



# Mill Water School

Preparation for *their* best future

## Post 16 Consultation Meeting

Date & time of meeting:

**Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2025, 10am**

### Attendees

Governor	Initials	Category
Andrew Gardner	AG	Co-opted
Julie Cornwell	JC	Co-opted
Sarah Irving	SI	Parent
Sarah Pickering	SP	Headteacher
Staff	Initials	Job Description
Andrew Maker	AM	Assistant Head
Paula Harris	PH	School Business Manager
Alice Hayes	AH	PA to SLT
Trust	Initials	Category
Guy Chappell	GC	CEO of SPT
Local Authority	Initials	Category
Simon Niles	SN	Head of Education Strategy & Central Operations
Shona Meek	SM	Senior School Organisation Officer

### Meeting Minutes

SP, welcomed parents to the meeting and all attendees in the meeting room introduced themselves. SP highlighted that this meeting will be recorded and anyone that does not want the meeting to be recorded to raise their hand. Nobody raised their hand so she then explained that we have parents in the room as well as online attending this meeting.

SP started to give background to the meeting mentioning that some parents may remember the previous consultation from 2023. In that previous meeting the reason why the leadership team and governors were considering making a significant change to the Mill Water School setting was discussed. From that, everyone involved looked at parent's comments and shared frequently asked questions, so parents had visibility if they weren't able to join the meeting. From that the decision was made at the time that there wasn't the right provision that could match what was on offer at Mill Water School stayed as was.

Coming up three years later, SP explained the school is going to consultation again. But for some parents, some of the issues that were raised three years ago will be repeated. SP will talk about how this decision has come about to go to consultation.

SP invited SM to explain the process. SM explained the process now Mill Water is an Academy. Firstly, the consultation has to run for a minimum of three weeks and for an Academy school the decision maker is the Department for Education SW Regions Group.

Following the consultation, the trustees will consider all the consultation responses that are put forward and they will make a decision whether to make this significant change application to the Department of Education.

There are different tiers of significant change, this being a tier one. It can be escalated to a higher tier if there's objections or concerns or there's risks involved.

It is an internal decision made at the Department of Education Regions Group. They will look at the trust's significant change application form and the core information within that, and the trust and the school will also be asked to provide a summary of all the consultation responses that come forward as well as a consultation response document which will include information including this meeting. Then the DfE may ask for details of the responses in full if they've got specific concerns. Then they will make their decision and parents, carers, staff and stakeholders will be notified.

The consultation will be circulated widely to parents, carers and staff, MPs, district councillors, parish councils to meet best practice. DCC's role has changed from last consultation when Mill Water was a maintained school. DCC would have been the decision maker. It would have come to a decision with our cabinet and now that Mill Water is an Academy, it will be the DfE who are the decision maker. DCC is a statutory consultee so we will respond to the consultation predominantly in terms of sufficiency of placements.

SP put some background to the consultation for parents and carers. Mill Water was built in 2015 for 100 pupils with the age range of three to nineteen. Only one pre statutory school aged child has ever been placed due to pressure on places.

It was planned to be ten classes of ten pupils with a self-contained flat which had a bedroom, a bathroom and a kitchen: all-important resources for providing the living skills our pupils require. Mill Water focuses on preparing our pupils for their best future. Most of our cohort are going on for life of purposeful leisure and we use that phrase "purposeful leisure" deliberately because very few of our pupils will go on to have paid employment. We want them to have the choice and the right to have purposeful leisure where they contextually make a choice about things that are on offer in their communities. Being out in the real world, real community showing us what they like, what they dislike and actively showing us that they can fill their week with meaningful and purposeful leisure.

The school used to have a fitness suite, drama room, a music room, art room, technology studio, science class and technology room. All-important spaces for pupils who are undertaking courses.

Since that time the local authority has consulted with an increased number of pupils from 4-16, dominantly coming in the early years so the school had to adapt and as a result have lost all those rooms mentioned which resulted in the post-16 learners losing out more than others.

The school are having to move off site to allow these pupils to have real life experiences. For example, our post-16 pupils today have come into school and at 9:30 they've gone out in school vehicles to try and get out into the community where we believe they're going to have their needs met due to restrictions on resources on site

When Mill Water last consulted it was felt that the maintained colleges weren't able to meet many of the needs of the pupils here. Since then the school has worked closely with Petroc College asking them what they need our pupils to be able to do and how Mill Water can facilitate that: what Mill Water can put into the curriculum to enable a smooth transition.

For leavers, we've had longer transitions. We've had more days of transition. We've had groups of pupils visiting and a parent last week just saying that it had been really successful because of the increased transitions. Petroc have become more inclusive, so we have had learners that have gone to Petroc, pupils have had sensory impairment, significant challenging behaviour, they need intimate care, pre-verbal and Petroc college have been able to provide the support needed in terms of AAC support and Speech & Language.

This academic year from our year 11s, we only had one pupil that didn't go to Petroc. It's been successful for those pupils. None have dropped out and the college is confident they can meet their need.

SP continued with another reason Mill Water no longer the best offer is when Mill Water first moved into this setting sixth form had its own area, classroom, common room and outside space and pupils had a sense of transition only being with their post-16 cohort.

However, now, because of the needs of the local authority and meeting the needs of more pupils they no longer even have a classroom that is bespoke for post-16.

This also raises a safeguarding issue because there are 4 year olds in shared spaces, corridors and toilets. There are two learners in the post-16 provision at Mill Water who should be able to, in terms of independence, be able to go out down corridors and use the toilet themselves however staff have to go with them because they're on a corridor where there are very young pupils so we are limiting their chances of being independent.

SP was talking to a parent because she saw her son at Petroc last week and they were moving around the ground as a group of post 16 students. They looked different. They were behaving differently and we've now got people on that transition pathway saying to us I can't wait to leave you behind, which is great. We want them to say, I'm too big for you. I'm too independent for you.

We do know that Petroc and other colleges were able to meet the needs of our formal learners: those students on a trajectory to supported employment or supported volunteer work. We knew that the offer was OK, but again, the work we've done with catch up means that they are meeting the needs of people from our semi-formal pathway and our pre formal pathway which towards all those learners who need a more bespoke package. They do require higher staffing ratios, higher levels of therapeutic input, but they are meeting all those needs.

AM Mill Water's qualified teacher of the visual impairment spoke to Devon County Council's qualified teacher of the visual impairment. They both worked on the transitions for the pupils with CVI/MSI which didn't happen before.

Mill Water pupils have a lot of wraparound care and specialist provision at Mill Water and that wasn't being carried through to the maintained colleges. Three years ago, I understand that parents felt very concerned that this wasn't on offer for their children. The work that we've been doing with local authority and with Petroc as well seeks to improve this.

So in terms of Mill Water learners, we do go to 19. But our years 12,13 and 14 were staying at Mill Water, not through an active choice. I would love to think that parents are actively choosing for their child to go to Mill Water sixth form because the courses on offer are fantastic and the pupils are ready for independence but from the last consultation what parents are saying is it is anxiety and fear. Mill Water has a very close relationship with parents and care very deeply about pupils when they join the school from 4 years old so the school understands moving on from this support can feel significant. The work Mill Water has been doing is to ensure colleges can provide this level of support as well. Parents that the school have spoken to say this is in a much better position.

We're aware that if we don't have a post-16 here, we need to increase our work in terms of transition. We've worked very hard and Andrew Maker is a big part of that when pupils leave. We want to get the best for our pupils. We don't want to hang onto our pupils when we are not right. The school believes parents should have an active choice instead of there not being anything else out there which was the feeling from the last consultation. As a school we have worked closely with the colleges to increase their offers.

