Acknowledged that it was an option which would be added to the pot and be discussed.

Liz Jackson (C Parent) – Wanted confirmation that there would be a school on the current site despite the option chosen. She pointed out that she has a school place saved for her child at Kingswear but if there would still be a school at the Chestnut site come September, she would rather send her child here.

RW – Emphasised that they were trying to decide ASAP, and added that the site at Chestnut was valued by both the council and community, but what the school would look like is being explored.

Liz Jackson – Asked if relocation occurred under option 3, would all the pupils attend St Margaret Clitherow while any building works were carried out.

RW – Answered that this had not been discussed.

Parent – Emphasised again the importance of small schools, and said that it was important to give parents in Brixham a choice of two small schools – one of faith and one not.

RW – Acknowledged it was clear the value of the small school ethos, but pointed out that if St Margaret Clitherow merged with Chestnut it would still be a small school.

Parent (C) – Talked about the issues parents would have if they didn't drive, and asked if there would be any help with transport and travel costs.

TJ – Said Torbay Council would try to avoid this as it would be too expensive to arrange assisted journey's for everyone, but agreed special cases could be looked at.

Parent – Argued how expensive and time consuming travelling to a different school would be, and that the big hills were a particular problem particularly with small children.

Karen Howe (SMC Parent) – Stated that she relied on her 75 year old mother in law to walk her children to school. She then asked about the response form, and whether they still had to vote or if a new form with all the options would be sent out.

RW – Emphasised they were in the first stage of the decision making process, and that although the first set of options had already gone out, people could get in contact if they had new options to go into the pot.

Bill Callaghan – Emphasised the special relationship Chestnut already had with St Margaret Clitherow, and asked whether this had any impact on the recommendation that they amalgamate.

RW – Acknowledged this point and said that the consultant's possibly looked at the way in which the schools worked together. He then brought the meeting to a close, and said that all the information would be collated and information sent out before Christmas. He added that TJ would come back to people regarding admissions and would try to help.

Minutes recorded by Catherine Harris, Policy and Planning Assistant

Consultation Meeting with Chestnut Primary School Governors 4 January 2011

These notes were produced by Tony Jordan who attended the meeting to represent the Council.

TJ opened the meeting by explaining that this was the opportunity for individual governors to ask questions and make comments that they wished to be made known to the decision maker. TJ clarified that the governing body also had the opportunity to express a collective response to the consultation.

A governor asked for clarification of the financial saving that would result from school closure. TJ explained that there is around £80,000 in annual fixed costs associated with simply maintaining a school and these would be recycled in to the dedicated schools block for Torbay.

A governor asked what the cost would be of providing specific support to a vulnerable school. TJ replied that each case is different but it is not unusual for support for a school in special measures to cost around £100,000.

A governor queried the accuracy of pupil forecasts and whether removing places was a risk. TJ acknowledged a risk that the forecasts could be inaccurate and this needs to be weighed by the decision-maker.

A governor queried why small schools are at a disadvantage compared to large schools. TJ answered to say that, as a generalisation, small schools are more vulnerable to changes in funding, staffing and pupil numbers. TJ said that small schools can succeed, but it tends to be harder work for school leadership and management.

A governor asked whether a school like Chestnut would benefit from the government's new "Pupil Premium" funding arrangements. TJ replied that he thought that Chestnut might be one of the "winners" in the new funding arrangements, though the precise picture is uncertain.

A governor expressed the view that life in a small school is more difficult and Ofsted have recognised that the capacity to sustain improvement can be a barrier.

A governor commented that Chestnut was fortunate to have had a good senior leadership team which has performed well, but this has been at a personal cost for those involved in terms of their commitment.

A governor drew attention to the many good points about the school, including the support from the Town Council. The governor read to the meeting a letter from a parent that praised the school, particularly for meeting her child's special educational needs. The governor commented that the decline in roll at Chestnut was the result of rumours that had begun to circulate about its future. The governor referred to a suggestion for the continuation of the school being developed by Town Councillor Nick Henderson. This suggestion was circulated at the meeting.

A governor pointed out that the school is a focus of the local community and wondered if there would be a consultation on Option 4 (i.e. "any other option that emerges during the consultation"). TJ responded by saying that the decision-maker will have to decide whether to hold further consultation.

