

**SPALDING GLEED PUBLIC CONSULTATION HELD AT GLEED GIRLS
WEDNESDAY 22 JUNE 2011 6:30 PM**

Attendance – approximately 30 people

Introduction from Paul Holmes (Head of Property and Technology Management LCC), Janet Daniels (Headteacher of the girls school) and Geoff Cowley (Headteacher of the boys school).

The consultation document and the consultation period is an opportunity to influence the outcome of the proposal. The DfE has eventually advised us that the two processes (the proposal to go co-educational and the proposal to convert to an academy) should be kept entirely separate. The first process is to become co-educational potentially followed by a further consultation on becoming an Academy.

Becoming one school gives sufficient infrastructure to provide a viable school with a balanced broad curriculum offering the pupils more choice and a better education.

Q On the consultation document it refers to both the co-educational change and the change to an academy as one, but you are saying that these two are separate?

A The governing bodies and the future designate governing body are intending to go to consultation on becoming an Academy should the proposal to merge and become one co-educational school go ahead. The processes are, however, entirely separate.

Q I received a letter on 26 May saying consultation was to begin on 6 June, then the consultation moves to begin on the 9th. The form on the back and the document comes across that the two are one consultation.

A It began on the 9th as we wanted to ensure that all documents were ready for publication based on late advice received at that time. We will look at revising the consultation documents in the light of feedback received today and further advice received by the DfE. The Academy conversion process does not involve the Local Authority and will be dealt with separately, although that process will only begin if this proposal goes ahead. (Note: the revised consultation documents were published on the website on 23 June).

Q A lot of parents will be confused by what they have received and you should write to all parents to inform them of the situation.

A Consultation has to be meaningful and open to change as a result of responses received. One of the changes is to completely separate out the two processes.

Q Are you going to write to parents to inform them about a separate consultation for Academy status?

A Yes, when the consultation on Academy status begins all parents will be sent documentation for the expected academy process from the Academy sponsor, CfBT.

Q What does the Academy status referred to in the document actually mean?

A As this was written before advice recently received from the DfE the form and consultation will be revised and reissued but an Academy is a maintained school which is independent of the Local Authority.

- Q Does the Glead Boys School have a deficit as a failing school?
A No it is not in deficit and it is certainly not a failing school.
- Q So why are numbers falling if it is not failing?
A Because there are less children in this area entering secondary education, the same is true of the roll at the girls school due to demographic trends.
- Q If you want to talk about Academy status and you are suggesting that a co-educational establishment is necessary is this to benefit the boys school due to falling numbers and standards?
A No, in actual fact the girls roll has fallen by a higher percentage than the boys and this trend is projected to continue. Both schools have good standards and according to Ofsted the girls school is good and the boys school is good with outstanding features.
- Q I have a son at the boys school and am very happy with his education; you are wrong to say the boys school is failing.
A Noted
- Q As a teacher and governor the only reason that the boys school is closing is to enable this process to happen so one establishment is left that is co-educational and more viable in the future.
A Noted
- Q The document states that the girls and the boys are below average in the county.
A We are a secondary modern in a selective education system, so it is not surprising that the schools results are below average.
- Q I have a daughter and I am a teacher here. Can you assure me that for the next 5 years she will be in single sex classes apart from options?
A That is what the governing body want to happen at this stage though it is impossible to give assurances. The girls' governing body were a little concerned about the co-educational proposal until we agreed the current proposed model for the single sex element which we truly do believe to be in the best interests of pupils, staff and parents.
- Q Are you going to turn around next year and mix sexes in all subjects?
A No, it is our intention to support single sex education within a co-educational establishment supported by both schools.
- Q But there will be some classes that might become co-educational?
A Options for KS4 would possibly be mixed sex to offer a wider curriculum and to be more flexible and will be subject specific. As one school it makes a wider range of options possible.
- Q Will class sizes stay the same?
A Yes, that is our intention.
- Q (Grammar School Headteacher) – I can see the advantages but there are ideas mentioned of offering sixth form facilities, can you give more details?

