

Appendix **A**

Consultation on the proposed closure of Brewers Hill Middle School, Aldbanks, Dunstable.

**Monday 24 February 2014 -
Monday 7 April 2014**

1. Introduction

Councils have a duty to ensure there are enough suitable school places for children aged 5-16 (as per Section 14 of the Education Act 1996). The Council's role is to promote parental choice, diversity, high standards and fair access to education (Education and Inspections Act 2006).

To help meet these duties a Council has the power to close schools where no other viable options are available.

Possible reasons for closing a school include where:

- it is surplus to requirements (e.g. as a result of an area-wide reorganisation and/or there are sufficient places in neighbouring schools to accommodate displaced pupils)
- it is to be amalgamated/ merged with another school
- it is failing and there is no viable sponsored academy solution
- it is to acquire, lose or change religious character or
- it is being replaced by a new school.

Central Bedfordshire Council is proposing to close Brewers Hill Middle School because the current and projected pupil numbers make the school unviable.

This document explains the reasons for proposing to close the school and how you can have your say.

The Council is also currently consulting on proposals to close two other middle schools in the Dunstable area for the same reasons. You can also have your say, by responding to the separate consultations, on the proposals to close:

- Ashton Church of England Voluntary Aided (CofE VA) Middle School (High Street North, Dunstable) and
- Streetfield Middle School (Dunstable Road, Caddington).

Consultation documents and responses forms are available from the schools concerned and from the Councils website at www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/consultations. You can also request copies by email from admissions@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk and by calling the School Admissions helpline on T. 0300 300 8037.

2. Background

There have been lots of changes taking place in Dunstable and Houghton Regis schools over the last few years; many have taken advantage of greater powers given to them by Government to change their school, in response to parental demand. The governing bodies of maintained schools in the area, which have approached the Council for permission to consult on a change of age range, were able to provide proof of parental support at that early stage in response to their initial surveys. This support was further demonstrated during the consultation process for each proposal and was one of the factors that were considered by the Council when approving a requested change of age range.

Likewise, for academies that were required to ask the Secretary of State for Education for permission to change their age range, the level of parental support was again one of the factors that were considered when approving the proposal.

In both Dunstable and Houghton Regis there has been a shift from the three tier system of lower, middle and upper schools towards a two tier primary and secondary school model as a result of these changes.

This shift has led to many of the previous feeder schools converting to primary schools. This has led to fewer pupils applying to middle schools for the intake at Year 5. Also the four former upper schools have extended their age ranges, meaning that some pupils are leaving middle schools to start secondary school in year 7. The combination of these factors means that pupil numbers at Brewers Hill Middle School have fallen significantly as a result of these changes. We have now reached a point where falling pupil numbers means the Council needs to consider the future viability of the school.

The funding that schools receive comes to the Council from Central Government and is passed directly to the Council's maintained schools in accordance with our local funding formula (academies receive their funding direct from Central Government). A maintained school's funding allocation is predominantly based upon the total number of pupils they have on roll and the total number of pupils that are due to move in and out of the school during that academic year. Because of falling pupil numbers, the budget for Brewers Hill Middle School is due to fall by 13.6% for 2014/15 alone and this decrease, and projected decreases going forward places the school in a financially unviable position. With such a significantly reduced budget, the school will find it difficult to employ sufficient teachers to enable the delivery of a full curriculum.

The table below sets out the current pupil numbers at Brewers Hill Middle School, the projected numbers in September 2014 based on actual applications, and projected numbers for September 2015 based on assumptions regarding applications. Brewers Hill Middle School has a Published Admission Number of 120 which is the total number of children that the school is able to admit for each year group.

Current and Projected Pupil Numbers at Brewers Hill Middle School

Year Group	Current number of pupils – as at 15 January 2014	Projected number of pupils for September 2014	Projected number of pupils for September 2015
5	64	36	0
6	56	64	36
7	33	28	32
8	28	33	28
Total	181	161	96
Total number of places available at the school	480	480	480
Percentage of school places filled	The school is 37.7% full	The school would be 33.5% full	The school would be 20% full

The projected figures are based upon applicants' 'first preferences'. There are sufficient places within Brewers Hill Middle School to admit all of the children who have applied for a place, in year 5, at the school as a 'first preference'. Due to the places that are currently available within other Dunstable middle schools, children who have applied for a place within an alternative Dunstable middle school as their 'first preference' and have named Brewers Hill Middle School as their 'second preference' will be allocated a place within their

'first preference' school. Second and third preferences for Brewers Hill Middle School will not therefore need to be considered.

