

London Borough of Camden Special Executive Committee Meeting, 21st November 2007

Present:

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| Councillor Keith Moffit, | Leader of the Council and Chair of the Committee |
| Councillor Andrew Marshall, | Executive Member for Equalities and Community Development |
| Councillor Janet Grauberg, | Executive Member for Resources |
| Councillor John Bryant, | Executive Member for Children |
| Councillor Mike Green, | Executive Member for Environment |
| Martin Davies, | Executive Member for Adult Care and Health |
| Flick Rea, | Executive Member for Culture |
| Ben Rawlings, | Executive Member for Community Safety |
| Chris Naylor, | Executive Member for Housing |
| Andrew Mennear, | Executive Member for Schools |

Officers:

Heather Schroeder
Andrew Knowles
Gail Tolley
Ian Patterson

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Frank Barnes Deputations

Chair: (Councillor Moffitt)

....deputations. I would like to take first those relating to Frank Barnes specifically and one of the reasons I wanted to do that is that there are quite a lot of children here tonight with their parents, and that they might wish to leave, and I'm explaining that because we're going to be taking the papers, first BSF, we're going to do the BSF Report first and then we'll do the Frank Barnes one second, and we do have to do it that way round for legal reasons, so it may be you find it better if actually, if the children want to be here to listen to the deputations specifically about Frank Barnes, and we'll take questions about Frank Barnes at the end, and if anybody wants to leave after that point they're quite welcome to do so. When we've done that we'll move on to listening to the deputations about the BSF programme. I had a quick word with Hugo Pierre about the Unison deputation and he said it's largely about Frank Barnes so I think I'll take that along with the Frank Barnes deputations as well. And then once again when we've heard the BSF related deputations we'll take questions relating to those. And then we'll move on to listening...to discussing the two reports. I hope that's quite clear.

So what I'd like to do now is ask the first of the Frank Barnes deputations to start. We have Stephen Phillips, the Chair of governors. I'm not sure Stephen if anybody else is taking part in the deputation or if it's just you. It's just you. So you have 3 minutes, and I am going to be fairly strict, and ask you to wind up after three minutes if you haven't finished as we have a lot of deputations to hear.

4.43 *Stephen Phillips:*

Thank you Chair. I'd like to thank you all on behalf of my governing body for permitting us to make this deputation tonight. You've heard a lot about Frank Barnes recently and we remain grateful for the messages of support that we continue to receive from across the political spectrum from within Camden. Now you're here tonight in part to debate the Report from CSF in relation to the future of Frank Barnes, and we are not so politically naïve that we do not know that the recommendation which that report contains is something which would have been discussed by you with officers before the paper was published. It is also quite apparent to us that CSF has now taken legal advice and has been told what we have been telling them for months, that there has been wholly inadequate consultation so far in relation to the future of this school.

The recommendation which is being made is nonetheless a startling one. For the first time the agenda which is really on the table is clear: close Frank Barnes, get the profoundly deaf children off the Avenue Road site so we can build the academy that we have promised to Camden.

Now we have always said that we broadly support your plan for creating much-needed secondary school places within this borough but we have also said consistently that those plans cannot come at the expense of some of the most disadvantaged children in our society. So a recommendation to close Frank Barnes and to transfer, which is the word you use, our children to Blanche Neville in Haringey has come as more than a shock, and it is especially shocking since you are going to hear from Torriano Juniors and Infants tonight that your only alternative is going to be actively opposed by them.

It's plain to us that you haven't really listened to anything that we have said, and we can say that for sure for two reasons. First, because you will have conducted no needs analysis in relation to the cohort of children we serve, and in going for a preferred option as you seek to do you have therefore ignored what we, as the experts, have told you about the education of the deaf. Secondly, because the first time that even one of you visited Blanche Neville was yesterday, considerably after the CSF paper, no doubt agreed with you in advance when its recommendation for closure was published. We are entitled to ask, and we do ask, does the process which you are now proposing have any value, or is it, given the preferred solution just window-dressing? We think it's the latter. What you want is the cheapest solution which you can get legally and we are perfectly aware that the evidence is therefore being made to fit your preferred solution for our children to be forced to a school in Haringey on just about the most unsuitable site that one could possibly conceive of. We don't think that fits with the moral obligations that Councillor Moffitt spoke of in July. We know it doesn't fit with your legal obligations.

Now you will hear from those members who were at Scrutiny last night what they propose. What they propose is a proper consultation exercise without a foregone conclusion or preferred option as you seek to call it. That is the recommendation therefore which you should be adopting and the one we urge on you, and not a recommendation which makes clear what the real agenda is, and abdicates the moral responsibilities previously recognised by this authority. Thank you for listening. Thank you for your time. For those of you who truly continue to support us, thank you for that support.

Chair:

Thank you very much Mr Phillips. I'd now like to call on Tomato Lichy, (I'm not quite sure of the pronunciation of the surname) who is a parent at Frank Barnes School.

SP:

Chair, could I just make this point, that it may be because of the interpretation that you need to extend these three minutes.

...

Chair:

Sorry, the idea was to take Tomato's as the second, the NUT will be next and then we'll hear from Luca Selice who is chair of governors at Torriano School. So can I say, we're quite happy to make it a little bit longer than three minutes because we realise that the interpreting obviously takes a little bit longer, so no problems with that.

Tomato Lichy (interpreted):

Yes that might help the interpreter, and that's the reason I am standing up so the interpreter can see me clearly. So I'm going to stand up for my presentation and I'm here today to represent the parents of Frank Barnes School, and I'm really quite shocked really because I've got a deaf child, I'm deaf myself, my parents are deaf, so we're a deaf family, and my first language is British Sign Language, and I've grown up in that environment and our child goes to Frank Barnes School and I was very happy about that. But now this has all come up, and I just actually feel really that everything has been taken from underneath us. It seems really that people haven't thought about the future, how things are going to move on, what people need, for example, if you're moving house and you don't know the future and you're really unsure it's really very difficult and that's what it feels like for me at the minute. Frank Barnes School is the only school in London that offers a high level of language in BSL to Deaf children.

Maybe you might not know, but Deaf students, leaving education at the age of 16 have an average reading age of eight, and that is a lot lower than the national average. And research has shown that Deaf children from Deaf families are much more successful at reading, writing and also accessing spoken English and they go on to achieve much more later in life. And the reason for that is that they've got a good linguistic role model giving them a firm foundation to build on, and in the early years they can actually grow and develop their confidence and structure in language, and later on they are able to express that using English etc and they can even learn other languages like French. Myself I grew up through the oral education system and my partner was the same. We were both educated in an oral manner, and it was awful. We were sitting in the classroom and they were talking to us and we wouldn't understand what they

were saying. We would miss out on the information and it wasn't until later that we learned to take in information through reading and writing and I think what Camden is proposing now is moving away from the system we have now to a more oral system, more speech based, and I just don't think that will work. And I'm asking all of you to think about this.

We've all heard the term before about *franglais* when you mix French and English together at the same time. We know that isn't a serious way forward with language and that's exactly the same what we're opposing with BSL. BSL philosophy is really important. You cannot use sign language and spoken language at the same time as that damages both languages.... (interruption)
Blanche Nevile using sign and speech at the same time.

So when children leave school the problem is if they haven't got a good linguistic role model when they leave school then it is very difficult for them, and the problem is with lots of staff in schools now their sign language is equivalent to a child of ten years old and it's not right having them teaching children as role models for their linguistics, for their sign language. If you were told your children were going to a British school and the teachers there could only speak English at the level of a ten-year-old you would not be happy. Frank Barnes breaks this system of people leaving with a low reading age because the system they use enables children to become high achievers, they actually learn the language well, They take things on board, they learn everything. It makes them enthusiastic learners.

And for Frank Barnes School, I think lots of other council agree, that Frank Barnes School naturally achieves a lot, and helps the children to achieve and they actually rush to get their children involved with us. And they travel a long way to come to us because they have identified what we can do. And we have a lot of deaf children coming to the school from other councils but from here, from Camden, we have four, that's all, four, and you've got to be very suspicious of that because it does seem that Camden really doesn't want the children to come, and they put up barriers in place of the children. They put barriers in their way.