A governor pointed out that the Town Council wishes Torbay Council to maintain the current school organisation of 6 schools and spoke of the uniqueness of Brixham and that it is on the cusp of an economic revival.

A governor said that the governing body had tried very hard over the last few years to reverse the decline in numbers, but this had not succeeded. The loss of pupils is not a reflection on what the school provides. It is important to preserve education on the current site for the local community. The governing body has been concerned about the situation for a long time and had urged the Council to act sooner.

A governor commented that a small school could capitalise on its position and secure additional funding to pilot new ideas. A letter was circulated offering the possibility to become a "SEAL sanctuary" working with a teaching University.

A governor drew a contrast between the view of the Town Council and of the Brixham schools who do not seem prepared to work together to maintain the current school organisation.

A governor highlighted that retaining staff in a small school is more difficult because of the multiplicity of roles that staff must assume. The school lost its good SENCO to a rival for this reason.

A governor queried what exactly might happen at Cabinet on 15 February. TJ responded to say that this is the date when the decision-maker will decide whether to publish closure Notices, but there could be delays in implementation through the "call in" procedure.

A governor queried whether a "fresh start" scenario might enable staff to trigger their redundancy if this was their preference. TJ said that this might be the case, but the details of any "fresh start" have not been defined as part of the consultation.

A governor commented that the school had already considered a 3 class organisation, but had found it not to be viable in the long term.

A governor agreed with a previous comment that rumours about its future had led to decline in enrolments and the removal of children to other schools.

A governor disagreed and said that it was not simply rumour; the decline had started as long ago as 2005. The governors had tried to arrest this decline, but had not been successful.

The consultation meeting ended after 75 minutes when TJ withdrew to allow the governors to decide whether to make a collective statement in response to the consultation.

Consultation Meeting with Chestnut Primary School Staff: 13 December 2010

These notes were produced by Tony Jordan who attended the meeting to represent the Council.

TJ opened the meeting by explaining that this was the opportunity for staff members to ask questions and make comments that they wished to be made known to the decision maker.

A staff Member presented an option paper that he wished to be considered as an Option Four "any other option". In his view Option One is not viable, Option Two amounts to "lie down and die" and he did not believe that there was sufficient support for Option Three.

This staff member does not consider that the Catholic Diocese has any appetite to relocate St Margaret Clitherow and he has developed an Option Four in response.

This staff member does not consider that the Diocese is acting in partnership and cites as evidence that an agreed joint school statement to staff was changed by the Diocese.

This staff member contends that the consultation will galvanise the community and makes his suggested option a viable one.

TJ said that the option would be presented to the decision-maker.

Another staff member asked how her colleague's suggested option would affect the position with regard to redundancies compared to other options. TJ replied that the option features a contraction of the school and so it would still lead to some staff redundancies.

This staff member commented that it will be difficult to teach a combined Reception/Year1/Year2 and that teaching at Chestnut is already tough and the school feels quite isolated. A larger school would be of more benefit for the pupils.

This staff member feels that the parents at St Margaret Clitherow do not want their school to move.

The Headteacher commented that:

- the school has examined a 3 class structure but feels that this would be unpopular with parents and not be an incentive to enrol their children.
- It is difficult to recruit and retain staff, difficult to arrange cover for absence.
- small pupil numbers brings a special pressure to leadership.

A Staff Member commented that the social mix of pupils at Chestnut was a great strength.

The Deputy Headteacher commented that:

- She would not like to lead a school under the option presented by her colleague.

- She has reservations about the Council's ability to support a small school and Torbay would not be as effective at this as, say, Devon County Council who has more small schools. Torbay would have to change its view about small schools.
- She is not sure that the needs of SEN pupils would be met properly through the model of the Headteacher taking on role of SENCO.
- The re-organised school would be quite a stressful environment for staff.

A staff member commented that the school had recently attracted some very positive coverage in the local print media.

A staff member sought clarification over the cost of the report commissioned in to the future shape of education in Brixham.

A staff member queried whether an alternative would be to reduce the size of Eden Park school. TJ responded to say this possibility had been acknowledged in the consultation document, but had not been brought forward as an option. It could be considered under the Option 4 "any other option"



Brixham Town Council

Minutes of the Meeting of Brixham Town Council

held at Brixham College, on 16th December 2010 at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Cllrs M Hodge, P Addison, G Boote, V Ellery, B Harland, N Henderson, P Killick, C Lomas, M Morey, R Ryl and J Stockman.