- A The reason for expansion is to give the boys equal opportunities at Post 16 and we are a vocational specialist centre and intend to remain fundamentally a vocational establishment and meet the needs of the local community.
- Q There is a lot of interaction between Spalding and the proposed changes to Crowland school and numbers there may come to Spalding. How is this being managed?
- A The Crowland issue is under consideration and the outcome of that will be carefully managed.
- Q Could you tell us a little more about CfBT sponsoring the Academy?
- A They will go through the appropriate consultation regarding the Academy proposal at the right time and they are supported by the governing body. The coalition government has passed the Academy Bill and is driving all schools to become academies giving them local freedom and decision making not constrained by the Local Authority, with freedom to select their own services within their own budget. The position is changing on a daily basis regarding who can, who may and how they become an academy. Various sponsors are out there and CfBT is one charity organisation of many as recognised as a sponsor by the DfE. The governing body is exploring links with CfBT and will consult further on this in the autumn.
- Q On the CfBT website there is a list of other schools. I hope that staff governors will be in place before any reorganisation is considered.
- A Currently CfBT do not sponsor any Lincolnshire schools but have a School Improvement role in supporting Lincolnshire County Council and its schools.
- Q How much longer will the Local Authority be able to maintain services if more schools go academy?
- A The DfE is currently consulting on future funding formulas and we do not yet know how exactly this will affect Local Authorities.
- Q What is the strategy for going out to parents in the local area to give them information to help inform their responses to the consultation? What is best for the majority? What is the strategy to make this work and convince everyone that this is the right thing to do?
- A Everyone was invited to this meeting so we could explain exactly that. There is also the consultation document which has been sent out to all interested parties. All of the information is also available on the county council website.
- Q More than just the existing document is needed to communicate to a larger audience.
- A We will be consulting with all parents and pupils in the schools as well as the local community.
- Q That is a very valid point but all parents present tonight can go out into the community and spread the word and talk to other parents who chose not to be here at the meeting.
- A Noted
- Q What response rate is required before moving forward and making a decision?
- A There is no limit. We will work with however many or few responses are received. This is a democratic process and a political decision based on the information that is

put before the Executive Council with a comprehensive report going to Scrutiny as well as the Executive.

Q So will documentation be reissued?

A Yes (published on 23 June on the LCC website)

In addition to the above public meeting there was also held on the same day a staff consultation meeting. A number of these questions and answers referred to issues that would be of interest to the general public and therefore these are detailed below.

EXTRACT FROM SPALDING GLEED STAFF CONSULTATION HELD AT GLEED GIRLS ON WEDNESDAY 22 JUNE 2011 4PM

Introduction from Paul Holmes.

Copies of slides were made available to staff

Q Why are they not both converting to Academy and then looking to become one Academy instead of doing it all at once?

A The DfE have advised that this is the process that should be followed, and the necessary consultation carried out, if the ultimate aim is to have one co-educational Academy across the two sites.

Q Would this process allow the two schools to combine and not become an Academy?

A Yes, this consultation process is only relating to the two schools merging to become one co-educational school. The conversation to an Academy is a separate process that is consulted on independently.

Q Do we actually have a new governing body for the future school? If the governing body does not yet exist how can the new governing body decide at this stage whether or not the ultimate aim is to become an Academy?

A A designate governing body with representatives from both governing bodies will be set up to continue to work towards potential Academy status which is what both governing bodies support.

Q The wording of the consultation is misleading as it suggests this consultation is on changing to an Academy

A We will look at this and see if we can make it clearer following feedback and recently received advice. Up until 21 June the DfE had indicated that we could consult on this as one process. We have now had confirmed that this will have to be consulted on as two separate processes, one to consider the proposal for both schools to become one co-educational establishment, and if that goes ahead then there would be a further consultation on whether or not to convert to Academy.

Q So at what stage of the process would we be consulted about possible Academy consultation?

A Any formal consultation would take place between 2 November and 31 December.

Q The wording of the consultation document needs changing as it is misleading and I believe it is inaccurate and is not reflective of the actual proposal.

A We will consider your feedback and make any appropriate changes if necessary.

Presentation from the Headteachers that the two processes are separate and that becoming co-educational and an Academy are to be kept separate.

Q Would the governing bodies have agreed to go co-educational if the Academy wasn't an option?

