Zoe introduced everyone and thanked everyone for coming.

Andrew explained the reasons for the meeting.

Andrew also spoke to the meeting: “I am new to Northumberland, I started my post in October 2014 and at the High School Heads and Partnership meetings, I asked what was holding back Northumberland and Northumberland schools. The common theme was the structure of the partnerships. In discussions with schools I was told that proposals for change had been ongoing for more than 10 years. I asked the schools how do we improve schools in Northumberland and they came forward with ideas. I advised that they needed to tell Northumberland County Council formally and received 17 responses. There were requests by email, letter and telephone calls asking for consultation.

Some schools want to stay the same, some want to go to primary. The Aln Federation (The Duchess’s High, The Dukes and Lindisfarne Middle Schools) were already going to go to consultation on changes to their Federation. I took all the information received to Policy Board and they agreed to consultation taking place but with the additional option of No Change, which has never been an option before. They also wanted it made clear that it is not the County Council’s policy to move from 3 tier to 2 tier, this was not the Council’s idea.”

Andrew went through the presentation, he pointed out that the powerpoint was rather wordy as he wanted to ensure that all the meetings were consistent with the same information being provided to all. He outlined the 3 Options that were currently being consulted on for the Alnwick Partnership and advised that although there were currently 3 Models further Models/ideas could be submitted.

Following the presentation there was a question/discussion session:

Q The new Duchess’s High School is being built, if the money was available would there be time to make the school bigger?

AJ There is a possibility that the school could be bigger, this would mean Lindisfarne Middle site would not be needed it would be empty and a possible source of revenue.

Q This would not happen straight away as the High School is being built under PFI the plans are not set it stone, could there be an add-on?

AJ We don’t know how long it would take, but if feasible, any decision on whether or not to do it would be made by the Council’s Policy Board. It would
be up to the Headteacher at the High School to decide how to divide the work across two school sites. The High School head has expressed that he would not be in favour of a 6th form on the Lindisfarne site but neither would he want Years 7 and 8 on a different site.

The Aln Federation wanted to consult on Model A, but if there is a possibility of Model B as a single site we would need to know which they are in favour of, this is not clear at the moment. We are waiting to hear what they want.

Q Why not wait until after the General Election this would make more sense?

AJ Some schools may do this anyway and feel they have waited long enough. I am new here and all of this debate about structures is a major barrier to improving schools, we need to make a decision and then we can move on. I do not want another consultation in 10 years’ time, there was one before in 2004. Whatever system we arrive at must be sustainable.

Teachers and Headteachers are worried, people applying for jobs in Northumberland are worried about whether schools are going to close, everyone is focussed on this, we need to be focussed on good teaching.

If we have a new government they could decide to change all schools to Academies where the Local Authority would have no control as they have their own power.

Q Ofsted, they must see a difference between 2 and 3 tier, what is the best?

AJ I was a Senior Inspector for Ofsted and their view is the same as what I have seen, there are examples of good and bad schools in both structures. Ponteland is an outstanding middle school. Lindisfarne is middle and is in special measures.

We need good leadership, good teachers and Local Authority support for all schools.

Q Lindisfarne is in special measures and there is one Headteacher across 2 schools, the decision has been made are you not just getting rid of a problem under Option A?

AJ Ofsted would smell a rat and look closely at this, this is not my proposal. We would be asked why we are doing this. The Aln Federation have said that even if Lindisfarne was a good school they would still be doing this.

Q The pupil numbers, even with the 2 schools combined they are still below capacity. At the same time the birth rate is going up. Are you not just creating a problem for 5 years time?

AJ We are not reducing numbers, this is a constant issue for small schools.

Q The children go from here to a Middle School then High School. It is important for rural communities to have the 3 tier system, it is not right keeping children here until 11 year old then a very large High School. Middle School is a good transition, they are community based, the children stay here and then go to Wooler.
How many first and middle schools want Option B?

AJ This is an opposing you should put forward as part of this consultation. There are 18 schools in the partnership, 17 wanted consultation but not all wanted change. Some schools wanted to consult on Option A, some want to become primary. Others implied that they may change if others do as they would have no choice.

Q The kids would have 2 years in ‘no man’s land’ and would have no choice if the schools change.

