

## NOTE OF PUBLIC MEETING IN SANDWICKHILL SCHOOL – 27 MAY 2010

**Present:** Mrs Morag Munro (Chair)  
Ms Joan Mackinnon  
Mr Bernard Chisholm,  
Mr Robert Emmott  
Ms Lesley McDonald  
3 Councillors – Angus Campbell, Donald Nicholson, Charlie Nicolson  
Miss Noreen Conneton – HMIE  
33 parents and members of the public

### Introduction

Mrs Morag Munro: Feasgar math a agus failte gu coinneamh co-chomhairleachaidh a nochd. Good evening and welcome to this formal consultation meeting. Before I start, I would like to ask Councillor Charlie Nicolson to open with prayer as is our custom.

Cllr Charlie Nicolson: Oh Lord and God we just thank you for the goodness of today. We ask you Lord to bless us here, help us with the discussions and deliberations that we'll have here. We pray for our community at this time. We pray for this part of thy , Sandwick. We ask you to bless the school, bless all the staff, bless all the young people involved in the school. We thank you for this area. We pray for our council and we ask you to be with them as we discuss and deliberate on the different issues tonight. Bless us and be with us Lord, just help us to look to you for guidance and wisdom in everything. Be with us now and bless all those that we love wherever they may be in the world, just help us in Jesus' precious name and for his sake and glory, Amen.

Cllr Morag Munro I am Morag Munro. I am the Chair of Education and Children's Services Committee at Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. With me tonight are Joan Mackinnon who is the Director of Education, Bernard Chisholm who is the Head of Schools and Resources and our IT expert Mr Macarthur at the end there and also Lesley McDonald who is the Head of Executive Office, Robert Emmott who is our Director of Finance and Corporate Resources and then our Leader, Mr Campbell who is one of your local councillors and Councillor Charlie Nicolson and Councillor Donald Nicholson who are your own local councillors and that I don't really need to introduce to you.

Tonight as well, we would like to welcome Miss Noreen Conneton from HM Inspectorate. We are very pleased to have you with us tonight.

In August 2007, the Comhairle decided to undertake a review of educational provision throughout the Western Isles. Since that time we have had a number of informal consultations throughout our communities. As a result of these the Comhairle agreed to go out to statutory consultation on the proposed closure or amalgamation of a number of schools. This meeting is part of the formal consultation process for Sandwick School. The meeting tonight; the purpose is for you to hear more about the proposal, for you to ask questions and for us to hear your views and these views will be recorded and in fact the meeting itself tonight is being recorded so that we have a verbatim account of what happens.

The aim of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is to provide our children with the best educational experiences and outcomes in modern learning environments suitable for 21<sup>st</sup> century needs within the resources that are available to us. Before I go on, are you hearing me? Is it ok at the back? I know that the acoustics aren't that great.

The Comhairle as you all know I'm sure are facing serious challenges. Our school roles have fallen from 3,681, 30 years ago to – sorry from 6,241, 30 years ago to 3,681 now and that is a huge drop. In the last five years alone our school rolls have fallen by 333, and that gives you an idea of the problem that we have. As education is resourced according to pupil numbers our funding has decreased accordingly. We have 38 buildings, 18 of which are in a poor condition. General tightening financial restraints is another challenge that we are facing along with all other public authorities in Scotland and throughout the UK. There is also pressure on other council services such as community care, roads, transport, waste services etc. All are under pressure and the other challenge that we have is the implementation of the new curriculum, the

Curriculum for Excellence which we believe is going to be of great benefit to our children. At the moment we are in the process of building six new schools and that will mean that 44% of our children will be educated in new efficient learning environments in which to deliver the new curriculum. Our aim in line with Government Schools Estate Strategy is for all our pupils to be educated in new or refurbished buildings by 2018. In order to achieve this, we have to reduce the spare capacity that we have in our Schools Estate.

I will now pass over to the Head of Executive Office, Lesley McDonald who will go over the procedure for tonight's meeting and for the consultation generally. After that the Director of Education will speak to the proposal and then the meeting will be open to questions.

Miss McDonald

Lesley McDonald

Thank you Chairman. If I could refer you to the consultation document of which we have copious amounts of spare copies here if anyone would like one – ok.

If I could refer you to the terms of the consultation document – can you hear me now – close – I'll try that – can you hear me now? - excellent

If I could refer you to the terms of the consultation document, particularly part 2 of that document which is at pages 3 and 4 which outlines the terms of the new Act under which this consultation is taking place and I would highlight that this is the legislation that I have now doubt you have all heard about which makes specific provision in respect of rural schools. For the purposes of this legislation, Sandwickhill is a rural school and there are therefore various factors taken into account in the consultation document to reflect that. There are some extra pieces of work that require to be done there.

This meeting is taking place within the initial consultation period which will end at 5.00pm on 30 June. Now you can make any consultation responses you wish to the Chief Executive of the Council and there is a particular area of the website set out to receive e-mail responses. The purpose of tonight's meeting has already been outlined to you. There is reference in your document to a note being made of that meeting. I will be taking some notes these evening but these will be very much a back-up. We hope that the note of the meeting will be the transcription of the whole meeting that is currently being recorded. To that end when we get to asking questions, which I'm sure is the reason that most of you are here this evening, if you could introduce yourselves, that will help for the note and when you see the note which will form part of the Report that - no it wont, ignore me. That transcript will be made available to anyone who wishes to see the transcript.

The HMIE has an enhanced role to play now in any proposal to close a school and at the end of the initial consultation period all consultation responses that we receive will be made available to HMIE who will then have until 20 August of this year to prepare their own report in relation to the proposal. Officers of the Council will then have the opportunity to review that report and prepare what is called the Consultation Report. Up until now it has been the Proposal Report, that would then be the Consultation Report which it is anticipated would be considered by the Education and Children's Services Committee late in October this year going to the full Council the first week in November of this year.

Its at that stage that the Council would make its decision on whether or not it feels that Sandwick School should be closed. From that date Scottish Ministers have six weeks in which to call in the proposal if they have concerns about any aspect of the proposal and nothing can be done within that six weeks but the estimated date of implementation of any closure in this document would be August 2012, so there is plenty of time in that regard.

In producing the second report, the Consultation Report the Council requires to take account of all of the consultation responses together with any comment made by HMIE with – its quite a detailed process and its all laid out in there –

The other legal requirement that we have is to carry out an Equalities Impact Assessment in relation to the proposal and again anything that comes out this evening will contribute to preparing that assessment. That's really all that I have to say but I am happy to answer any questions as to the procedure.

At the moment you are probably aware from the press advertisement we are carrying out a number of these meetings. We hope that we have sufficient administrative arrangements to deal with any comments that you may make and we would seek to acknowledge any consultation response within three days of it coming into us and so it would be helpful if perhaps you make a response and a week later if you haven't had an acknowledgement if you would let me know, I will track down your response, make sure it is being dealt with and get you an acknowledgement to that response.

One of the main purposes of us being here tonight is to answer your questions. We will answer all the questions that we are able to do so tonight but I'm sure you'll agree that it is essential that you have accurate information and if we don't know the answer to a question we'll take a careful note of it and give you a response to that question just as quickly as we can. Thank you Chair.

Cllr Morag Munro

Now I would ask the Director of Education to go over the proposal.

Joan Mackinnon

Can you hear me if I stay sitting like this? Ok then, I'll use the mike that is in front of me and I'll not stand up. Is that ok?

As Lesley said this is the first of a number of consultation meetings that we are intending to have and it was interesting for myself today to note. You'll have been aware through the news that there are very tight financial situations facing everybody across the country, not just in Scotland but across the UK currently. Interestingly there have been e-mails today in particular – I think four came in – how to cope with cuts and how to cope with tightening budgets – these things were popping up and finally this one – how to manage pain and thought that one was really useful or me today because, I hope tonight won't be too painful but I thought I should have read that e-mail although I just deleted it.