Parent - I just had a quick question really. I just had a look online at how far away Petroc is and for us it would mean that [Pupil's name] is travelling just over an hour to school every morning. This just won't work. I get that Petroc is probably lovely and that's brilliant, but it's simply too far away, so I just don't see that it's a viable option. It sounds lovely. If it was in Sidmouth or if it was in Exmouth or if it was in Axminster, then yeah, brilliant, sign me up. But it's not. And I feel like you're just giving up on Mill Water's provision rather than trying to make Mill Water better. You're just saying, well, that's not going to work. And we're not going to do anything to make it work.

And we're just going to ship them all off even further away from where they are. You know where they live. [Pupil's name] is not integrated into our community because she already goes to school 35 minutes away from home. The other children in the area don't know who she is. They don't know anything about her and so we're going to ship her an hour away from home. If something happens to her during the day, how am I meant to get there to, to be with her? What am I meant to do? She has a terrible seizure on that transport, which already transport is tricky and she has to be picked up last, dropped off first because that journey is already too long, but adding another half an hour on top, she's going to really, really suffer, and she's going to end up just being at home, and then she'll just be lost. From 16, she will sit in our house and that is what she will do. And I just, I don't think it's good enough. I think we need to look at something to make Mill Water better or make something closer to where these children are living. Not everyone lives in Exeter. And I know that that seems to be the general assumption, but it's not.

SP – Yes let me come back on that. We do have pupils who travel for great distances and we are going to have to do a piece of work around commissioning of special schools for that for that very reason. Mill Water have got pupils travelling from Plymouth, from Crediton, Tiverton, they come, some would say too far. And the limit on travelling times for Primary

and times for Secondary is often breached. We go above that a lot of time. I think we do need to look at individual cases.

I think at the moment with pupils, some can manage a longer journey and they might be on a bus of 12 or 13 pupils, other pupils there's medical issues or behaviour issues, they have a direct route so it might be one or two in a taxi for that reason. But you are right [Parent's name], we do need to look at a travel plan which will be put in place and actually some of it being so close to the border: is there any reason why other provisions can't be part of the placement? I'm saying Petroc because of the work that we've been doing there, but is it isn't just Petroc.

In terms of making Mill Water better in the consultation document, which will go out, it will include all the work we've done to try and make it better, but actually better is not right for our learners here on site. At the last consultation, I did raise with the parents the number of requests I put into local authority to find a building for our post 16 learners (at the time we had more post 16 learners)

This year we've only got we've got four learners with two leaving this year. We will have a post 16 of 2 learners from September 2026.

I need to look at what's right for those individual pupils, but I do take on the concern about transport. Our pupils travel a long, long time anyway to get into Mill Water. The size of Devon is challenging which is why the local authority are looking to do a recommissioning of special schools for one of those reasons.

SN – Yes so, the recommissioning of our special schools will take these points into account. We're doing a process through all of our special schools in terms of recommissioning for the changing needs of the children that we've got coming, needing specialist provision and the needs of the children coming into Mill Water have changed significantly from when it was originally built.

We're also putting a lot of work building on what we've done in Petroc in Tiverton with our other FE provisions, you've got Exeter College, we're working with Exeter College, we're obviously working with Petroc in North Devon and also working with South Devon College. And we're also having very early conversations with Bickton College about future commissioning. I think from a sufficiency point of view, obviously having sixth form of only two pupils when we've got a lot of the post 16 is a challenge for the local authority in meeting its statutory duty.

Parent – So sorry to interrupt. The fact is Mill Water have been telling parents actively for the past at least four years that Mill Water post-16 is now not an option for their young adults with high, complex needs, this parents said this at the first consultation meeting in March 2023. Mill Water had told them that Mill Water's Post-16 was no option for them and parents of pupils who have left recently have said the same last school year that Mill Water had asked them again or told them that Mill Water Post-16 is no option, so Mill Water school have been telling parents of pupils with very high, complex needs that Mill Water Post-16 is no option. This has been going on for at least four years, parents said it at the first consultation meeting in 2023. They have written it on the Mill Water Parents and Carers Facebook page last school year, that they had been told that Mill Water Post-16 is no option. So, how can the school and the Devon County say that Mill Water there are no numbers, no pupils for post-16 if Mill Water had been telling that Mill Water Post-16 is no option. You've been reducing the numbers. That's what the parents have been saying at the first

consultation meeting and they've said it on the Mill Water parents Facebook page, a high number of parents. And I've heard from a very a good friend of mine. She said that majority of the parents of the pupils with very high, complex needs wanted to stay continue and Mill Water post-16 provision. But you have been telling the parents of pupils with very high, complex needs, that there is no option and to add to it what you've just mentioned that like the needs of the pupils have been changing over the years this is not true because dozens of pupils here have got very, very high, complex needs. They are non-speaking, they have got unsafe, dangerous behaviours.

They have no danger awareness, my daughter, I wanted to say this at the end of the presentation, but you've just raised it. My daughter [Pupils Name], we live in Seaton 30 minutes' drive from school. She got extremely traumatised long term on the school transport three years ago. She got aggressive, physical to the escorts, school staff. She had never been aggressive prior to that. And I kept asking the transport coordination service to give her a separate car. They refused. It went to the panel meeting. They refused because it would cost them extra £240 to get a separate car, driver, experienced escort every day to drive her from Seaton to Mill Water and this is half of the distance, half of the mileage, half of the travel time to Tiverton. So the learning Disability Service was involved two and a half years because conditions on her transport were so her horrendous. Seven other people in a small van. She suffered terribly, just completely overwhelmed. She was biting, kicking, people jumping around and stuff. She had to be restrained in adult harness for many months and the Devon County panel meeting still refused to improve her travel conditions to give her a separate car, so this folder is full of reports, assessment, cognitive assessment, severe learning disability diagnosis describing her struggles during transitions, transport and busy environments. So we've been meeting Andrew for the past two years. Specialist speech and language, specialist OT, psychologist to calm her down. And then you are telling me that she will cope with one hour journey. I know Devon County won't pay and won't give me a separate car for her. The same [Parent Name] is concerned about [Pupil Name] because [Pupil Name], they live only in (town) 5 minutes from us. So, if you add more people onto the bus because [Pupil Name] needs a proper bus, then the travel times will extend and the children or young people will become dysregulated. [Pupil Name] will get fits. It's a massive safeguarding issue for us and to tell us that the Devon County or whoever should start looking for another, possibly another provision for them. Why? Because this is the only specialist setting in East Devon

Parent – It's because there's no room. So over the last five years I've noticed there has been a massive increase and a decrease in older children. So as you've said, Mill Water have said that post-16 is not an option over the years, I do believe that there has been a couple of students that have done like three days a week but there has been more high needs of the younger children that have come in, so there's less space to be able to adapt to be able to meet the demand of young children that are not managing in mainstream schools and they have come to Mill Water because provisions, there are just none around and our children, have got profound needs. [Pupil Name] is non-verbal, he's profound. He is very profound with his needs too. So I completely get where you're coming from, I have noticed over the years, there's a lot younger children that have come in that are coming a little bit later and there's just no room in this school for the older children. So then they try to separate them and push them further afield. I have a massive concern with Petroc. I have a fifteen-year-old daughter, she attends (school). We live an Exmouth. She's got autism, ADHD, she's verbal. She can walk to the shop, she can get herself dressed. She can do a lot more than what my son could do at her age. In the last five years, there's not been much progression in [Pupil

Name]. He's still non-verbal. There's still no changes. He'll still try and play with his poo. He'll try and eat it, but there's not been any changes. I worry because my fifteen-year-old nearly sixteen-year-old, has been offered and we're looking at Petroc for her. So how can my daughter go to Petroc and then potentially my son who is non-verbal. Where do they meet needs for children with such profound complex needs? When my child is also my eldest is looking into going there. So I'm a little bit concerned with that. I don't want [Pupil Name] to be in a place where my daughter, potentially I'd like him to be in a place where he was more included. It's more inclusive. There's less chance of him being bullied and less harm and risk. So Petroc for me would be no.