As described above, low pupil numbers make the school no longer educationally or financially viable and keeping this school open would not be in the best educational interests of their pupils.

3. Our proposal

The Council is proposing to close Brewers Hill Middle School. The Council has considered other options (see question the Frequently Asked Questions on page seven) but the fall in pupil numbers, both current and projected, means that the school is not able to deliver the full curriculum and the school is unviable.

Should the proposal go forward and the closure of the school be approved, the timeframe and process would be as follows. **Please note that this timescale would need to be reviewed nearer the time depending on actual numbers at the school.**

September 2014	
Year 5	Children for the new Year 5 group are admitted.
Year 6	Parents of Year 6 children are invited to apply for transfer to a secondary school in Year 7 (to transfer in September 2015).
Year 7	Year 7 operates, but on a reduced size of year group.
Year 8	Parents of Year 8 children are invited to apply for transfer to a secondary school in Year 9 (to transfer in September 2015). This will be the last Upper transfer in Dunstable.

April 2015	
Year 7	Parents of Year 7 children are invited to consider making an application to transfer to a secondary school in Year 8 (to transfer in September 2015). This is known as an in-year application as it happens outside of the normal transfer point.

September 2015	
Year 5	No new pupils are admitted.
Year 6	Parents of Year 6 children are invited to apply for transfer to a secondary school in Year 7 (to transfer in September 2016).
Year 7	Year 7 operates, but on a reduced size of year group.
Year 8	Year 8 operates, but on a reduced size of year group.

April 2016	
Year 6	<p>Any Year 6 children whose parents haven't made an application to transfer to a secondary school will be sent an application to state a preference for a school.</p> <p>If no application is received by the end of May a place at the nearest Secondary school with places will be allocated.</p>
Year 7	<p>Parents of Year 7 children are invited to consider making an application to transfer to a secondary school in Year 8 (to transfer in September 2015).</p> <p>This is known as an in-year application as it happens outside of the normal transfer point. If no application is received by the end of May a place at the nearest Secondary school with places in Year 8 for September will be allocated.</p>
Year 8	<p>Parents of any Year 8 children remaining in the school are invited to apply for a place in Year 9 at a secondary school (to transfer in September 2016).</p> <p>If no application is received by the end of May a place at the nearest Secondary school with places in Year 9 for September will be allocated.</p>

We recognise that this proposal to close the school may be unsettling for pupils, staff, parents and carers and we are keen to hear from all those people who want to have their say on the proposals during the consultation. You will find a full list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) starting on page seven of this document which may help to address some immediate concerns that you have. You are also welcome to raise queries via the School Admissions helpline on T. 0300 300 8037 or at the public meeting that is being held at the school on Tuesday 4 March (see page six for details).

4. The consultation process

The Council is required to consult with a range of people and organisations including:

- Parents and carers of the children in the school
- The school's governing body
- The school's teachers and other staff
- The governing bodies, teachers and staff of other schools that may be affected
- Parents and carers of children at other schools that may be affected e.g. at feeder schools
- The local diocese and other faith groups
- Neighbouring local authorities
- Members of Parliament

You can have your say online at www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/consultations or you can complete pages 13 and 14 of this document and return them to the FREEPOST address provided at the end of the form. As well as providing feedback on the Council's proposed closure of Brewers Hill Middle School, you can also submit an alternative

proposal for the school. All responses should be returned by **5.00pm on Monday 7 April 2014**.

We will also hold a public meeting at Brewers Hill Middle School on **Tuesday 4 March 2014** at 7.00 pm which is open to all interested parties. We are also meeting with the staff, union representatives and governors of Brewers Hill Middle School.

The timetable for the consultation and decision making process is set out below. At the end of this consultation, if the Council decides to pursue closure of the school, it would then have to go through another stage of consultation (a Statutory Notice period) before any final decision could be made in August.