To briefly go over why we are here tonight. Basically because of the main issues which Cllr Munro has outlined, it's about the challenges that are facing the Council over the next while. We have been looking at the stark facts. School rolls have been falling in the Western Isles in the last 30 years. Here at Sandwick, if you take the roll as it is today – 42 – the roll has fallen by 55% in the last eight years and I myself have had a long and happy relationship with the school and its staff and I remember; it doesn't seem that long ago when the roll was over 100.

This pattern is repeated throughout our islands and, so, clearly we have more schools than we need and that's at a time when the government has a strategy which sets out its aspiration for the schools estate. Their target is that well in excess of 90% of pupils should be educated in good buildings. We can only do this if we have fewer schools. If we keep the number of schools we currently have, we are clearly not going to be in a position to have the money to bring them to the condition that they would be expected to be in according to the strategy. I suppose the question tonight is, why are we in Sandwick? Here we have a school with spare capacity. Currently Sandwick is running at a capacity rate of 29% and within three miles of Sandwick we've got Stornoway Primary – another school with spare capacity running at 59%.

The problem is, we need less schools – we've got spare capacity. Could Stornoway Primary fit into Sandwick? No, there isn't the scope for that. Could the pupil population of Sandwick fit into Stornoway Primary? Yes it could. We are at a very exciting time in Scottish education in terms of the implementation of a new curriculum. The teachers and pupils at Sandwick School have been engaging with the outcomes and the experiences since they were first published and that has also been happening at Stornoway Primary and indeed in all our schools. However, we believe that there are advantages in the two schools coming together. These are outlined for you in the Educational Benefit

Statement which you'll find at section 8 of the proposal paper and I don't propose to read it, you'll have done that yourselves and I'm sure have done it carefully, but if I could draw your attention to the section which is in 8.15, which we summarise there which we think are the main benefits of the two schools coming together. There will be increased opportunities for pupils, we believe, both curricular and extra curricular. There are 19 different activities on offer at Stornoway Primary and all the staff at Stornoway Primary deliver 10 hours of an activity in each session. That is not to say that the teachers there are better than the teachers at Sandwick – of course they are not – that's not what we are saying but because there are more of them they are more able to offer more choice when it comes to activities. There'll be greater flexibility in grouping children for learning and teaching. There'll be greater flexibility of the deployment of staff in meeting pupil needs and a larger staff will offer a wider range of expertise in resulting in increased opportunities for sharing practice, more collegiate support for one another and a wider range of learning and teaching approaches would then be possible for pupils and just because it is bigger, there would be more management support to promote school improvement.

If I could just draw your attention to section 9, Miss McDonald has already alluded to it. This is the section that is particularly – the consideration of factors affecting rural schools and you will see there in bold the paragraphs that we would need to take account of.

The first one is viable alternatives to closure. The likely effects on the local community and that's important – and the likely effects caused if there are different travel arrangements as a consequence of the proposal being affected.

You've had the documents now for a while and you have listened long enough to us talking. I know that the purpose of the meeting is for you to tell us what you think about the proposal. We've told you, we believe that we have more schools that we need. We know that we are going to have a lot less money to deliver the service that we require. We still want to deliver a high quality service for all children in the Western Isles. The aim, the motto if you like of the Education and Children's Services Committee is to deliver quality education and quality buildings. Now, in order to do that, we feel that we need less schools in which to do this better. Our proposal tonight is that we look at amalgamating the pupils at Sandwickhill into Stornoway Primary. We have a challenge, we feel we cannot keep the number of schools we have – this is our suggestion. Do you have another suggestion that would be cost effective that is different to what we thought of? This is your opportunity to tell us what you think. We will try to answer any questions that you have. As Miss McDonald said, if there are any tonight that we cannot answer, there will be, as she has already said, a verbatim report. These questions will be typed out tomorrow or the next day and we will – Miss McDonald will make sure that you get the answers.

Over to yourselves now.

- Cllr Morag Munro Thank you. I would now like to open the meeting out to questions from yourselves. There is a roving mike somewhere. Donald has got the roving mike.
- Joan Mackinnon What do you call the guy who does the television programme – Jeremy Kyle.
- Murdo Johnson Murdo Johnson representing the Sandwickhill Parent Council. With the introduction of the amalgamation of the two schools, what would be the proposed class sizes that the kids would be going to and would there be composite classes?
- Joan Mackinnon Yes, there would be composite classes – you are currently in a situation where there are composite classes in Sandwick and next year with a roll of 45 there will be two composite classes in Sandwick – so you will have a four class composite and a three class composite. If the amalgamation were to take place (think that was a motorbike!) if the amalgamation were to take place in

August, which it wouldn't, but we were looking at the numbers that we would have in August. If the 45 pupils from Sandwick School were going to go into Stornoway Primary – Mr Chisholm and I did this exercise and there would be 13 class groups in English medium education in Stornoway Primary. We would have:

A primary 1 with 18;  
A composite 1/2 with 18;  
A primary 2 with 18;  
A primary 2/3 with 18  
A primary 3 that would have 25 in it;  
A 3/4 with 25;  
A primary 4;  
A straight primary 4 with 29;  
A straight primary 5 with 29;  
A primary 5/6 with 24;  
A primary 6 with 28; and  
Two primary 7s with 22 in each.

The most composite class would be a two class composite. Obviously composite classes do not go bigger than 25. We would be keeping to 18 for primary 1 and 2. All primary 1 and 2 classes. That would be the situation if that were to happen in August and I think Mr Chisholm – you know the average difference between the classes would be.....

- Bernard Chisholm Between 2 and 4 and looking next year at 45 say coming in to Sandwick we would have a staff formula of 2.5 so with that in two class groups or depending how it worked you could have a composite class size in excess of 20. The Gaidhlig Medium in Stornoway Primary for those who would have an interest in Gaidhlig would be for a composite P1-2, 13 - a composite 3/4/5 of 20 and primary 6/7 of 16. The figures are those; roughly based on the figures we project right now.
- Murdo Johnson Is there a danger of the less confident children getting lost in large classes?
- Bernard Chisholm I would say that children with additional support needs in the Western Isles – we have a very robust system as the school here knows and at Stornoway Primary of identifying the needs of all the young people. We do an audit once a year that is moderated independently by a range of staff including head teachers and then we deploy the learning support, so proportionally Stornoway Primary in the amalgam obviously it's a larger school, has more of the resource but we would be confident that all the young people with personal learning plans, individual educational plans or co-ordinated support plans would have their needs met and those class sizes that we are talking about, given that we also have school assistant auxiliary support we believe would be well within the national figures and of a size that children's needs are being met and would continue to be met.
- Joan Mackinnon We would be confident that young people would have a good experience if the amalgamation went ahead.
- Murdo Johnson To the untrained eye, Sandwick School to me looks like a school in reasonable condition, very well resourced. How much better is Stornoway Primary going to be in that respect? Is a total refurbishment taking place or what benefits in that respect does Stornoway primary offer?
- Joan Mackinnon In 2007 all our schools were surveyed by independent surveyors who came across from the mainland to do condition surveys and in 2007 both Sandwick and Stornoway Primary were categorised as Condition C buildings. You probably know if you live around town that Stornoway Primary has had significant refurbishment going on there, more or less since early 2008, I think; maybe Mrs Murray would keep me right. That is ongoing and it is intended that that would continue.

Can I just say that the Council has made a commitment that any amalgamation

taking place; they have committed to the fact that children would only move into a provision that was better than the one that they were in so there is a commitment for the continued refurbishment of Stornoway Primary. If Sandwick were to close we would be guaranteeing that the facilities would be better than they are currently here. We believe that Stornoway Primary would be categorised as Condition B if it were to have a survey just now but the work is not finished.