SP – Yes I understand everything you said, parents have raised concerns before that about Petroc and that change going to college. What we have noticed so Petroc's send provision is separate to the main body.

So they are included in that setting, not in the main body of the school. AW you can talk about your visits maybe a minute, but again, they have improved, increased their offer for the more complex needs. I have been saying to parents you need to look elsewhere. We have a post-16, there's four pupils in it. Three years ago there were six. I have been saying to parents you need to go and look elsewhere. Don't just stay at Mill Water because you think there's no other choice. Make the active choice that you think is the best thing you've ever seen. And it meets all your pupil's needs. But what I'm saying as a professional and a parent is it isn't. What's happening is the pupils are just moving down the corridor. It's more of the same. We've tried to adapt. We have met the needs of the local authority, which is meeting the needs of pupils through a different cohort to before but we do move pupils out back to mainstream if possible, or to Southbrook at Year seven and Petroc at Year 11 and what's happened is our post-16 ended up being the learners who can't have their needs met anywhere else. That is not an active choice. And as I said, there isn't even a bespoke sixth form space outside or inside, and this is the first year when they haven't been mixed with different year groups. In fact, two years ago, I think we've had a Year eight and Year nine in with Post-16 to try and meet the needs of the local authority's requests.

Parent – Which is really sad but we're like, but it's all to do with funding and not enough room and not enough buildings and staff.

SP - It partly is, but also it is but I have said to parents I want you to have an active choice. Three years ago, I said I want you to be knocking down the doors and saying make your provisions better and [Parent Name] the whole East Devon thing is a really good point. Actually you're closer to Dorset than you are too us

Parent - But the thing is I used to be Mill Water's PTFA treasurer. We got numbers like geographic from you through them. [Parent Name] and I looked at the same area in East Devon and counted the numbers. So in 2020, there were around 70 pupils living in East Devon, attending Mill Water school the rest, probably around 40 to 50 were from Mid Devon and also my point is pupils who are able to go back to mainstream school or Southbrook or Tiverton shouldn't be accepted by Mill Water school or by the SEND statutory team at first place. This is a school for pupils with severe, profound, multiple disabilities. I agree with you, [Parents Name] We must restrain [Pupil Name] near roads, while crossing roads, while at a car park. She must have very detailed transitions like here, the escorts must give her hand to hand because she has ran away. She has ran away at school trips, on the school grounds. It will be a massive safeguarding concern for me to send her to Petroc. It has got hundreds and hundreds of students and as I've said, Devon County, won't pay for a separate car so

my two points are Devon County have been pushing you heavily to increase numbers in lower classes, but Devon County have been sending you pupils from mid Devon here and pupils who could cope at mainstream schools with one to one. But our daughter, [pupil names] won't survive at mainstream schools. She will get killed. She will get abused. She will run away. So this is my point, why Devon County Council has been pushing you long term to accept pupils who can cope at mainstream schools with one to one and at least 40 pupils who come from the Mid Devon. In 2020, ten pupils lived in Tiverton. Around 27 pupils in Exmouth, Exeter 19 so why have they been pushing you? The only specialist setting for East Devon to accept pupils from Mid Devon, from Tiverton.

Parent – Can I ask? Could our children go from here to other SEND schools?

SN - So, if we just come back, the reason that the local authority are looking to place children here from wide geographic area. Firstly, that is what you get in a large rural authority. Unfortunately, we're not able to put specialist provision in every market town and therefore unfortunately in Devon. It's a beautiful place to live but children do have to travel sometimes quite long distances. And therefore, whilst the school sits in East Devon has a strategic role across the local authority. What we don't want, obviously children passing each other with taxis, etc. So that's that, in terms of the commissioning of places that confirms the point that the need to recommission our special school because the needs of the children that are coming through and needs specialist provision are changing. Demographics are changing. We've got lower numbers of children being born, so it's a very complex model of children's changing needs, demographic change.

So in terms of the young people that that are consulted that, I mean that's obviously a local authority responsibility. The school will just come out and they will say whether they can meet the child's needs and then the local authority will actually place. But the whole reason and our sufficiency strategy is we need to go in and look at all of our special schools because the needs of the children are changing.

Parent - But severe learning disabilities like my daughter with very complex needs. She requires specialist care, constant supervision. These children had diagnosis. I have the report here, clearly states there are only 0.1% of children of her age with such high cognitive needs so I agree. I see, I read, I follow Devon County post. I know numbers have been going up. But you've had children and young adults with very, very high complex needs here all the time. So in my opinion, in our opinion, these children and young adults need to be prioritised because they won't cope with long travel to Tiverton and also to add to it, Tiverton haven't had access to salt therapist to occupational therapists, physiotherapist. They can't find. They don't get visits there and my daughter has got salt provision. So where other SEND schools has been oversubscribed. Another specialist setting similar to Mill Water on the other side of Devon, she wouldn't survive the journey or other people wouldn't survive. She would end up at the psychiatric ward with the conditions you would trigger.

Parent – I know a lot of the children in school but non-verbal and I know over the years there is progression about when you get to like looking at post-16 and there's not. I get that you individually have to look at needs and then put a plan in place and I get that you're saying to parents don't limit the children, but a lot of the children are unable to go to other schools because they are limited. A lot of the children at home cannot be left in a room on their own because they could potentially kill themselves or eat something that they shouldn't, hang themselves on a blind it is to the point where they need from one to one, the majority of the time. And that's for a lot of our kids in this school.



Parent (online) – Yes so my points, I think that if our children could cope in a mainstream school with a supported TA, they would already be there. And I don't think that placing a child at the age of sixteen in that area is a good thing. And just because of lack of space, I think that the younger children coming through obviously need to be supported and have their needs met as well, but that should also call for more schools, more buildings for children of that age to be given that opportunity to have a placement. And I am aware that across Devon and Cornwall there is a lack of schools for children with all disabilities, whether they be medical or intellectual. And I think that the funding obviously isn't there to support any of these children anyway. But I do think that if we're moving our children from a place that is familiar, where they've come accustomed to the people and the places, if their understanding isn't that they can move forward like we do, know that if our children were placed in a mainstream school, we have the bullying every single day we face situations that we shouldn't have to face and that they shouldn't have to go through, and we know that putting them on a bus to travel an hour to somewhere that they don't know just after a couple of weeks, they'll get used to the area, but they don't know those people. The people don't know them, they're not comfortable, they don't have the ability to ring home and say, mum, I'm really struggling today. They just have the situation that they're in and I think that we have to support them better. Whether that means that the Council or, take it to the MP, I would happily stand in a court for our children and I would put across all the points that we need because our children are underfunded and these children are going to leave at sixteen. They're going to be lost adults. They're just going to go into a society that dismisses them and doesn't have a place for them. And I think to give up on them at that age is not appropriate and I understand that it is purely the space that we need, we need a space for them. We have Bicton College and I'm sure that most of those rooms aren't in occupancy all the time. I don't know why we can't have an agreement with, a school that is local. There's plenty of schools across that even if we had a setting where it was just for them where it was sectioned off where they could go and attend, that would be ideal. But to place them into a mainstream post-16 provision where we've all been to college, we know what it's like. We've all walked amongst people that are different and the majority of us show kindness and help people, but, even this weekend my daughter was facing a situation with two adults from Cornwall Council that mocked her and laughed at her. And I just think you can't control the situations they're in. And we need our children to have as much support as possible moving forward into adulthood and after post-16, unless they have a good support there, they really don't have much direction for the rest of their lives either. So I think it's really key that we focus on the children that are that age rather than worrying about the children that are coming into it and replacing them because it seems that it's one in one out rather than actually supporting the children at the other end of the year.