Consultation Timetable

Action	Timescale/Deadline
Six week consultation period begins	Monday 24 February 2014.
Staff, Governors and trade union meeting	Tuesday 25 February at 4.00pm at Brewers Hill Middle School.
Public meeting	Tuesday 4 March 2014 at 7.00pm at Brewers Hill Middle School.
End of six week consultation period	Monday 7 April 2014.
Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee meet to consider the responses received to the consultation. This meeting is open to the public **	Wednesday 7 May 2014 at 7.00pm at the Grove Theatre, Dunstable.
Council's Executive meet to consider responses to consultation and decide next course of action. This meeting is open to the public **	Tuesday 27 May 2014 at 9.30am at Priory House, Chicksands.
If decision is made to proceed with the closure, Statutory Notices will be published and a four week period for comments and/or objections begins	Monday 9 June 2014.
End of Statutory Notice period	Monday 7 July 2014.
Final decision regarding the proposal to be made by the Council's Executive Committee This meeting is open to the public **	Tuesday 19 August 2014 at 9.30am at Priory House, Chicksands.

** for information regarding these meetings, please see page 11.

For more information about this proposal please:

- visit the School Admissions webpage at www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/admissions
- email admissions@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk or
- call the School Admissions helpline on T. 0300 300 8037.

5. Frequently asked questions (FAQ's)

Q – Does this consultation mean that the Council has already decided that Brewers Hill Middle School will close?

A – No. The Council's Executive committee has approved the start of a consultation on the proposal to close the school, based upon the school's financial and educational viability. The final decision will not be made until 19 August 2014.

Q – Has the Council considered any alternative solutions other than the proposed closure of Brewers Hill Middle School?

A – Yes. We have considered converting the school to either a primary or a secondary school but we do not need any additional primary or secondary places. The school also worked with the Barnfield Federation to investigate a conversion to academy status as part of that organisation but unfortunately this was unsuccessful.

Q – To give parents a real choice, could the Council keep just one of the 3 middle schools open?

A – Unfortunately, due to the total number of pupils currently in Brewers Hill, Ashton CofE VA and Streetfield Middle Schools, and the number of projected pupils moving forward, this is not a viable option.

Q – Why is the Council proposing to close Brewers Hill Middle School, which is a 'Good' school (Ofsted February 2013) when 2 of the 3 upper/secondary schools in Dunstable 'require improvement'?

A – Although we recognise that the school has improved significantly over recent years, the proposed closure is based upon the school's education and financial viability and is not based upon standards. However standards will inevitably fall if, due to the significantly reduced budget, the school cannot employ sufficient teaching staff to enable the delivery of a full appropriate curriculum for all year groups.

Q – What is the Council's response to the accusation that by proposing to close 3 middle schools in Dunstable you are reducing parental choice?

A – Parental choice and support was demonstrated to us within the proposals that were brought forward to the Council by the schools that wished to expand their age range. This has been further demonstrated by the number of parents who have not applied for a middle school place for September 2014 but are choosing to keep their child within a primary school. There are still middle school options available in the area:

- Barnfield Vale has expanded and is a Primary and Middle school for children aged 4-13 years and admits children in both Year R and Year 5 as these are their normal points of entry.
- Caddington Village School is for children aged 4-13 years and admits children in both Year R and Year 5 as these are their normal points of entry.
- Priory Academy is expanding from 9-13 years to 9-16 years from September 2014 and admits children in the Middle transfer round to Year 5 as their normal point of entry.

Q – How can the Council be sure that the projected figures are correct?

A – The projected number of pupils for September 2014 for Brewers Hill Middle School is based upon the total number of applications received by the School Admissions Team, by the national closing date of 15 January 2014, that requested a year 5 place in the school.

Q- Would there be sufficient places in Dunstable upper/secondary schools to take any potential displaced children?

A – Yes. The Council is legally obliged to provide sufficient places for all children aged 5-16 years.

Q – Following the conversion of many Dunstable lower schools to primary status, is there now a surplus of primary school places within the town?

A – Yes. There is currently a 17% surplus of places in year R (reception) to year 5 and a surplus of between 63% and 65% surplus of places in years 5 to 8 within the local area.

Q – Historically, some Dunstable parents have chosen to send their children to schools outside of the local area. Is this still the case?