Q If Seahouses closed Glendale will suffer, the middle schools did well on the primary league table. Seahouses and Glendale were in the top 6 and Glendale got a good Ofsted.

Branton and Whittingham have always fed into Glendale we didn’t realise we were in the Alnwick partnership.

How has this come about as parents always looked to the North for schools?

AJ I believe Branton catchment is in both Alnwick and Berwick catchments, but I have not been here long enough to answer this. All the children here go to Glendale, but then go to The Duchess at Year 9.

Q Need to consider transport and quality of education and distance.

Q If all the first schools go to primary, will someone come out to the schools, what if they are not capable of being primaries or have the facilities or are not cost effective?

Q What does a school need to be a primary?

AJ Someone would come out and assess the cost of changing over each individual school, some schools would cost more some less.

The costs would be looked at for the standard facilities needed eg toilets and changing areas (primary school age), the need for mixed age classes, this would then be put before the Council.

Some schools would find that the additional element for Years 5 and 6 would be a complication or a challenge. There are some outstanding small schools, but with small numbers it is more difficult to get an outstanding school.

Q Will all the first schools remain open?

AJ That is a different issue, this is not a consultation on closing Branton, three years ago the Council made the decision not to close. If there is a significant change to the school e.g. numbers plummet, the school is in the red, the school is in special measures, the council would not decide to close.

This consultation is not a way of closing little schools – unless this is put forward as an alternative option, reducing the number of first schools has not been put forward as an option to date, but it might be part of the final proposal based upon all the evidence.
Q What if it costs too much to turn this into a primary?

AJ The DfE’s definition of a small school is a school under 200 pupils. The Council say that keeping small schools open in Northumberland is what they want to do, due to its rural isolation. However, this must match with the system and sound education.

In Newcastle a first school with only 13 pupils is a problem, but in Northumberland a school with only 13 pupils is a rural school.

Q Looking at the figures for oversubscription and capacity in the Consultation document then there is not the capacity in the schools to keep the children an additional 2 years.

LF Capacity is the space a school is using at the moment, this is a different number to the intake.

AJ We are looking at educational capacity as well – the school needs to decide.

Q If every school reorganised under Model B then there wouldn’t be enough places.

AJ A small first school with 13 pupils would be a small primary school. However the Council would need to look at distance travelled and location, it is for the Council to decide. Ofsted would not be asking why we are running small first or small primary schools, but they would ask the school if it could offer the right curriculum.

Q Every school will need to be reorganised significantly to move forward. For example Swansfield Park has a capacity of 210 which will increase to 315 if this school becomes primary, would they be able to physically cope with the extra numbers?

How would the school increase its capacity?

AJ If all schools had to be significantly altered we would put the costs to the Councillors to decide what they will do with all the schools.

Not all the schools are like this one. Some schools have already looked at costs, capacity and resources they knew they could do it.

There is an element of self-interest for some schools and some schools will suffer. We need consensus on this. we would prefer that individual schools didn’t act alone.

Q Is the planning authority involved, what if the school doesn’t have the capacity or parameters to do this, on some sites they would have to build upwards?

AJ When Sue Aviston visits the school she will look at capacity and costs, she will then speak to the planning authority and look at whether there are any planning objections. The details need worked out and put to the Councillors.

The consultation process entails all information and outcomes of feedback being included in a report and put before the Councillors. They will look at
this and may ask for more information or make recommendations. I will take the report to Policy Board and I am impartial, but I want the system to work educationally.

When Policy Board makes a decision on which option they prefer a further period of formal consultation would happen. Then Policy Board would meet again and if they did not agree with the option they could throw it out.

Q  What are the timescales?
AJ  Feedback has been requested for the 11 March, Policy Board will meet on the 21 April and the final Policy Board would be the 9 June giving a year to implement.

Q  Which first schools want to go primary?
AJ  I cannot say yet as they contacted me confidentially, however all the schools should respond to the consultation by 11 March. I cannot let you know the information at the moment as some schools may change their minds. If they decide to not move ahead with proposals, then officers will inform Policy Board via the report.

Q  To make an informed response we need more information, the 3 schools going primary could be Alnwick schools not rural schools, or it could be some rural schools. Alnwick could have 3 tier rural schools and 2 tier town schools.
AJ  We won’t know the answers until the report goes to Policy Board. Some schools/heads don’t want to go public yet.