SP - Yes. Thank you, [Parent Name]. If I could just come back on the giving up point and I know that's not what you really mean in terms of to us as the leadership team of Mill Water, but actually the work we've been doing two and a half years is for that reason to improve the offer. So I think the point I tried to make three years ago and I'm making again is that we want it to be better and it shouldn't just be that the only option you've got is to join the school at four years old for sixteen years, stay in the same setting. The other thing with Petroc is it's not in the mainstream college, it's a SEND satellite as part of the mainstream college. It wouldn't, you know me, it would not be sending your children out to a mainstream college where they're going to have a have a tough time.

Parent - No, I know that, I think that you have always supported the children very well and I know that you always have their best interest. I just feel that across the board, I feel that it

needs to be noticed and the Council need to support and the academies need to support and understand that our children really do need this provision and this support at Mill Water or a close setting with Mill Water.

SP - Yes, that's what we're trying to do. But I really appreciate all comments. Thank you. There's 400 more places being created.

SN – I think we need to bear in mind in terms of seismic shift we have got in terms of the post-16 provision is that is the commissioning of post-16 provision. So on paper they are mainstream further education, there is an expectation government that our mainstream FE will support more children with special educational needs and therefore we're not just moving children into the provision we are providing bespoke facilities that can support the children's needs. So we've got a significant amount of investment going into Exeter College to build a bespoke building. We've done this in Petroc. We've done this in Petroc in Tiverton. We've done this in Petroc in North Devon and we're doing exactly the same within South Devon.

Parent – Could you do it in Bickton too?

SN - Yes, but I think we need, to bear in mind in terms of the figures that Sarah's provided. The successful transitions into those provision and therefore the real need to make sure we're actually commissioning the right stuff.

Parent - I think a lot of children from the school would go to Bickton and if that was an option.

SN - Yes so we are working with all of our FE colleges about commissioning the vision because there is an expectation and this isn't the only school that's been through this. We have other schools going through this at the moment that have reduced from nineteen to sixteen. Because the best offer for the children is going through a different transition. So your point around (SEND school) is we will be recommissioning (SEND school) and in that process we have massive amounts of data and spreadsheets and all kinds of stuff so we're looking at a continuum of provision and we know we're going to need sixth form provision in specialist, but I think the issue we have here is I think Sarah outlined it really, really well, A is the quality offer, and B where the children are

Parent - The quality offering? Because obviously you guys are amazing here and I get that is it the space?

SP - It's specialist space. So other SEND schools in Barnstable and Dawlish and Exeter and in Dartington they all have a separate area for post-16. So the pupils have that sense of I'm different, I've transitioned. I'm away from the youngsters and actually can set things up differently. So in terms of safety, the technology they're able to access is so limited because we have 4 year olds and we have to be so safe. We're unable to have any area because of the numbers and it has come from pressure. No, no one's pretending it's not come from pressure, we're built for 100, we've got 120. We've had 123 before- 23% above optimal use. But what's being squeezed is all the specialist spaces, which maybe you don't miss out on so much when you're five/ seven/ nine but actually, if we're talking about having to cope in the community, having to cope in the real world it's important

Parent - But that's when things are taking them out more and that's going to help them.

Parent – The question about space. You've got the new building opening up in Seaton. Could that not have been a sixth form place? And will that not then free up classrooms here?

SP - It was considered, was it right and it wasn't. It wasn't the right space. For 12 years the buildings I've sent to local authority to look at have been for post 16.

When Seton came forward, DCC approached me to see if it was any good for sixth form or key stage four and five and it just within terms of outside space, thinking about the learners that would stay on would potentially be on more complex, it's just too small. So what we've done to try and reduce the pressure on this building is make it for our formal pathway learners, the ones whose trajectory could have been Petroc because that's in the community, but it's too small. It's very small there's no food tech or additional spaces. But we did consider it.

Parent – would that then free up your facilities that you used to have here but had to be turned into classrooms or are DCC just pushing more children. The thing is, these children are going to become big children

SN - If I may. That's really important. Why you have good transition into further education, supporting the SEND challenge across the county. Because you're right, there are more children coming through with more complex need. Our education, health and care plans are projected to top out about 13,000 in three years' time compared to 9,000 in January last year. And therefore it's important that we have a continual provision that's going to meet all of those children's needs from the children who have got very complex, needs to those who just need a more supportive environment. So that's why we're building in our FE schools. That's why we will commission all of our schools. We will go through a process with all of our schools including (SEND school).

Parent - Doesn't the transport costs, these growing number of children that are going to be in the specialist school, that provision for the long term, the cost of transport alone not shipping them and driving them to Tiverton or Exeter. Is there any plans to build within East Devon for a sixth form too? So there's space for these before the Will Water is not.

SN - I think the expectation is we will have to hold to some Post-16 provision and I think we go back to the post-16 provision in an area where you can get that wider social outputs, but the expectation is that the further education will be supporting the overarching majority of children with education, health and care plans who do who go on to post-16 education, some will go into employment.

Parent – When I look at [Pupil Name] as we all do I don't see him having a job. I've worked hard to be able to do what I can and my husband too, so we can have as much money as we can now to be able to meet his needs, he's going to leave me as his carer 24/7 because it won't be able to work. And it's really hard to even work in the hell as an SEN parent when I'm sleep deprived. He does not sleep. Life's so challenging he can't be left on his own at home, at all in the home. And I'm trying my hardest to work now when I could easily just try and use some time when he is school. But I know that when he gets to the age of, however, possibly even sixteen, if you don't have an option of a college that I'm going to be his full time carer and then we're financially going to be in crisis as a family. We've got only one adult working then mentally, we're all just going to be in crisis.

Parent - All of this information was new for me, but is it not possible to make some kind of an agreement with Bicton College? The kids are already used to coming here. And by the time they get to that age, it's a similar environment, but also different, not the same. So they get that different environment into different community space, but also in the in a familiar surroundings. And also one of the parents was saying earlier after that age if you put them

into mainstream or like a different setting like that, mental health wise it's going to be a whole other different situation. At that age there's more bullying. There's so many other issues that the kids are dealing with and then you add this on to that at that really critical time.

Parent - There's a fine balance between opening their world up and getting them used to roads and traffic lights and all of that, but also some of our children will never be able to cross the road safely. So it's about safety netting them.

SP - Absolutely. Yes, you're absolutely right. And all the points are really fair. I think the other work we've done is with social care and we've worked really, really hard. So our three day off in post-16, the other two days we've worked hard with social care, so they are providing some sort of enabling wrap around and the reason for that and [Parent Name], it's a fair point, it's very difficult to say I don't think my son will have a job and I think it's very brave to say that. As a professional, we're criticised for putting ceilings on aspiration. For that reason we need to make sure that our pupils can generalise their skills, transfer skills we're giving them here. And we're talking about being so protected. If they say five days till 19 in the same building. Beautiful grounds but away from society, all the comments you've made about society, we need to educate society as well to be better placed.