Inaudible

Joan Mackinnon Well the commitment is that we wouldn't move young people until the refurbishment was such that the school was better than what you've got.

Murdo Johnson We also asked through the previous question we sent in – could the process be halted? We were told the process could be halted if there was a significant increase in numbers. What number would you consider significant enough to consider the proposal should be halted and with an answer like that it gives an impression that the only reason that the school is closing is a financial one?

Joan Mackinnon Obviously there is a financial pressure and there is also, if you like, we are expected to have good governance of the money that we have from the government and if I can just quote to you out of the government's own strategy in terms of the school estate where they say that "maintaining too many surplus or underused areas is wasteful and dilutes the productive deployment of resources". You can understand that all young people in the Western Isles are entitled to have the best provision that we can give them. If our money is limited obviously if we have less buildings, everybody gets better. If we keep what we've got it dilutes what everybody gets. Can the process be halted? Yes – if there was a significant increase in the population at Sandwick to the extent that Stornoway Primary wouldn't have the capacity for it. That would be a point at which the process would stop. We are not in the business of having schools that are half empty.

Murdo Johnson On that point, Stornoway Primary would also be able to accommodate the amount of people that Sandwickhill could accommodate. Even if Sandwickhill was 100%, Stornoway Primary could still accommodate them.

Joan Mackinnon I'm not sure that it could if it was 100% full.

Murdo Johnson Sandwick has got 146....

Joan Mackinnon I can just check how many pupils Sandwickhill can take. Give me just a minute.

Murdo Johnson 146

Joan Mackinnon 146

Murdo Johnson So Stornoway Primary could take 146

Joan Mackinnon I'm not sure that it could take 146. I would say it could take 100

Bernard Chisholm It's clear that in the consultation that those schools where we have significant usage of the schools – around 70% or so, we are not discussing closure. This hasn't been an exercise where we have approached it from the basis of "can we close schools?" it has been an exercise that has been led by the small numbers and the continuing declining rolls in schools. Now, in answer to that question there is no fixed number but if we were approaching the increased capacity use of this school to above 70% or 75% where the school was being used in all its rooms and all the capacity that it had, then I think we might not be here today. I think at our previous conversation I remember it being said that if this had had the student population that we had 10 years ago of 130 or 120, I'm not sure that we would be here in this position but the fact of it is that in those years we have lost each year a significant number of pupils and that is regrettable but it has ended up being a school that is only now having 29% of

its capacity occupied.

- Murdo Johnson And does that include the nursery figures?
- Bernard Chisholm The nursery as you know, at the request of the local voluntary committee we took over the direct management of the nursery. The school figures we are talking about at the primary 1 through to primary 7 capacity. In trying to promote and support the nursery in the area we undertook direct management. We are happy that that is a good relationship particularly with Curriculum for Excellence with the early stage – that was two years of pre-school together with first year of primary but these figures do not bring us anywhere near the kind of figures we were talking about when we had the full capacity, or near full capacity for this school.
- Joan Mackinnon I was looking at that today and with the nursery being open in the morning only, it would take the capacity up to maybe about 31%.
- Cllr Morag Munro Thank you
- Inaudible
- Cllr Munro I think there is a lady at the back and then we'll come onto you.
- Mrs Buchanan Can we go back to the figures you gave from this August?
- Cllr Munro Can you put it close to your mouth?
- Mrs Buchanan Your gave us the figures for if the school was to close in August. The school isn't closing in August, it's closing in two years time and I think that the catchment area for Stornoway Primary – not Stornoway Primary but for Laxdale is changing so we would be having a larger catchment area in Stornoway for Stornoway Primary. Have you worked out the figures for how many will be going into P1 then? Will you have the accommodation for that figure?
- Joan Mackinnon The situation with that is that we need to go through the same consultation process as we are going through for an amalgamation like this we need to do that for the change of the catchment area at Stornoway Primary. There is no date for that consultation yet. We have been given authority to have a conversation with the communities of Laxdale and Stornoway to discuss the catchment areas. We are not in a position to say whether we will even be changing that – whether we'll ever consult on it until after these conversations have taken place but if they did, we are still confident that we would have the accommodation even if the catchment area was to change.
- Bernard Chisholm Just on that, it would be worth reminding ourselves of what we said earlier. Stornoway Primary has had the same experience that Sandwickhill has of reducing roles and it therefore currently has a capacity of only – occupancy of 59%.
- Cllr Munro OK lady over
- Gillian Scott Why couldn't we have the nursery open in the afternoon as well and consider an afterschool club?
- Bernard Chisholm Currently, the nursery being open - we open or we try to respond to the full demand that is there. We don't have a demand at this point for all day nursery or wrap around care here in Sandwick. In the Stornoway area we do have an overall demand but we currently are able to meet that demand. Clearly some people are aware that there's been more challenges recently and we are looking at that but the situation at the moment is that even if we were able to open with fewer numbers in the afternoon it doesn't at this point suggest that it would significantly raise the enrolment in primary 1 of Sandwick.
- Gillian Scott Why is there four people on the waiting list for the nursery then if its not full?

Bernard Chisholm The nursery morning session is full but that doesn't give us full numbers to run an afternoon session when we still throughout the entire Stornoway area can meet our requirement for the statutory hours provision for pre-school education.

Gillian Scott If it was open in the afternoon, it would be full as well.

Bernard Chisholm I don't have any evidence that the moment that there is a sufficient demand to provide full registration in the afternoon - I don't have that.

Cllr Munro Any other questions?

Can you get the mike.

Could you give your name as well – tell us who you are?

Ruairidh Finlayson I'm Ruairidh Finlayson. Ed Balls was on the news once again this week and he was talking about statistics. They are wanting to turn the schools down in England into academies and the primary schools as well. They are amalgamating them – making them bigger and the statistics are – they're not getting so well educated in bigger schools. In small schools education statistics are a lot better and another point as well. What is the cost of knocking down these schools and making the other schools bigger? The Nicolson Institute as well, is it to cover costs of making – knocking down the Nicolson and making it bigger for the reason of having bigger schools?

The concern I have is will our children be lost amongst a huge crowd of pupils and not get the same kind of teaching you know. I went to the Castle School myself and I protested against the closure of the Castle School and that was a sad loss on the island and my concern is for that as well.

Cllr Morag Munro Education is a devolved issue to Scotland so that whatever the UK government decides will not cover us unless the Scottish Government takes it on as well and I think that also he may have been talking about big schools. Our biggest primary school is Stornoway Primary and in terms of the schools that he was talking about I think that that is probably a small school basically but I'll let the Director answer your question.

Joan Mackinnon In terms of big schools, we don't really - the Nicolson is the only big school that we have over 1,000 pupils in it but as you say Lionacleite which is an S1-S6 school in Uist has 400 and some pupils in it and that is a small school and Stornoway Primary with 200 and - just under 300 would itself be a small school. I taught there myself many years ago when it had twice that number of pupils in it so our - as Mrs Munro said, our rolls have been falling in the last 30 years - they have halved in fact so we don't really have a school that is huge.

Mrs Buchanan Absolutely, I mean unfortunately, that is the case and there is nothing that we know that would make us believe that that isn't going to continue unfortunately.

Cllr Munro Any other questions - wait until he comes with the mike and if you would say who you are for the sake of the recording please.

Mrs Buchanan Why is Sandwick earmarked for closure first when there is lot of other rural schools that have less of a roll? When you see all the amenities that we have here, we have the hall and we have the pitch and we have the playground out there plus we have the youth club.

There are some schools with a roll of 24.

Mrs Buchanan There are 19 schools with                      inaudible                      I was just wondering why inaudible

Cllr Morag Munro I think one of the reasons is the capacity issue. We considered a number of issues when we were discussing and doing our review, rolls, capacity, distance between the school and the nearest school and also condition of the buildings. These were the criteria which we took into account when we were discussing

our review of educational provision.