Q  Why is it confidential, it should be fully open, tell people to let them make informed decisions?
AJ  Legally they can do this in private. Aln Federation haven’t come back formally to say they want to go with Option A, I have asked the Chair formally but have not had an answer yet. I believe they are waiting for the Duchess’s High School consultation. They need to tell us what they want.

Q  Branton to Glendale, if the decision is for a different direction from here would transport not be an option from Branton to Glendale?
AJ  That decision needs to be made by the County Council.

You could put that in as an alternative Option that you want to be part of the Berwick Partnership.

Q  There is a time limit on how long a child can travel.
AJ  This would be looked at on an individual case basis when parents apply for transport and we would stick with our policy.

Q  Option B Year 7 and Year 8 Lindisfarne, the Duchess’s built under PFI what if you don’t get permission to extend the Duchess’s High, will the children be in a holding pen of 2 year groups on the Lindisfarne site?
Regarding the PFI (Private Finance Initiative), it was noted that there would be additional space on site for additional facilities. PFI is paid back like HP arrangements, however the company can put stipulations on a building, their own rules, this can be a drawback.

Expanding the site, if this was a possibility it would have to be funded by the County Council. As for the 2 year groups the Governing Body would have to make the decisions if this was a split site school, they would need to decide how to manage this.

A selling point for parents was that the new school would not be a split site, now the new school is another split site.

Yes you are right. I have inspected split site schools that are outstanding schools due to good leadership and management, and also those that haven’t been well managed.

Maurice Hall the Head at Duchess doesn’t want the 6th form on the Lindisfarne site. Kids facing their GCSE’s are being farmed out to that site, when will the decision be made about whether there will be a shared site?

The school needs to tell us what option they want and how it will work in practice. Do they think it’s a good idea for them to become a primary or what else they would propose?

We’ve been waiting for a new High School for 40 years we have discussed this, we were always led to believe this would be a 13-18 school. Lindisfarne combined with the Dukes, not 2 tier - this wasn’t in the first plan.

Aln Federation put forward Option A, not Option B, they want a 13-18 school. Option B is not supported by the High School, we do not know how it will work if the school is not in favour.

If the High School wants Option A why is there an Option B? This is just causing a ruckus, why not do A not B and leave schools alone?

17 schools said they wanted to consult and a number of schools are wanting to go primary. I cannot stop them, the decision is up to the Governing Body in the First School to go Primary, the process is a 6 week consultation and if parents agree they can go Primary, we can discuss this with them but they make the decisions. They can also decide to become an Academy if they want.

If the building doesn’t accommodate them can they go ahead?

If they have space initially, but then some schools will have an extra 25 Year 5’s and the income could be used to convert further classrooms and pay for teachers so they could do this.

If the Headteachers of some schools want to go Primary have they consulted with parents to go ahead?

That is why we are consulting, and they are consulting with their parents at the same time. On the 11 March all the schools will have to put their ‘cards on the table’, all 18 schools, we can then give information on what all the
schools have decided. We need forms from individual parents and groups, Heads and Governors need to give a definitive view, we need to know whether yes or no or give other options.

Q  A split catchment we need to know what the other schools want. Have Glendale expressed concern?

AJ  Branton need to formally respond then Glendale might say it is a good idea or a bad idea that will reflect on them.

We want to be open, honest and transparent, you need to let me know what you want and it will all be put in the public domain by 11 March.

Q  I am a Councillor (Murray) and I am involved in Glendale and a Governor. If this goes ahead it will have huge repercussions on Glendale, it could be that we cannot afford a middle school at Glendale.

Option A is feasible and would maintain what is good, getting young people into extra education at the same age as all.

Can I say that Andy has been impartial and fair.

I have reservations, not putting a strong voice to Committee, we asked Scrutiny to subsidise Post-16 but Policy Board makes the decisions. We need to be strong and continue to enjoy a good educational system here, we need to fight to keep the system here.

Head  Mr Murray you are always welcome here. We are all here because our children matter. If anyone here has a different option we need to know what your views are, forms can be anonymous, we need to know what you want. You can return the form anonymously or you can go onto the website. We need to know what the parents/community opinion is. If you can get your forms to us by the end of February it will help us respond to what you want.