Parent - Doing three days here and then two days enabling to me sounds OK. I would be happy for [Pupil Name] to do that rather than sending him to Petroc.

SP – And for that reason, again, it's about that chance to transition. So a lot of points we make are pro our pupils, but almost against in terms of we want to keep them so safe but actually what we need them to be able to do is to practise those transitions and for parents and carers, not to have to be full time because you know that they can go with a range of enablers. We talk about education and then at college, whether we prepare them, because actually we're talking to the education, healthcare and act when it came to the 0-25 team was about finishing courses they've started at sixteen/seventeen, not just about having more of what, because we need to be careful that Mill Water and as their head teacher I hope you see this as a brave thing to say, we need to make sure that we're not just babysitting your pupils for three more years because we are so limited in resources. We need to be aspirational and pushing them to be the best they can be.

Parent - Who else is going to push them? That's what I do at home. And I feel like when they're older, even more so it's not babysitting, but just trying to get them to just be able to keep be happy but also life skills to be able to carry out personal care

SP - Which is really important for to do and for us to push that we need to make sure we fit that our learners can do that with a variety of settings. We've worked with Cedar, with enablers, with the Colleges.

Parent - Is it not possible for Bicton College to come up with an agreement for transition?

SP - I think in terms of commissioning, Bicton's unique selling point is for pupils keen for a career in outdoor: farming practical skills. So some of our pupils have been able to go there but we've what we found is previously it hasn't been right, so they have dropped out of those courses. That's what we got to do the work we are doing with colleges in terms of sufficiency and placement planning. Exeter have come to the table. Bicton, I'm not sure what conversations you're having (asked of SN).

SN - We're starting to open up conversations with them around the same commissioning. They're also doing a lot of work down to pre 14 for those children and young people who want to go on that pathway into agriculture.

Parent - But we don't know what our children want to do because they can't tell us and they don't know what they want to do either.

SP - And that's why we need to give more opportunities so they don't just end up going to the garden centre because that's all there is on offer. Actually we've now got them going to the leisure centre, they're attending spinning classes. They went to the cinema last week we are opening up that enrichment.

Parent – is it the formal or semi-formal cohort that are doing that

SP – As many cohorts as possible. Semi-formal learners did two blocks of spinning down at the leisure centre and that started as really difficult for them. The likes of having to interact with the public, but actually because of the support we give them here, that was huge a success. There were times every single learner was able to book themselves in and we're able to show the talkers because we're talking about pre-verbal pupils as well were able to use AAC devices to say it's too loud, it's too bright. I'm going to go into [Parent Name].

AH – Before [Parent Name] we have another question in the comments. Can you explain what the DCC demographic projections look like and the assumptions and evidence that supports that. Also if you were to build a SEN hub for Devon, then what is the case for locating it in a market town such as to Tiverton versus Exeter.

SN - So the SEND sufficiency strategy will be published week after next. We've have got a professional demographer to do the work for us, so it builds on our population changing. So if I give you an instant of our population changing in Year 11, we've got about 10,000 pupils across the county, so we've currently got in our reception cohort 6,200 so there's 50% more children in Year 11. So we're going through that massive demographic change. We've also looked at what we've seen in terms of the change in needs of children and young people and the areas of growth have been around social, emotional, mental health, autism and speech and language. So the traditional cohort of Mill Water and similar schools has actually fallen away with demographics. Doesn't mean there isn't a need.

Parent – How about how many with EHCP's?

SN - What happens is, in terms of education, health and care plans obviously as you get older, you get more children in each year group, but the growth as we see will go from age six to seven, seven to eight, eight to nine, nine to ten is in that autism, social, emotional, mental health and speech and language so.

Parent - I was just wondering if other buildings have been looked into in light of the local government reorganisation that's sort of on the horizon. So if we were to say, lose our district councils, could the District Council buildings be looked at as potentially a new provision could be set up in East Devon, so you've got Black Down House at Honiton, which is much closer to this side of East Devon that could potentially be put in the mix. And I also don't know if depending on how they divide Devon, whether that would have any difference on what becomes available to us and what we might need. We could end up with a much larger area, at the moment we're carved up into all the districts, but if we are under a unitary government or a unitary council, is that going to make things worse? Are we going to be then fighting for the spaces that are left with even more people? It just seems like if Mill Water are

giving up on their post-16 then we need a replacement. We don't need to be funnelled into a pre-existing place that will just be oversubscribed. I think Devon County Council need to be looking at finding a new place in East Devon that they can set up for our children.

SN - If I pick up very quickly on local government reorganisation. So Devon County Council's proposal is that the districts and Devon County Council in its existing footprint will become a unitary authority and therefore in terms of the statutory responsibilities, the provision across the county that will remain exactly the same because you'll have a children's services and the inclusion and learning team which is what we sit in. It doesn't make any difference to the sufficiency needs if for example, as you know, there are some proposals, there's a 541 where Plymouth stays as it is, and Torbay joins a few districts and Devon joins a few districts. It doesn't make any difference to the sufficiency planning and we sufficiently plan across Plymouth, we sufficiently plan across Cornwall, Somerset, Dorset, so local government reorganisation A we don't know what it's going to look like and B we won't have a clear picture probably until the new academic year. But even if there were quite significant changes to the way that Devon runs with more than one unitary, or three unitaries, or four unitaries, it includes Torbay and Plymouth, there will still be an expectation that pupils will be able to travel to the provision that they need whether it's in one local authority or another.

Parent - Has there been any talk of opening a new setting for children with SEN and complex needs?

SN – So the sustainability strategy which isn't published yet promotes the expansion of, probably about another 300 special school places across the county up to 2030. So that will mean since 2018 we've doubled the amount of special school places that we have within the county, which includes expanding this school, which includes expanding other special schools.

Parent – What about a new provision?

SN – So there is one new school planned in Cranbrook, which is part of the Cranbrook Plan for social, emotional mental health.

Parent – For children with profound needs or just children, because there's so many different levels, and I know that obviously all children need that support and I get that. But the children that are very high need, I feel should be prioritised.

SN - So within our commissioning and with our commissioning discussions, what we're trying to stop doing is using what's on the front of an education, health and care plan as the be all and end all so we are talking more about the children that come to this school will be able to, the children that come to school will benefit, the children that come to this school will be able to transfer the to the FE. So the new school in Cranbrook at the moment will be looking at social emotional mental health, that's what we bid for. We will review that during our commissioning but what we'll be talking about is not necessarily the one line of parameters and discourse it'd be about what the children need and what they what they can get. But if I just come back to SEND hubs were mentioned. The overarching driving need we've got to meet our CGT are within those three cohorts. That is where we are seeing our need being driven and that is where we're struggling with our sufficiency duty. The other thing I will say as well is we're under pressure sufficiency wise. But Devon has twice as many children in a special school compared to its statistical neighbours. So the drive now and the government drive is talk about sending reform, white papers and are they going to come down the track is all about increasing the capacity of mainstream schools to support children within their

community and that cuts across to our further education as well, but we need to make sure that we commission, we've got and our commissioning strategy goes from here to here. So the young children, the young people that you're describing to us today and it's not being lost on us I know that, we will still need to make sure that there is a good offer that meets their needs.

Parent - But I think somewhere like Mill Water that is for children at post-16 age. So if they can't come here they need to be in somewhere which is a complex, severely, profound provision, not put into a learning hub that is attached to a main school.

