

Summary of the comments submitted by the Parents' Action Group (See Annex 1) with *Officers' response in italics:*

1. The council claims it will keep community facilities, including a vital nursery, but only has funded plans to decommission the site.

Paragraphs 43-44 of this Cabinet Report (17 July) confirms that the council will lead a full review of the potential options for the site, focussing particularly on the continuing provision of community facilities. The review will be informed by a consultation forum that will include community groups and partners.

2. There is no material evidence to show that all options to make BCC viable have been 'vigorously pursued' as repeatedly claimed on radio, in the press and at public meetings.

The initial public consultation noted the options that had been considered as an alternative to closure. The consultation document asked for people's views regarding these options. These were also noted in paragraph 20 of the 15 May Cabinet report. These options included merging BCC with another secondary school to create a split-site school, merging BCC with one or more local primary schools to create a 'through-school' for children aged 4-16, converting BCC into a new Academy. The LA has explored and debated these options with the governing body and with the wider school community. The report explained why these options did not address the fundamental challenge of falling numbers and reduced funding.

3. Future demand for secondary places will require BCC places by 2016 and there is no credible plan to meet future demand without BCC.

Paragraphs 30-41 of this Cabinet Report (17 July) address this issue in more detail. The initial consultation document and the 15 May report considered demographic trends and the future demand for secondary school places. Annex 3 of the 15 May report detailed predicted demand for school places, actual and projected birth rates, pupil numbers by catchment area, current school

capacity and surplus places in schools. This Cabinet report (15 May) acknowledges that it is difficult to predict with accuracy where demand will increase, given the changing impact of migration, birth-rate changes, progression of housing developments, the impact of parental preference and the potential for schools to increase admission limits as a result of new legislation. The report notes that the LA will bring forward proposals to meet demand as it rises over the decade.

4. Closure does not properly recognise the services provided by BCC to SEN, disadvantaged and troubled children and there is no credible plan to preserve the same quality of services to these special groups.

Paragraphs 47-55 of this Cabinet Report (17 July) comments on SEN issues. The report details the number of children with SEN on the roll of Burnholme in each year group (children with statements or recorded as School Action or School Action Plus). The report also notes the success of the satellite class, which provides a base for seven students (who are on the roll of Applefields School) within BCC. The report confirms that work is underway to secure a new partnership with another secondary school that can build on this success.

5. Affordability has been grossly misrepresented through the consultation and there is no demonstration or indication that closure represents better value than retaining the school:
 - a. It was routinely repeated that the only source of funding for BCC was to top slice other schools when this is not true.
 - b. The full costs of closure are largely uncalculated and they are omitted from the proposal to misrepresent closure as being far better value than continuation of BCC.

The financial implications of maintaining or closing BCC were set out in paragraphs 70-82 of the 15 May Cabinet report. The views of the Parents' Action Group are addressed in this Cabinet report (17 July paragraphs 56-63). It remains the view of officers and the York Education Partnership that BCC is no longer financially viable.

6. There is a lack of evidence of active council support to BCC and this suggests a strategy to starve the school of support in readiness for earliest closure.

This suggestion is refuted by officers and by the governing body of BCC. The LA has steadfastly supported the school, writing off a significant budget deficit in 2009 and providing over £1.3m of additional funding over the four years to 2012/13.

7. BCC academic results show reasons to support it, not close it – Since financial issues are balanced and active options to support the school have not been ‘pursued with vigour’ closure is a political choice, not educational or financial.

The LA does not accept that financial issues are balanced. The school cannot operate within the budget to which it is entitled under the local funding formula. The LA case has focussed on falling rolls, the fact that the school has over 50% surplus places, and the challenge of providing a full curriculum for such small year groups. The 15 May report noted the challenges facing the school in the future, and noted the risks of the new Ofsted framework. Annex 4 of the 15 May report provided details of academic results in all secondary schools. This Cabinet report (17 July) provides further information following the recent Ofsted inspection.

8. Taken together these issues show that the consultation has not complied with statutory guidance and is a failure of the council’s duty of care.

The council has sought to ensure that the consultation and decision making process has fully complied with all statutory guidance regarding school closures. The council has undertaken extensive consultation on this challenging and complex issue. The public documents record the extent and detail of the consultation process and the responses received. This report (17 July) sets out the statutory guidance to be considered by Cabinet when taking a decision about a school closure.