Attending: Ki Barnes, Town Clerk; 11 members of the public.

10/153.Primary School review.

Standing Orders were suspended to allow members of the public to speak, then reinstated.

Report from Cllr N Henderson was circulated at the meeting, a paper entitled option 4 by Chestnut Primary School teacher Mr B Callaghan and information from Torbay Council were also made available.

Mr Tony Jordan, Assistant director of School organisation at Torbay Council spoke on the falling role in the affected Brixham Schools and the reasons for consulting Brixham Town Council. A teacher at Chestnut Primary School and parents from the school also spoke against the closure or merger of the school. Tony Jordan undertook to provide the statistics on the numbers of pupils from Brixham attending schools out of the area and was asked to include Kingswear in this and to obtain the information from Devon County Council.

It was **resolved** that this council would not support the closure of Chestnut Primary School but ask Torbay Council to explore other options than the three currently on the table. Torbay Council could ensure the future of the school by stating that it has a future.

Email from Sarah Wollaston MP

Dear Tony,

Clearly this is a difficult decision but I am struck by falling pupil numbers at Chestnut and the strength of feeling from parents that part of this is due to uncertainty about the future of the school. I feel that the Mayor needs to clarify his decision as early as possible or the school will close by default as further parents leave rather than face continued uncertainty. Both schools have a valuable and individual ethos and if, financially, Chestnut can be viable I do hope it will continue on its current site.

Yours Sincerely, Sarah Wollaston

Our Lady Star of the Sea
New Road
Brixham TQ5 8NB

Mayor's Office
Town Hall
Castle Circus
Torquay TQ1 3DS

13 February 2011

Dear Mr Bye,

Brixham Primary School Review

We write on behalf of the Catholic community in Brixham.

We are very proud of our Catholic primary school, St Margaret Clitherow. We have great respect for the work that the dedicated teachers and support staff do there. It is the school where we sent, or send, our children and grandchildren. Some of us our ex-pupils, some of us current or retired teachers and some of us have been, or are currently, school governors.

Some of us have long enough memories to remember when the school first opened, before the pupil numbers reached double figures. Who would have guessed that we would find ourselves, as we do now, looking at the school and wondering how we can create more space to best serve the diverse range of children who come to us to learn?

We understand that the Brixham Review identified a current and forecast surplus number of places in Brixham primary schools. We also understand that one proposal to address this is to close a school. We are glad that Torbay Council recognises the value of maintaining a Catholic school in the town, as we do, though our hearts go out to the staff, pupils and families at Chestnut who wait to hear whether their school is to be closed.

We know that the recent consultation sought our views on a range of options, and some of us have already sent our independent responses. We write to you now as there seems to be some doubt of our support for a move of our school to the Chestnut site, were it to be vacated. The teachers and governors who are familiar with the buildings and grounds tell us that it has excellent facilities, far better than those we have at present, that would make an enormous difference to the quality of the children's learning experience. Therefore, were the school given the opportunity to move to these premises, we would be wholeheartedly in support of such a move and, as a parish, would work in partnership with the local community to help overcome any obstacles this change presented.

In prayerful anticipation of your decision.

Yours sincerely,

(85 signatures on behalf of the Catholic community in Brixham)

14th February 2011

Mr N. Bye
The Mayor's Office
Town Hall
Castle Circus
Torquay
TQ1 3DR

Dear Mr Bye

Re: Brixham Review

In 2008 the combined primary and secondary head teachers of Brixham wrote to Tony Porter, expressing concern over the rate of progress of the reorganisation of the primary school provision in Brixham. Due to the lack of progress from Torbay we wrote to Carol Tozer in October 2009, explaining that this issue was a black cloud hanging over our schools and was causing increasing anxiety for staff and parents.

Since that date through many meetings, much work has been done by the head teachers supported by Tony Jordan from Torbay, exploring different options to reorganise primary provision in Brixham. This resulted in an independent consultants' report that was commissioned from Owen Education last year.

The report recommended a federation between Chestnut Primary and St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary. Whilst this did not prove feasible, it was developed into Option 3 of the Consultation Document (the closure of Chestnut and the moving of St Margaret Clitherow). At our last meeting it was unanimously agreed by all the head teachers and by the chair of the Brixham Trust, that this option was the best choice for improving outcomes for pupils in Brixham and raising standards, and also remove the differences of operational management and strategic development of schools where future pupil numbers are unpredictable.