Q  There are 23 at the school including the Nursery, the school is growing, it is bottom heavy, we want to respond to what the community wants. If we need to make the school bigger for 42 children, we don’t want a lesser education for your children.

Q  Is this the only partnership where you are discussing 3 tier?

AJ  Only this partnership has come forward and remember this is not a 3-tier debate from the Council.

Q  By doing this consultation will this give you a tick from Ofsted?

AJ  Definitely not, we need officers to be focusing on schools to help them improve not spending time consulting.

Q  How often will you keep visiting this? If it is turned down due to parental choice or not enough cash for facilities for our children.

AJ  I don’t want to do this again. If we can get the Alnwick partnership to make a decision and work together we can then concentrate on teaching, leadership and the children.
Q Why blame the system for one failing school, all the other schools are working well?

Why not give the money to existing schools why pay a fortune to maintain one school? Options A and B make no sense. You used Ponteland as an example, 3 tier works and works for rural Northumberland.

Why are the first school heads who want primary sitting behind screens?

AJ You will know by the 11 March.

Q Is there a valid reason for consultation?

AJ Explained the slide ‘Rationale behind Model B’ and that many first schools put forward issues about the structure, 4 schools want to be primary.

Northumberland LA is in trouble with Ofsted, under 16s are underperforming, we come 146 out of 147. White British boys are bottom of the league. Our KS2 results are lower than other authorities in the North East and we have schools who are in special measures. Children are massively underachieving in some schools.

Is the magic solution 2 tier? No, what we need is good teaching, management and support.

Q Is this Northumberland as a whole or just the North of the County?

AJ Yes all of Northumberland.

Q KS1 results in Northumberland are outperforming everyone else.

AJ Middle Schools say KS1 results are not high. Our KS2 results are not where they should be according to the KS1 results.

Q Are the results better for 2 tier or 3 tier?

AJ We won’t know for 5 or 6 years until the children have gone through the system, there are also factors which would need to be considered such as new teachers.

There is also no definitive proof that Academies are the answer.

Q I am a parent of 2 boys at Duchess’s they are getting extremely high results, there are pockets of excellence in Northumberland.

AJ The Duchess is a good school.

Andrew Johnson thanked everyone for attending the meeting – the meeting closed at 8.50 pm.
BRANTON FIRST SCHOOL- CONSULTATION MEETING

Minutes of Staff Meeting

3 February 2015 – 3.30 pm

Present:  Andrew Johnson – Director of Education and Skills
          Lorraine Fife – School Organisation Officer
          Ian Hamilton – HR Adviser
          Pat Hughes – Note taker

Also Present: Zoe Ryan – Headteacher
             Colin Dyson - NUT

LF made the introductions and explained the reasons for the meeting. She explained that AJ would be arriving following the presentation and would be in attendance for the Governors and Public meetings.

LF went through the presentation and outlined the 3 Options that were currently being consulted on for the Alnwick Partnership and advised that although there were currently 3 Models further Models/ideas could be submitted.

Andrew arrived and spoke to the meeting: “I am new to Northumberland, I started my post in October 2014 and at the High School Heads and Partnership meetings, I asked what was holding back Northumberland and Northumberland schools. The common theme was the structure of the partnerships. In discussions with schools I was told that proposals for change had been ongoing for more than 10 years. I asked the schools how do we improve schools in Northumberland and they came forward with ideas. I advised that they needed to tell Northumberland County Council formally and received 17 requests to consult. There were requests by email, letter and telephone calls asking for consultation.

Some schools want to stay the same, some want to go to primary. The Aln Federation (The Duchess’s High, The Dukes and Lindisfarne Middle Schools) were already going to go to consultation on changes to their Federation. I took all the information received to Policy Board and they agreed to consultation taking place but with the additional option of No Change, which has never been an option before. They also wanted it made clear that it is not the County Council’s policy to move from 3 tier to 2 tier, this was not the Council’s idea.”

AJ went through the presentation, he pointed out that the powerpoint was rather wordy as he wanted to ensure that all the meetings were consistent with the same information being provided to all. He outlined the 3 Options that were currently being consulted on for the Alnwick Partnership and advised that although there were currently 3 Models further Models/ideas could be submitted.