A – The admissions process allows for parental preference and parents can select any school they wish their child to attend whether that is their local school or one some distance away. In previous years some parents in the Dunstable and Houghton Regis area have opted for Middle and Upper schools in the Leighton Buzzard or Harlington areas or have chosen to send their children to schools in Luton.

Q – Will the new homes planned for Frenches Avenue in Dunstable potentially increase demand for places at Brewers Hill Middle School?

A – Although every new housing development creates pressure on schools, the number of new homes planned for Frenches Avenue will only equate to a very small number of children, estimated at just 8 per year group.

Q – Are the school staff also being consulted as part of the consultation process?

A – School staff and trade union representatives are being consulted throughout this consultation process. Should a decision be made to issue statutory notices to close the school, staff and trade unions would be further consulted. The Council and the school's Human Resources provider will work with the governing body, the staff group and trade unions to ensure all staff have access to appropriate advice and support and will ensure that the relevant policies and procedures of the Council are followed.

Q - Should a decision to close the school be made, how would the Council retain the staff that would be needed until the school closed completely?

A - Should a decision be made to close the school, the governing body of the school would consider a staffing structure that would reflect the pupil numbers and the educational and pastoral needs of pupils at the school until it's closure. The Council would work with the governing body and their Human Resources provider when considering the staffing structure.

Q- Is the Council able to place staff from the schools under consultation in other local schools that may have vacancies?

A – In accordance with education legislation, each school's governing body is responsible for appointing its own staff therefore vacant posts in other schools are unable to be ring fenced to staff in those schools under consultation. The Council has a redeployment procedure for school based staff and would support the redeployment of suitably qualified and experienced staff where possible.

Q- Why did the Council not forewarn parents of this proposal?

A – Because it is only a proposal at this stage. A decision has not been made yet. The data upon which this proposal is based was not available until after 15 January 2014, when the closing date for middle school applications had passed.

Q – My child is due to transfer into Brewers Hill Middle school this September from their lower / primary school – if the proposal is approved, what would this mean for my son/daughter?

A – If the proposal to close the school is approved, all children who are due to start Brewers Hill Middle School in September 2014 would still be able to take up their place. By 31 October 2015 you would need to make an application for your child for a year 7 place at a Secondary school in September 2016. Brewers Hill Middle School would be closed by the end of the academic year in the summer of 2016.

Q – My child is currently attending Brewers Hill Middle School – if the proposal is approved, what would this mean for him/her?

A – If the decision is taken to close the school then the following would apply:

Child is currently in Year 5	Could continue at the school and make an application in September 2014, when in Year 6, to transfer to year 7 in secondary school in September 2015. Or alternatively child could continue into Year 7 in September 2015 but would need to make an ‘in-year’ application in the summer of 2016 to transfer into Year 8 at an alternative school i.e. Secondary school or Priory Academy or Barnfield Vale.
Child is currently in Year 6	You would need to make either a late application for a Secondary school to start Year 7 in September 2014. Or apply ‘in-year’ for a place in Year 8 in the summer of 2015 to start in September 2015.
Child is currently in Year 7	Could continue at the school and make application in September 2014, when in Year 8, to transfer to Upper school as normal for September 2015. Or make an ‘in-year’ application for a place in a secondary school either to start in the academic year of 2014/15 as a Year 7 pupil, or at the end of Year 7 to start in Year 8 at a secondary school.
Child is currently in Year 8	Would transfer to Upper or secondary school in September 2014 as per usual process.

Q – What happens at the end of this consultation period?

A - This consultation period will end on Monday 7 April. The responses to the consultation, plus any other alternative proposals that are submitted as part of the consultation process, will be considered at a meeting of the Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Wednesday 7 May. This meeting will be held at the Grove Theatre in Dunstable at 7.00 pm. As with all Council meetings, the public are welcome to attend and

to speak at this meeting. For advice on how to apply to speak at a council meeting, please see the guidance on page 11.

The Council's Executive Committee will then consider the results of the consultation plus any other viable options, along with the recommendations from the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at their meeting on Tuesday 27 May. This meeting will be held at the Council's offices, Priory House, in Chicksands at 9.30 am. The public are welcome to attend and to speak at this meeting. For advice on how to apply to speak at a council meeting, please see the guidance on page 11.

