

ARC Meeting October 12th, 2011

St. Joseph's School

Present: Frankie Berry, Liam O' Dwyer, Regina O' Connell, Mark O' Leary, Liz Mc Lafferty, Loretta Wynne, Catherine Troy, Miriam Mc Nally, Laura Behan, Shirley Wolverson, Paula Keenan, Janet O' Shaughnessy, Brenda Egan, John O' Brien, (INTO), and Judith King

Interpreter:

Apologies: Maire Collins (ASTI), Barry Glennon & Declan Keane, (Parents representatives) and Maura Buckley (CIDP Board).

Agenda:

- Agreement of agenda
- Notes of May 25th ARC meeting
- Matters arising not on the agenda
- Other related issues (Liam)
- Comments on changes in 14th draft
- Review of 15th draft including location proposal
- Next steps in process
- AOB
- Date of next meeting

Minutes

1. Members were agreed on the proposed agenda and endorsed the minutes from the May 25th meeting.
2. **Matters arising:**
 - (a) A Member asked what had become of the '13th Draft of the Education Model', given that it was the 12th that was worked on at the May meeting. Judith explained that the amendments proposed at that May meeting were incorporated into what then became the 13th Draft, which stood for most of the summer months. CIDP then had

a couple of 'informal negotiations' with the Department of Education, the second of which was in September 2011 and proposed changes based on that exchange were incorporated into a 14th Draft. This draft was then discussed and further amended at the ARC Steering Group meeting of September 29th. In addition a separate document outlining location options was also discussed at the Steering Group Meeting. In preparation for today's meeting a 15th Draft was written incorporating this location discussion and also includes the changed school numbers of the start of the new school year.

- (b) Some Members present who were also present at the most recent Steering Group meeting raised some concerns about how their discussion was wrongly, in their view, incorporated into this 15th Draft. One member said she had no recollection of there being any tacit agreement to sell off a third of the Marion site as a part of Option 1. Another said that the 15th Draft included a reference to a majority who had agreed with a particular option and that she had not been part of any such endorsement. Judith explained that this idea of a majority came from a 'totting up' of the round of location preferences which were taken from individual members at the Steering Group meeting. In response the ARC Member said that if she had known that those preferences were going to be recorded in this manner she would like that to have been informed of such. Another said that she believed that there was new information in the 15th Draft regarding location that she had not been privy to at the Steering Group meeting. (*Note from Judith: The Minutes of that Steering Group meeting will be circulated by the CIDP office very soon so members of the Steering Group will have a subsequent chance to make amendments to same*)

3. Other Related Issues

- (a) **Residences:** Liam then reported on some related matters beginning with developments regarding the Residences. The HSE has already reduced the budgets. They had proposed an extra € 120,000 cut from St. Mary's budget. In negotiations CIDP have managed to retain that amount for one further year but the HSE have indicated that now is a time for a formal review of the residences cost structures. CIDP have therefore begun a review endeavouring to ascertain the best development for the residences and is using the HIQA standards as guide. It should be ready in six weeks or so. Early indications would suggest that the St. Joseph's buildings would be the obvious place for an amalgamated residence.

One Member wondered if single, en-suite rooms are suitable accommodation for very young children. Liam explained that CIDP would retain three 4 -bed rooms for such instances.

(b) **Village Project:** Building works are moving ahead at a pace and should be completed by July 2012. One Member, who is also a member of the CIDP Board, had been on a site visit recently and asked if other staff would be allowed such a visit. Liam said he would very much welcome site visits from staff and asked both schools to contact him next week and he would arrange same. He suggested that staff might arrange to visit in groups of 8-10.

4. 14th and 15th Draft – Discussion on changes

(a) Location

Following the discussion which arose above under Matters arising, the meeting returned to the issue of location. The Staff of St. Mary's reported that they had a meeting to discuss the location issue. This meeting included teaching, administration and SNA staff. The results of their discussion were unanimous and include the following:

- ❖ Option 3 is the 1st preference
- ❖ Option 2 is the 2nd preference
- ❖ There was total agreement that the primary and secondary schools should be separated
- ❖ Option 1 would NOT be considered, by this staff, as an enhancement of schooling services for Deaf children, given that 'enhancement' has consistently been held up as a reason for amalgamation
- ❖ Finally, failing agreement on all of the above St. Mary's staff agreed that an Option 5 should be introduced which is to stay as we are.

In response Liam noted that this outcome indicated no change in the position among the St. Mary's staff despite two years of discussion.

The Principal of St. Joseph's asked for clarification re the location decision, adding that she understood that it would not be in the gift of either or even both staff to make it. In response Judith said that this is still the position. The CIDP Board in conjunction with the Patron is the group who will officially make the location suggestion. However, she said that since the beginning of this process Liam, on behalf of CIDP has been investing considerable energy and time into including the views, opinions and concerns of staff as a crucial component of any location decision. In addition the Department of Education will be looking for some measure of consensus among stakeholders as an essential criterion.

Liam asked that, for the sake of completion of due process, that the St. Joseph's Staff might have a similar meeting to the St. Mary's meeting so that we can include their collective preferences. The Staff representatives for St. Joseph's readily agreed with this proposal and informed the meeting that they could say with certainty already that there is also a preference for separate primary and secondary schools among their staff. One of these staff representatives also reiterated that each staff, understandably, has an affiliation with the site/area on which their own school is currently located. Judith thanked the member for recognising this as a factor in what a staff may state as its preference.