Applause

Thank you, thank you. Parents within Camden have their children trying to go to Frank Barnes School and there are seven barriers that they have to cross to actually get people through into the school. And they're put up by the professionals that work for the council. They put barriers in their way and challenge them every step of the way. And it does seem that Camden is not offering that service to the family and parents of Camden children. And it seems that they are trying to keep them away from that service. We've got a very good educational resource here but the people of Camden can't access it.

I'm sure all of you have heard that it has recently become very popular for babies, hearing babies of hearing parents to learn sign language because it helps them to increase their vocabulary and it helps them to improve their confidence and all these things develop. And it really seem quite odd that at this moment in time we are pushing Deaf people back and saying, no, your children can't sign, and yet we're telling hearing people, it's good to get your kids signing. That's just bizarre.

Applause.

Thank you. I think it's very important that people learn the language and it's a very popular language and lots of people are learning it and lots of people are loving it and it does spread. BSL is taken up by lots of people – so why at that time are you stopping Deaf children?

Chair:

Are we coming to an end? Because we've obviously extended the period quite a long time.

Tomato L:

Well, could I have two more minutes please if that's appropriate?

Chair:

That's absolutely fine.

Tomato L:

Now we're seeing lots more children having cochlear implants and there's concerns over the service they receive because people are thinking that children with cochlear implants don't actually need the input of British Sign Language and that isn't true. Research has actually shown that children with cochlear implants still need to carry on with using sign language. This gives them confidence, it helps them to take on information quickly. A cochlear implant on its own, doesn't actually give you immediate access to spoken language. They can't take in anything through that straight away, they can't get the spoken vocabulary and grammar, that takes a lot of time to develop. So they still need immediate access to rich and complex information in their own language, in sign language.

If you look at some of the other countries, Finland, Denmark etc. they've actually got laws passed now linked to the education so that parents of Deaf children are actually obliged to go and learn sign language first. So they've actually got that on law now and other countries are using that as a way forward. And parents that choose to implant their children still have to learn sign language.

Now we've already got lots of children in the UK with implants and they are being accepted and taught at Frank Barnes but we do need to make sure children with implants in general carry on getting access to sign language. Hearing kids get 12 years of education in how to use the English language, but most deaf kids in the UK, with or without implants don't get a single hour of teaching in the grammar, the high - level linguistic skills of signing. Deaf kids really need to get that accessible input so that, as I said before, their language skills will advance, benefiting their spoken and written English. Otherwise it will be impossible for them to achieve fluency in any language. It is very important to save them for the future, and we must make sure that access carries on.

And that's why they need to save Frank Barnes for the future. It's the only place in London that delivers all that. And everything's already there. We've got all these things already in place. They're already there and we need to move them

forward and that's why we need to become a centre of excellence for the whole of London, something Camden can be proud of and will be better for us.

Applause

Chair:

Thank you very much indeed. And I'm sure we'll have some questions for you later on. I'm now going to invite Kevin Courtney from Camden NUT, and it's back to the usual three minutes Kevin.

Kevin Courtney (NUT):

Thank you. You've heard from the experts. I'm speaking as a representative of all the teaching staff at Frank Barnes, all the class teachers are members of the NUT. I don't have the expertise, but sitting next to me Katharine Gilligan is currently an NUT member and a teacher at Frank Barnes, and previously a teacher at Blanche Nevile. So we do know something of what we're talking about.

The key thing that you have to understand about Frank Barnes is that it's the only BSL medium teaching school in the whole of London. It's the only school which teaches first through BSL. And that means that the Deaf children who are there, when they're in school, are not disabled in any way, they have no special needs, they communicate with everybody absolutely freely. and it's that pleasure for them of not being disabled, on just being part of a linguistic minority but not being disabled, that's why the community will fight for the school. That's why the school does so well in its results, that's why it's got an international reputation, and it's why there was a big demonstration covered on BBC and ITV tonight. And that's what you have to provide for them. If you want this campaign to go away you have to guarantee BSL medium instruction to all of the children at Frank Barnes School.

Applause

The proposals that you had in July, there were many proposals that you had in July and you've retreated from all of them. And that's a real worry to us. The proposal in July was for a merger with Blanche Nevile. That is not what you're being asked to look for on a recommendation on tonight. The proposal tonight is to transfer the children to Blanche Nevile. It doesn't say merge. Within the document at 5.1 it says 'A partnership with Blanche Nevile' It doesn't say merge. You have retreated, the officers have retreated from the idea of having a merger to a much weaker position. And that's something that the school community will have a real concern about.

What guarantees do you have for the staff about transfer, what guarantees do you have about BSL medium instruction in Blanche Nevile, without the merger you have retreated enormously from that and it is a real worry to us. You have to guarantee as I said before BSL medium instruction. You're got the Torriano proposal but there's going to be another deputation this afternoon which will tell you that that's going to be a real problem. And it would be crazy to get £200 million for education and end up cutting the play space in another Camden primary school. There are options that aren't on your table that you have to look for. There is the option of building Edith (Blanche?) Nevile School and rebuilding Frank Barnes School with it and I happen to know that the school community there would be very much up for it. You had that option at Fleet, and

another option at Primrose Hill. There are options that you can take and you should take. Because if you did come forward with a serious proposal for a regional centre of excellence which you know that Frank Barnes could be, if you came forward with a serious proposal for that then you would have unity across all the political divides in Camden.

Applause

You'd have unity with the school. That's a proposal that you should find the way towards. We know there are problems with your capital, but we also know there is a primary capital project on the way which will start releasing money. You have to find the way of bridging the gap to that. You don't have to close Frank Barnes, you can have a regional centre of excellence, it's the only way to go forward, the proposal you have for Blanche Nevile would mean children who are already travelling long distances to get to Frank Barnes having to travel much further, and many of those parents have said it will be too far for them. So the proposal you have here is not a sensible way to go forward if you want to find some degree of consensus in the borough.

I would just like to... my last point. The Education Act 1996, sections 13, 13A and 14 say that you must provide for all pupils the opportunity of appropriate education, and it says that appropriate education is education that offers such variety of instruction and training as may be desirable in view of the pupils' different ages, abilities and aptitudes. The abilities and aptitudes of the children currently at Frank Barnes require a BSL medium instruction in a regional centre of excellence.

Applause

Chair:

Thank you very much, Kevin. I'd now like to invite Luca Selice, the Chair of governors at Torriano Juniors. Thank you.

Luca Selice:

Thank you Chair. The reason why I'm here, why we're here from the governing body at Torriano Juniors is that one of the options on the table is for Frank Barnes School to be moved, to be relocated to our site, to the site which is partly ours, and partly Torriano Infants. We lack sufficient learning space in our existing building, and this is compensated to some extent by our playground space. We are therefore opposed to any proposal which entails a loss of our school's built or unbuilt area. The school's community and governing body have over many years carried out our own feasibility study on building a new extension on our existing space. We are now in the process of appointing architects with a view to building an extension that will enable the school to secure more room for learning and promoting the arts...We are therefore opposed to any proposed relocation that would curtail our space. But we would like to support Frank Barnes in its quest to have a secure future. It would be unfair of the Council to close Frank Barnes, and blame its closure on us.

I understand that there are many options regarding Frank Barnes which have not been fully explored because they do not fit with the council's self imposed deadline. The Council has imposed deadlines on the basis of its desire to have a new academy built in Swiss Cottage, not on the basis of the needs of Deaf pupils attending Frank Barnes. Torriano Juniors needs to defend its space for

the benefit of its pupils, and would not like to be blamed for the closure of Frank Barnes, which is due to the Council's haste in building an academy on the land currently occupied by Frank Barnes. We always knew that the academies' project would be divisive for schools in Camden, and this is the beginning of that divisiveness. We have been put in a very difficult position of having in a way to shoulder the blame for the closure of Frank Barnes, and we do not want to be blamed for that. We are friends of Frank Barnes.