- Mrs Buchanan Do you think the condition of the building is that bad?
- Cllr Munro According to the survey that was done in 2007 it was a Condition C - I accept that this part of the building is new and is very nice.
- Mrs Buchanan Another thing you have here is that it won't affect the community but I think it will.
- Mrs Buchanan I think everybody agrees on that
- Joan Mackinnon Can I just take that one? One of the things that we looked at in terms of the effect on the community was, we looked at the school lets because obviously that is a good indication to us of how much the school is used by the community and there are very few lets for Sandwick School.
- Inaudible – male and female voices
- Joan Mackinnon Yes but the school isn't being used by the community – that's the point.
- Mrs Buchanan They are using the hall.
- Joan Mackinnon We're not closing the hall
- Bernard Chisholm We're not closing the hall.
- Joan Mackinnon No we're not
- Bernard Chisholm Just to come back to a point in relation to the school just to make you aware that apart from the consultations we are having here tonight in Sandwick we are also talking to Cross, Scalpay, Balallan, Carlaway, Bragar, Shawbost, Lionel and Seilebost, Stoneybridge, Daliburgh - so there is a number of schools that we are in discussion and the conversation with - but one of the things it was agreed early on was that we should have such a conversation from the Butt to Barra and it should be something about the best of our provision for the whole of our school estate.
- Gillian Scott Can I just say that Stornoway Primary has been Condition C since 2008 as well or 2007 when you did the last survey. It just feels the only reason you are doing Stornoway Primary up just now to a B is to accommodate the other pupils because that is the only way they would get into Stornoway Primary.
- Joan Mackinnon Well that is simply not true because we started to refurbish Stornoway Primary because it was in the capital programme before there was any talk of reviewing the school estate.
- Gillian Scott Out of all the schools you've mentioned there I feel and I know it has been ongoing for quite a while, Sandwick has the most potential for increased roll because it will eventually happen. There will be housing development in the area and I know that's what has kept it this long. I think its getting closer.
- Joan Mackinnon Can I just respond to that because we've been looking at that as well because that was of interest of us and - we've looked at research and the research suggests to us that the ratio of 28 primary school children and 20 secondary school children for every 100 houses that get built that is what the research tells us. Out of 100 houses you could expect to have 28 primary children and 20 secondary we understand that there is a proposal to build approximately 25 houses and if you use the formula, if you like, you would have an increase of 7 primary pupils and 5 secondary out of 25 houses so that wouldn't increase the viability of the school by very much - so we have to use the research that we've go and that is what we are doing.
- Gillian Scott ..... Out of 25 new houses *that's not* good enough. There's three houses beside each other ..... Sandwick with 6 children between the

houses *in* inaudible

- Bernard Chisholm We have seen house development in relation to a number of our schools in a number of our areas and our experience of enrolments in the school continue to support that type of research and therefore year on year in the last 30 even though many new houses are coming into our area as we see them, they are not impacting on our enrolments, which year on year have gone down and it is genuine figure in the last five years, over 300 out of our rolls in a period where in the last five years many new houses have been build.
- Joan Mackinnon Just to say - I thought that the new houses which were built in Parkend would have impacted very positively on the roll here and it had very minor impact on the roll – I was surprised, I thought it would have been much more.
- Bernard Chisholm One of the other areas that have significantly affected has been the size of families. Ten years ago, I don't know the absolutes but you could see there were four and five in a family.
- Joan Mackinnon I think we spoke about that the night we had the conversation and we were suggesting to you young ladies here that you might go home and have bigger families - oh you are.
- Hector Low Hi my name is Hector Low. I was just wondering if you know what number of kids that are currently in the catchment for Sandwick are attending Stornoway Primary at the moment.
- Joan Mackinnon I'm not sure if we know that they are attending Stornoway Primary but we do know that there are 18 - is it 16 placing requests out of Sandwick in the last three years?
- Mrs Buchanan That's the way it was. *If there were facilities here* they wouldn't be going to the Stornoway Primary. *If there were facilities* back here the parents would take their kids back here.
- Bernard Chisholm We don't have that information from the parents and certainly in terms of the placing requests
- Mrs Buchanan *If there were facilities* after school I think there would be more parents here. *There is an afterschool club* at Stornoway Primary. We have a provision here - why don't we have *an afterschool club*?
- Joan Mackinnon We don't have a statutory duty to provide afterschool care so where we do it, it has to be viable so you need a critical mass basically.
- Mrs Buchanan Are you running it as a business – the after school club?
- Bernard Chisholm No, the reality for all our pre-school provision, our after school wrap around care, it doesn't get run as a business. In fact all of the pre-school provision that we do has to have a level of subsidy throughout all of the areas of the Council. What we do have - we have a statutory duty from August for 15 hours of pre-school education but we endeavour to try to provide as much all day care where we've had a demand for morning and afternoon and where there is sufficient demand, that we can organise after school or before school support we do it, but we have to say in a catchment area like Stornoway including all its environs that is not a significant demand that we are asked to meet and certainly not of a level that would allow it to self finance itself.
- Mrs Buchanan *How many children are in Stornoway Primary After School Club and how much does it cost per pupil?*
- Bernard Chisholm 18 – 20 - its not a big demand when you consider the catchment area of where we are talking. I honestly couldn't tell you off the top of my head what our afterschool would cost per pupil but would be happy to give you a calculation.

Joan Mackinnon Miss McDonald is taking a note of that.

Catriona Macdonald It is approximately 2 miles from Sandwick School to Stornoway Primary. *What arrangements would be made for children who don't get transport just now and the other children who are travelling 2 miles to Sandwick from Branahue, Melbost.*

Joan Mackinnon I think it says it in section 9. An enhanced transport provision would be required and every pupil who is more than a mile away from the receiving school would be in receipt of transport.

Catriona Macdonald We're about 4 miles away from Stornoway Primary.

Joan Mackinnon You currently have transport to school here?

Catriona Macdonald Oh yes the bus comes through our village to here. Now I'm just wondering how long it would take the children from the bottom of our village to get to Stornoway Primary in the morning. Are we talking about half an hour to get ....

Joan Mackinnon Surely not

Catriona Macdonald Well it takes actually 20 minutes for them to come home. See the kids in Parkend, they go on the bus

Joan Mackinnon Is it a special school run?

Catriona Macdonald Yes, it goes down through Branahue back up through and comes to Parkend and the children come off on that side of the road because of – you know – safety.

Joan Mackinnon Of course

?????? I'm just wondering what would the procedure be. It does it takes about 15 -20 minutes to get that wee loop so you're talking another 15 -20 minutes to Stornoway Primary if you are going to go through Plasterfield, down through Lower Sandwick with the kids.

Bernard Chisholm We obviously are looking at and not yet until all the work is done but we recognise that there would have to be enhanced travel and we also have a commitment that no travel journey would be more than 30 minutes and therefore we are comfortable that we will achieve it within that although there may have to be some adaptation to the route etc.

Joan Mackinnon The routes might have to be more direct if you like

Catriona Macdonald Yes, I mean if it was a direct run it would only take 10-12 minutes but if you're going down - you'd probably have to be obliged to go to Holm to pick up Sandwick children to Lower Sandwick .....

Bernard Chisholm However, it wouldn't be the same bus that we would make go on the same journey all the way round – not necessarily. I think we have to look at where other people are travelling.

Catriona Macdonald That's a lot of cost for you – isn't it?

Bernard Chisholm Of course – I mean

???????????????? Inaudible

Joan Mackinnon We have estimated around £3,000 a year extra. I don't know if the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources wants to make any comment.