Parent – Yes I agree. There is a number of children who are approaching age for post-16 and you are just about proposing to close post-16 provision which is half an hour drive from our homes and as [Parent Name] has said we won't be able to drive to Tiverton just to pick up our child or go for meetings frequently. We can do it here. It's like if [Pupil Name] is unwell, dysregulated [Parent Name] stops work, drives to Millwater and picks up we won't be that flexible and I fully agree what you've said, but my question is there is five children or approaching age when they need post-16 provision. The building at Seaton I used to take [Pupil Name] there to children's clubs. It's a bigger building. She would cope there. She would be fine there, it's almost in the centre, 5 minutes' walk away from the beach, from the gym, from the town centre, from Tesco. So I feel that this building and provision would be much better for [Pupil Name] and children who live in this area and who are on her bus then transporting them to Tiverton with all the pickups transporting them, will take an hour and a half with all the pickups and so Devon County will need to pay the extra cost there. It will be extremely stressful and safeguarding issues for our children. And then, on the other hand, you will be transporting children or young people living in the Exeter or Exmouth area back to Seaton, so we as parents can't see the logic that building which would be suitable for post-16 in Seaton won't be used for young people living in East Devon. Instead, they will be transporting to Tiverton, and then you will transport other older children back to Seaton. It will cause serious safeguarding, health, well-being issues for our children. This is the reason why I need to be so passionate about it, because I've spent hundreds, thousands of hours with professionals. So many agencies have been involved. [Pupil Name] care just to get her where she is now. More settled. But it's a very, very fragile balance. And I agree with [Parent Name] we feel that our children need to be considered differently than. I've read the local offer website. It's very detailed, very interesting. You mentioned the most vulnerable children or young people, but in my opinion our children should be in a separate group, extremely vulnerable children or young people, because, as I've said, I need to restrain my daughter frequently so she won't get killed. She can't go anywhere on her own. We need to watch her at home. She eats items. But thanks to the school support she has improved. Or she's been more settled so she's had less unsafe behaviours but there's a lot of safeguarding concerns as well.

Parent - We want to thank you as well and we obviously get that you're saying you feel like you're not giving them what they deserve, but I don't feel like, well, we all feel like and we know that your best interest is for them too. And we completely, I want to thank you for all of your care and your support with the children over the years. And I don't feel like you're giving up on them. But I feel like you've been pushed into a corner where you it's hard to get out of and at the end of the day, what's happening here is that we just haven't got the space and provision.

Parent This place in Seaton. That's nineteen. I don't know if it's freeing up space. What are the plans for that space?

AM – Yes, just to say that obviously in an idea world, we'd love to have a Mill Water that goes up to sixteen and a Mill Water that goes from sixteen to nineteen and one that goes from nineteen to the rest of their life. But obviously what we're trying to do is make the best situation and a lot of work has gone into the work at Petroc supporting things, training and up skilling the staff so that it is running in tandem with what we do. So they are familiar with the communication needs of the pupils, behavioural needs and the room set up is similar, but a next step up so it's improving and developing their functionality. But also what they can do that we can't do is sometimes the risk that we have when they stay here too long is the safety. So then there is no transfer of these skills.

Parent - But they are going out if they're here only three days a week they are still going out into the public two days a week so they are getting that. They are somewhere safe. We know that they're safe. We get a bit of respite. The other two days they are with enablers or one day they're with the enablers and the day they're with us.

SP - It's an option that needs to be considered. Remember this is a consultation, like last time.

Parent – Also don't underestimate the safe space for our children. It is not necessarily them being stuck in a rut with them being here. Other schools do it do it. All these other schools are doing it. It makes them feel safe at lower their anxiety, it allows them to come to school. We have a lot of children that struggle with demands and they need to feel safe and understood by their caring adults. And there's nothing wrong with the children feeling safe and going out and about, they don't need to be five minutes from the beach, they can go out and drive to the beach. But it takes my child sometimes an hour to just come from his bedroom upstairs to downstairs to then get to the car. That's just a transition in his safe space. So the staff are incredible, but it's also the building and the feeling safe I think that they're always going to need to feel right into adulthood. They've got development delay, cognitively they might still feel very young. They might always feel six/ five. So that feeling of safe that's always going to be paramount for them and to us.

SP – Yes the fact we did the fundraising for the outdoor classroom and the local authority helped with that because it meets two needs and predominantly why we got fundraising pledged is because we said actually for families the feeling of isolation is not OK. As you know our pupils find it hard to access HAF

Parent – [Pupil name] used to attend that. That was great because you went out and it was just a few of us and you went to Budleigh or we'd come in and stay with them and did arts and crafts but all of that got scrapped.

SP – Yes it didn't work so we asked parents what they wanted and it's about that sense of community. And [Parent Name] exactly as you've said, it's the area that makes us feel safe. So the outdoor classroom is going to be 52 week accessible and that's on the back of parents saying we want somewhere to go. So actually let yourself into the building, kitchenette and you can use the grounds as well. So that is practise for, not necessarily just being in this building. So I take on we do need our people to feel safe.

Parent – And this area is so much beautiful, why are we wasting it? Our children could be enjoying this. And we don't need to be having this conversation because there would be a Post-16 available.



AG – There a couple of points I would like to make. Question for Simon. Did you just say that there are twice as many children or young people in this county who need special provision within education?

SN - No, I said we've got twice as many children in our special schools compared to our statistical neighbours. So, if you look at our population and you compare the number of children we've got compared to our close statistical neighbours.

AG - Do you mean like Dorset?

SN – No, statistical neighbours are usually local authorities of a similar type size so similar type size, 800,000 population.

AG – So twice as many pupils, but not twice as much funding?

SN - Well funding is a different. So you're not funded for the high needs block for a number of children who have education, health care plan.

AG - But also Kellie Knott, who I believe is she's still with DCC. She told me at a consultation meeting that you're also twice as likely as the pupil to be in the private sector in Devon than you are in in any other county. So you've got twice as many pupils and you've got half the amount of provision.

SN - It's not quite twice, but it is I think 6% compared.

AG - From local authorities so that is critical and it's a crisis.

SN – And that is why the recommissioning of our special schools is a key part of our sufficiency and not continuing to build provision. OK, so it's described like building a sixth lane on the M25.

AG - I'm Chair of governors. My son, his needs are not as severe and as great as the children that we've generally been talking about. But what happened in the transition, is I've been able to manage to incorporate social care, within Devon County Council Reaching for Independence team and others by getting out there and knocking on the doors and everything I've managed to transition things whereby my son came out of Mill Water he did go to Petroc and Petroc is local to me, so that doesn't take into account the concerns of coming from East Devon, but I also managed with the assistance of social care to get some additional funding that is available and I still have that funding to send [Name] because he was attending Petroc, for the provision unless it's changed, was only over four days and some people only get three days.

But there are other places you can go, for example, where [Name] attends a place called Heathfield Farm, which is part Devon Linkup and we happen to have the chair of that charity with us at the moment. But there he can expand his learning and diversify a little bit. So there are possibilities and it's not an easy road and I understand that. I understand that for all of you I've been there myself. My son was in mainstream education before he came to Mill Water in the (school name) in Tiverton and that as was described ended up being babysitting because he was dipping in and out of mainstream and when he was in mainstream everything was going over his head so he wasn't gaining anything. But it is possible to prove these things and it's difficult, but it's a road that that you can get down. I appreciate all of your concern and having been a governor of the school for ten years and having a son that's now coming up to his 24th year all the way through the system with an EHCP since he was

four/ five it is very hard and I think to make your concerns known is very valuable and these sort of consultations and to talk to.

Parent - It's the distance for us. The distance can mean that my daughter will need a psychiatric care because she was in such a state.