Applause

Chair:

Thank you very much Luca. Can I, as I agreed with Hugo Pierre before, is it you Hugo and Julie Hussey both speaking on behalf of Unison or just you? OK. As you told me earlier you are mainly going to speak about Frank Barnes. You might like to speak now. As I said before it might be sensible to take you now before we take questions on Frank Barnes. So you've got 3 minutes, OK?

26.19

Hugo Pierre:

Thank you Chair. I am going to mainly address my remarks on Frank Barnes because I think when the NUT make their deputations about academies I am sure there is nothing we will disagree with on them there. In addressing item 7 on Frank Barnes I'd like to draw your attention to this document. It's called "Planning and Developing Special Education Provision". And I'm going to quote you a bit out of that document. It says 'When proposing any reorganisation of SEN provision including that which might lead to some children being displaced through closures or alterations, local authorities and all other proposers for new schools or new provision will need to demonstrate to parents, local community and decision-makers how they propose alternative arrangements are likely to lead to improvements in the standard, quality and/or range of educational provision for children with special educational needs.'

And it goes on further to say 'Proposals which do not credibly meet these requirements should not be approved and decision-makers should take proper account of parental or independent representations which question the local authority's own assessment in this regard.'

Now that is the guidance that has been issued by the Dfes because there has been a whole spate of closures of special schools around the country. That's why you promised Frank Barnes parents and students at the Executive on the 31st of October that you would abide by this guidance. I believe that's what you were attempting to do. But tonight you are considering closing not just one but two special schools. For Jack Taylor, which is in your BSF proposal, your plans may well meet the criteria that are laid down in this guidance. But for Frank Barnes we believe that you have not even begun to demonstrate how your proposals will lead to improvements in the standard, quality and/or range of provision for Deaf children. The advantages that you list in your report start with numbers quite frankly, reducing two Deaf schools into one. A projected reduction in the numbers of students at Frank Barnes, a potential reduction in the recoupment unit costs for other authorities. To us this appears that your report for the closure of Frank Barnes is a really an exercise in reducing cuts, not in improving educational provision. It follows on a bit from your better and cheaper, but really turns it into cheap and nasty.

Applause

Let's face it, in your report you're planning to spend a little capital money on Blanche Nevile School, but we don't believe for one minute that you're planning to spend the one million pounds it costs to educate the children in Frank Barnes School. And we don't believe that because we don't think you're going to transfer that money to Haringey Council. You claim that there will be increased peer opportunity, peer support but ignore the research that has been presented in your report that shows isolation from peer support has been quite correctly pointed out by our colleague in the parents. Because those Deaf children simply cannot communicate with their hearing peers.

You've heard how Frank Barnes parents have to fight to get their children into the school and I believe and the Unison members believe that it's a scandal that this council has done nothing to address the prejudices that exist among the professionals to make sure that Deaf children get an education that's worthy and that really supports them. Now we have to say that our deputation isn't going to be mudslinging against Blanche Nevile. We know that there's good work going on there, but your report says for example that Blanche Nevile has 50% value added. Where have you shown in your report what the value added is for Frank Barnes School?

Applause

And we have to say as again has been pointed out, how will translating the curriculum enhance the confidence of the students, how will translating the curriculum into BSL enhance the confidence of the Deaf students that go to Frank Barnes now???

I am winding up now. We do, Unison supports all the support staff in the school. We've got staff who've put in years of experience into Frank Barnes. It's a fully bilingual staff group and your proposal if you close Frank Barnes will put those experienced staff on the scrap heap. We don't believe that this is the only option for you. There are other options that for one reason or another you've not bothered to explore. We want you to explore those to safeguard the skills and experience of the group of staff that you have there, but also to make sure that Frank Barnes children do get a decent education, a bilingual education they can understand.

Applause

Chair:

Thank you very much Hugo. I'm now going to ask the members of the Executive if they have any questions for any of the five deputations that we've heard and that gives us 15 minutes altogether for questions if we want to use it.

Questions to Frank Barnes Deputations

Councillor Bryant:

The first question is to Stephen Phillips on the Frank Barnes governing body [warning from chair to go more slowly for the interpreter]. In your deputation statement, our page 23, your page 9, why do you appear to describe the teaching spaces which have been specifically designed for Deaf children in Blanche Nevile and only completed in 2003 as unacceptable accommodation?

Stephen Phillips:

Well, your proposals in relation to what you used to call a merger for Blanche Nevile would see two different groups of children being taught in those classrooms: children with more oral ability and children who are profoundly deaf who have no oral ability. If you put those two groups of children into a single classroom you have to end up with a situation where the teaching is taking place in English with simultaneous translation, alternatively you've got two separate groups in the classroom, and in those circumstances it is naturally the case that the children are going to be distracted by one or other of the teaching methods which is going on. In addition to that, your question is such a loaded question, and what you haven't taken into account at all is the facilities that Blanche Nevile shares with Highgate Primary School which are not Deaf friendly. They have hard surfaces and they are very difficult for the oral children in those circumstances to hear, albeit that it doesn't affect the profoundly deaf children so much. And you've latched on to one particular point in relation to the teaching space, ie the classrooms at Blanche Nevile, what you haven't thought about at all in those circumstances is the fact that Blanche Nevile is essentially situated in what is for want of a better word an enclave within Highgate school. We have pointed out to you, and you haven't contradicted this, you have no evidence to contradict it, we have pointed out to you that opportunities for inclusion are much more difficult to manage in that setting, in a co-located primary school on the same site as another Deaf school.

Applause

Chair:

Do you have a supplementary?

John Bryant:

Why is it a presumption from both Frank Barnes governors and other deputations I have to say, that bringing the two school communities together in one site, the Blanche Nevile community and the Frank Barnes community, means that profoundly Deaf children will be taught in the same space as those with aural ability?

Would it not be possible and feasible to have two groups or two different types of pupils as you have described taught in separate spaces within the same building?

Stephen Phillips:

There are six classrooms.

John Bryant:

And are we not considering building more there?

SP:

Well, I've been there. If you've got some feasibility work that you've conducted to demonstrate that there could be some classrooms constructed somewhere else on the site then I have yet to see it.

Applause

Chair: Thank you. Are there any further questions?

Councillor Grauberg:

It's a question about something that was in the statement but wasn't raised in the deputation. Sorry..a question to Stephen Phillips. I wonder if you can tell me a bit more about your concerns you felt about the extent to which children at Blanche Nevile are included in the work of Highgate Primary School. And I suppose I'm saying we want to work towards inclusion of all types, and I'd like you to explain a bit more why you think the model of a co-located primary school and a Deaf school works against inclusion rather than for.

SP:

That's not what we're saying if you read carefully. We haven't said that co-location works against inclusion. Let me start by answering the question in this way. Inclusion is a great thing for Deaf kids but it does need to be managed very carefully indeed. Now as I understand the position at Blanche Nevile for example, they have the same playtimes for all the Deaf children and all the mainstream children. Now we know, or at least I am advised, that that is something which is not going to work so well for our children. It needs to be managed carefully. Those who can cope with that can go out to those playtimes. Those who can't cope with it have to have separate playtimes. And all that we've said in relation to inclusion at Blanche Nevile, we've said that we didn't witness any exclusionary activity and that is correct, but what we said is that it needs to be managed very carefully and that is a very difficult thing to do in a school that frankly although I know officers dispute this, has as many characteristics of a unit, albeit that it describes itself as a separate school, because it is subsumed within a primary school for 500 children. 500 mainstream children.

...

Chair:

Kevin is indicating that he wants to give another response. Is it relating to? Yes, go on Kevin.

Kevin Courtney (NUT): I have just been discussing with Katharine the situation at Blanche Nevile. The children at Blanche Nevile spend about half the day in the old school building. That has not been treated in any way to make it accessible to Deaf children. So that the surfaces are noisy, the hall where the assembly happens has sun streaming through so that people can't see signers. So there are all those sorts of questions which make it currently not the best situation for Frank Barnes School. I think we've got a question by return. Why is the word merger dropped?

Chair:

I wonder if it would be helpful just to bring in an officer just to comment on the wording of the recommendation because it's repeatedly being referred to. I wouldn't normally do this in the middle of taking deputations but it seems to me that it might just be helpful to explain why the recommendation is phrased in that particular way which seems, I understand doesn't sound very helpful. Andy Knowles, if you could help with that, that would be very good.