A If we forget Academy status and concentrate on the co-educational element, then many of the leadership and management of the Gleed Boys School have been of the opinion that co-education should be explored. Numbers look to continue to fall for both schools and Further Education facilities may start to take pupils from 14. Also Eastern European pupil numbers may fall as well.

Q Projected figures for the county are on a dip but only for a few years. DfE evidence shows that boys and girls perform better in separate classes.

A Even if it is a dip in the short term it could have a massive impact causing a long term snowball effect. The proposal is still to have some single sex sets and lessons and be co-educational at appropriate stages of education and benefit from all of the academic advantages that come with the flexibility of this model.

Q My concern is the roll of 1300-1400 will be too big for a school

A The proposed capacity is 1270. Big schools have both advantages and disadvantages. They must be well managed and have appropriate structures, but it is widely agreed that larger schools can offer more opportunities for staff and pupils to reach their full potential.

Q So the only thing that would stop it happening is a technicality and what we think won't affect the outcome?

A The situation has been created for us rather than by us, but the ultimate decision is with the LA by the full Executive Council when all feedback received will be considered in forming a decision. What people think can certainly have an affect on the outcome.

Q What are the financial gains? Holbeach is getting significant capital.

A Holbeach is an old style academy receiving capital from central government and should not be compared to the new Academy conversions. Capital is not available for Academy conversions. Academy status allows more flexibility as one larger organisation. Longer term it is clear that all secondary schools may become academies but will not be financially better off but gain in other ways.

Q Regarding funding, if the Academy will gain from initial conversion, have the costs of actually becoming co-educational and related costs to achieving that been considered?

A No, not at this stage. We do not believe the cost of amalgamation will be significantly different to remaining as we are and dealing with the challenges ahead as two single sex schools but there will be longer term benefits.

Q It sounds like the main thrust for this is the falling NOR?

A The trend across the county is that more pupils are going out than coming in but this is only one reason.

Q The consultation document states "parents in the local area would prefer a co-educational school for their children". What evidence is there to support this?

A Evidence from the admissions team shows that there are people that do not come to either Gleed schools because they are single sex. Our model offers the best of both worlds.

Q What will we offer to keep the children and stop them leaving?

A We believe we will offer something that is unique that will appeal to a wider range of pupils and parents than at present.

Q Why do we need to risk this process as it is confusing and the budget is good for the new designate governing body to have time to consider options and will they be less secretive than schools such as the Maltings?

A (After a long discussion) Not all academies are the same and we will want to work with our parents and the local community.

Q What are the benefits of becoming an Academy and not just a co-educational school?

A At the moment the government are pushing the Academy route and the later we leave it the less advantageous it might be financially and otherwise.

Q Do you think savings will come from merging and reducing staff?

A Because of a likely poorer financial future due to falling rolls it is inevitable that there is the possibility of redundancies in both schools even if they were the same as now.

Q What do the boys think about going to a girls' school?

A When it was announced to the boys they were happy! The name of the co-educational school should be changed to something more appropriate. Technically if we went down the competition route we could be in for a far worse situation. We are looking to join together through this technical process to enable the merger. The name of the school would be up for change and discussion for an appropriate name at an appropriate time.

Q People keep asking why change to an Academy, but why with CfBT?

A Today, and at this stage, we are not looking at an Academy but on their behalf the support and close working relationship from CfBT is key to the future success of the school(s). We have absolute faith in CfBT because of personal experience. All they want is local discussions and what is best for the children and young people and to only step in when or if support is required. They would appoint a governor but it would be one of the existing governing body that would be the CfBT representative.

Q So if numbers are falling and the grammar school is also affected then will the grammar schools go co-educational?

A Rolls are not an issue for grammar schools and it is for the schools to decide.

Q How will the new and designate governing body be formed?

A Every governing body member on both governing bodies would be invited to apply for the designate body, which would have the power to act for both governing bodies.

Q So will there be a separate consultation document for going to Academy between November and January?

A Yes

Q If it goes ahead what are the implications for our buildings?

A Ideally we would have a new build as was planned under BSF, but money is not available and we will use existing buildings appropriately making best use of available resources.