Following the presentation there was a question/discussion session:

AJ Explain that a few options and comments had already arisen from previous meeting.

- Model A some felt that 2015 was too quick.
- Model B why not for some parts of the partnership.
The Duchess’s High School to be on a single site (age 11-18) and would there be enough money? AJ explained that the County Council would make the decision, there was room on the site and it would need extra planning, it was not outside the bounds of probability but he could not say it would happen, costs would need to be put to the Council.

Union Colin explained he would take back any questions the staff may want to raise to the other unions. He also wanted to ensure that everyone was aware that in the process of consultation and that the information gathered would go to Family and Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny (FACS) before it goes to Policy Board – this was noted and added to the Powerpoint presentation.

FACS Scrutiny will either agree the report or give recommendations. Policy Board are not obliged to take actions arising from FACS, but everyone should be aware this was the next step.

AJ Explained that both Policy Board and Family and Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny are public meetings.

Q If it is decided there would be no change could some schools still go primary?

AJ Yes schools can go ahead, even if the County Council did not agree. Even under Option C – no change – if some first schools want to go Primary the Governing Body can extend the age range, they can consult with parents and the Local Authority. The Local Authority would check the building, budget and staff to see if this would be viable and make sure the school has thought it through and made sure it was a good idea. However, even if we disagree with them they can still do this.

Q What about school transport, if some schools change what would be the effect?

AJ If children have to move in separate directions it could destabilise the transport system, even one school changing could have a knock-on effect, but this is parental choice.

Q How might transport work for children if the school became primary, the majority of our children feed into Glendale Middle School, would they still get free transport for Glendale from Year 4 until the end of their middle school education, or would they have to pay for transport as Branton would be their nearest school for their age group?

LF Individual circumstances would be taken into account; under current policy if Branton is their catchment/nearest school there would be no transport to another school. However, if this was their catchment school but Wooler was their nearest school and a parent wanted to send a child there, the child could get transport. It is very complex and would depend on a child’s individual circumstances.

AJ A child would get transport to their catchment school but there is parental choice.

Q Union – Are there any catchment area changes?
There will be no change to other partnerships, we have put a loop around Alnwick, as a result of this we may have to look at catchment areas to determine any changes. Further consultation may be necessary.

Glendale Middle, Dr Thomlinson C of E Middle, Belford First, Warkworth CE First Schools, I am meeting with the Headteachers and Governors of the schools and will be encouraging them to respond to the consultation. We are aware that there could be implications such as transport, catchment areas etc.

Model B – Sue Aviston will look at the buildings, what are the implications for this school?

The costs will be put to the Councillors and looked at with all the other costs.

You are putting sites at risk, what if the school is not suitable here?

There could be a Model G – for schools to amalgamate or close first schools, but no-one has put forward this model as yet. But this might happen.

The school is growing from the bottom up, we have 2 rooms here.

There would need to be facilities for older children such as toilets.

Where would the funding come from?

Council funds, we would need to let the Councillors know the costs as this would not come from a National Grant but from County Council spending.

Would the school have to do this as a loan or would it be funded?

Funded.

Councillors have a portfolio of properties and this is part of the process, the school belongs to the Council and they would have to make the improvements.

Parents have raised their concerns about mixed-age classes, it would be naive to think this was not important.

In this school, as a primary, what would the numbers be?

There will be:

3 Year 0
4 Year 1
3 Year 2
1 Year 3
2 Year 4

We will have 7 in reception in September and 5 next year. We do have 1 Year 4 who will be leaving for private education.
The numbers are growing at the bottom of the school as we are becoming more popular.

AJ it is recognised that Northumberland is different due to its being rural, if a school declines until it cannot continue to function we would look at the school, where it is located, how far it is to the next nearest school, how isolated it is and we would also look at the local community. If it is felt it is a resource too remote from other schools, the Council may decide to keep the school open. If there were 2 similar schools in the area the Council may look at combining schools. The DfE states that a small school is a school with less than 200 pupils. Northumberland’s view is that we would match community need with size of the school, but we must make sure educational issues are at the front of our thoughts.

Head Branton fought to stay open, we have a large catchment area, we are a well supported and growing school.