Andy Knowles:

Yes, certainly, Chair. Just to say that in discussions with Haringey at the moment they've asked us to use the word partnership in our work with them while we undertake further work to determine the model. We think it's important that we describe that as a partnership, they have indicated very positively their willingness to work very closely with us on developing that model.

Chair:

I think the point is there are legal reasons why that phrase has to be used in this decision tonight. It doesn't reflect the spirit of partnership that's come out of the discussion. I think it's quite important to make that clear. Are there any other questions?

Councillor Rea:

It's really, a number of the deputations mentioned the idea that the children would just be taken from Frank Barnes and sort of dumped in Blanche Nevile. I can't remember which deputation said it but several did. But I think I would like also clarification, rather as you asked just now, on the use of the word transfer. I think that is, obviously, a number of the deputations mentioned this, and it does rather sound as if they're all being sent off with their suitcases and their gasmasks at the beginning of World War II. I don't think that's what you mean when you are talking about the partnership with Blanche Nevile, so I'd be very grateful if that could be clarified. Because transfer doesn't sound very friendly and yet if we're talking about a partnership with the school it becomes...legally it may have to be called a transfer but could you please explain.

Chair: We... I think you have probably answered your own question Flick.

AK: The legal definition at the moment would be transfer, that's the advice that we have. Clearly working with Haringey and Blanche Nevile School we want to develop a partnership arrangement and we're willing to look at a whole range of different possibilities for the development of the new provision.

Chair:

Could I myself ask a question of you Luca, and say would you accept that the exact nature of the school on the Adelaide Road site, and you mentioned about it being an academy, is not really relevant to this, and you know, were we to build a Church of England School or a Camden community School there would be the same difficulties, Would you accept that there would be in fact that's not quite the point. The real issue is about the space which is the difficult problem we are struggling with.

Luca S:

My point is that the Council seems to have a haste in its dealings with Frank Barnes, and it is the haste that has ruled out various options. In the feasibility study made by Haverstock Associates, the firm of architects does say quite clearly that various options are ruled out because of timing issues and that indicates to me that the thing is motivated by deadlines rather than by the needs of the children, and that is the point I was making, it's not the fact that the school is an academy that I was referring to, but the fact that the Council is acting with haste and therefore not in a position to explore all the various issues properly.

Applause

Chair: So you are in fact using academy as shorthand for the new school the council wants to build?

Luca S: Yes.

Chair: Thank you.

Councillor Bryant:

I have the following question for Luca actually. Relating to the Torriano site. He may recall a private conversation we had in the Council chamber or outside it a few months ago. He mentioned to me a parcel of land which is not currently part of the Torriano Infants or the Torriano Juniors sites, but he felt that if that was included as a parcel of land that might work, would he then have a different view about inviting Frank Barnes on to the Torriano site if that were the parcel of land? Which you described to me as a car park at the time. If that was included, would that make it more feasible from your perspective?

Luca S:

I cannot speak officially for my governing body because we haven't considered this fully but speaking personally I would say that we would be prepared to consider ways of working with Frank Barnes. We are willing to explore any possibilities of working with them, but our condition is that we are not losing any land at all, any surface. We don't want to gain land by building up. We just want our land, our total surface area preserved.

Chair:

Thank you. That's very helpful. Any questions about Frank Barnes from any other members of the executive. I don't think so.. (thanks to deputations)

Deputations about BSF

Item 6 – Building schools for the future – Part 1

1.24.31 *Gail Tolley:*

BSF...it's not about buildings, it's about transforming learning, transforming learning and outcomes for all secondary age children and young people, 11-19, in mainstream, special and pupil referral units. Unless our vision for transforming learning and outcomes is accepted by Partnership for Schools, the DCSF and ministers then Camden will not be able to purchase any bricks, build any buildings, because it is a learning transformation agenda that BSF is intended to deliver for secondary age pupils. The vision that is outlined for you in the report and presented in some detail...1.26.03 We have high expectations and ambition for all of our learners in Camden.

1.26.32 We are setting high standards, high aspirations through with all our schools, and all our provision as part of this programme. We want to move the grading of our schools by Ofsted from Satisfactory and Good to Outstanding ...key area: the need for collaboration across schools, across the family of schools, all the schools proposed in that new provision, including the new school...to deliver aspects of extended services...

We will be focusing clearly on transitions from primary to secondary schools and how the building provision can enhance and improve that transition from primary to secondary to enable all our young people to get a very positive start to their secondary age education so that they can achieve those outstanding outcomes that we want for all of them.

1.28 Programme of funding of £200000 million for all our children and young people is key in making this step change from satisfactory and good to outstanding.

(1.29.07 Councillor Mennear talks about school buildings being important in raising standards, giving Haverstock School as an example. DD Unlike Councillor Bryant who at the end of the meeting says it's the community of the school which is important rather than the building).

Councillor Bryant:

1.30.20 I just wanted to pick up one thing... One of the deputations earlier had a worry about South Camden School becoming too big, and that meant whether it would be difficult to manage behaviour within that school. But is it not the case that some of our schools...South Camden included, are also looking as part of their future vision to have schools within a school. So we may have a year group unit which may take all our year 7s together and keep them as a single community as it were, rather than having a large school where everyone is mixed up right from the beginning. Is that the sort of thinking which is also taking place within our schools in Camden as one option and it may be in other places as well?

Gail Tolley:

Yes, reference is made to schools within schools model within our education model because it is something that schools are considering. Members of the executive may have heard some information about this that was published last week, on a particular school on the radio, and we are looking to visit that school in Essex which has adopted that model extremely successfully. So South Camden Community School, in terms of the Schools within Schools model, is looking at that but so are some of the others in terms of the year 7, arrangements for year 7, and innovative groupings in order to support all our learners to achieve more highly than they are at the moment.

1.31.54 Councillor Davies:

...addressing the health inequalities aspects of the borough, income inequalities, because both of those link back to addressing education (I was at a William Beveridge conference yesterday) how he termed it as addressing ignorance as it was termed in the 1940's. And the need within that I believe to ensure that we have a correct amount of choice both parental choice and choice for the children themselves, and to ensure that all children's education is catered for across the board so that we are providing a range of courses and skills etc so that no child is made to feel that they are failing at a particular point in time which I believe will go some way to being able to address those issues and to reducing some of the health inequalities in Camden. I suppose what I'd like you to be able to do is to point out for me exactly where in the strategy that is covered and that we are ensuring that within the BSF programme we are maximising that to minimise health inequalities in the future.

1.33.24 *Gail Tolley:*

In terms of the sections where that would be particularly addressed that would be in the personalised learning section, and the detail that is there about appropriate curricula but also support and guidance and personalised learning plans for learners, the use of a managed learning environment, the ICT system that will underpin and support all of this. That would be a clear section. In terms of the impact that we expect it to have under our key performance indicators we are certainly seeking to increase the outcomes for children and young people in order to improve their life chances. We know that if young children and young people are able to achieve at Level 2 in particular, then their life chances, their economic, their future income, their life chances for them and their families are much greater.

....

1.34.42 *Ian Patterson:*

I'd like to deal with a number of issues around the process of consultation, place planning, site issues, financial matters and I'll overview each of those briefly.

I think the Committee knows the Council is working to a wave 5 timetable for the BSG programme and we are firmly on track for the delivery of the programme to the Wave 5 timetable.

1.36.43 the main messages coming back from consultation were aspirations for high attainment, the need for increased numbers of secondary school places....1200 places mainstream endorsed by PSF. 500 post 16 and special school places.

(Concerning the existing sites the designs not yet fixed.)

The other key site issue is the designation of Adelaide Road site for the new academy and the co-located special school which is proposed subject to decisions, separate decisions, on the future of Frank Barnes School

Projected cost now £211,000,000

Extra allocation of funds brings the gap down from £22m to £14m ???

Councillor Mennear:

1.48.43 I would like a larger group of all our children to go to the Russell Group of universities because it is only when you have aspirations that for the schools to do better that you will come anywhere close to achieving that dream.