We urge you to act with decisive action and choose Option 3 to change the current situation, and resolve a very difficult issue for the Brixham schools.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs M. Easter	Head Teacher, Brixham Church of England Primary School
Mr G. Page	Head Teacher, Chestnut Primary School
Mr K. Kies	Head Teacher, Eden Park Primary School
Mrs A. Timbrell	Head Teacher, Furzesham Primary School
Mr S. Ruffe	Head Teacher, Galmpton Church of England Primary School
Mr M. Tookey	Head Teacher, St Margaret Clitherow
Mr M. Eager	Principle, Brixham College
Mr R. Owens	Head Teacher, Churston Ferrers Grammar School

Tuesday 14th December 2011

Dear Mayor Nick,

So much is happening now to "Save our School" that I truly believe I have a creative solution to secure our future, but there are significant agreements to be achieved amongst many people in order to bring about my vision.

As you are very aware I have been 'beavering away' behind the scenes bombarding e-mails with questions and appeals to you, your Officers, your Cabinet Colleagues, and every Brixham Town Councillor! These are all filed to review as necessary.

It was really good to see you with your Officers and Colleagues here last night, where you had the opportunity to witness first hand the passion of our community to preserve high quality education and safeguarding for all the children on our beautiful site here in Higher Brixham, as the community of St. Margaret Clitherow showed their desire to continue with the same provision on their beautiful site too.

One new child joined us two weeks ago and we have three new children signed up to start at our school soon, whose families have chosen for them to come to us despite the current uncertain situation. They come with no preconceptions, just a desire to join us, and I say, "Hallelujah!"

After reading Page 6 of the Herald Express printed on Friday 10th December, it is crystal clear to me that our current Headteacher has 'thrown in the towel' and has no appetite to end his teaching career by fighting to save Chestnut Primary School. I find this a great shame, but now I feel I have the mandate to put myself forward to lead our school from September 1st 2011, as long as Mrs. Bligh does not wish to do so, and decides to retire along with Mr. Page.

If Mrs. Bligh does wish to lead our school then I hope she would outline her vision for the future provision of education on this site, and I of course would stand aside and fully support her to achieve her goals.

If she does choose to retire I sincerely hope she gets the rewards from the Torbay Local Authority her long dedicated service deserves, and I would hope to retain her SEN expertise and services at Chestnut in the future in some form of a consultancy role, and I would suggest to you

that she could be an asset to all the schools in Brixham as an SEN Consultant in the future.

Mr. Page originally stated he would retire this Christmas, but is now remaining and waiting for the Local Authority to make their decisions about all our futures.

As it says in Proverbs, "Without vision the people fail".

Please let me explain my vision and how I can raise the "Phoenix from the Ashes" we currently find ourselves in. This may even prove to be the 'Option 4' not yet proposed as part of the Brixham Primary Schools Reorganisation Consultation Process.

"A clear vision is really just a picture of how things would look if everything were running as planned. A leader needs a vision for excellence. The best leaders have a strong vision and positive beliefs to support that vision. Any organisation can thrive and grow in confidence from this philosophy of leadership because the community will succeed in a climate of optimism and good organisation with an enthusiasm which is infectious."

I now intend to use my optimism and enthusiasm with your parental and community support to apply for the position of Headteacher at Chestnut Primary School commencing on the 1st September 2011. I will promise to work for and achieve the qualification for Headship, the NPQH, as soon as is practically possible, which would be January 2011.
See this website link:

<http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/index/professional-development/npqh.htm>

I have an action plan whereby we initially start with a three class school. There will be cohorts of Reception/Year 1/2, Year 3/4 and Year 5/6 children. I believe this will provide the best outcomes for the children currently here at Chestnut and I pledge to create a culture of learning to achieve the best academic results possible with high quality teaching and safeguarding for all. Once the existing community here in Higher Brixham get to hear of these plans I believe it will inspire confidence in all the families who are currently living with uncertainty not knowing what to do best for their children's futures. If my proposal is supported in principle, we can reassure them that Chestnut Primary School will continue to serve

them, and we can then focus on attracting more pupils and their families to join us, including those who left and may wish to return, from the wider community. As we grow we can then introduce a fourth and even a fifth class as the people of Brixham come to see our creative "Life Skills" curriculum which I believe will produce confident, well rounded and independent learners who will grow up to say "I went to Chestnut Primary School until I was eleven, and I had the best possible start for my journey of lifelong learning."