AJ I do not believe that at this time the Council are looking to close the school. The Council does not have a hidden agenda.

Q Pupils are travelling long distances now, if we closed the travel would be even longer.

AJ With the falling birth rate and families moving things could change.

Q The High School model with a split site, my son is currently in the 6th form and hates having to move site in bad weather.

Union If you have concerns about the High School they will be having a meeting at their school it will be the last of the meetings and is an open meeting, please attend and raise your concerns. Maurice should be able to give you reassurances.

AJ The Aln Federation may have changed what they want, until I hear back from them I am assuming they still want the model they put forward for consultation. They may be waiting for the meeting at The Duchess’s before they make a decision.

Q We have concerns about the split site, Years 7 and 8 at Lindisfarne or the 6th form. I have a child in Year 12 and post-16 transport has reduced the options in the North of the County. The new High School needs to address Post-16, it is a long journey to Ashington College.

The Duchess’s is a Science/Technology College, they need to make the most of themselves, this is a missed opportunity.

AJ You can put this forward as part of the consultation, if there is money available the Council could decide to spend it on the alteration of the High School site.

Head We have 5 High School parents here.

AJ Glendale Middle also needs to be part of this, it needs to be involved.
Q: Whatever the outcome will Policy Board listen to us?

AJ: They are elected members, I can’t say what they would do, I give them advise, costs, educational pros and cons and they make the decision.

Union: Previous consultations have been in response to a school being in special measures, did this prompt this discussion?

AJ: If Lindisfarne was a good school the Aln Federation said this would still have gone ahead.

Q: We are a vulnerable small school, are there enough pupils or would they close a school nearby and combine.

AJ: This could be put forward as an alternative Option by the school. You need to decided – you are a vulnerable small school.

Q: This could be taken out of our hands.

AJ: The Church Schools are having their own consultation with similar presentations, what we don’t want is the Church and Community Schools doing different things.

Q: What happens if the Church Schools make their own decision to go primary?

AJ: Market forces and parent power means they can choose their own configuration.

Q: You could have a primary with years 7 & 8 feeding into the Middle School.

LF: We are doing the whole partnership as we are trying to be coherent.

AJ: Some partnerships do have more options.

Union: Meadowdale in Bedlington is an Academy also Haydon Bridge has first and primary schools, they are running a mixed economy.

AJ: Northumberland has a significant number of middle schools, some are good or outstanding.

There are changes all the time, David Cameron announced today that they want to change all schools in special measures or requires improvement into Academies, we will find out after the election.

Andrew Johnson thanked everyone for attending the meeting – the meeting closed at 4.30 pm.
AJ thanked the Governors as he said that Governing Bodies often go unthanked for the sterling work they do.

AJ then made the introductions and explained the reasons for the meeting.

AJ also spoke to the meeting: “I am new to Northumberland, I started my post in October 2014 and at the High School Heads and Partnership meetings, I asked what was holding back Northumberland and Northumberland schools. The common theme was the structure of the partnerships. In discussions with schools I was told that proposals for change had been ongoing for more than 10 years. I asked the schools how do we improve schools in Northumberland and they came forward with ideas. I advised that they needed to tell Northumberland County Council formally and received 17 requests to consult from schools. There were requests by email, letter and telephone calls asking for consultation.

Some schools want to stay the same, some want to go to primary. The Aln Federation (The Duchess’s High, The Dukes and Lindisfarne Middle Schools) were already going to go to consultation on changes to their Federation. I took all the information received to Policy Board and they agreed to consultation taking place but with the additional option of No Change, which has never been an option before. They also wanted it made clear that it is not the County Council’s policy to move from 3 tier to 2 tier, this was not the Council’s idea. This is about the quality of education not the structure of the partnership.”

AJ went through the presentation, he pointed out that the powerpoint was rather wordy as he wanted to ensure that all the meetings were consistent with the same information being provided to all. He outlined the 3 Options that were currently being consulted on for the Alnwick Partnership and advised that although there were currently 3 Models further Models/ideas could be submitted.

Following the presentation there was a question/discussion session:

Q Thank you very much that was very clearly done. Can you clarify how the outcome will be measured is it purely on responses, the number of people who respond?