Robert Emmott Can you hear me alright? Clearly one of the additional costs will be of

transporting children further to school. I haven't got much further to add, I think it's a point we can take back, we can certainly take it up with the Council's Transport Co-ordinator and provide some additional information back. Getting children to school throughout the school estate is complicated because there is so many side routes and feeder routes and distances, so I think it is an important point that we can take back and we can perhaps prise some information back from the Transport Co-ordinator through the parent council to answer the question.

- Joan Mackinnon I just want to make one point myself and its to do with maybe – it is an error in the document and I wanted to draw your attention to it. It was the head teacher at Stornoway Primary who brought it to my attention and its under the section in the Education Benefits Statement that's section 8 where it is talking about ICT and its says that every classroom in Stornoway Primary has an electronic white board, three of them don't but they will have by the end of next session. I just wanted to correct that.
- Gillian Scott *We have electronic whiteboards in every classroom here*
- Joan Mackinnon We've been very good to you.
- Cllr Morag Munro Yes
- Christina Maciver I'm Christina Maciver the Chair of Sandwick Parent Council. There's a couple of items in the proposal I'd like to run through and just to get clarified. 8.3 it says Stornoway Primary was assessed as Condition C in 2007 and has been upgraded to a Category B in 2010 – did you say earlier that this work wasn't completed?
- Joan Mackinnon The refurbishment is still ongoing.
- Christina Maciver When is it going to be completed?
- Joan Mackinnon Not until - say just now for example if there is going to be an amalgamation there would be further investment in Stornoway Primary because what's being done in Stornoway Primary just now is what was planned long before we started talking about this but obviously we would invest more money in Stornoway Primary to further enhance the accommodation there.
- Christina Maciver Would that work be guaranteed by 2012?
- Joan Mackinnon Yes, the pupils we've said already the Council have given a commitment that we would not be moving pupils into an accommodation that was not as good as they were.
- Christina Maciver You just brought up about the ICT. We just wanted to point out as well that there's whiteboards in all the classrooms in Sandwick and in the nursery. There are 15 laptops, one classroom box and 9 stand alone computers – so the children aren't going to benefiting any more by going to Stornoway Primary.
- Joan Mackinnon They won't be disadvantaged either because they'll have equal access to ICT in Stornoway Primary.
- Christina Maciver Not every parent wants to put their child to a bigger school. There's a lot of parents that want to have their children in smaller schools and if you close Sandwick there isn't going to be that option in the Stornoway catchment area to put their child to a smaller school.
- Joan Mackinnon Well I suppose you could technically say there is because you could choose to go somewhere else.
- Christina Maciver Not really – when you think of it logistically, you couldn't.
- Joan Mackinnon Fair point

Christina Maciver 8.7, Accessibility of Premises – following the proposed upgrade Stornoway Primary will be fully DDA compliant. It says that Sandwickhill School further work is required in order for it to become DDA compliant. What does that mean? What work would have to be done in Sandwick?

Joan Mackinnon We mentioned already that surveys had been carried out by external experts in 2007 and both reports include - the reports that were done for all the schools have a section on DDA compliance. Therefore we know that there is some work – when the survey was done there were significant things had to be done at Sandwick here in order for it to be not completely outwith the law if you like so there were ramps and things put in but there was further works that required to be done in terms of toilets, widening some doors – things like that, which if Sandwick was being refurbished that would be done.

Christina Maciver Would you be able to let us know later – you know – you know what that work would be?

Joan Mackinnon Yes absolutely, it's in the report.

Christina Maciver There are two disability accesses into the school and two disabled toilets.

Joan Mackinnon Yes I know

Christina Maciver That's why we're wanting to know what further work is required

Joan Mackinnon Yes, absolutely because what the report showed was that there were some works that had to be done as a matter of urgency and other work which should be done but could wait.

Christina Maciver Is the nursery part of this school or is it not? Nobody can seem to answer that question.

Bernard Chisholm The nursery is a part of the school and it is directly managed through the school, absolutely, and it is supported through the school.

Christina Maciver Why is it not mentioned in the proposal about the nursery?

Joan/Bernard It is

Christina Maciver There's no figures for the nursery in any – anywhere here – it does say that – unless I've missed it that there is going to be a secure area for nursery pupils but - did anybody else see anything about the nursery in the proposal - 8.6?

Bernard Chisholm And also while we had the conversations we shared the enrolment levels

Christina Maciver Its very vague - that's just one and a half lines. The nursery is very important to this school.

Joan Mackinnon Yes, it is also very important to Stornoway Primary - we haven't expanded on it there either. We're just saying that there is provision here, there is also provision in Stornoway Primary and parents would have the choice of having English or Gaidhlig there.

Bernard Chisholm Can I say for the nursery – we were very positive in responding. We have a lot of applications for the direct management of the nursery, very positive in responding. We were very pleased to adopt the classroom. I think it has been resourced well - we have done those things. I think it reflects our own commitment to the nursery in the school and we are very pleased with the work that is going on.

Christina Maciver But you are going to have four nurseries under one roof

Joan Mackinnon Can I just say - I also know that there has been excellent work done between the nursery and the infant classroom and the infant teacher has worked very, very well with the workers in the nursery to enhance the experiences of young

people there.

Christina Maciver And it also got a very good report from the Care Commission

Joan/Bernard Absolutely

Joan Mackinnon We were delighted with that

Christina Maciver Yes, so were we but you are going to have four nurseries under one roof - well that's your proposal to have four nurseries under one roof. Do you have enough capacity for that?

Bernard Chisholm Yes, as some of you will know we have had a Technical Report and we have the accommodation and provision. We've had close liaison with the head teacher of Stornoway Primary and therefore yes we have the capacity.

Christina Maciver Today the nursery in Sandwick received a phone call asking if there was capacity in Sandwick for some of Little Teddies children so that implies to us there isn't enough capacity in Stornoway Primary to take all the children.

Bernard Chisholm Most of those folk who are following the discussion that has occurred in relation to Little Teddies will know that at the time of the decision by the Health Board to withdraw the funding we had to make alternative arrangements. The alternative arrangements that we had to make were within a fixed budget pot that the Council had set from our contribution to that. A number of our nursery providers in the area and in the areas that parents place children from do have placements so the provision that we could run out of Little Teddies with the budget we had was fixed to pre-school places and I think 6 baby places, a number of 2-3 and 3-5 places so an exercise that we undertook on behalf of the parents in Little Teddies to contact all the nurseries in rural areas as well as local areas here to get a feedback on the capacity so we had options and information for any parents requiring places. It wasn't because we cant place all the children.

Christina Maciver Point 9.4 - which will probably be a very tricky one at the moment. The likely effects on the local community. It says as detailed in Section blah, blah, blah .. of the proposal document is believed that there will be no significant effect on the community - it will because the hall belongs to the community - you rent the hall off us - Monday to Friday - instead of paying us rent you pay for the electricity, the rates and the insurance. Now as a community, I don't think that we would be able to keep this hall going because we built this hall for the school and the community so there will be a detrimental effect on this building should the school close as you know yourselves. You've spent a lot of money on this hall, you've contributed quite a bit towards it as well. We pushed for the kitchen, we put in - we saved you over £200,000 to get a kitchen put in - so that will have an effect on the community and we need some reassurances from you that we - you know could possibly get some help towards running this should you close the school because if you go back - you were bussing the children from Sandwick down to Aird for I think it was nearly two years because the hall that was here was condemned. We fought as a community to get this hall up for the school.

Cllr Munro Thank you for that. I think we do understand what you are saying and your concerns over that and I'm sure that we as Council would like to enter into discussion with the community on these issues.

Murdo Johnson *Can you guarantee that?*

Cllr Morag Munro That we would enter into discussion - you can have a guarantee that we will enter into discussion with you on the issue.

Catriona Macdonald I'm just concerned about this travel. If I make a placing request for my children to go to Bayble School, do you put on transport to get them there?

Joan Mackinnon Yes, if any parents here wished to make a placing request for their children to go to Bayble School then we would endeavour to ensure that they got.....