As the new Headteacher of a 'small school' I would expect to teach for 3.5 days (Monday morning, Tuesday all day, Wednesday all day, Thursday morning & Friday morning) and lead & manage for the remaining 1.5 days, to include having full responsibility for the Special Educational Needs of those children with specific conditions to be addressed to enable them to reach their full potential by the time they are ready to embark on their secondary phase of learning. I would expect to be mentored and supported by the expertise of colleagues from the Torbay Local Authority to guide and inform me of how to lead and manage a small school most effectively and efficiently.

The teaching staff would be Mrs. Birchall, Miss Price and I, who all the children know, and between us we can provide a wide range of skills and expertise for the benefit of all.

To cover PPA at no extra cost to the school budget I would combine Classes A & B, and B & C on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons allowing Mrs. Birchall and Miss Price the time set out in law for them to plan, prepare and assess.

The Classes would be called "Ash" (Ali), "Beech" (Bill) and "Cedar" (Corrine) in keeping with our local community of addresses with tree names.

I would encourage parents, governors and retired people (following the required safeguarding checks and CRB investigations) in our local community to come into school and volunteer their spare time and skills to support the learning of children by listening to readers and playing Literacy and Numeracy based games, etc. Tea, coffee and biscuits would be provided to sustain their energy and enthusiasm!

I would begin each day with a "Wake & Shake" and "TLC" Assembly (Thought & Lifeskill Challenge" for the day).

This gives all staff half an hour to plan and prepare the resources for each day and to liaise with colleagues.

This would increase the 'non-contact time' to 4 hours per week for Mrs. Birchall and Miss Price.

All teaching staff are obliged to work for 1265 directed hours per year to include:

Teaching
Staff Meetings
PPA Time
Parent Evenings
Report Writing
Non-Pupil Days
Performance Management

The teaching day would be:

8:45 - 8:55 Children arrive
8:55- 9:00 Registration
9:00 - 9:30 Wake & Shake in French/ TLC Assembly
9:30 - 10:30 Whole School Numeracy
10:30 - 10:50 Morning Break
10:55 - 11:55 Whole School Literacy
12:00 - 12:10 TLC Follow Up (Speaking & Listening Emphasis)
12:15 - 1:10 Lunch Break
1:15 - 3:15 Topic Afternoons to include all Foundation Subjects

We would need to look carefully at the detail in the budget & SEN funding to see how many administration staff, TA's & MTAs we could employ, but I sincerely hope the current carry forward would retain all those who wish to remain working here at Chestnut until August 31st 2012 at least.

If he so wished, I would want to retain Rob Capp too for Breakfast Club, Forest Skills and a new Teatime Club, so that we can offer working parents 'wrap-a-round' care from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day.

I want to provide a "Creative/Life Skills Curriculum" and aim for a Value Added Quotient of 100 to 101+ year and to set realistic targets for all

the children to progress with the commitment to achieve the highest percentage possible of children at the end of Key Stage 2 to achieve the Government's Target of Level 4 in Maths & Literacy. I would expect the Governing Body to be my 'critical friends' and to ensure I monitor and assess all children's progress to ensure that any intervention required is supported by them.

I'd like to see the PTA renamed as the Chestnut 'SEEDS', the School Environment & Economic Development Society, to work hand in hand with the children's School Council to improve the learning environment of the school both inside and outside.

With a renewed enthusiasm to improve I feel confident that parents in a small school community with their multitude of skills will give their time freely to work as a team to take on such tasks as repairs and redecoration, etc. Weekend/Evening Working Parties with Barbecues and activities for the children would become part of our drive to regenerate and maintain the best possible learning and teaching environment not just here in Higher Brixham, but the whole of Torbay. Children who take responsibility for their environment will be proud of their achievements and will work even harder as a result. They will learn the importance of working as part of a TEAM (Together Everyone Achieves More), and they will grow up to be good citizens with a sense of community spirit, which is surely what we want for our future society.

I promise that I can deliver all of the above, if, and it's a big if, the will of the parents and community of Chestnut, and the final decision of you the Mayor would allow me the opportunity to do so.