AJ No, this is not like a vote, it is not about the numbers per model. I write the document that will go to Policy Board, I have to describe the feedback for each model, let them know what people think. I also feedback any other models put forward. It is not as simple as looking at numbers and saying
more want Model A than Model B. The Councillors will look at and weigh up all the models.

Even if a majority of schools want a model, it might not happen, the Councillors take into account all the models and feedback.

Q Are finances taken into account?

AJ The models need to be viable. Model B would take a lot of finance, converting First Schools to Primaries and modifying the 11-18 site.

Q You will be saving revenue closing The Dukes Middle site, there would be a saving there.

AJ Yes, if Model B there may be revenue from the Lindisfarne site if there was an 11-18 High School then we could dispose of the Lindisfarne site, but until the end of consultation we can only look at ‘ball park’ figures otherwise we could be criticised that this was a ‘done deal’. We cannot go into too much detail at this time until a decision is made, as I said this is only a possibility it is the Council who will decide.

Q We could go through all this then do nothing?

AJ The will look at the pros and cons of all the models and then decide.

Q Additional facilities, there would be school building issues, we have struggled here to stay open with the help of the community and the Head. Are you looking to us as a way of getting rid of a small school eg us and Whittingham. Who decides ultimately whether a school is deemed suitable?

AJ This is a separate process, there is a Small Schools policy in Northumberland for keeping open small schools. The DfE deem a small school as a school with less than 200 pupils. We are not consulting to close this school as part of this consultation.

Q We need to know if the school is deemed suitable before we can decide on an option. What do we need to do, will we get financial support the school budget is increasing as the school is growing.

AJ This school wouldn’t have to fund this it would be built into Model B. The advantages would be more children and increased finance. The disadvantages would be mixed-age and ability groups. The school could be more secure with bigger numbers. We want all children to be given a fair deal, but acknowledge there could be problems delivering the curriculum in Year 5 and 6.

Someone could come up with an alternative Model for example, e.g. close all small schools, or look at 13 small schools and reduce to 6. This is not the proposal the Council is consulting on at this time, but there is an invitation to offer alternative models.

Q Transport regulations travelling time is 45 minutes for KS1.
Q  Model where rural settings are different, merge Whittingham and Branton, keep Glendale and transfer to The Duchess’s.

AJ  Yes, you can put this forward as an alternative proposals to Councillors if you want to.

Q  Where would the children sit in the criteria for places, would they be disadvantaged if they are not in catchment?

If it was me, my concerns would be move from here to Glendale and Alnwick or here to Glendale and Berwick.

AJ  The children could join Alnwick at a later time but only if places were available and if this was thought to be educationally appropriate. If Model B, Years 7 & 8 would be at Lindisfarne, Berwick would be parental choice. There is not a yes/no answer to this as the Council have not made a decision yet. We need to know what parents choose.

Q  We don’t have all the information to make a decision we need to know if this school is viable. For example we have a pupil who lives half way between here and Morpeth, they might keep them here or move them to Glendale, then Morpeth, it would be a huge journey.

AJ  Sue Aviston will come out and visit the school soon to assess costs if this school could become a primary. This is not funded by the school and depends on the number of children at Year 4 and 5 if the parent wants them to stay.

Morpeth have not made a formal request to change their structure, however any school can change their age-range.

Glendale, where the child lives half way between, this needs to be looked at on a case by case basis, however this is the catchment school.

The Council will decide; you need to tell the Council what you want e.g. Option B and what you want to happen, you need to tell them what you want to do.

Q  I went to the meeting at Whittingham and was told if not Option B then Lindisfarne would become an Academy.

AJ  That might happen, it is not definite but it is a possibility.

Q  They were directing Model B all the way.

AJ  I am not directing Model B but asking for your views.

Lindisfarne might come out of special measures, if not it could become an Academy. The Aln partnership had already applied to become a converter Academy but this was knocked back due to Lindisfarne being in special measures.