SP - I've got some parents online with hands up. [Parent Name] I'll come to you.

Parent - So I think you mentioned earlier that by 2030 three hundred more places that you're hoping to have available, which is great. But there is over 800 children in Devon and Cornwall that are SEN that don't already have a placement at all at a school. By the time we get to 2030 the majority of the children who are in need of this place are going to have left school and that won't help any of them and also with the enabling side, we have not had enabling for three years because no one from that sector can come back to me and get a panel ready for [Pupil Name] care. So I don't trust that when she gets to sixteen that she would actually have any support or enabling team. I have gone back and forth for three years with the 0-25 team and even the Assistant Head at the school has written for me and her teacher last year, her name escapes me at the minute, but she was brilliant and she also wrote and still we have nothing. We have no communication with that team and I think that, the distance is a problem for a lot of people but that isn't my main concern. My main concern is the actual provision itself and the environment of that provision. [Pupil Name] trip, she has epilepsy, she has seizures on the bus. She had one on Friday morning on the bus and it is a huge worry. But also if I can get her somewhere, whether it be ten minutes or an hour, I don't like the distance at all. And obviously with work it's very difficult, but I'd much rather her be in a setting that I am sending her to knowing that she will be supported properly and receiving the right care and encouragement but also I just need to know that it's not somewhere that I'm sending her like to the lion's den. That's what I don't want to feel like and I just don't understand why we get to a point where we're actually we fought all of their lives for these positions and these places and we're constantly fighting for them to be, helped and put in the best situations. And I think that I know that a lot of the time it is funding and it's just where do we put it. And there isn't enough funding to go around. But I just think that we have got a huge amount of children in this part of the country that need that support. And I think if the parents are, we are all obviously shouting loud enough to have a point that we want the same thing, but we just still need it to be in a place that is a comfortable environment and the focus needs to be how can we make this happen and not whether or not it's worthy of happening.

Parent - Is this Petroc in Barnstable?

SP - No, there is a Petroc in Barnstable but there's a Petroc in Tiverton.

Parent - Oh, right, OK. That was my main question. But my point is that I understand that these bolt-ons and add-ons to mainstream colleges would potentially be good for these children. But for me and a lot of people in this meeting, our children are so severe and complex that I'm not convinced that that would ever be an option for our children. So is there going to be emphasis on creating a suitable place, that is, like you've said, about investigation work on buildings and it just seems to be a lot of Petroc been mentioned and I feel like a bit more emphasis needs to be placed on actually creating a setting for the children that are so complex and severe because those ones won't necessarily ever be able to go to these colleges.

SP – Yes thank you. Petroc has been spoken about a lot because it's the work we've been doing with an existing college so Simon's work is about sufficiency of places that already exist it's making it the right places for the right children as opposed to, shoehorning in. But that's why I'm talking about Petroc that's the work we've been doing since the last consultation, which happened over three and a half years ago.

SP – It's [Parent Name] can I just reassure on Petroc? Because obviously, [Pupil Name] is very complex. He's non-verbal, totally reliant for the rest of his life on support. But he we went to look at it. He's in Year 10 now, but we went and looked last year and we were really, really pleased and I would feel very comfortable putting [Pupil Name] there and it was lovely to see all the Mill Water pupils there already, really well looked after. You have to go and look at it. But they have got amazing intentions. The facilities are good.

Parent - We're quite far off at this point, but it does come round quickly, but that's definitely reassuring to note. But again, limited spaces that is going to be another fight going through the getting them in.

Parent - Yeah. I just wanted to say that that.

SP – Thank you (parent name). That has happened on the back of the work we did. Three years ago I don't know if you would have made those comments. If this consultation comes to the point where there is no sixth form at Mill Water, that's not Mill Water's work ending. Mill Water's work actually, if anything, increases. And it would be really easy for me to keep your pupils for sixteen years. That's the easy job. I don't need pupils; the school is full. We keep the ones that we've known for sixteen years. The hard work starts in making sure that Bicton, Exeter, South Devon College, meet the needs of our pupils because this is not a case of us letting them drop off the end of a cliff. But it wasn't good enough provision and we've worked really hard with them. They've improved the offer, they're doing the work as well. But the provision is now much better and can meet the needs of more pupils. So we appreciate those comments. Thank you [Parent Name].

And Petroc has grown numbers and that's again the work that Simon is doing. There's 400 plus places that are being provided. But it's the right places. We could find 400 places, probably quite easily. It's about being the right places for the right pupils and in some ways is win lose. When we were in Honiton some people's travel 5 minutes and have to travel half an hour here and vice versa. So there will never be the perfect place for all the pupils. What there needs to be is the perfect course and the perfect college for all the pupils, rather than just being a no choice, choice.

SN - Can I just say in terms of those 400 places. There's a £10 million investment programme going on across the county in all those four main sites that Sarah just mentioned, including a significant investment in bespoke provision in Exeter. So, there is significant amount of investment going into create those places to support the FE colleges, support children with required levels of need. I just didn't make that clear before, but this isn't 400 places. We have a little bit here, a little bit there. These are bespoke properly designed, properly thought out needs of the children all fed into that process. I was at Petroc the other day, the facilities there are compared to what the children got here for post-16 are really good quality facilities, really good quality.

GC – Certainly, I think sat here listening and it's a really meaningful, purposeful conversation. I think I just echo some of the points. Mill Water is a high quality offer and everyone around this table has confirmed the care, commitment, compassion, knowledge of

the team, led by what is, an outstanding head teacher and privilege to have this school in the trust. I think your concerns are really valid and they've been put across in terms of provision, where it is, how young people will get there, what the future looks like. But I think Sarah really bravely saying as a head teacher, really proud of the offer, it's important to have high quality choice and what Sarah is reflecting on and the proposal is reflecting on is due to numbers and choice is Mill Water continually the best place for young people for that period of time. I agree with Sarah. I actually think the easiest option would be to continue doing what we're doing, but I don't think, and I agree with Sarah, that's necessarily the right thing for our young people. I think the option, not the proposal, is hard work for Mill Water, and indeed the trust, because not only are we advocating for high quality here, we are influencing an advocating for high quality choice. And that's the important word here. I think is choice. We're also as a trust CEO, I'm sitting here thinking, what does commissioning a special school look like? Well, we'll advocate for our children. And they are our children. When local authority talk about commissioning special schools of age three or four or five sit within the trust within Devon so we will have a voice. A voice for schools, a voice for young people and that's really important. I think there is a continuity of high quality provision from early years through to post-16 and we are very much a part of providing that as Mill Water provision. I understand change and transition is challenging and I understand that and I'm also sitting here as a trust thinking why aren't I talking to Bicton about Post-16. Stuff like that is going through my mind which might be supported by Devon might not be, but there's that involved as well. So there's a lot of thoughts, which is exactly what this meeting is designed to do and pull out from everyone informing the process. But I think ultimately what's best for the young people here now and those coming through as we think about SEN provision in a society that we're living, actually paramount for school, I think that's been the proposal in the comments today.