If a decision is made by the Executive to proceed with the proposal to close Brewers Hill Middle School, the Council would move to the next stage of the process, which is the publication of a statutory proposal and this would be published on Monday 9 June.

Q – If the Executive decide that an alternative viable option has been submitted for the future of Brewers Hill Middle School, what would happen then?

A - The Council would be required to carry out a consultation process for the alternative proposal, following the same procedure as this consultation.

Q – What is a statutory proposal and what would happen if it is published?

A – A statutory proposal is the second part of the process that the Council is obliged to carry out for proposed prescribed alterations to its maintained schools. A full representation (description) of the proposal would be published on Monday 9 June along with a summary of the proposal, which is referred to as a statutory notice.

Once published, all interested parties would have an opportunity to respond and make their views known to the Council regarding whether or not they support the proposal to close the school. Any comments or concerns they may have can be submitted during this period. This part of the process would last for 4 weeks and would end on Monday 7 July.

Q – When would the decision be taken to either keep the school open or close it?

A –The Council's Executive would consider all of the responses received during the statutory notice period, and would determine whether or not to close the school at their meeting on 19 August 2014. This meeting, which the public are welcome to attend, will be held at the Council's offices, Priory House, in Chicksands at 9.30 am. For advice on how to apply to speak at this council meeting, please see the guidance on page 11.

Q – Could the Governing Body of Brewers Hill Middle School or anybody else appeal against the Executive's decision?

A -.Within four weeks of the decision being made by the Council, the following can apply to the Schools Adjudicator against the decision

- The local Church of England Diocese
- The local Roman Catholic Diocese
- The governing body of the school that is subject to the proposal
- The Trustees of a foundation, foundation special or voluntary school that is subject to the proposal

On receipt of an appeal, the Schools Adjudicator would request the Council to submit, within one week, the proposal, the responses received and the reason for the decision made. There is no right of appeal on any determination made by the Schools Adjudicator.

Q – What would happen to the building and land if the school was to close?

A – No decision has been made regarding this. The land and buildings would remain as Council assets. The school's playing fields are used by Dunstable Town Football Club and

this agreement would continue. If the Council decided to submit the buildings and land for disposal, the Secretary of State could insist that they are used for educational purposes.

Q – Why has the Council allowed this situation to happen within Dunstable?

A – Following Central Government’s decision to allow academies (which are outside of the Council’s control) to change their age ranges, in order to give maintained schools (schools which are within the Council’s control) the same flexibility, Central Bedfordshire Council has allowed schools, with evidence of parental support, to bring forward their proposals to improve their schools and, through this, the outcomes for their pupils.

The changes that have subsequently occurred in schools and academies throughout Dunstable and Houghton Regis have led to the situation that we now have.

New Government regulations, which came into effect at the end of January 2014, have given more freedoms to maintained schools; they are now able to change their age range by up to two years without following a statutory process and without the Council’s consent.

Q – Has the consultation that Brewers Hill Middle School carried out previously, regarding a conversion to Barnfield Park Academy, had any bearing on this consultation?

A – No. In 2011 Brewers Hill Middle School governing body and Head teacher approached Barnfield Academy Trust with a view to becoming an Academy, with the intention to change their age range to become a primary school, with plans for a future studio school to be established (Studio schools are for pupils aged 14-19 years olds that have a new approach to learning which includes teaching through enterprise projects and real work). With the impact of the changing pattern of provision in the area, Barnfield Academy Trust eventually identified that there would not be sufficient demand for a further primary school.

The governing body of Brewers Hill Middle School may launch a further consultation regarding an alternative proposal. Information will be available on the school’s website - <http://www.brewershillmiddle.co.uk/>

If you have any questions that have not been addressed above you are welcome to:

- raise these at the meeting to be held in school on Tuesday 4 March
- visit the School Admissions webpage at www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/admissions
- email admissions@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk or
- call the School Admissions helpline on T.0300 300 8037.

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Attending and speaking at Council meetings

The public are welcome to attend the Council meetings at which decisions regarding the proposed closure will be discussed.

The Council’s Constitution allows anyone to register to speak about an item, prior to the meeting, once the agenda has been published. Those who register to speak are allowed a maximum of three minutes to speak (unless the Chairman agrees to allow more time).