Catriona Macdonald So if I was the only one in our village or you know from this school that put in this placing request, to Mr Maclean - shock if I did - I mean that would cost you a fortune putting him down there every day back and fore, would it not?

Joan Mackinnon It would be the use of the integrated transport and you would get a bus pass to use the integrated transport, as some children currently from this area do.

Catriona Macdonald So you would put on

Joan/Bernard It would be the integrated transport and you would get a bus pass.

Bernard Chisholm Not you personally

Joan Mackinnon Would you really want to be going to Bayble?

?????????? The council are quite happy to pay for them to go to Bayble

Inaudible - laughter

Joan Mackinnon If there's a placing request -  
It definitely is the Head teacher

Cllr Morag Munro Anybody else want to make a comment?

Joan Mackinnon Did you want to speak Mr Maclean? Do you want the mike?  
Inaudible  
I thought you were

Cllr Morag Munro Mr Campbell – what do you want to say?

Angus Campbell First of all, I mean I never thought I would find myself when I started here sitting in this position but I think we all have to face the reality of what we are trying to deal with across the Western Isles – we are dealing with a huge reduction in numbers of people in schools. No one can deny the fact that we have half the number of people going into the primary this year as came out of it. That's the issue we have to deal with here and we have to do that in a fair way across the board. When I was Chair of this hall committee for many years, I know what it took to build this hall and one of the issues I would say is that we have to ensure that this hall is safe for the community and that is something I would certainly - and I'm sure the other councillors would dedicate themselves to doing - and I've got a little bit more confidence than Christina maybe that the local community will help in that, although we do need much more involvement from the local community on what's happening in this hall. One of the disappointments has been the lack of people getting involved after we provided the facility.

I think we are trying to do this right across the board in a very even way, a very sensible way because what you want to do with the money you have available is to provide the best education for all the children we've got. Now, that applies to the children in this ward as well as it applies to children in every ward across the Western Isles and that means that we can carry on as we have before no matter how much we are attached to this school. My attachment to this school goes back to my father who went through here, my own family went through here and it is hurtful to see us having to make this change but the numbers show it.

I think as a councillor what I would be looking for when we come to decide on this is, one, that all the conditions are applied are that we go into a better receiving school, we have to have surety of that; we have to have parity of treatment right across the Western Isles. I would not stand by and watch one school being treated differently to another. That is something I am definite on. We have to have some assurance on the hall as I said.

In real terms what we are faced with at the moment and the criteria we are judging on we would have to see a big change in numbers to make this a viable school again – but I'll tell you what, if we got that change in numbers, I'd be the first one to stand up and say "Sandwick should stay open" but if we stay as we are the honest facts - and I think a lot of you when you look - you don't want your money to go into bricks and mortar – you want it to go into educating your kids. The best way to do that is to do that is to bring these schools together but I really, really hope that we do see the numbers jump because then I would be the first one to lead the charge.

Ruaraidh Finlayson *I'd like some more information about the Stornoway Primary catchment area and the impact on capacity.*

Joan Mackinnon It would just be the Stornoway Primary catchment area. The area where children currently come from to go from Stornoway Primary.

Ruaraidh Finlayson So its just from Sandwick School here to the Stornoway Primary and that's it

Joan Mackinnon And the town of Stornoway

Ruaraidh Finlayson What other schools are there in the town of Stornoway?

Joan Mackinnon Actually the Cearns area has got children that go currently to Stornoway Primary and to Laxdale – they go from the Cearns to both schools and that has always been the case since the Cearns was built.

Ruaraidh Finlayson What effect will like the other schools in other rural parts of the island shutting down and you know – they are building bigger schools to accommodate them but like we were saying earlier like the effect that that would have on parents – maybe they won't want to take them to a bigger school in Bayble or a bigger school somewhere else. Maybe they might want to put them to a smaller school in the likes of Sandwick so why not have a wee bit of trial and error and a wee bit of common sense and just say "let's see what happens when these other schools shut down and see if this school would start populating again" – because Stornoway is quite a big area and it is on the increase. You know more people are coming - returning back home and settling down back at home and they're having families – you know – to make a whole pile of schools shut down – in quite a big – the most populated part of the island is town, so you don't know what effect that would have on it unless you give it a wee try, you know. It seems to be all round the island its going to be dut, dut, dut, dut, dut. They're all shutting down and then going to bigger schools you know, and then there's going to no small schools left – you know.

Joan Mackinnon I don't think that's actually true. In terms of the new school at Bayble for example, the people in Point have waited, I think, something like 10 years for the new school, where they agreed that Aird and Knock would close and all the children would go to Bayble. I don't think you're going to find any parent down in Point wanting to send their child to a school other than the brand new school that they will get in less than two years time.

With regard to the other schools – big schools aren't being built. It's a bit like the situation here, where there are schools that have got not a lot of capacity currently and its just moving children into schools where there is room for them because none of the schools are that full.

Gillian Scott You're saying if we get the kids back, you'd give it a chance but you're not giving it a chance because you can see on this paperwork it slightly increased since 2008 and you've got a large intake this year so you're not giving it a

chance.

- Joan Mackinnon I agree that there is an increase but it isn't a significant increase.
- Gillian Scott But its still an increase – you're asking for an increase. It is still an increase and this year it's only going to increase it again – so you're not giving this school a chance.
- Joan Mackinnon Yes, but you have to accept that in eight years the roll has decreased in more than half.
- Gillian Scott But they have all over the island – not just Sandwick – all over the island
- Joan MacKinnon I agree with you, that's true.
- Gillian Scott Why are we even having this if the numbers are slightly increasing again – why are we going down this route?
- Cllr Morag Munro I think we've explained – we're doing this review throughout the islands and its because of the challenges it faces throughout the islands; not just in education but in all our services.
- Gillian Scott *My son is almost 5.* He's very, very shy you know. I actually think all the councillors should go and talk to all the children and see what the children say.
- Cllr Morag Munro I think there has actually been a consultation with the children.
- Bernard Chisholm As part of the entire process in the consultation document, not only do ourselves as officers have a duty to talk to the children or groups of children and the staff as part of this process – so will HMIE and others. As Ms McDonald mentioned, this process has some way to run and that information – I have to say much like the hall here tonight and I can say I've spoken to a number of young people and nowhere in this discussion is there any sense on officers part or others that we don't think Sandwick School does a good job and it's a good place to be and the children say the same things. They say those things – so yes we do listen to the children. We've listened to some of the concerns and they've looked at and talked to us.
- Certainly I've spoken to a group today both of the pupil council and from other classes ranged from P4-7. I met with a group of children and I think the range of.....
- Gillian Scott And what did they have to say to you? Because my son is almost 5 – when I told him where I was going tonight he said he would phone the police on the councillors.
- Bernard Chisholm I can tell you some of the things they said but I'll also tell you some of the ones that were quite impressive. Would you like me to share some of the things that were really quite impressive? No, it's not the good ones, it's just the impressive ones that are around it. I mean if you just talk amongst yourselves while I find some of the comments that I might have shared today – that the young people shared with me today. Wait until I get this – questions – yes.
- Ok – some of the concerns they might have that I picked up today was about public transport. How would we get there? Some of the parents here had some concerns about that. Their friends might choose another school – there's been some of that here tonight.
- I could be honest, I was impressed as what the children told me as any of the adult conversations we've had today folks.
- They also mentioned that they felt it would be more difficult maybe for the older children who've had longer friendships to make inroads into the older, you know, the more stable friendships of Stornoway Primary. One said "new school, new fears". Like any new thing the work might be different or we could

end up repeating it. So there was a range of things like that. A quick mention of some of the positive things.

Some of the positive things they thought might be. Do you want to hear them? Do you want me to jump over them – no.

