**MOORSIDE HIGH SCHOOL GOVERNORS’ RESPONSE TO THE LA BSF PROPOSAL**

The Governing Body of Moorside High School has formally rejected the Local Authority BSF proposal following a long, detailed discussion and debate. The scheme to close both Moorside and The Swinton High Schools was only supported by one Governor. The Governors rejected the proposal for the following reasons:-

* Repeated requests have been made by the Governing Body for the LA BSF Team to provide details of various ‘Plan B’s’ so that they could fully understand the facts and how the LA had come to the only plan on the table. Although officers had made themselves available at certain points, no details of the alternative plans such as cost, viability and detailed surveys were forthcoming. This inhibited the Governing Body from providing an alternative plan as they did not have the facts to develop a cohesive argument nor did they know whether such alternatives had been rejected and why. (Feedback on two of the queries was made available to the Governors, following a communication mix-up but this still did not address the detailed option appraisal and refurbishment of the current site as requested.)
* Governors felt that Moorside High School has a distinct character and ethos which has been built up through mutual respect within a smaller than average size school. There was a feeling that a move to such a large scale would risk losing this intimate and safe environment. This was supported by a recent school survey of parents who chose the school because of its size and ethos.
* Comments were made about the risks involved in putting two successful schools together. Parents have chosen one over the other and this choice would be lost. Parents were disappointed at the lack of a question and answer session at the consultation evening and have expressed these concerns to the Governing Body. This was a distinct contrast to the way the Governors and staff consultations took place. The risks in creating such a large school and the consequential likelihood of having immediate success were explored. It was felt that the risk to present cohorts and future generations were too high and that not enough emphasis had been placed on the educational outcomes and more on financial and environmental considerations.
* The short term lack of playing facilities had not been addressed to the satisfaction of the Governing Body. The fact that the bulge of 1800 pupils on a site for 1350 with no provision, due to the old primary and high school buildings still being in place, was asking staff and pupils to be in a high risk environment.
* Why were two highly successful, solvent schools being closed when there were high schools in the authority with high deficits?
* When the Governing Body had requested details of costings for 3-19 place schools so that Moorside and Swinton could remain in their communities, the figures and details of this alternative were not forthcoming.
* Refurbishment of other schools has been put forward but the financial details requested by Governors on their plan to re-develop a building of character were not presented by the LA. The plan to use one of the two existing buildings with a refurbishment and alteration to create 21st Century spaces has not been addressed by the LA.
* Moorside Governors have a variety of possible alternative plans, which we have no indication from the LA if they have been investigated. Various examples were discussed one of which was:-
* Close Wentworth High School – removes the situation of deficit and reported management issues.
* Allocate pupils to fill Buile Hill, Moorside and the new Academy.
* Rebuild The Swinton High School on the Wardley site thus keeping a high school in that area of the city.
* Rebuild a large Catholic High School to incorporate St Ambrose Barlow and All Hallows High Schools, with the proposed 6th form on the Wentworth site.
* Rebuild Moorside High School as a 3-16 or 3-19 school on the existing site.

This proposal eradicates the need to manage a bulge of 1800. Develop schools that are financially viable whilst being a size that can develop a distinct and intimate ethos. Keeping high schools within their communities and enabling choice for those within the North area of Swinton. Placing the Catholic High School in the heart of the city rather than on the periphery. Use the opportunity to reduce the financial burden of a deficit school. In not having detailed feedback, examples like the one above could not be prioritised.

The Governing Body of Moorside High School has always supported, and continues to do so, the idea of new buildings. However, it is our view that a school is more than the building. It is what happens in the building, the relationships and high quality learning and teaching that creates outstanding schools. This proposed LA plan takes risks that are not necessary to provide for the communities both now and in the future.

Governors additional comments made were:-

**Governor one**

* I am more than happy with the comments made in our response to BSF. I have felt that the consultation process has been anything but a consultation; more like, this is the BSF team plan, accept it! The alternative plans suggested do need consideration by BSF as I believe some have merit and provide an alternative to those proposed by the BSF team. There also seem to be some “double standards” in the proposal, where certain problems seem to be brushed over when considering the proposed BSF plan, yet are a major issue causing alternatives to be rejected (e.g. school ground sizes). Perhaps one of the biggest worries is how the new school will ‘manage’ with 500 pupils too many in 2013, yet staffing levels will be okay by 2018?  Will this mean class sizes of over 40 to manage this bulge in school population OR will there be redundancies between 2016-2018 as class sizes decrease?

**Governor two**

* My only comment would be that it doesn't fully address the real, and impressive, educational improvements that have occurred at Moorside over the last few years. This success has been hard earned and should be rewarded rather than being put at risk by the proposed merger.

**Governor three**

* More importantly the whole of Salford's thinking is governed by Harrop Fold and Buile Hill PFI's which they are repaying. Both schools have not been popular and have excess places, so they need to try to fill them. Then they have given unnecessary preference to the Catholic sector. Why are there going to be 4 Catholic HS's when the Catholic population is decreasing? Moorside and Swinton are left at the end with no money to spend on them. St George’s should take over Harrop as the commission suggested (see last week's Advertiser front page) and Wentworth should be closed with the pupils distributed as the letter says. The Oasis Academy is another white elephant built in an area with huge numbers of one bedroom flats which does not require a primary school let alone a secondary.