Parent - Hi. I've got a few worries. Obviously. I've had a few boys go through the school. Did amazing work with [Pupil Name]. I spoke to Andrew before about [Pupil Name] having struggling with settling. Now. [Pupil Name] is verbal. He can be quite aggressive in his ways. It depends where you live to whether they will take him. I we could use Petroc we've got issues where [Pupil Name] won't settle, he won't settle in a new setting. We could do all sorts of transitioning, but he still wouldn't settle now. Devon County have come back to me and said Petroc won't take him because of where we lived. SEND schools are oversubscribed. I've also spoke to them recently about [Pupil Name] in a couple of years having to attend there. They said they probably wouldn't have a space for him. A different school said they could offer a space for [Pupil Name] with his other brother, who's also there. But again, like another parent said, my other son is very verbal. He understands he can, he's academically able in a small setting. [Pupil Name] wouldn't cope there. He wouldn't conform. So my only option is then either fighting to keep him at Mill Water where he said it wouldn't be an appropriate provision for him because he's verbal, there wouldn't be a cohort which I completely understand. But then where can he go? Social care told me with [Pupil Name] can't help you till he's eighteen. So I've I will have nothing for [Pupil Name]. [Pupil Name] will be home from sixteen. What do I do with him then?

SP – Yes, good point [Parent Name]. That's the work-what is right. If you think about your boys, how individual they all are, how different, how unique it is about getting it right for the individual. And being part of the trust was about, where can we get it right for our pupils. There's colleagues on the line that work at local SEND school The executive head and I have discussed post 16 pupils. The recommissioning of SEND schools work is starting. A local SEND school that was two schools that became one, and then their cohort has

significantly changed over the years, probably more than any. But again, is there potential that we can work together that way. It's about place planning and making sure that there's that that choice, which is the most important thing that I want you as families to have.

Parent – [Pupil Name] has been assessed emotionally she's at early approachment stage, which is like fifteen months to two years. So she's emotionally very, very low, which affects her mental health or self-regulation. She needs trusted adults to help herself regulate. She can't self-regulate on her own, so this is the reason why she's had lots of unsafe, dangerous behaviours. She has been assessed by the clinical psychologist by specialist occupational therapist. They've said how the low emotionalised stage affect has on self-regulation, so I agree with our parents. For us, I have two concerns the distance, but the other concern is [Pupil Name] needs very basic but specialist care. Her carers need to be highly knowledgeable, experienced, know very well because unknown people unknown escorts, 1 to 1 are massive triggers for her. The transport, long distance travelling, another massive trigger. All this have been described in her professional reports, so for us for a high number of parents, our main concern is our children have got very, very high basic needs. They need to be watched constantly, supported with personal care, with toileting. We've got to remind her to wipe, close toilet, wash hands. We've got to prepare food for her, but she's unable to self-regulate, so if I sent her on a bus to Tiverton the journey will be long for them. She will be dysregulated, unable to absorb anything by the time she gets to Tiverton. So there are serious concerns regarding basic health, emotional, mental. Lots of serious concerns just to meet their basic needs and keep them safe. Our priority is their safety and help with self-regulation.

SP – Yes, and when we're talking about self-regulation and personal care, we need to make sure is college the right thing for our learners.

Parent - But she needs the education because she can read a bit. She's been writing a bit more, so she needs to be educated until the age of eighteen. I don't want to care for her at the age of sixteen. She's got weekly enabling, she goes to the Bicton park where she loves it. She needs the soft play to do her or roly-poly's, the stream to calm down but she needs a safe space. We want her in the education.

Parent – Just one more question for Devon County. So if we are forced to send our children to Tiverton, will the transport coordination service provide a bus for our children and escorts. Because post-16 transport is completely different then our current transport, they are not obliged to arrange transport and it will be doubled distance, so it will be higher costs four times a week.

SN - Just taking that last point. We've also got cohorts of children coming through who need provision here, who, if they are getting that provision here they're needing transport as well. So there the transport policy is as read. And therefore is not an automatic statutory entitlement, but there is entitlement to ensure that we meet children's needs, so that will be borne out through the consultation. The consultation document will talk a bit around this very thorough document that will come out on the back of it, that sets out, sets out the transport requirements and then therefore see.

Parent - Because as I've said, today we are flexible with this school because it's 25 minutes' drive from our home here but Tiverton, it's M5 going through lanes and it's an hour at least, so it's we won't be able to drive, drop [Pupil Name] off at Tiverton an hour in the morning, come back another hour for us. Drive again to Tiverton to collect drive back [Parent Name] works full time and I can't drive.

SP - Yes, thank you, I appreciate that. OK, I'm going to bring it to a close. I just wanted to make sure that parents realise that this is being recorded. FAQs will be updated and as they come in, please feel free after what you've heard to ask the questions, make comments. They'll all be collated and put online. Councillors have been being made aware they were invited. I'm not sure she's able to attend but will be sent the recording and invite to the next meeting. Shona I don't know if you wanted to say again what next steps will be because some parents weren't able to get in beginning. What next steps will be in terms of consultation and timeline?

SM - Yes, of course. It's really important to have attended the meeting and future meeting if you weren't able to attend today. All these points, as Sarah said, will be recorded and summarised to the Department of Education. The requirements are that there is a period of consultation, minimum of three weeks, then the trust and the school have to consider the consultation responses and make a decision whether or not to submit a significant change application to the Department for Education SW Regions Group. That's a tier one significant change. It could be escalated if there's concerns or risks or number of objections. All the consultation response summary will be submitted as part of the application to the DfE. They'll make their decision internally and all parties have been notified. DCC is a statutory consultee, not a decision maker. Because Mill Water is an Academy school.

SN - Can I just confirm that obviously we've got a transcript of this. We will be encouraging parents to make individual responses to the actual consultation.

SM - Absolutely. It's all in the consultation document.

Parent – how can we request this to be escalated to the higher tier because it's a safeguarding concerns for us.

SM - It's a decision of the Department for Education, but they will review all the consultation responses and make their decision.

SN - Just to reassure you Shona and I won't be sitting behind them making a decision. So we are a statutory consultant in terms of sufficiency planning, but we will brief our cabinet member who was hoping to get in today the consultation response from the local authority will probably go through the send strategic director, who's obviously aware of the proposal, but it will also go through our cabinet member as well.

Parent – Will they be at the next meeting?

SP - We did invite them, but you will invite them again and she's aware of it.

SN – Yes, I'm the same strategic director for today that's my role as their deputy. People have made representations to members all already. But I will come back to the local authority's responsibilities around sufficiency duty. Through the Child Care Act that we've got a sufficiency duty and that's principally what we will be responding on. But obviously we will be taking into account what we hear from here for parents and that's helpful for planning the future as well. If you think if you think about how far we've travelled in two 1/2 years where we've now got the majority of children going in and being successful at Petroc. That's because we've been here before and the work that the school have done, the investment, the local authority has done, invested within the buildings and commissioning. So the fact that we've got very small numbers in sixth form a whole cohort this year probably going to FE shows how far we've come in in, in two 1/2 years. And that was based on

parental feedback, so we don't just look at the spreadsheet, we have looked at this previously and worked really hard with the school doing most of the legwork.

Parent - Can we get more information regarding the transport from the Seaton area?

SN - Yes so we've picked up loads of frequently asked questions today. So this is really, really helpful to. We can get these questions out to the head of transport.

Parent - You can access our doctors reports and speak to professionals at the Learning Disability Service. Just I think because the children's needs are very complex and the transport can be dysregulating them and it can traumatise them and cause serious consequences like aggression towards the school staff and so the transport is extremely important for us.

SP - OK, I'm going to enter there. Parents who have joined online. I really appreciate your time. I will get this the date out at the end of the day today for the second meeting and as I say, please send in your comments as we saw two 1/2 years ago. It's a consultation. It's not a decision I've already made so your thoughts and comments are really, really important, so please send them in all questions or comments are all valuable and I will get everything written that and it'll be online ASAP, but I appreciate your time. Those who joined online. And pleasure to see you in person. Thank you for your time.

Meeting ended: 11:27am