Some of the positives – more people because some of them were saying there could be more friends. Another one said – more teachers, different choices. One of the things – they've got a strong affection for their teachers here and they know that some of the teachers have different skills and they get the benefit of that. There was a bit of discussion about that.

The youngest group of it were saying "a bigger school environment". That was more interesting because when I asked them if there were things I could do to help if that were to happen, some of the things they shared with me there were as follows:-

- They thought it would be good if the Head teacher of Stornoway Primary would allow some of the pupils to come to Sandwick to tell them what its really like. The older children thought that the Nicolson have a kind of induction plan going on abnd would like something similar.
- They thought some of that might be - they wanted to know what would happen to the school accounts. Pardon - yeah well, believe you me they wanted to know that there would be things – I have to say they did want to look at that.
- They also wanted to know – what about the resources they worked for over the years acquiring here – would that – would they have access to these?
- They felt it would be good to have some level of social activities. Quite interesting that one.
- Some thought – yeah this was a beauty – I thought this was a particularly good one – it said it would be good to get teachers from Stornoway Primary to teach us so that we can see how they work.

Joan Mackinnon See if we like them or not.

Bernard Chisholm They didn't quite finish it like that but you could read the sub text – it was quite good.

Some of them suggested that it would quite good to get a map of the school because they thought it was quite big and a map would be a good way of making way they didn't get lost. What I'm - questions they wanted - I gave them the opportunity if there were questions that they thought they might want if you didn't ask them tonight - what questions that I could take back to the Director or Councillors.

They certainly felt that the building was a big one. All of them felt – what are you going to do with this new building and things like that? They were concerned that the staff might lose jobs so they wanted to know that we would be looking at that. They also – well the resources they said. They also wanted to know what we would do with the nursery because some of them thought that was working really well. The old canteen – that was just something they wanted to know. What would happen to the school account? These were some of the things that were coming and we will record these and pull these together as well as we look at the overall information from today. It was a good experience to hear the youngsters' look at it.

????????????? *What would happen to the school building?*

Bernard Chisholm Sorry – plans for the building. If the school shuts. As was mentioned earlier, yeah.....

Lesley McDonald The council has a policy on disposal of surplus property. That policy is subject, first of all to the council declaring the property as surplus. The first thing would

be, whether there was any other council use for the property. Then in terms of government Regulations it's firstly offered to HHP, the registered social landlord to see if they would have any housing purpose for it.

The next stage would be to gauge community interest and if there were any community interest we would ask that interest or those interests to produce a business plan in relation to what they would intend to do with the premises and take that back to the Council. If there weren't to be any such interest we would be looking at disposal on the open market.

It's a recently approved - it went through the Council in February so that we have a consistent approach to disposing of property once it's declared surplus and I'd be quite happy to let anyone have that report on e-mail that wished to have it.

????/ *If the school shut would the community still be able to use the school house like we do?*

Lesley McDonald I will double check on that but my initial view on that would be that this proposal doesn't have anything to do with the schoolhouse. The schoolhouse excluded from this proposal and nothing would change in relation to the schoolhouse but I will double check that.

Cllr Morag Munro Where's the mike? Can you wait until we get the mike to you?

Cameron Macleay I'm not talking on my own behalf here. I'm retired now and I'm thinking some of my ex colleagues in the school. Some of them are quite young yet, what are their job prospects? This going to happen to a few schools. Are they surplus to requirements?

Joan Mackinnon The Council currently – its policy is that there would be no compulsory redundancies so we would be looking to redeploy staff as best we could but there will be individual consultations with staff if that were to be - if the decision to close the school is taken and that eventually happens then there would be discussions and we are actually talking to the unions currently about the whole issue as well so we wouldn't be anticipating that we would be making compulsory redundancies at this point.

Cllr Morag Munro Are there any other questions then or any other comments.

Catriona Macdonald Would you put a transition period in for the kids if they were to go to the Stornoway Primary or to Bayble? Would there be a transition period of one afternoon a week for a couple of months or.....

Joan Mackinnon We would be very keen to look at that and that would certainly be part of the process and I would anticipate that if a school were closing anywhere – not here but anywhere, that we would be looking at that to allow the children to move with their teachers for an afternoon, a week, a month or more. I think we would allow the two head teachers who were involved to come up with a plan for that to happen but we would certainly be encouraging that.

Catriona Macdonald *What do they think in Stornoway Primary?*

Joan Mackinnon All I can say is that I met by accident yesterday, two teachers round about lunchtime and they asked if I was going to be involved in meetings that were happening today, I said no but I will be tomorrow night and this was what they said – and I'll let the head teacher speak for herself if she wants to but they said "if it happens, we're really excited". This particular teacher she teaches a primary 2 and she said "in fact children must be talking about it because the children in my class were talking to each other and they were saying "it might be that we are getting new friends"". I'll let Mrs Murray speak for herself.

Mrs Murray We are in the business of providing an education service and what we want is the best educational provision for every child. We have the capacity, we would

welcome any children who would come into the school from wherever.

- Joan Mackinnon I think actually, the parents and there are two of them here tonight if they wanted to speak are very positive about the amalgamation if it goes ahead but if they want to speak for themselves they can.
- Mrs Murray We have some very supportive parents and it might be worth adding in terms of what you said earlier about the refurbishment of the school. Our Parent Council and the former PTA have contributed thousands of pounds worth of equipment to the school and they are very supportive and I think that obviously that the Sandwich parents who are here tonight are very supportive of their school and if the two schools amalgamated I think there is a tremendous potential of power for good there. If our Chair would like to speak up.
- David Morrison David Morrison, Chair of the Stornoway Primary Parent Council. I actually stay in the Sandwich catchment area. I haven't - with no offence to Sandwich, it never entered my mind once to shift the children out of the school because we are very happy with what Stornoway Primary are doing. I don't think any of the children from Sandwich if they went to Stornoway Primary would have any problems whatsoever settling into the school personally – that's my own view.
- I understand what the parents here have in their own local community – but the Parent Council - and I don't think any of the parents have any issues whatsoever with the two schools coming together.
- Mairi MacSween Mairi MacSween from the Parent Council as well. As a parent the children are talking about it. All the children are speaking very positively about the children coming from this school and looking forward to it. The opportunities are second to none. The extra curricular activities, the after school clubs – obviously with more staff, there are lunchtime clubs every day, there are activities every day. Whatever your child is interested in is on offer there whether it is sport, music and I know that every school has these. I know that there are huge opportunities there for the children and just to mention we had an assisted self evaluation and we came out in a very good light in it. I don't think as parents you need fear anything from coming to Stornoway Primary.
- Bernard Chisholm We just also mention in relation to what you mentioned earlier that we also would undertake a process of consultation with the pupils and staff of Stornoway Primary and that would be used in part of the whole consultation document.
- Gillian Scott Sorry, I don't mean to sound offensive to Stornoway Primary parents but we are actually the parents that are having to move our children into Stornoway Primary and it is going to have an effect on each and every one of these children. Its going to be a huge upheaval going into big classes. They are used to small classes. Maybe you can say you don't have a problem but I for once certainly do have a problem moving my child into a much larger school and its no offence to you guys.
- Lesley McDonald It is really just procedurally – I've taken a note of four things that we'll come back to you on, that is: the cost per pupil of afterschool care at Stornoway Primary, more details as to how the transport arrangements would be, details of the further work that has been identified for full DDA compliance and also just to double check the position in relation to continued use of the schoolhouse.
- Firstly was there anything else that you were looking for us to come back with information on and secondly what is the best way of us getting that information back to you. Would that be through the Parent Council?
- Murdo Johnson *A meeting about the Hall*
- Lesley McDonald Add on the hall to that but would the best way be through the parent council to get that information disseminated to you.