Councillor Grauberg:

Five questions for Ian...(no 5)

the final thing, and I'm not quite sure Chair whether we're discussing this here or under the next stage, is about the impact on the special school, schools, and whether, we heard I think about the requirements that we have to protect and promote and improve services with special education needs. And whether we're, if you could just say a bit more about where we've got to with making sure that the new special school, the new proposed special school on the site, does that.

Ian Patterson:

1.57 (about possibilities of new money to sustain new build)...

1.57.33 Finally the point on special schools: as the project has developed over the last three months we have continues working with both of the existing

special schools, Swiss Cottage and Jack Taylor and a vision is being developed between those schools and there is also now good joint working now with the technical advisers and architects on the development of the outlying proposals for that site. This report recommends the selection of the Adelaide Road development as a sample scheme which will be one of the flagship schemes more fully developed in the early stages of the programme. And there will be good opportunity for the schools to further develop their vision and their ambitions through that process.

Andrew Knowles:

We were concerned initially about the challenge that co-location would provide but actually over the 18 months that we've been working with the Steering Group with Swiss Cottage and Jack Taylor Schools their confidence has grown enormously in that way. We've done joint visits to other provision. The schools have now exchanged governors across the different governing bodies. They feel that is a really important stepping stone in their ways forward and they have expressed real interest in their desire to work with co-located UCL on the same site, on the same site. They think that's of real benefit to both schools, and as Ian says they have been working with consultants on developing both the vision and on the provision necessary to meet the increased range of needs on the site. And it's a really exciting proposal.

1.59.55 Councillor Grauberg.

A question about the SEN improvement test, whether we're confident that these proposals would meet that in respect of the special schools.

AK:

Yes, absolutely. Jack Taylor School, currently the most vulnerable pupils in the whole of Camden in the most appalling physical conditions. There's absolutely no doubt that by moving to a new provision it would do so. Swiss Cottage School, coming to the end of its life as well although it offers high quality support to a range of young people, it is really in need of a total rebuild. The opportunities afforded by bringing the expertise of both schools together, developing that additional range of support will undoubtedly pass the SEN test.

2.02 Councillor Bryant:

BSF 2.05.29 is all about raising aspirations for our children. It is that raising of aspirations that is the centre point of our UCL submission which we talk about later, but it should be the aspiration of all our schools.

2.06 The advantage... of BSF is that we can properly invest for the first time in decades in special education generally, making sure that the accommodation for our pupil referral units is really up to standard. Some of the worst accommodation we have in Camden is there to accommodate some of our most vulnerable students. And also the Chalcot Special sSchool, when I visited it last year I was appalled at the lack of indoor PE space...

2.08.50 Gail Tolley:

The UCL choice fits with Camden's vision of increased ambition and aspiration for all Camden 's young people. We would see the UCL sponsored academy as meeting the challenge of the high aspirations that we have set for all of our schools by 2016.

2.16.08 Councillor Bryant:

In consultations since July 44% believed that higher attainment for all and narrowing the gap in the outcomes for children and young people should be an aspiration...

2.17.11 (Re UCL sponsorship consultations) We have a far more vocal and more interested education community than they have in Haringey...

2.18.25 (Re UCL) We want to work with... one [sponsor]that wants to raise the aspirations of children whatever their background so that they can fulfil their full potential

Adopting the Recommendations:

Chair:

Recommendations 1-5 agreed.

Recommendation 6 to confirm the designation of the Adelaide Road site as the site of the proposed new secondary school. We wish to confirm that but the implementation is subject to the decision on whether or not Frank Barnes School for the Deaf should be closed and I think you know the word closed is used in a technical sense here but we need to be aware that we are making that subject to our decision under the next item, so is that agreed?

Agreed

Recommendation 7 confirms the approval of an academy preferred sponsor route for the new secondary school with UCL as the preferred sponsor.

Agreed

Recommendation 8 once again is subject to the decision on Frank Barnes School under the next item, and it's to confirm the proposal to co-locate the new special school with the new secondary school on the Adelaide Road site.

Agreed

2.23

Chair: Thanks to all officers for working on this... No decisions have been taken lightly.

Andy Knowles:

The Report starts with a clear recommendation to authorise officers to consult all interested parties on the future of Frank Barnes School, on the basis that the council's preferred option would be that Frank Barnes School did not continue to exist on the current site and the children would transfer to Blanche Nevile School in Haringey or should this not be possible to transfer the Frank Barnes School to the Torriano sites. The Report lays out the reasons why Frank Barnes School has to move from the Adelaide Road site. We know that there are currently unsuitable buildings there. We've been working with Frank Barnes School for over 18 months looking at the different models for the school. We've also through the North-Central Regional Partnership together with other authorities have commissioned a piece of work through the National Deaf Children's Society to look at potential regional model developments within this area.

We know another reason is there is a reduced demand for places at the Frank Barnes School, a school built for 45 places, now down to 28. And just a point in one of the deputations that was raised that there are currently barriers to young

people actually moving into Frank Barnes School, I have to say that those barriers are certainly not placed by Camden local authority. We have tried to encourage, working with the school and the school likewise to make sure the school's population is maintained and developed. It clearly doesn't make financial sense to go below a certain number and it costs Camden local authority extra resources and other boroughs as well.

There are currently only 4 Camden pupils out of the 28 at the school and we would much prefer that to be an increased number. Many children from Camden at the moment actually go out of borough to seek their support in a different way, using a different model of education. Third, and a very distinct issue is the proposals for a new special school and second? the development on the Adelaide Road site. The Report also notes the SEN improvement test that must be passed for any future development. The Report reminds the Executive that the decision was taken at the July 25th meeting earlier in the year. At the time there were five possible options for us to pursue. Officers have worked through all these five options and have concluded that there are now only two proposals possible.

Number one, partnership work with Haringey at Blanche Nevile School which we see as a stepping stone to the regional centre which we described that the NDCS has also been working on earlier. The second, a possible development at the Torriano School outlines the results of the feasibility studies carried out and? the other options are included in the paper. Just a note about Torriano School, the conclusion is that it would be possible to transfer the Frank Barnes School to that site subject to detailed planning and consultation with the stakeholders. However, we do recognise that the Torriano governors and Head Teachers don't agree with the results of our feasibility study on that case. We clearly need to update the feasibility studies to include the latest data supplied to us by the schools and also to consider the other possibilities available to us, including investigating the land at the rear of the site as discussed earlier.

2.26.39*****Why then would we suggest the preferred option with the partnership work with Haringey at Blanche Nevile School? Educational reasons, clearly I feel. There are many advantages, but just to discuss some of those advantages and similarities first of all, about joint working. Both schools are highly rated by their communities and Ofsted. Both schools take pupils from a wide range of London Boroughs, 16, so they are very experienced in working with cross-borough arrangements in that way. Both schools use BSL for curriculum delivery, Frank Barnes school uses it exclusively, and Blanche Nevile uses it alongside oral/aural communication techniques as well. The fourth, not educational, but financial advantage is that by bringing both schools together that would reduce the unit recoupment costs available. Currently charged for at our schools. Blanche Nevile's school's upper unit cost is currently £20000, Frank Barnes is £35,000 so there is a distinct difference there which we have to consider.

Moving on from the advantages to what we would consider to be the improvements in the education provision by joining together the two schools and working in partnership with Blanche Nevile, we believe that this would provide educational advantages which I will describe now, and also support the

process which was raised earlier by one of the deputations, again relating to the SEN test.

Firstly, the availability of places and increased stability of the school rolls will undoubtedly be a feature of bringing the two schools together and therefore help a longer term future for Frank Barnes. An increased range of staffing expertise and provision is also going to happen by bringing both schools together. Now that would not necessarily be the case at the Torriano site. It doesn't have that kind of experience working with those young people. Blanche Nevile School is co-located with Highgate Primary School. This offers a more inclusive approach and educational and social advantages. Blanche Nevile School has recently been refurbished and has potential for further capital development on the site. Partnership provides us with a stepping-stone towards regional centre development. All modes of communication are to be offered, whether that's BSL, oral, sign bilingual, total communication or other. That's clearly what we aim to do, that's clearly what the regional model described by the NDCS does, that's what we want to do within the new provision. We want to make sure that classes would run in parallel with each other so that the students currently at Frank Barnes School would have the opportunity to have their curriculum delivered in BSL as they do now. We would also want to run parallel classes that would produce a co-delivery system of BSL and oral/aural and therefore would allow students to move in that way from one stream to another. Again that was defined in the NDCS report and seen as a distinct advantage. It would provide for all Deaf children, regardless of communication mode and SEN Additional Needs.