Que sera as always Nick,

Bill ☺

My first Thought and Lifeskill Challenge (TLC) for the above is:

Chestnut Primary School is the place where we sow seeds of knowledge and nurture individual growth.

Please allow us to flourish and you will all continue to reap what we sow.

Proposed Option for Chestnut School (put forward by Nick Henderson)

To advertise, interview and appoint a new Headteacher. This person would be a teaching head with a keen interest in moving the school forward into the future with the firm intention of giving a good quality education to the pupils of the school and managing the high percentage of SEN pupils the school has at present.

To advertise, interview and appoint a School Office Manager (an example job description is attached) whose main purpose would be Administrative Duties, act as the Headteacher's personal assistant including dealing with highly confidential and sensitive issues, be responsible for: One part-time Administrative Support Assistant; Caretaker; Cleaning Staff etc. To manage and ensure the smooth running of the school's reception, postal, telephones, stationery and hospitality facilities. To investigate and seek out other forms of extra funding for the school to enable the school to develop extra facilities and activities to enhance the education experience at the school.

To advertise and appoint a suitably qualified Co-ordinator (teacher or SEN trained person) to be in charge of SEN pupils and their care. Their area of responsibility would be to liaise and work with all members of staff with regard to the SEN needs of the school. To look after any pupils that need any extra care during the school day to avoid disrupting classes. It is suggested that all members of staff who have any contact with the pupils are trained with regard to restraint in unusual circumstances to ensure the safety of all pupils.

To reduce the number of classes from 4 to 3. These could be;

Class 1: Reception, Year 1 and Year 2.

Class 2: Year 3 and Year 4.

Class 3: Year 5 and Year 6.

This would be in the short term until pupil numbers rise when the school would have the budget to increase the number of classes.

To take over the management of the Sure Start nursery and integrate this into the school. This would bring more income into the school and not significantly add to the management costs. It would also ensure that the school would be getting more pupils from the local area.

The thinking behind the above is:

An Office Manager would cost less than a Teacher and have the appropriate skills in running a business (school). All the Teachers including the Headteacher would be teaching as they have been trained to do. The Headteacher would of course remain in charge of the school and would (with the help of the Governors) be in control of the direction the school takes in the future. We do not have information on the current or future finances of the school however it is assumed that by reducing the number of qualified

Teachers from 5 to 3, having an SEN Co-ordinator and employing an Office Manager and Assistant the wage bill would be substantially reduced.

The school should take the same approach as Galmpton Primary School does in promoting itself (unofficially) as a feeder school for Churston Grammar, we realise that all schools in the area fill this role however we think that the school should enhance the perception that small schools can give a quality education with enhanced care and that all important family feeling that the school has at present.

The management of SEN pupils is delicate as there is such a high percentage of SEN pupils in the school. This is another thing that a small school can do better than a larger school and it is felt is good for the development of all the pupils in the school. We have been told by a number of parents of SEN pupils that the Local Authority was the body that suggested to them that they send their children to Chestnut Primary School which is probably the reason for this high percentage of SEN pupils, Chestnut is obviously a very good school at fulfilling this purpose.

We are aware that a number of children from Chestnut do pass the 11+ and go to Churston Grammar, the recent SATS results and the last OFSTED report confirm that the standard of education at Chestnut is good. With the help of school clubs those pupils that need extra tutoring to be able to pass the 11+ can be helped at a much lower cost to parents than having 1 to 1 tutoring.

A number of the present pupils at Chestnut were previously at Eden Park Primary School and are unlikely to return there if Chestnut closes. A number of parents have said that if this were to happen then they would probably send their children to Kingswear Primary School thus Torbay would lose the income from these pupils. At present there are a number of new properties being built in Brixham (Sharkham and the Pavilions) and this will continue as Brixham goes through this current period of regeneration. Tesco are building a new supermarket in town with about 200 new jobs and there are a number of other proposed projects planned for Brixham, all of these bring new jobs which will require young families and thus more children. It doesn't take too long for trends to change and for the number of primary school places required in Brixham to rise considerably. It would be a pity to close a school now and then have to build a new one in the next 10 years at considerable expense.

Chestnut Primary School has the best grounds and buildings of any primary school in this area and has the potential to be the best primary school in Torbay and the surrounding area. It is on the brink of becoming a really fantastic school, possibly this period of consultation is the catalyst the school needs to move forward to a bright future and it could become the type of school that other schools aspire to be.