A lot of resources are being spent on The Duke’s Middle School by Governors which would not be needed if they move onto the Lindisfarne site.
Q Would this money come back to the Alnwick Partnership?
LF The money would go back into the Dedicated School Grant (DSG) pot.
Q What is the cost for Lindisfarne Middle?
AJ There is no cost as it belongs to the County Council.
Q If Model B what about the Year 5 and Year 6 from Glendale moving to the Duchess’s? Can they transfer at Year 6 as part of the cohort.
AJ It is parental choice, a parent can move a child if there is a space at the school, they would only be refused if the school was full or it was not thought to be educationally sound.
Q Could they go to Glendale to Year 8 then High School at Year 9?
AJ Yes, but as I said they can be refused if the school is full or it is not appropriate.
Q Would the parents have to pay the transport costs, if nearer to Wooler than Alnwick’s nearest school?
LF It is parental choice, transport is to the catchment/nearest school.
AJ We want all the schools to be coherent including the church schools.
Q If the school is closer to the child’s home than the catchment school, would they get transport?
AJ This still applies there is no change in the transport policy.
Q Current Year 4 will they get their first choice school?
Q I am concerned for the children
Q Year 4 in September moving to Glendale Middle School, they will get transport as this is their catchment school. Then if this school becomes primary this is their catchment school, if they have already had transport granted would it be taken off them?
AJ They would still get transport if it has already been granted.
Q The deadline is tight, parents have already applied for Glendale Middle.
LF You should know by April which Option has been chosen.
AJ You could decide to do nothing, as Councillors are representatives of their community you can lobby them.
Q It is change for change sake, if it is not broken what is the good of going to 2 tier.
AJ A number of Heads contacted me and want to do this anyway, and their reasons are on the slide ‘Rationale Model B’ they wanted consultation. We are managing the consultation but the decision will not necessarily be to go
primary. This is about making sure the system hands together, whatever system it is.

Q  I don’t believe children would get a better standard of education under 2 tier.

AJ  Some schools were critical of the Middle Schools and they want to keep their children for an additional 2 years. Middle Schools are saying middle school education is what children should have. I just want the debate to end and put this behind us, there is a constant air of ‘what might happen if?’ and uncertainty.

Some schools may still decide to extend their age range independently of us.

Q  Some Governing Bodies might want to change but their schools but will they have changing facilities etc.

AJ  We would look at the capacity of the school and their facilities, we wouldn’t want to stop them.

Q  Would the school fund still give them the facilities?

AJ  Some schools in Year 5 would have an additional 25 kids which would give them the funding to enable them to do this, they would then have 25 kids moving into Year 6.

Q  Can we provide the provision for Year 5 and Year 6 to meet their needs. History, geography, we are not part of the overarching partnership.

If the Governing Body makes the decision, and then parents can decide to move their children.

Q  If the partnership chooses Option B can we then ask parents what they want to do?

AJ  If the decision is to become primary you would have to change your curriculum and the school would have to decide of this is viable and tell us.

Schools can also choose to become, Academy, Federation, Free School.

Q  If we become part of a new partnership the working groups will change.

AJ  You can choose to federate with another school, even a school in another partnership.

Q  The key concern is which High School.

AJ  If Option B was the choice, the children would stay in primary to Year 6, the would then go into Years 7 and 8 at the Lindisfarne site then Year 9 at the new high school site. Some parents are seeing this as a problem and some don’t.

Q  Years 7 and 8 would they stay on that site or would they move to the High School for some lessons?
The option for the Aln Federation was Option A. Option A is currently their preferred option.

Option B with the High School on a single site, this is another option.

You will take the consultation results to Councillors to decide, would they be told ‘x’ amount of schools want each option?

No, it is more complicated than that, all the information needs to be distilled into one document. It needs to include all the views for and against all the Models. They need to have the financial implications and also any petitions.

The Councillors will have to read all the information and make an informed decision. It is not done on numbers.

How many schools want this, what about the high school?

Not a lot of parents from the High School may get involved as this does not affect their child. Nearly all the schools wanted a consultation.

Is the Ashington consultation finished and can we see the information from that?

Yes this is all available on the Council’s website

A 3 tier model makes more sense in a rural area.

In Ashington were the reasons not specific to Ashington?

In Ashington it was driven by the schools, only the Diocese and 1 parent dissented, the parent mentioned a petition but this had not been submitted.

Petitions can go to a petitions committee, we would encourage everyone to complete a consultation document and give their views.

What about the staffing protocol?

You need to discuss this with Angie Dyer, HR Manager.

Andrew Johnson thanked everyone for attending the meeting – the meeting closed at 6.20 pm.