Finally, just to comment on the proposals to consult widely on this issue of a development. This period of proposed post-consultation will now allow wide-ranging views to come forward from stakeholders, parents, children, the wider community, other local authorities, and other Camden schools including Torriano. We feel then we would be in a position later in the year actually to make an informed decision on the future of Frank Barnes School.

Chair: Thank you very much Andy. Now I said I'd bring in Councillor Johnson next as Chair of CSF Scrutiny to present the reference so it's you next.

Councillor Johnson:

OK thank you for that. I should start by saying that way ages ago when this first came up the Children Schools and Families Scrutiny Panel were at that time very concerned about the future of Frank Barnes. And we have continued to be concerned about Frank Barnes. And a lot of the things that have been aired again this evening were also the concerns of the members of the committee. And I think that it's worth mentioning a few things that have struck me very much tonight and I think that would have rung very true with other members of the committee had they been here this evening.

Very early on there was a comment made that at Frank Barnes School no children are disabled. At Frank Barnes School every child can understand what is being said because it is being said in their language. And it is for them the only language that they effectively have. And I actually think this meeting this evening, although it has been fabulous in terms of the signers being here and they have done an incredible job actually demonstrated how difficult it is to

Speak and then have translation in signing and to hear what people are saying and be able to keep up with it and all of that kind of thing.

Now if we really believe that these children who are profoundly deaf are going to be advantaged by moving into a situation where that's around them all the time – I fully accept that these young people are going to have to live in a world where there are hearing people and they will have to get used to it – but education – they should be being educated, their actual education time should be in surroundings where they are comfortable and they can really get on with their education. So that's the context for it.

Another couple of points that I would make, and in fact a couple of these are points that weren't in the arena yesterday because they are things that have happened since, but they concern me and I think that I should raise them. I mean, we're looking at something where we're going for a preferred bid on the transfer to Blanche Nevile School and I am very concerned that in the same way that Torriano has come today and said that no actually we're not happy with being part of this, why has there been an incredible flurry today of Haringey councillors and members contacting Labour members in Camden and saying, what's all this about? Now that really worries me, that that's happening, that there's no knowledge of that at all. And another worry, and I don't know whether this is something that isn't a problem or is a problem. I've been told that there was a closure notice served on Blanche Nevile School that has not been lifted. Now, you know, what does that mean? So that I do think is a worry.

And I suppose the final point I want to make, no actually two final points, is that we're talking about possibly spending a lot of our capital on a school in Haringey where we will not have control any more over that school. While Frank Barnes is located in Camden we have full control over the operation of that school and we can ensure that certainly the Camden School and the other children going to it have an educational standard that we would expect in Camden and we have control over it. And I thought it was very interesting that Councillor Bryant mentioned there being perhaps a less interested education community in Haringey, I mean that kind of says it a bit, that is my kind of worries.

What we have said in Children, Schools and Families is that we want the consultation that goes forward from here to be full of clarity and transparency, and for that reason we don't think there should be a preferred position now. We would like to set up a working party from CSF to look at what appear to be the three front running options. Possibly there might be something else that might appear during this. And therefore we would like, we are making a recommendation that the executive do not go forward with Blanche Nevile School as the preferred option. That way we think that the consultation that goes on will be clear, it will be transparent, you will be consulting on a number of options, not, this is our view, we're only consulting on this. I think that something that a lot of parents, a lot of people have told us, whether you agree with it or not, that we weren't consulting on other options over the BSF. Here there are real concerns and I think we should be consulting on all three,

So you've got written down, and not I have to admit in very good English because it was altering an existing recommendation so there's kind of ifs and

ands and things that are probably slightly in the wrong order. But we are asking that your recommendation is that:

- Consultation is carried out on the future of Frank Barnes School.
- We have accepted that Frank Barnes School will not be able to continue on its current site but that we should be looking equally at the merger with Blanche Nevile School, the possible building on the Torriano site, and the possible building on the Primrose Hill site.

That's all I want to say.

Chair: I see a little forest of hands. I didn't know if officers wanted to respond to points made in the reference, that's...? or..

(Councillor Bryant: point of order – extend meeting to allow for a decent debate on this. Okayed).

Chair:

Can I ask officers to comment on some of the points made under the reference before we take comments or questions from members...Members have taken a very detailed interest in this and if you were cynical you might have said there are only four Camden children involved. That's certainly not been the view of the members of the Executive and we've taken a very close interest in this subject. So can I start with Councillor Davies then first of all.

Councillor Davies:

Thank you very much. I've just got two questions, one to officers and one to Heather on the CSF recommendation. To officers, in terms of what's come out both from parents that are here and also that's been raised from deputations this evening and also a point that Heather raised as well. Could you clarify for me from an educational point of view the issues that have been raised around educating children in a single language, ie BSL and in educating children in what is potentially a dual oral, in two languages. I'd just like some clarification of that in terms of the educational evidence around the advantages and disadvantages of those and what actually evidence there is out there for that.

The question to Heather is that the Scrutiny recommendation includes Primrose Hill as being one of the other options. We've heard this evening from Luca that the reason that Torriano don't want the Frank Barnes School is basically that they don't want to reduce the size of the site. The feasibility study in the report says that the reason we're not taking Primrose Hill forward is because of the reduction in the site. Can you inform us as to why, given that evidence from the feasibility study, why you are suggesting Primrose Hill goes in.

Councillor Johnson:

My understanding... what came through the Scrutiny Committee was that actually they felt there should be more delving into this, that we hadn't maybe looked at all the possible possibilities. Pat Callaghan has just said there is apparently a building on the, schoolkeeper's house, it is possible that that ground could be brought into the equation, and that that might do it. We were told that there is positive feeling from Primrose Hill School about a co-location.

Now that might be wrong, it might be right, I don't know. And I really want to be clear about that before we go into another, go down one line not having investigated that fully.

I hear what Torriano is saying but who knows if we could again look at other things, if there is other land, if there is something else that we could spend some time working on. It seems to me, and it seems to the committee it's like, oh we've got to do this at breakneck speed, we've got to do this so we can get it done so we can do something else, and that really we should be going from what is going to be best for Frank Barnes and let's really look at it, and let's not make a decision in haste now because it's just easier to do that. We just didn't feel there was enough information and that's why we talked about setting up a working party or a sub-group so that we could do some in depth research and go and talk about it without it being a preferred option. That's all I can say.

Chair: There was a first part of the question from Martin (Davies) you might wish to come back on.

2.43 Andrew Knowles:

Yes, I would actually agree with the parents of Frank Barnes School that you must have the appropriate communication system for your child. That's absolutely necessary. There's no disputing that at all. All the evidence shows that if you have a false communication system that doesn't actually support a child, you're going to cause trauma, you're going to cause unhappiness and potentially long term mental illness as well. What we're proposing is that by bringing together different communication systems we would therefore provide a range of opportunities for varying families who decide that that's most appropriate for them. Currently there are five families in Camden who choose Blanche Nevile School for that system because they feel that that system actually supports them better. Bringing them together therefore would provide in that dual stream way the opportunities for a greater range of both Camden students and oral? students for their requirements to be met.

Heather Schroeder:

Could I just comment on the Primrose Hill issue, Chair. I would want to reassure the executive that we have not been, have not brought these proposals in haste, and that the work has not been done in haste. There is a list of options that have been considered since July when the executive asked us to look at all the options. That list of options is in the report. In relation to Primrose Hill, what the report says is that the conclusions on Primrose Hill are that it is a high risk option with a number of drawbacks. Very specifically, in order to make Primrose Hill a real option we would have to reduce down the brief on Frank Barnes, so the specification that has been agreed with the school 2.44.45 would have to be decreased.

