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## Record of Public Meeting concerning proposed closure of Kell Bank CE VC Primary School

**First Public Meeting held on 17 November 2020 at 7pm using Microsoft Teams (due to Covid 19 restrictions in place at the time of the meeting)**

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**Present:** County Cllr Patrick Mulligan (Executive Member for Education and Skills, NYCC), Andrew Dixon (Strategic Planning Manager, NYCC), Canon Richard Noake (Director of Education, CoE Diocese Leeds, Jane Wood (Executive Headteacher, Kell Bank CE VC School), Jeff Loveday, (Chair of Governors, Kell Bank CE VC School), Matt George (Strategic Planning Officer, NYCC) and Sue Turley (Strategic Planning Officer, NYCC).

Five school governors, Chair of Fearby Healey and District Parish Council and three members of the public.

**Apologies:** None noted

16 people were present at the meeting via Microsoft Teams.

### AGENDA

Meeting opens – brief welcome	Jeff Loveday – Chair of Governing Board
Executive Members Opening Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to the Panel</li> <li>• Short statement about background</li> </ul>	County Cllr Patrick Mulligan
Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposal</li> <li>• Background to the proposal</li> <li>• Pupil numbers</li> <li>• Finances</li> <li>• Local Schools</li> <li>• Local Housing</li> <li>• Catchment area</li> <li>• How can people comment</li> </ul>	Andrew Dixon – Strategic Planning Manager NYCC
Question and Answer Session	County Cllr Patrick Mulligan
Meeting Close	County Cllr Patrick Mulligan

#### 1. Welcome

##### **Chair of Governors Kell Bank CoE VC School opening remarks**

Jeff Loveday, Chair of Governors, Kell Bank CE VC School welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Jane Wood, Executive Headteacher of Kell Bank CoE VC Primary School and County Councillor Patrick Mulligan.

Jeff Loveday said the public meeting tonight was to discuss the consultation on the proposed closure of the school which followed a request from the School's Board of

Governors in September 2020. It is important we hear what everyone has to say as part of the public consultation tonight.

### **Executive Member opening remarks**

County Councillor Patrick Mulligan introduced the rest of the panel, including Richard Noake representing the Diocese of Leeds. The meeting was supported by three LA Officers; Andrew Dixon, Strategic Planning Manager, Matt George and Sue Turley, Strategic Planning Officers.

## **2. Presentation**

Andrew Dixon, Strategic Planning Manager at NYCC said the meeting would be recorded to aid the note taking and support the decision making process. The recording would be deleted once the written record was finalised.

Andrew provided a presentation which covered:

- The proposal
- Background to the proposal
- Pupil numbers
- Finances
- Local Schools
- Local Housing
- Catchment area
- Diocese statement from Canon Richard Noake
- How can people comment

Richard Noake said he was representing the Diocese and thanked the governing body for all the work they had done to support the school and at looking at the different options for the future of the School. He also thanked the LA as part of their statutory duty. He added the Diocese, sits in partnership with the governing body and LA in terms of supporting the best way forward. He urged everyone to ask questions and understand the process. Noting the School is celebrating 200 years of education provision in the village, he added it would have been one of the first schools set up under the National Society in 1811. Adding, it is difficult to have these conversations at this time of celebration of 200 years of the School but it is important as part of the Diocese's duty and he would be happy to take any further questions.

A Q&A session followed the presentation and comments.

## **3. Q&A Session chaired by Cllr Mulligan**

A member of the public and previous teacher and a governor at the school said they were extremely concerned about its future. It was recognised the school had only 6 pupils and therefore difficult to maintain. There has been a number of improvements over the years to facilities but it has always been a great centre of excellence for learning and noting now celebrating 200 years. In terms of the future of the School building could it be used as a pre-school, a Forest School, an Outward Bounds Centre or as a centre for excellence for training teachers in using their local environment?

David Cleaves Vice Chair of Kell Bank CoE VC School and governor Masham CoE VA School, asked the question if the field was owned by the County Council as it was purchased with a donation to the governing body?

Andrew Dixon responded saying his understanding was that the field was owned by the County Council.

Richard Noake added that the Diocese inventory indicated they own the rest of the site.

A governor said she had received the documentation regarding the consultation and praised the work of the Chair of Governors and said he had done an amazing job over the years. Noting at Masham CoE VA School the capacity was at 116, asked why there are 121 pupils and remarked those additional 5 children could have made a difference to Kell Bank CoE VC School or to another small school.