Re Selling off a portion of Marion site: Liam explained that any statement to that effect in the 15th Draft is 'pure conjecture' as yet and is based on informal conversations not contractual agreements with the Department. One Member asked what would become of the funds raised through such a sale if it were to go ahead. Liam informed the meeting that any funds raised through such a sale would be re-invested in the schools as extra funding will likely be essential to any amalgamation project.

A Member asked about the costs listed for the upgrade of the Primary school in Option 2. How, she wondered, would the creation of toilets for boys cost € 1.3 million? Liam agreed and said he would go back to Nowlan's about this figure. If the figure is exaggerated the member added that the remainder could be transferred to make other options more viable.

Another Member said that the Staff of St. Mary's would be most unhappy with the idea of the schools being located in the middle of what she would call 'a commercial campus'. The Member was referring to the Village Project.

(b) Other Suggested Amendments to or Questions about the 15th Draft

One representative asked about the secondment plans referred to on page 13. It was explained that the plan was still in the realm of possibility rather than probability. Another added, (also in relation to secondment), that a statement like 'loss of teaching days' is inaccurate given that they are substituted for. The loss, this member suggested, was more about the experience of those seconded staff to the schools. It was also asked about the posts of responsibility section on page 15 and wondered if it was realistic in the current climate. The Current policy of the Department is to have only Principals and Deputy Principals. It was agreed that while the numbers were based on the formula that held until the moratorium, the number of Assistant Principals could be changed from 4 to 1 and could include 12 special duty teachers.

One representative noted that the numbers for SNA on page 3 were incorrect and she offered the corrected version. Both Principals agreed to check all such figures. This rep also asked if SNAs would be included in the Staff Development plans mentioned on pg.

15. Non-classroom staff also wondered. Liam stressed that development opportunities would be made available to all.

Another suggested that the ISL staff mentioned on 1st paragraph of page 2 be referred to as a 'tutor' rather than a 'teacher'.

Also on page 2 another representative corrected the final sentence of the 2nd paragraph regarding SNAs with ISL tuition roles, stating that this was the case in only one of the schools.

Non-classroom staff are not listed among staff tabled on page 3. Staff representing these groups believe that although the Department of Education may only be interested in the staff it pays for, the document should at least include the others involved in the staffing of the schools.

The Student Population figure on Pg 16 is not correct, a Member said. Liam also requested that he would receive the final figures on disability numbers in St. Joseph's and the most recent Leaving Certificate results from both. A number of Members stated that it would be very important to have all figures correct before the document was submitted to the Department.

Regarding Post-Leaving Certificate a member suggested that the last paragraph on this section, pg 14, be changed to read that students here 'attain very satisfactory outcomes such as good results and certification'. It was also suggested that such outcomes could be usefully be compared with the National averages as 'there is considerably less dropout by Deaf young people on our programmes'.

Regarding results overall, another Member suggested that it be said in the document that teachers and other staff agree that the children and young people could not have achieved the excellent results of recent years if class sizes had been as big as they were in the past. It is the much increased level of attention that smaller numbers has allowed for which has led to our much improved results.

A Member asked if the pool in St. Mary's would continue to be used by the children even when the Village pool is ready. Liam said yes that St. Mary's school pool will remain functioning but that pupils will also be welcome to use the Village facilities. Another asked if this would mean exclusive access. Liam said no that it would not be possible to for the whole pool to be available but that a section of it would be roped off.

5. Next Steps in Process

The meeting then proceeded to discuss the next steps. Liam outlined the possible sequence. The final draft of the Education Model would be circulated to the Boards of Management of both schools before Christmas. (These Boards will have a number of new management personnel from November and their first full meeting will be January 2011). The Education Model document and the outcomes of the discussions at Board level will be forwarded to the subsequent meeting of the CIDP Board – most likely February 2012. Following those discussions, and if it is a positive decision for amalgamation, a meeting will be sought with the Department of Education to begin negotiations in the Spring of 2012.

One Member asked if the CIDP Board would be advised about the opposition of staff to some of the proposals. The INTO representative from his experience, urged caution about the use of terminology like ‘opposition’. Instead he suggested holding to the language of preferences as, he continued, the main focus of everyone should be on securing the future of the school/s and the jobs. He added that he could see from the various meetings however, that some one group needs to make the location decision.

Next (and perhaps final) ARC and Steering Group Meetings

The Steering Group are due to meet again on **17th November next, 9.15-11.00**. The meeting was reminded by one Member that the ARC group are the decision-making group so they too will need one last meeting following the Steering Group’s final meeting. This was agreed for **November 30th next also 9.15-11.00**.

6. A.O.B.

- (a) A Member wished to ask the INTO representative what he made of the most recent circular about Special Schools Education. She referred to a circular which seemed to update the June position of schools being allowed to hold onto their current allocation and added that such ‘holding on’ would only be for one more year. John agreed to check same and get back to the committee on that.
- (b) Other Members representing St. Joseph’s staff agreed that the fear of job losses has begun to loom very large. One added: ‘We are doing all this discussing and planning but at the end of the day we will not be paid to go into an empty classroom. The numbers situation is at crisis point’.
- (c) Another asked of the Union representative also what would happen if the schools were to close. He said that the panel mechanism would be just the same as in a surplus staff situation and the same rights would apply to all.

- (d) One St. Mary's representative wished to record a vote of thanks to the Board of CIDP for the recent investment by it in IT support for the schools. This was welcome and appreciated.