

Brighton & Hove City Council
Children, Young People & Skills Committee

4.00pm 31 January 2022

Council Chamber, Hove Town Hall

Minutes

Present:

Councillor Clare (Chair) John (Deputy Chair), O'Quinn (Opposition Spokesperson), Brown (Group Spokesperson), Grimshaw, Hamilton, Lloyd, McNair and Meadows

Co-optees: Ms D Boyd, Mr A Muirhead and Mr S Parr

Part One

57 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

(a) Declarations of Substitutes

57.1 Trevor Cristin was substituted by Mandy Watson.

(b) Declarations of Interests

57.2 Councillor McNair declared he was a Governor at Carden Primary School and had been granted special dispensation to speak and vote on Item 62 - Admission Arrangements September 2023.

(c) Exclusion of Press and Public

57.3 The Committee considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any of the items listed on the agenda.

RESOLVED: There were no part two items in the agenda.

58 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

58.1 The Chair thanked everyone for the work that went into the report and all those who responded to the consultation. A special thanks was issued to Richard Barker for his valuable contribution.

59 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

(a) Petitions

59.1 There were none

(b) Written Questions

59.2 The Chair stated that two written questions had been received from members of the public, Kamila Stedman and Esther Garibay. The Chair invited Kamila Stedman to present the first question.

59.3 Ms Stedman read out the following question:

This consultation has shown that families in Brighton and Hove will not let the smaller schools on the edges of the city take the hit for something that concerns the whole city. We think support from the LA could help these schools thrive alongside their larger counterparts. So how do you intend to improve working relationships between the schools across the area, fostering greater cooperation in tackling this issue of surplus spaces?

59.4 The Chair thanked Ms Stedman for her question. The Chair replied:

It is evident that the issue of surplus places in our city's primary schools has placed strain on our family of schools' approach. The government's ideological approach to parental preference is at odds with what we think we need to do in the city and whilst we know we are unlikely to achieve universal agreement we must look to build a stronger consensus across Headteachers, governors, political parties and residents. I think it is unlikely that people remain oblivious to the problem or the issues that have to be grappled with. This problem cannot be solved by money even if the council had any to direct at this issue.

I hope that if the committee agrees with not taking forward any proposals to change Published Admission Numbers (PANs) in 2023 it will provide the platform to work together as it is being acknowledged in the responses received, that it is not the right thing to do at this time.

Improving working relationships requires dialogue. We will bring Headteachers, Chairs of Governors and councillors together to talk more about these issues. We have heard the offer of responders to also contribute to the debate required with residents so that everyone understands the impact their actions have on others especially when they live in other areas of the city and we will consider how that can happen.

We will continue the dialogue with the dioceses and the governing bodies of voluntary aided schools.

We are working with schools to identify what can make them more resilient and what allows them to continue to provide a high standard of education. And we will share the learning with others. However more time and more talking is not guaranteed to foster the cooperation needed and so it is important to be clear that where consensus cannot be reached and schools come under more financial pressure the council will need to act.

59.5 The Chair asked Ms Stedman if she wished to ask a supplementary question. Ms Stedman declined.

59.6 The Chair noted that Esther Garibay was not in attendance at the meeting and read out her question:

At the CYPS meeting earlier this month, members of this Committee discussed a worrying development in our city: the pandemic has served to further widen the divide between those who do well at school and those who don't. I welcome the Committee's plan to address this through the Education Disadvantage Strategy. However, at the same time, you are discussing a proposal that will halve the maximum number of pupils at Carden Primary, which serves some of the most disadvantaged children in our city. Limiting our intake will not only reduce Carden's budget but diminish the richness of diversity in our school and the capacity of the parent community to fundraise for those most in need. For example, last year our PTA provided 20 laptops to enable students to continue learning during the lockdown. How do you plan to mitigate the impact on the most disadvantaged should this PAN reduction go ahead?

59.7 The Chair thanked Ms Garibay for her question. The Chair replied:

The council has heard clearly from responders the concerns about the proposals that were consulted upon in the autumn. The council is not recommending the PAN at Carden or any other school should be reduced. If the committee agree to this later in this meeting then you can be assured that the school will be able to continue to support all its children in the way that we all would want and ensure the school's rich diversity continues.

However, on the wider point, the council has developed an Education Disadvantaged Strategy that was shared with Children and Young People Committee on 10th January 2022. It will also be developing a broader disadvantaged strategy in the coming year.

(c) Deputations

59.8 There were none.

60 ITEMS REFERRED FROM COUNCIL

60.1 The Chair confirmed that four petitions and one deputation had been referred from Council:

60.2 Petitions

- 1) Keep Rudyard Kipling School Admissions
- 2) Keep Carden Nursery & Primary School as a thriving 2 form entry
- 3) Bevendean Primary School - SAVE OUR SCHOOL
- 4) Stop Woodingdean Primary School from having its pupil numbers reduced

60.3 Deputation

- 1) School Admissions Consultation – reducing PAN at seven Primary Schools across Brighton

60.4 **RESOLVED:** The Committee agreed to note the petitions and deputation.

