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**23 September 2013**

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Consultation Response on the possible closure of Skerton Community High School, Owen**

**Chief Executive**

**Mark Cullinan**  
**Chief Executive**

Town Hall  
Dalton Square  
LANCASTER LA1 1PJ

DX63531 Lancaster

Your consultation document on the possible closure of Skerton Community High School was considered by Lancaster City Council's Council Business Committee on Thursday 12th September 2013. The council does not support the possible closure, and would like Lancashire County Council to maintain the school on account of its special education provision, the implications of closure for the local community, and the significant housing developments taking place in the area.

Skerton Community High School (SCHS) provides a unique environment to develop the education and wellbeing of vulnerable children. It is recognised in the consultation booklet that pupils with special educational needs or disabilities represent a relatively high proportion of the school roll and, whilst SCHS does not have a designated special education facility, the council recognises the high standard of pastoral care and educational support which teachers and support staff at the school currently provide. Whilst educational outcomes at the school may be lower than average on account of the high proportion of children with SEND, it should be noted that a recent Ofsted report found that SCHS is a very caring school, in which staff ensure good personal support for students.

The relatively low numbers of pupils on the school roll is cited as a key reason for the proposal to close the school, due to the higher annual cost per child compared to neighbouring schools. However, in a school with a much higher than average number of children with special educational needs, smaller class sizes will allow pupils to benefit from a lower pupil-to-teacher ratio. How the needs of these children, and those of future generations, will be met elsewhere is a matter of great concern to the council, and we urge you to maintain the children's wellbeing as the chief consideration when making the final decision.



Aside from the negative effect on current and potential future pupils, Lancaster City Council is concerned about the effect of this proposal on the local community, especially in light of the closure of Skerton Primary School in 2010 and Luneside Resource Centre in 2011. Lancaster City Council has invested considerable resource in Skerton over recent years through the Connecting Communities in the Skerton Area project, and the council is anxious that this work is not compromised by the proposed closure.

Skerton Community High School was at the heart of that project, providing a focal point for the community and hosting meetings, whilst the pupils were fully engaged in the project and helped to set its priorities from an early stage. One of the main findings from the project was that SCHS is a major contributor to the sense of place and identity in Skerton; not only providing a central place for community groups to meet, but because the children who study there are recognised as a crucial part of the wider community.

The closure of yet another public building would send out a very conflicting message about the future of Skerton as a community.

This is particularly pertinent in light of the new houses being built on Pinfold Lane and Ashbourne Road in Skerton. Together with a shortage of houses in Lancaster, which may lead to further development in the area, the closure of Skerton Community High School would present an extremely worrying situation for families with young children living in the area, or those in need of housing.

Taking into account the school's important community role, an increase in local housing and, most importantly, the education and well-being of vulnerable children, the council calls on Lancashire County Council not to close SCHS, but to develop its potential as a quality school and focus of the local community.

Yours faithfully,



**Mark Cullinan**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**