Notes from Asymmetric Week Public Meeting, Jedburgh, 21/1/14

Reasons for the proposal:
1. Educational reasons – collaboration, meetings, increased training opportunities for teachers.
2. Financial Reasons - £11 million to be taken off SBC Education Budget in 5 year plan.

Overall there will be no reduction in total pupil teaching hours and staff will remain in school on the afternoon that the school is closed, for purposes of meetings, collaborative work between primary and high schools, training etc.

In terms of high schools, the intention is that all 9 SBC high schools will have aligned timetables i.e. 33 periods of 50 minutes per week, and that course choice subject columns will also be aligned. This will enable courses to be offered between schools, which means a more effective use of reducing numbers of teachers. It is estimated that this will save £500,000 per year. This would enable pupils will have more chance of being able to undertake less popular subjects that cannot be justified for 2 or 3 pupils in one school. There may also be opportunities for educational and other activities (such as sport and drama) on the half day that schools are closed.

Concerns raised by attendees included childcare costs and the effects of the longer school day on younger children.

Considerations for the next planning steps include:
1. The exact length of school days (will be varied in different primaries to suit).
2. School transport realignment.
3. Ensure IT structures and systems are in place to support developing curriculum opportunities.
4. How school meals will operate.
5. Engagement with partners including potential childcare providers.

Answers to questions from the floor:

1. The asymmetric week will not do away with in-service days (5 per year).
2. The half day will not necessarily be a Friday, but it is likely.
3. There will be no ‘one size fits all’ policy for primary schools as regards timings of school day.
4. Other support staff, admin staff etc. – hours may be moved around but will not be cut.