And the reason for that is because at the moment there is 3580 square metres at Primrose Hill...there would be needed to be 3 580. There is only 1 837 square metres available. We've got Sarah Bourne with us who knows the detail of it, although I'm sure tonight isn't the time to go into the detail. But just to reassure executive that we have looked through the option on Primrose Hill, and to revisit would be very very difficult without changing the specification.

Chair:

Maybe I could just ask for a point of clarification. The fact that something isn't specifically mentioned in the recommendation wouldn't stop it being considered and even something beyond Primrose Hill even, we could still look at other options despite there being a preferred option.

Heather Schroeder

Absolutely Chair. The process would be that we would go out to formal consultation in the New Year on the preferred option but we would continue to look at other 2.45.45 options and if in the event Blanche Nevile for some reason was not possible or indeed for educational reasons was not concluded to be the right proposal for Frank Barnes then we would be looking at the other options.

(Standing orders suspended)

Councillor Mennear:

I wish really to make some points in response to the various deputations we heard earlier. First I must admit my embarrassment at not having thanked officers earlier for their work on BSF – you put me to shameAnd I know that Frank Barnes School knows how hard people have been working on this particular issue as well. As to the points that were raised in the deputations earlier, in the first deputation the Chair of governors at FBS said that Camden's agenda is clear, to close Frank Barnes and to build an academy. This is incorrect. Frank Barnes, a working group was set up with Frank Barnes, a joint one of officers and representatives from the school in the spring of 2006. That was before this partnership administration was formed, it was before the elections in 2006, and it was before Camden was invited to participate in BSF which came in July 2006.

This was because there had already been issues identified which jeopardised the long term viability of Frank Barnes in its current location, both in terms of its facilities, its falling roll, and in terms of concerns over transition from Frank Barnes to secondary education. Because and that's something we haven't mentioned as of yet this evening and I will go into that in a little bit. So it is incorrect to say that the agenda here has been to build an academy at the expense of Frank Barnes. There have been two linked issues here, one to do with school places in the borough but that was something which was only turned to after we had set up a working group to look at the future of Frank Barnes and the provision of education for the children which it serves.

We had another comment which was made by Kevin Courtney of the NUT about the need for appropriate education. And I think that Andy Knowles has addressed that point in specifying that our agreement that it is necessary to have children taught in a way which is appropriate to the child, this is the needs of every individual child having to be addressed through their education. And it's partly through this that we have ruled out certain options for Frank Barnes going forward, in particular a small unit looking for Camden residents' pupils at the school. That was ruled out. It was put forward as a possible option but we're clearly of the view that that is not possible. We have been listening to the concerns which Frank Barnes School has been putting forward over the last period of 18 months or so. It is true that concern heightened among Frank Barnes community with the discussion around BSF once the Adelaide Road site

was identified as the leading contender as a site for a secondary school in the borough. But a lot of the concern was saying, you have to find a solution for us quickly, you can't leave us in the situation whereby there is a big question mark hanging over the future of this school because that is putting off families and other borough from considering sending their children to Frank Barnes.

Now that wasn't ignoring the fact that there was an issue over a falling roll at Frank Barnes before this occurred but it was acknowledging that there were difficulties in improving upon that situation once there came to be known there were question marks over what was going to happen next. So whilst we're on a bit of the horns of a dilemma here, you're either damned if you do set a deadline for trying to find a solution and you're damned if you don't because of the way things work out.

Well, BSF has necessitated that we come up with a proposal that will provide adequate education for the community which is served by FBS at present, and that is what this report endeavours to do.

This also addresses the idea that other councils are rushing to get their children involved with Frank Barnes. Well as we've heard, parental choice here has led to fewer families considering Frank Barnes than was once the case, and this is partly due to the popularity now of cochlear implants. And other councils, whilst they, you know we don't hear bad things said about Frank Barnes, no one is ever saying that, but it is noticeable that other councils have been unwilling to share in additional costs for the maintenance of Frank Barnes because we've asked other local authorities to share part of that £35,000 per child cost and the empty spaces and they haven't been willing to do that.

I take the point that other countries such as Finland have laws to oblige Deaf children to learn sign language first, I mean again that isn't something that we as a local authority can pursue on our own, that's a case for national governments to decide. But again I state that we do believe that appropriate education does mean that the education is appropriate to the child. Luca mentioned the council's self-imposed deadlines, well I think I've addressed that and I do wish to say I don't think honestly anyone would see the Torriano School as shouldering the blame for the closure of Frank Barnes.

I mean we understand the concerns that have been expressed by the governing bodies of both schools, but we do note that this report is talking about the feasibility in the first instance and part of that is the spatial feasibility, but we also believe there may be ways around that spatial problem with playgrounds at the moment which our officers will explore with the other parties, with the other bodies.

So I come back to what the Unison delegation was saying. That it's necessary to find improvements. What are the improvements in the education. What are the improvements. And the biggest improvements are to do with the transition. It was unsatisfactory at the moment that pupils leaving Frank Barnes have no easy transition for secondary education. A number of pupils end up at boarding facilities much further away from where they actually go to Frank Barnes. A number go to a school in Wandsworth, this is true, but a number also go to other schools as well.

It is certainly our belief that it would be beneficial if Frank Barnes was at minimum co-located with a primary school to at least start off with some of the children at Frank Barnes having more contact with children who are not purely using sign language, but it's also an advantage of Blanche Nevile is that it does have a secondary option attached to the school and I do think that this is something which, as a local authority, we talk about the importance of transition between primary and secondary for the students in Camden who attend our regular maintained primary schools but that is equally if not more so important for the more vulnerable children who are attending our special schools as well.

So I would argue that that is a very strong reason why we have to say that at this moment in time the Blanche Nevile option is our preferred option. And while I welcome wholeheartedly the Scrutiny Committee's decision to set up a small Scrutiny panel to consider Frank Barnes and the various options in more detail, this I see as a very welcome addition to the consultation process, and it will be a very informed input into the consultation process, but I think we really do have to go away with the information which is before us on the papers, which is that at the moment, Blanche Nevile is the preferred option because of the advantages in terms of transition in particular. And I do think that we do want to assure ourselves that we are getting the appropriate educational advantages out of it before everything goes with a big tick, but I am confident that a decision of this nature this evening will put us in a much stronger position to be able to attain that through our discussions with Haringey and Blanche Nevile than if we were just to leave everything open moving on from tonight.

And one other thing which hasn't properly been mentioned so far, is that I do believe that Blanche Nevile have said that they would be more than happy for Camden to have a co-stewardship role with Haringey of the school, and I'm very keen that we do explore that. We do have previous with Camden Penn School which was located outside the borough and which was part of Camden's educational stable as it were. And obviously we no longer do, but it's not without precedent for Camden to have some form of administrative 2.57.43 arrangement with a school outside the borough.

...

Councillor Green:

I'm going to be very concise. Councillor Bryant was mentioning earlier about the possibility of some land just by the Torriano schools. Is that something that's feasible, and if so, if it's even a possibility, could we slightly amend the recommendation so it talks not just about the Torriano site – the Torriano site and suitable adjacent land for example.

2.58.38 Heather Schroeder:

Very briefly, we've got very little information at this moment in time, it is Housing's land, I've not been able to have a conversation with the 2.58.47 Director of Housing? in this respect, and what we would need to do is look at the feasibility of it in terms of what its use was in Housing at the moment and whether or not there could be a transfer, And of course the planning implications as well. So we start from a position of not a lot of information to be honest.

Councillor Green:

But would that exclude changing the recommendation to allow that possibility? I think it would help.

Chair:

Can I come in there - because I think we're trying to leave things quite open. We're saying there's a preferred option but we are actually willing to look at other possibilities as well. And I accept that the preferred option may not be possible to implement and I think we need to leave the door open for various different possibilities, and the more we start being specific about one particular alternative the more it sounds as if they're the only things we're looking at. And we all know this is a very fast moving picture and new things have kept emerging day by day, so I understand the reasons for your suggestion Councillor Green but I think having a maximum flexibility in the recommendation would seem to be helpful.