Andrew Dixon said the specific reason for numbers at Masham was not something that had not been looked at prior to the meeting but added that if oversubscription were a factor it could be because parents had gone to an independent appeals panel and their decision is binding to the school.

A governor said that Brian Gregg, Chair of Fearby, Healey and District Parish Council, had wanted to make a comment but was currently unable to join the meeting due to technical difficulties but had asked the question regarding the numbers at Masham CoE VA School. Brian had grandchildren coming up to school age and wanted to support the school. The governor added she also wanted to comment on the higher numbers at Masham CoE VA School which were not helping smaller schools like Kell Bank CoE VC School.

Cllr Mulligan added it could be due to admission appeals which is a parental right and choice.

David Cleaves responded saying it is generally where a class had not reached its Published Admission Number (PAN) in a particular year group and if parents went to appeal they would probably get in. David added Masham CoE VA School had not sought to actively attract out of area pupils.

A governor asked if the County Council was taking any of the future housing development in Masham into account because it would increase pupil numbers.

Andrew Dixon responded saying the County Council had taken the housing growth into account in Masham and said that as the sites in Masham are built out, pupil yield would be impacted over time. If the building developments come to fruition then pupils from the Kell Bank area would have priority over the quite high proportion of children who, to date, had secured places from out of catchment at Masham CoE VA School. It would be a gradual change of the type of intake. Masham CoE VA School has 37% of pupils attending from out of catchment (based on the October 2019 school census) that would gradually be displaced over time. Andrew stated there were around 100 pupils in the Masham and Kell Bank area, allowing headroom for Masham School to absorb additional numbers and the LA had given careful consideration to this.

Responding to this answer, the governor stated the catchment area for Kell Bank was wide in terms of countryside but had few children living in it.

Andrew Dixon said that was important to note and as indicated in the presentation, it is also about parental preference. Although Masham CoE VA School potentially could become the catchment school for the Kell Bank area that did not preclude any parent applying for any school in the area and this is a common feature in both town and rural areas across North Yorkshire.

Another governor added that due to the fact Masham CoE VC School takes 37% of pupils out of catchment it does not help other local schools. It would be helpful if parents stuck to their catchment areas and this could have attracted more pupils to Kell Bank.

At this point Brain Gregg was able to join the meeting by phone.

Brian Gregg, Chair of Fearby, Healey and District Parish Council asked the question why the school numbers had gone down so much given its high academic achievement, what assistance had the LA given the school over the last few years?

Andrew Dixon replied saying the presentation had covered the support provided by the LA and the Diocese to the School.

David Cleaves asked about the development in Masham and entitlement to S106 funding. Regarding the capacity at Masham, their PAN is 20 per year so the total number on roll could rise to 140. He added Kell Bank CoE VC School also historically attracted some out of area pupils. Another contributing factor is the type and cost of property in the area, which precludes it being bought by young families.

Richard Noake said he empathised with the question around parental preference. The government in the mid 1980s said parents should be able to make a preference. This is challenging in terms of the distribution of children over a number of schools, but parents can choose and if spaces are available, an opportunity is provided to attend. The opposite end of this is when a school becomes vulnerable and goes into an Ofsted category, parents then take children to other schools. It is a challenge faced in the sector in terms of how admissions operate.

**Various attendees** at the meeting raised several points about the communication of the meeting date/time and sight of the consultation document. Attendees requested NYCC reflect on this and that a further meeting be established.

Cllr Mulligan said he had noted all the comments regarding the publicising of the meeting and would consider the need for another meeting and it was important that a public consultation was made available to all. He urged everyone to respond to the consultation. He thanked everyone for attending the meeting and noted it was a significant issue for the community.

The meeting closed at 20:20

### **Post meeting note 19 November 2020**

NYCC confirmed a further virtual public meeting via Microsoft Teams would be held on the 2 December 2020. The additional public meeting would be communicated as previously to all known stakeholders, which included; parents, staff and governors at the School, Councillors both County and District, National Teaching Union, all other local schools in the area and Early Years providers and additionally via the Masham Community Office as suggested in the public meeting and including Masham Town Council.

In addition, these stakeholders were notified that the closing date of the consultation was extended to 21 December 2020, a week later than the original closing date of 14 December 2020.