Normally no more than three people can speak on any one item, but again the Chairman can extend this number if they feel it necessary and if there is significant public interest.

We encourage groups of residents or community groups to nominate a speaker to speak on their behalf and represent the views of others so as to encourage as many different views to be represented as possible.

Speakers are normally invited to speak at the start of the meeting or, at the discretion of the Chairman, during the debate.

Agendas for meetings are published eight working days ahead of the date of meeting. You can find the agendas on the Council's website www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/committees

You are encouraged to submit a request to speak at a meeting to the Clerk to the Committee to speak as soon as possible after the agenda has been published, although the Clerk can accept such requests up to 15 minutes before the meeting starts.

The clerk to the Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee is Jonathon Partridge: you can contact Jonathon via email Jonathon.partridge@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk or T. 0300 300 4634.

The clerk to the Executive is Sandra Hobbs: You can contact Sandra via email Sandra.hobbs@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk or T. 0300 300 5257.

**Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Children's Services
Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford
SG17 5TQ**



Brewers Hill Middle School Proposed Closure Consultation



Central Bedfordshire Council is consulting on the potential closure of Brewers Hill Middle School as current and projected pupil numbers makes the school unviable. We want to hear your views.

Feedback must be received by **5pm on 7th April 2014**. You can also see the full details of the proposed closure and complete this online at: www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/consultations

1. Are you a: (Please tick one)

- Parent of a child/children at Brewers Hill Middle School
- Parent of a child/children at another school in the area
- School employee of Brewers Hill Middle School
- School employee of another school in the area
- School Governor of Brewers Hill Middle School
- School Governor of another school in the area
- Local resident
- Other

Please specify:

2. If you are the parent of a child/children currently at another school, or the employee or governor of another school, please tell us which school. (Please write name of school)

3. Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to close Brewers Hill Middle School (Please tick one option)

- Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree

4. Please give your reasons why you agree or disagree with the proposal to close Brewers Hill Middle School. Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary

5. Please use the space below to suggest any alternatives to closing the school or make any other comments you would like to make about this proposal.

About you

The following information will help us when considering your opinions and to make sure that we're getting the views of all members of the community. The answers will not be used to identify any individual. Our data protection statement is provided at the end of this form.

6. Are you (Please tick one)

Male

Female

7. What is your age? (Please tick one)

Under 16 years

20-29 years

45-59 years

65-74 years

16-19 years

30-44 years

60-64 years

75 years +

8. Do you consider yourself to be disabled? (Please tick one)

Under the Equality Act 2010 a person is considered to have a disability if he/she has a physical or mental impairment which has a sustained and long-term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

Yes

No

9. To which of these groups do you consider you belong? (Please tick one)

Asian or Asian British

Chinese

White British

Black or Black British

Mixed

Other Ethnic group

If other, please specify:

10. What is your postcode?

Thank you for your views.

Please return your completed form by 5pm on Monday 7 April 2014 to:

FREEPOST RSJS GBBZ SRZT (you do not need to use a stamp)

School closure proposal for Brewers Hill Middle School

Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, SG17 5TQ

Data Protection Act 1998

Please note that your personal details supplied on this form will be held and/or computerised by Central Bedfordshire Council for the purpose analysing feedback to the consultation on the proposed closure of Brewers Hill Middle School, Dunstable. The information collected may be disclosed to officers and members of the Council and its' partners involved in this consultation. Summarised information from the forms may be published, but no individual details will be disclosed under these circumstances. Your personal details will be safeguarded and will not be divulged to any other individuals or organisations for any other purposes.

Information classification: Protected when complete

Notes from staff briefing held at Brewers Hill Middle school on Tuesday 25 February 2014

Title of meeting:	Notes from staff briefing held at Brewers Hill Middle School	
Date/Time:	25 February 2014 at 4.00 pm	
Attendees:	<u>Central Bedfordshire Council</u> – Helen Redding, Assistant Director School Improvement Rob Parsons, Head of School Organisation, Admissions & Capital Planning David Waller, Senior Human Resource Manager Lydia Braisher, Admissions Manager Sue Barrow, Information Manager	<u>Union Representatives</u> – Tim Rawsden – NASUWT Bridget Fordham – ATL Martin Foster - GMB
Venue:	Brewers Hill Middle School, Aldbanks, Dunstable	

A presentation was given by the officers of Central Bedfordshire Council regarding the proposal to close Brewers Hill Middle School and the consultation process that is being undertaken.