Christina Maciver	Yes
Lesley McDonald	Of course
Cllr Morag Munro	Do you want the mike?
Angus Campbell	You don't need the mike
Cllr Morag Munro	Its just so that it will be recorded. I think its important that its recorded
Christina Maciver	The costs per pupil. We were just wondering since we've got a split headship now – well we assumed that the cost per pupil would come down.
Lesley McDonald	That is to double check to make sure that it takes account of the shared headship.
Christina Maciver	And plus we have no principal teacher in Sandwich now either so there should be a saving there too and the other bone of contention Joan, the school meals.
Joan Mackinnon	<p>Can I just explain the school meals and I hope this time you'll understand it – ok. I know that you find it really difficult to understand how a meal in Sandwich costs £4.12 and the meals in the other three schools in Point cost less although they come from the same canteen and they come down on the same transport.</p> <p>The unit cost for cooking the meal is exactly the same in all the schools. The cost of the transport is divvied up and I'll tell you how. Yours is 15% and Knock's is 20%, 30% for Bayble and 35% for Aird. You're paying the least travel and the cost of the meal is the same. Where yours becomes expensive is that you have – it's a historic thing in terms of the staffing of your canteen because this school used to have in excess of 120 pupils – so at that time, people have a contract of employment that relates back to that time – that staff cost is now divided by 38 or however many people have a lunch. In Bayble, even if they had the same staffing you are dividing it by 70 – so its just simply that you have so many fewer children but the staff costs are the highest.</p>
Cristina Maciver	Is that something that could be looked at though as well when you're saving
Joan Mackinnon	<p>Well you know people have got employment rights unfortunately or should I say fortunately, sorry.</p> <p>I don't think the people who are working in the canteen would like me to be saying that. Its really related to the employment costs and the fewer number of children who are therefore having a meal but you're dividing it by .....</p> <p>Two people are being paid. In Knock, one person is being paid. The cost of the meal is the cost of the meal.</p>
Cllr Morag Munro	I think Councillor Nicolson has something to say.
Cllr Charlie Nicolson	Thank you Chair. Usually you're wondering why I'm so quiet and in the background and that. Usually I'm
Cllr Morag Munro	I wasn't wondering, I was just thankful
Cllr Charlie Nicolson	Oh well, you might not be thankful after this then Chair. Just going on the basis on what Councillor Campbell said. The basis that as far as I'm concerned its quite sad that we are here tonight. If we had the numbers and that we wouldn't be here and we are at the situation that no one wants this school to close at all but we are in a situation that we find ourselves in. I would just kind of reiterate if the school is to close to back what Councillor Campbell said and I'm sure that other Members would say the same that the community facilities that you would have our support to try and safeguard the community facilities in this place. When you built the hall and put all the effort in as a community down here to getting this facility and that, Sandwichhill School was not on the agenda for closure in any way. It wasn't in any thought as such. Unfortunately, things

have come on board where we find ourselves in a very difficult situation and a situation that we have to look at the education provision of the Outer Hebrides and if we had the numbers we wouldn't be here tonight so you will as one of your local Members have my full support if the school does close in working together with the council and with the different departments to safeguarding the aspect of the community facilities here.

Secondly if the school does go down the line of closure as such, I think the community here have to kind of discuss themselves the use of the buildings here. Miss McDonald went through the process that the Council goes through as such. We are the community down here, you are the community down here and if we find ourselves that the school is closing then as a community then you can have a big say in regards to the facility that we meet in here and is on our doorstep. Thank you very much Chair.

Cllr Donald  
Nicholson

Can everybody hear me – oh for recording purposes. I think looking round the room I'm probably – I stand corrected but I'm probably the person with the longest association with this school in this room. I went to this school over fifty years ago and I've a long association with it. My three children, my sister went to this school, my three children went to this school over a whole period of eighteen years. My children were in this school for eighteen years. Like Charlie said, we are all sad about this. There is a sort of inevitability about this because we aren't discussing a problem with the education of the children and the school buildings could be sorted but how can the roll be reversed. Now that's the big problem. When I went into the school we had probably over two hundred children in the school. In my class there was thirty two or thirty three all the way through the seven classes – seven years. Ever since then the community has watched it going down. In 1990 when I became the councillor for this area, it was one hundred and twenty three in this school. In 1997 when the great last push to close it – it was ninety eight or one hundred and eight – you have to forgive me my memory isn't that good. I can't remember exactly what it was and Gillian said "Give it a chance to recover". Well over the years, certainly over the last ten years while I was a councillor to the school I always got as a matter of form I always got the entry numbers in August. I always kept an eye on the roll of the school and year after year after year it went down. Not only I knew that, Gillian, but so did the Education Department. We've tried to watch the school we've tried to build it up in various ways. This hall was part of our strategy for renewing the school to attract more people to it.

You know, its pretty sad really but if we can come up with some way of reversing the roll, the, we are there. Now on that one myself and Angus Campbell – it was a wee bit before your time Charlie but – have tried our best to get land to build houses on in this area. It was one of our big pushes five or six years ago because the secret is houses. We need houses to put people in so that there'll be children from them. The community has come to a stage where people like me are old – generally that live in this community – our children are long gone – the houses are still there but they are occupied by people without children.

We did get eventually – we did get some thirty acres - which some of it has now been purchased by other parties – not us – but its almost too late for that.

Gillian Scott

Its never too late

Cllr Donald  
Nicolson

Gillian I've got no problem at all with the optimism. The optimism though has to relate into numbers and we have to look at our Primary 1 figure, our Primary 1 figure sustained all the way through.

Gillian Scott

Inaudible

Cllr Donald  
Nicolson

I'm not arguing with you – I don't know anything about that. That is what we are trying to do, that's the key to getting the role reversed but circumstances are overtaking us, circumstances are overtaking us, the roll now has probably bottomed. You'll probably get thirty to forty kids coming into this school from the community. There are seven villages feeding this school if I remember

correctly.

Just to come back to it, there was two hundred when I went to the school. Thank you.

Cllr Morag Munro

Any other comments – any other questions before we close. Well if you are happy then, said all you have to say maybe we'll conclude. Of course the consultation process goes on.

The consultation process of course goes on until 5.00pm on 30 June. The Comhairle will review the proposal having regard to the HMIE Report, written representations and the comments that you made tonight at this meeting. A verbatim report of this meeting hopefully will, as long as the recording worked will be included in any report that will go to the Comhairle. A consultation report will then be prepared. This report will be published in electronic and printed formats and will be published in local newspapers. The report will be available on Comhairle website and from the Comhairle offices as well as from the schools concerned and that's free of charge of course. The consultation report together with any other relevant documentation will be considered by the Education and Children's Services Committee who will then make a recommendation that will go to the full Council for approval. Should the Comhairle decide to close the school it's required then to notify the Scottish Ministers of the decision and provide them with a copy of the proposal document, the consultation report in accordance with the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010 within six working days of the decision being made. Scottish Ministers have a six week period from the date of that final decision to decide if they will call in the proposal. Until the outcome of the six week call in process had been notified to the Comhairle, the Comhairle will not proceed with the implementation of the proposal but that wouldn't happen anyway because the proposed closure date for this school is August 2012.

So can I remind you again that the deadline date for the receipt of written submissions is 5.00pm on 30 June 2010. These should be sent to Mr Malcolm Burr, Chief Executive of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar at Sandwick Road, Stornoway or electronically to [schoolconsultations@cne-siar.gov.uk](mailto:schoolconsultations@cne-siar.gov.uk). That address is in your consultation document as well.

Is there anything else that we need to notify people of?

Well I would just like to thank you very much indeed for your constructive comments. I know that it is a very difficult process. It is a difficult process for us too I assure you but I would just like to thank you very much for your contributions this evening and for a very constructive meeting. Thank you very much.

Joan Mackinnon

Thank you

**NB - All narrative in *italics* is not an accurate account of what was said – recording was unclear and wording is from memory.**