

**Council**

27 March 2014

**Agenda Item 104**

Brighton &amp; Hove City Council

**Subject:** Brighton & Hove School Organisation Plan 2013-2017  
– Extract from the Proceedings of the Children & Young People Committee meeting held on the 10 March 2014

**Date of Meeting:** 27 March 2014

**Report of:** Monitoring Officer

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**Wards Affected:** All

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE*****Action Required of the Council:***

To receive the item referred from the Children & Young People Committee for approval:

**Recommendation:**

- (1) That the School Organisation Plan 2013-17 be approved.

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE**

4.00 pm 10 March 2014  
COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**Present:** Councillors Shanks (Chair), Buckley (Deputy Chair), Bennett, Gilbey, A Kitcat, Lepper, Pissaridou, Powell, Simson and Wealls

**Non Voting Co-optees:** Andrew Jeffery, Parent Forum, Ben Glazebrooke, Community Works/Voluntary Sector Forum, Graham Bartlett, Chair Local Safeguarding Children Board; Bethan Winstanley, Youth Council; Sue Sjuve, Sussex Community NHS Trust

**PART ONE**

**72. BRIGHTON & HOVE SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN 2013-2017**

Note: The special circumstances for non-compliance with Council Procedure Rule 3, Access to Information Procedure Rule 5 and Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), (items not considered unless the agenda is open to inspection at least five days in advance of the meeting) were that in the light of information in this report about the allocation of secondary school places it would have been inappropriate to publish this information in advance of 3 March 2014, which was the national offer day in 2014 for all secondary school place offers as set out in the statutory School Admissions Code.

- 72.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director of Children's Services seeking approval of the School Organisation Plan 2013 - 2017. The Committee was required to consider the Plan and then to make recommendations to the full Council which had the authority to approve it.
- 72.2 The Head of Education Planning and Contracts explained that the City Council had a statutory duty to secure sufficient, suitable school places for children of compulsory school age within its area. These places might be in any type of school, including local authority maintained schools, academies and free schools. With the introduction of Raising the Participation Age legislation, the Council also had a duty to ensure sufficient suitable education and training provision for all young people aged 16 -19 and for those aged 20 - 24 with a Learning Difficulty Assessment in its area. Whilst it was no longer a requirement to produce a School Organisation Plan it was good practice to do so and was a useful tool for forward planning.
- 72.3 The School Organisation Plan focused mainly on the duty to secure sufficient, suitable school places for children of compulsory school age and included forecasts of future pupil numbers in the primary and secondary school sectors, the accommodation requirements arising from these forecasts, a broad outline of how these requirements might be met and the associated funding implications.
- 72.4 The Head of Education Planning and Contracts explained that it should be noted that the increase in primary age pupils which had been experienced across the city over the past ten years appeared to have reached its peak and that this number was now expected to decline from 2016 onwards. Notwithstanding that, the size of current cohorts would create significant and on-going challenges in terms of the need to secure sufficient secondary school places over the coming years and discussions were taking place with school heads and governors in order to identify the best means of addressing the remaining primary places issues and the continuing challenge in relation to secondary school places.
- 72.5 Substantial funding would be required to meet the needs identified by the Plan and whilst the increases in funding announced by the Secretary of State in December 2013 for the 3 year period 2014/15 to 2016/17 would assist in that process, similar allocations would be needed in subsequent years in order to continue to secure sufficient secondary school places for the growing number of secondary school students. Application of the secondary admissions procedures for 2014 had revealed significant pressures on the present arrangements and in consequence it was proposed that an urgent review was commenced in the current year for completion by April 2015.

Arrangements to address issues arising in respect of school admissions for 2015-16 were the subject of a separate report (Item 73) on the agenda.

- 72.6 Councillor Pissaridou stated that whilst noting the work that had been achieved she was disappointed that further work was required, especially in relation to the issue of school places. The Executive Director of Children's Services explained that the level of grant awarded for the three year period to 2017 had not been notified until December 2013. The recognition of the city's need for new school places was welcomed as it would provide a good basis for planning and securing new provision, notwithstanding that some challenges remained.
- 72.6 Councillor Wealls stated that in his view the demography of different localities in the city could have an impact on forward planning. He inquired to what degree it was possible to predict changing numbers by use of GP registers and other indicators and how this could be utilised in order to consider potential alternative strategies. Councillor Wealls suggested that figures could also be affected by families moving into the area. The Head of Education Planning and Contracts stated that a number of information sources were used including analysis of demographic cycles but that a cautious approach had to be adopted in respect of figures for later years. A balance needed to be struck between ensuring sufficient school places in areas of highest demand whilst making best use of spare places occurring mainly in schools located at the edge of the city.
- 72.7 Mr Jeffery, Parent Forum stated that there needed to be greater clarity for parents. The Executive Director of Children's Services stated that it was recognised that there was an urgent need to review current arrangements for secondary school admissions to ensure that the local authority was able to offer high levels of certainty for children and families and the levels of clarity and transparency that were required.
- 72.8 Councillor Wealls stated that he was in agreement that there was a need for clarity and that there needed to be further discussion regarding the arrangements to be put in place and for the adoption of a consistent approach. Councillor Pissaridou concurred with this view. It was confirmed that further discussions would take place at meetings of the Cross Party School Organisation Working Group and that further reports would come before the Committee in relation to the review of the current admission arrangements and on other related matters.
- 72.9 Councillor Lepper stated that it was unfortunate that the distribution and disparity of school places across the city continued to be an issue, given that this was not a new problem. It was disappointing that measures brought in a few years ago to address this problem had ultimately not done so and now required review.
- 72.10 Councillor Simson referred to specific difficulties in Saltdean where places at the local primary school were limited and the area straddled the border with the neighbouring authority. It was explained that the local authority gave priority to those living within its own catchment area, whilst working closely with neighbouring authorities who were experiencing similar problems. There were currently no plans to change the existing arrangements although the feasibility of providing an additional "bulge" reception class was currently being assessed.
- 72.11 Councillor Buckley referred to the adverse impact that new housing could have on school places, if not accompanied by a sufficiently high Section 106 contribution from

the developer to mitigate against any potential disbenefit citing pressures on Davigdor Infant School in her own Ward as an example.

72.12 Councillor Pissaridou stated that she considered the Plan to be a work in progress and as some elements of it (school places) would require further work over coming months she considered that the School Organisation Plan and its contents should be referred to Full Council by the Committee rather than recommended to it, to do otherwise would be premature. This was put as a formal amendment proposed by Councillor Pissaridou and seconded by Councillor Wealls and Members voted to agree that the resolution to Full Council should be put as set out below.

**72.13 RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND:**

- (1) That the Committee having considered and commented upon the School Organisation Plan 2013 – 2017;
- (2) The Committee refers it to the Council at its meeting on 27 March 2014 to approve the Plan subject to any comments the Committee wishes to make.