The officers advised that the proposed closure of the school was based upon the

- Changing pattern of provision
- Year 5 retained in Primaries, Year 7 transfers to Secondaries
- Reducing pupil numbers in the Middle Schools
- School funding follows the child so resulting significant financial impact
- Forecast further reduction in pupil numbers will increase the financial impact

Questions were then invited.

Below is a summary of the questions and issues that were raised by the staff.

Question	Response
Due to the process that the school went through last year, to become an academy within the Barnfield Federation, is the school being given an opportunity to consider any other change?	The Governing Body are able to bring forward an alternative proposal in response to this consultation.
Can the lower schools, that have changed their age range, provide the facilities that are needed for the curriculum e.g. science labs?	At the meetings held during the lower school consultations many parents asked whether the lower schools would be able to deliver the full primary curriculum. The

Central Bedfordshire Council

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	schools were able to assure them that they would.
Why are you proposing to close Brewers Hill, which is an Ofsted 'good' school, when the secondary schools 'require improvement'?	<p>The proposal to close the school is based upon the viability of the school, which affects the ability of the school to deliver the curriculum. It is not based upon the current standard of the school.</p> <p>The secondary schools in the town are making good progress.</p>
Did the Council consider the over supply of places when it approved the change of age ranges for the Dunstable and Houghton Regis schools?	The Council allowed maintained schools to bring forward proposals to change their age range in order to give those schools the same opportunities as were available to academies within the area. The supply of places was one of the factors that was considered when decisions were made by the Secretary of State (for academies) and by the Council (for maintained schools).
Are the primary schools undersubscribed? Will any of them be closed?	Some lower schools that have converted to primary are predicted to have lower numbers for year 5 in September 2014. This is a trend seen elsewhere in the first few years of a school's transition to a new age range but we expect numbers to rise in subsequent years as parents grow in confidence.
Are academies allowed to do what they like? Academies appear unaccountable and Council maintained schools are therefore at a disadvantage	Academies are accountable to the Secretary of State who will intervene in any that are underperforming or are significantly undersubscribed and therefore unviable.
The letters that have been sent out to parents of current year 6 students regarding admissions have been misleading and parents have raised their concerns with staff. If the letter had been properly written we would not be losing so many pupils. The school should have been privy to any letters that were due to be sent out to our parents.	<p>The School Admissions service has a duty to advise parents of a change to a transfer point. We therefore needed to advise parents that there will be no coordinated year 9 transfer into Manshead or Queensbury from September 2016.</p> <p>The letters invited parents to contact the Admissions helpline. Many did contact us and we were able to assist them.</p>
By forcing children into bigger schools, with much older children, you are forcing them to grow up too quickly.	All of the schools that have proposed an extension to their age range have had to demonstrate how they will manage the increased age range and provide the pupils with a good education. If we have any



	concerns about a maintained schools ability to subsequently do this, we will intervene. If we have any such concerns about an academy we can take these to the DfE's Regional Commissioner.
Comment from union representative	<p>Please feedback to the consultation with the enthusiasm for the school that you have shown today.</p> <p>It is not a losing battle. Twice we have been close to inevitable closure decisions which were subsequently over turned.</p> <p>Tell the Council's elected members of your views by responding.</p>

Notes from public meeting held at Brewers Hill Middle School on Tuesday 4 March 2014

Title of meeting:	Notes from public meeting held at Brewers Hill Middle School
Date/Time:	4 March 2014 at 7.00 pm
Venue:	Brewers Hill Middle School, Aldbanks, Dunstable

A presentation was given by officers of Central Bedfordshire Council regarding the proposal to close Brewers Hill Middle School and the consultation process that is being undertaken.

Helen Redding, Assistant Director School Improvement

Rob Parsons, Head of School Organisation, Admissions & Capital Planning

Lydia Braisher, Admissions Manager

The officers advised that the proposed closure of the school was based upon the

- Changing pattern of provision
- Year 5 retained in Primaries, Year 7 transfers to Secondaries
- Reducing pupil numbers in the Middle Schools
- School funding follows the child so resulting significant financial impact
- Forecast further reduction in pupil numbers will increase the financial impact

The officers encouraged everybody to respond to the consultation.