61 MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

(a) Petitions

61.1 There were none.

(b) Written Questions

61.2 The Chair noted that one Written Question had been submitted by Councillor Yates who was not in attendance. The Chair read out his question:

Given the potential short term and long term implications of reducing PANs at schools built for (and within) relatively isolated local communities across the city which have poorer access to a range of alternatives and mitigations that other schools previously considered for reductions - what impact of these proposals has been assessed in relation to:

- Walking distance to alternative schools
- The councils long term carbon reduction ambitions
- Avoiding focussing PAN reductions on areas of multiple disadvantage
- Protecting the long term delivery of specialist and targeted education within those schools
- Ensuring educational outcomes are protected/ enhanced

61.3 The Chair confirmed that Councillor Yates would be provided with a written response to his question.

(c) Letters

61.4 There were none.

(d) Notices of Motion

61.5 There were none.

62 ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS SEPTEMBER 2023

62.1 The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director Families Children and Learning which provided details of the proposed school admission arrangements for the city's schools, for which the Council was the admission authority, for the academic year 2023-24. The report detailed the outcome of the consultation undertaken in November and December 2021 on the proposed changes to the Published Admission Number of seven primary schools. The report was introduced and summarised by the Head of School Organisation.

- 62.2 Councillor Brown supported the recommendations adding that the schools selected for the proposed reductions were all community schools serving a distinct area. Two had specialist facilities and all had a high number of disadvantaged children on role. Despite smaller class sizes they were successfully managing their budgets. She acknowledged the problem of empty spaces in schools remained, adding that a long-term solution was needed, rather than a piecemeal approach which caused turmoil for the schools involved. She wanted to work with all schools in an open and transparent way to identify a sustainable solution.
- 62.3 Councillor O'Quinn echoed Councillor Brown's sentiments. She was disappointed that that the biggest schools had appealed against the reduction of their Published Admission Number (PAN). She wanted to seeing a cross-city consultation and looked forward to developing a fairer strategy for the future.
- 62.4 Councillor Meadows agreed with Councillors Brown and O'Quinn and congratulated the parents and schools.
- 62.5 Councillor John acknowledged that the issue of falling pupil numbers would continue into the future and there were difficult decisions ahead. There were many factors to balance including a falling number of children, a growing number of empty places and limited options in terms of the solution. She did not wish to make decisions which disproportionately affected disadvantaged students and she stressed the importance of protecting children with special educational needs. The consultation had been a huge exercise in listening, learning and evaluating and she thanked everyone who had taken part.
- 62.6 Councillor John conceded that PANs needed to be reduced in order to meet the financial pressures of maintaining empty spaces but accepted it was hard to make an argument to reduce admission numbers in schools that were successfully maintaining their budgets. She felt that keeping schools open and financially viable was going to be difficult.
- 62.7 Simon Parr, on behalf of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton, did not agree with the recommendations in general. The Diocese fully understood the consultation responses and would expect most schools to be against reductions. However, as in the report, if the number of surplus places was not addressed, some school would face significant financial issues. Delaying the problem would make things worse and initial first preference data reinforced the need to reduce PANs.
- 62.8 Councillor Hamilton's main concern was Carden Primary School. He did not understand the rationale for reducing their PAN given they had more first preferences than Bevendean or Coldean. He agreed with the recommendations in the report and felt these were the best options available under the circumstances.
- 62.9 Diana Boyd addressed the committee. PAC who represented the families of children with special educational needs had written a position statement which had been shared with councillors and officers. PAC had not made recommendations either way because they understood the complexity of the situation. She noted that children with special educational needs were more dependent on support staff than other pupils and stated this would have a disproportionate effect on these students if budgets were tightened. She requested this be considered in future proposals. With regard to the specialist

facilities at Carden and Bevendean, she asked these to be taken into account when determining whether to reduce the PAN at these schools. Lastly, she highlighted the importance of mitigating the negative impact on children with special education needs in any future decision making.

62.10 Cllr Grimshaw noted the contribution of those who had campaigned for their schools and to all those who had listened.

62.11 The Chair noted her pleasure at reaching a cross-party decision and thanked colleagues for attending consultation meetings.

62.12 **RESOLVED:** The Committee agreed to:

Make no changes to the council's school admission arrangements or secondary school catchment areas.

Make no change to the Published Admission Number (PAN) for Bevendean Primary School and Nursery.

Make no change to the Published Admission Number (PAN) for Carden Nursery & Primary School.

Make no change to the Published Admission Number (PAN) for Coldean Primary School.

Make no change to the Published Admission Number (PAN) for Queen's Park Primary School.

Make no change to the Published Admission Number (PAN) for Rudyard Kipling Primary School & Nursery.

Make no change to the Published Admission Number (PAN) for Saltdean Primary School.

Make no change to the Published Admission Number (PAN) for Woodingdean Primary School.

Make no change to the co-ordinated scheme for admissions or to the "relevant area".

63 ITEMS REFERRED FOR COUNCIL

63.1 **RESOLVED:** That no items be referred to the next meeting of Full Council.

The meeting concluded at 4.43pm.

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of