Heather Schroeder:

I mean I can certainly reassure members that we will look at all those possibilities, look at the availability, the time scale issues and of course the affordability as well, and I don't know what the additional cost could be, they may be, I just don't know at the moment.

Chair:

I think it's very clear from the attention the executive are giving this that the officers are very keen to explore other avenues, whilst looking at a particular preferred option, and we certainly know the discussion we had about UCL when we made an indicative decision about UCL it enable a lot more detailed discussion to take place, and at that particular point once the partner knew we were really serious, and I think it would be helpful in the same way if Blanche Neville knew we were very serious and they weren't just being considered alongside a lot of other options.

Councillor Rea:

I'm reverting back slightly to a question by Councillor Davies earlier on. We heard a lot from the deputations about the need for children using BSL to be in a totally BSL environment throughout their school day, so they were surrounded by, presumably everyone connected with the school was using BSL. And how valuable that was to their confidence and their stability. And whilst I can see all sorts of advantages in cross-fertilization if you like between two sorts of educational method, I just want to know how much it's envisaged that their school day, their unit, their safe unit, would be preserved during it, or are you assuming that they would actually all have lessons together and games together and playground together, because that would seem – how can you balance that within the school?

Andy Knowles:

Well I have first of all to say we have to balance it, we have to balance it to meet the SEN test, that's, we've got to at least provide what is there currently, and that delivery model is the current kind of baseline, therefore in our work with Blanche Neville School we make sure that we can do that. We would definitely like to provide opportunities for what you describe as cross-fertilization, in terms of moving across the different bands? there, that we would say already

happens at Blanche Nevile School, many of the foundation years children only use BSL in that first very early stage, then move on as they move through the school to using both BSL and oral/aural communication systems. And certainly that is the model as described by the NDCS that we should be putting into any future original model.

Councillor Grauberg:

Mine are two quick questions. The first picks up the point I asked to Stephen Phillips who was concerned about the site and the inclusion and he raised issues about noisy floors and I just wondered if you could comment on the suitability of the Blanche Nevile site for the pupils who are currently at Frank Barnes and who may have the future needs of present children?

And the second question was, I ask you just to say a tiny *bit about the regional centre option because from reading the deputation statements and from hearing other people, that seems to be what everybody would ideally like, and why we've concluded that that is not a realistic option at this time?*

Andy Knowles:

In relation to the classrooms and the acoustic treatment that has been placed - all the classrooms at Blanche Nevile School have that acoustic treatment and offer a very very sound environment. The gyms at Blanche Nevile School have also been treated, the floor system has been altered recently to allow that to happen, the 3.04 school hall does need further work and certainly that would be part of the feasibility study in terms of looking at extending the range of classroom provision while also the specialist nature of that provision, we would need to look at that.

On the second point, relating to the regional centre model yes it is an aspiration of which clearly Frank Barnes School have signed up to in that way, in many ways, that certainly other local authorities have, the DCSF think that's appropriate Within the timescales available it simply can't come together in that full model. To get agreement across all the authorities is simply not possible and we have worked with the DCSF on this and they see that it's a long term model. We believe that the partnership work with Haringey is actually a stepping-stone towards that regional model. And in relation to Councillor Mennear's point about the school being very positive about joint governance and management arrangements, that's not only the school that is positive about that, that's the lead member for children who's positive about that, and the Director of Haringey as well, so that at all levels we've got those opportunities to work through both joint governance and management arrangements which again is partway towards the regional centre model.

3.06.22 Councillor Bryant:

First I ought to preface my remarks by welcoming what the Scrutiny committee agreed in part last night in terms of having the separate working party. I felt certain? about that possibility earlier yesterday morning and I have to say the initial reaction from some of our officers wasn't so excited about that. But I think they warmed to it, because I did say that and all parties I think have agreed, that it is a way of exploring in the kind of detail that we do need for our March decision, it's another avenue for collecting evidence and seeing what the views are across the piste? And I do hope the working party when it gets down to work will take evidence from a range of people, the obvious partners that we

need to talk to, also the NDCS, I hope they will be able to pick up some evidence from there. I hope they will also look at the Torriano site with a possible extra parcel of land, and I hope they can explore that possibility as well to see how much of that is an alternative option. But I think also the need to get properly to the bottom of the different teaching methods which we've heard about tonight.

One is the slowly? BSL approach which is in a sense a single language, and the possibility as we've seen at Blanche Nevile how they develop a dual approach where there is some oral/aural work as well as BSL.

Now, having, a lot of discussion earlier in the depositions was about the fact that we hadn't been to Blanche Nevile to have a look. I first asked that I wanted to go to Blanche Nevile to have a look about four weeks ago and there have been a lot of complications with diaries I have to say, but I was persistent in the fact that I could not come here tonight to advocate that possibility as a preferred option until I'd seen it for myself. And I was very pleased that I was able to get it organised yesterday. I met the lead member, Council Santry? yesterday who was very positive about the possibility of partnership working. I can't answer for how she answers to her own members over in Haringey so I'm surprised that other members there weren't aware that Councillor Santry was being so welcoming to us. But we saw a range of people, the Chair of governors, and, and a very very positive outcome of that meeting.

I also went round the school and learnt a lot of things that I didn't know before. First of all, BN starts with BSL. Children who come into their early years will start with BSL only. Because often that's the only form of communication. They develop their communication skills through BSL. But the advantage perhaps of the BN approach is, and they gave me an example of this, where a young child came in, had hearing difficulties, learnt BSL and after several years at the school started to develop their oral abilities. And they were therefore encouraged in that way. And it was a surprise as much to the staff that this child started to talk because they thought they were probably so profoundly deaf that they would never get to that point.

And so because of their dual approach some children who may have been thought to be profoundly deaf and therefore would never learn any oral abilities, they actually encouraged that.

The accommodation itself has been specially designed. as we've heard, acoustically to ...

(interruption by Chair to speed up)

Can I just say one important thing that a school is not a building. It's a learning community between the pupils, their teaching staff and the support staff. We need to preserve the Frank Barnes School community but it doesn't have to be in the present building which is poor. We need to recreate that building, to get the accommodation right, either within Candem on another site, or if we can develop the BN site further to make sure we can accommodate them there. And those are the, that is the extra work that we need to do between now and March when we might make a final decision on this and that work has to be done. So can we say that we are here to find a lasting solution for the Frank Barnes pupils, not a quick fix, something that will last a generation, and that can only be done by some very careful work between now and January when any

consultation documents may arise so we can get more detail into those and we can properly look at it. We need the Scrutiny Panel to help us, to come to those right conclusions, feed into that process and we need a full debate with all the players including national players so that we get the right solution and the right decision in March. I still have an open mind. Although we have a preferred option I have an open mind where it might end up, but I would ask my executive colleagues to support the recommendation as listed and also welcome the work that the Scrutiny committee will be doing.

Chair:

I wanted to suggest that we might make it clear in the recommendation that Blanche Nevile is the preferred option for educational reasons, maybe insert those words, so where it says the Council's preferred option at present, actually insert after that, for educational reasons, would be that Frank Barnes etc. to make it clear that, you know, I think that has emerged from the discussion tonight that it is for educational reasons that this is the preferred option, and not for any other reason. But I don't think, it's been very clear from the discussion here that there isn't a consensus to go with taking the preferred option concept out, because it generally is our preferred option. I would like to say that if I read the words in the CNJ or anywhere else tomorrow that we have rubber-stamped this decision I shall be absolutely furious when we've sat here talking until half past ten at night on two items. Nobody can accuse us of rubber-stamping this and not taking it seriously. And we intend to carry on doing that.

Recommendation approved, subject to adding those extra words (for educational reasons):

1. That officer be authorised to consult all interested parties on the future of Frank Barnes School on the basis that the Council's preferred option for educational reasons at present would be that the Frank Barnes school did not continue at its existing site and would close and the children transfer to Blanche Nevile school in the London Borough of Haringey or, should this not be achievable, to transfer the Frank Barnes School to the site of the Torriano infants and junior schools.

2. That the reference from the Children Schools and Families Scutiny Committee be noted.

(NB Note the difference in wording of the recommendation – the BN proposal refers to the transfer of the children, the Torriano to the transfer of the school – Diana)