Questions and concerns were invited.

Below is a summary of the questions and concerns that were raised

Question	Response
If the decision is made to close the school, can the Governing Body appeal the decision?	The Governing Body can appeal to the Schools Adjudicator within four weeks of the decision being made. There is no right of appeal on the determination made by the Schools Adjudicator.
If the decision is made to close the school, and the teachers all leave, who would support the children and what would happen to their education?	The Council would work in partnership with the school to support the process and to provide support to the children. The Council would also commission any additional support that is required.
What would happen to the staff if the school closes?	With the reduced budget that the school have for 2014/15, the school's Governing Body will have to consider its staffing budget with effect from September 2014, irrespective of the outcome of the closure proposal.

	If the school faces closure, the Council will provide HR support to the school and to the staff.
This is not a 'failing' school, why is this school facing closure?	The proposal to close the school is based upon the viability of the school, which affects the ability of the school to deliver the curriculum. It is not based upon the current standard of the school.
Could just one middle school remain open?	There is a 65% surplus of places within the area in years 5-8. There is no demographic demand for these places to be retained in the area.
Why were the parents of year 4 children not advised of this proposal before they were asked to submit their choice for year 5?	Figures from the admission process, which closed on 15 January 2014, were used to confirm the numbers of pupils that were due to move to the school in September. This then gave us the information we needed regarding the future viability of the school.
How will the decision be made regarding the proposal? What will be the criteria?	The Council is required to follow the guidance produced by the Department for Education for decision makers. This includes consideration of all of the responses to the consultation.
You are taking away our choice. By forcing children into bigger schools, with much older children, you are forcing them to grow up too quickly.	All of the schools that have proposed an extension to their age range have had to demonstrate how they will manage the increased age range and provide the pupils with a good education. If we have any concerns about a maintained schools ability to subsequently do this, we will intervene. If we have any such concerns about an academy we can take these to the DfE's Regional Commissioner.
The letters that have been sent out to parents of current year 6 students regarding admissions have been misleading and parents have raised their concerns with staff. If the letter had been properly written the middle schools would not be losing so many pupils.	The School Admissions service has a duty to advise parents of a change to a transfer point. We therefore needed to advise parents that there will be no coordinated year 9 transfer into Manshead or Queensbury from September 2016. The letters invited parents to contact the Admissions helpline. Many did contact us and we were able to assist them.
Have the children from the new development north of Houghton Regis been included in the projected numbers?	This will be provided either within or adjacent to that development, providing school places local to the new communities in north Houghton Regis, when they are required
How can village schools stay open, with very low numbers?	School funding regulations changed last year and each school now receives a uniform lump sum, plus additional funding based upon the number of pupils they have. Small schools that struggle to stay open often go into partnership with other schools in order to remain viable.



<p>Can parents change their mind?</p>	<p>Yes, parents can change their preference and submit a late application</p>
<p>This is scaremongering and nobody has been asked to vote for either 2 tier or 3 tier across the town. Nobody has voted for this closure. The council will not listen.</p>	<p>Academies and schools within Dunstable and Houghton Regis have brought forward their own proposals to change their age ranges. They were able to justify these proposals and show evidence of parental support to the Council who is the decision maker for Council maintained schools and to the Department for Education for academies.</p> <p>This not a referendum, there is no voting process. This is a consultation and we encourage everybody to submit their responses.</p>
<p>Why has the Council not driven all of the changes?</p> <p>Academies are competing for our children. Feeder schools are in partnership with other schools. The mess within the town is due to the lack of partnership working between schools.</p>	<p>The Council is no longer able to drive system wide change and schools are now largely in control of their own destinies. The Council has not been the decision maker for the changes that have happened in academies, but the Council decided to give our maintained schools the same freedoms that were available to academies.</p> <p>Following recent changes to school regulations by the Department for Education, all maintained schools can now change their age range by up to 2 years without any recourse to the Council.</p> <p>The Council retains responsibility for ensuring the provision of school places.</p>

At the close of the meeting, everyone was encouraged to respond to the consultation.