

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE CABINET MEMBER MEETING

4.00PM, 19 JANUARY 2009

COMMITTEE ROOM 3, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Mrs Brown (Cabinet Member)

Also in attendance: Councillor Hawkes (Opposition Spokesperson)

Other Members present: Councillors Allen, Fryer, Kemble, McCaffery and Wakefield-Jarrett

PART ONE

61. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

61a Declarations of Interest

61.1 There were none.

61b Exclusion of Press and Public

61.2 In accordance with section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 ('the Act'), the Cabinet Member for Children & Young People considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during an item of business on the grounds that it was likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press or public were present during that item, there would be disclosure to them of confidential information (as defined in section 100A(3) of the Act) or exempt information (as defined in section 100I(1) of the Act).

61.3 **RESOLVED** – That the press and the public be not excluded from the meeting.

62. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

62.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2008 be approved and signed by the Cabinet Member as a correct record.

63. CABINET MEMBER'S COMMUNICATIONS

63.1 There were none.

64. ITEMS RESERVED FOR DISCUSSION

64.1 **RESOLVED** – All items were reserved for discussion by the Cabinet Member.

65. PETITIONS

65.1 No petitions had been received.

66. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**66(i) Public Question – Mr P Beard**

66.1 Mr Beard asked the following question:

“In relation to the proposed extension to Balfour Junior School, Balfour Road, Brighton, and the total disregard of the Council's own publicly pronounced policy of democratic consultation and given the considerable concern of the local residents over the design of the building, and also in the projected increase in traffic congestion, is the Council prepared to temporarily withdraw the planning application and will the department's officers consult with neighbours in accordance with the City Council's adopted Planning Statement on Community Involvement.”

66.2 The Cabinet Member replied:

“The size of this proposed development means that it is not considered a major development in planning terms; it is a relatively small extension to a local primary school that does not impact on a major strategic long view.

As a result of all these factors it was not considered necessary to carry out a widespread pre application consultation with the local residents regarding the form of the building. The statutory process that has to be followed with a project of this nature is the planning process that follows the need to provide additional accommodation for the expanded school.

Consultation is part of the planning process and the necessary notices were placed on the street and in the local paper. In addition to this the nearest neighbours were written to regarding the planning application, although I understand that this was somewhat later than should have ideally been the case. However the time for responses to the planning application was lengthened accordingly.”

66.3 Mr Beard asked the following supplementary question:

“Can you confirm whether or not, at the date of this meeting, a construction contract for the school extension has been put out to tender and, if so, have tenders been received and/or discussions been entered into with a contractor as a preliminary to awarding a building contract?”

66.4 The Head of Capital Strategy and Capital Planning answered the question on behalf of the Cabinet Member and explained that, since October 2008, the council had had in

place a strategic partnership contract. She clarified that this meant that individual schemes, therefore, did not need to go through a procurement process as the procurement had already been done.

66(ii) Public Question – Mr Marek Kohn

66.5 Mr Kohn asked the following question:

“Increasing numbers of families in western Brighton and eastern Hove face transport difficulties arising from allocation to Hove Park School, entailing journeys of up to three miles. These difficulties involve child safety, ability to participate in school activities, and costs. A number of us have expressed our concerns to the Director of Children’s Services, last October and subsequently in December after one of our children was threatened with a knife at a bus stop. Will the Board acknowledge these difficulties and work to mitigate them, particularly through improvements in the timing and location of afternoon bus services?”

66.6 The Cabinet Member replied:

“There have always been a proportion of pupils living on the Brighton/Hove border who have had to travel to the Hove Park lower school site if they have not been able to obtain a place at Blatchington Mill. Similarly some pupils in other parts of the City have no choice but to make relatively long journeys because they do not live close to a school. The City is served by a good bus infrastructure which has been designed to meet a variety of travel needs including those of children on the home school journey. Hove Park Lower School is served by a number of routes that either allow direct travel on a single service or link in with other routes to provide cross city coverage. These include the 56, 96, 93, 27A and the various services on the 5 routes. Where children are travelling outside of regular school hours in order to participate in after school activities those using dedicated school bus services will have to switch to other scheduled services whichever school they attend. Hove Park is served by the 5, 56 and 27A in the afternoon which allow direct travel or connections city wide.

The knife incident described in the question was deeply disturbing for the school and particularly for the student who was threatened. Whilst not minimising the seriousness of this incident the Council cannot make arrangements for all services used by pupils to run directly from outside the school either at Hove Park or at other schools because of the potential for criminal activity. It is not unreasonable to expect that children should walk short distances to link with bus services on the outward or return journey, and it is nearly always safe to do so in this part of Hove and elsewhere in the City.

The City Council remains in constant contact with the Brighton & Hove Bus Company to look at the changing pattern of public transport needs and how the City is best served by bus services. Clearly this has to take place within a framework of financial constraints on the Bus Company and the City Council, but that does not preclude changes to services where they can fit with the availability of vehicles and a clear change in the pattern of use. School travel forms one part of that continuing dialogue, and services to all schools in the City, whether scheduled services or designated school services, remain under review. The Council takes the view that bus services in the vicinity of Hove Park Lower School are reasonable. It will, however, ask the CYPT Admissions

and Transport Team, the Public Transport Team and the School Travel Plan Officer to work with the school to review travel patterns and make recommendations on school travel needs based on that evidence.”

- 66.7 Mr Kohn asked as a supplementary question whether the CYPT knew, when it arrived at the view that the 56 bus stop location was safe, that the school's position was that it could not sustain supervision there in the long term. He relayed the school's observation that Police Community Support Officers had patrolled the area on only a few occasions in response to the knife incident, and that by the nature of their duties they could not be expected to provide sustained security.
- 66.8 The Cabinet Member reassured Mr Kohn that officers took matters of safety very seriously and indicated that it was her understanding that the school had been liaising with the CYPT and the police to patrol the area.
- 66.9 The Assistant Director, Schools, Central Area and Schools Support, echoed the Cabinet Member's reassurances with regards to safety issues. He also indicated that he would like to consult with the Head of Transport to find out whether further provisions could be made to provide a more robust solution to this matter. The Assistant Director agreed to write to Mr Kohn in due course with a fuller response.

67. DEPUTATIONS

- 67.1 No deputations had been received.

68. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

- 68.1 No Letters from Councillors had been received.

69. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

69(i) Question – Consultation with local residents with regards to the expansion of Balfour Junior School

- 69.1 For clarity and ease of reference for those members of the public attending the meeting, the Cabinet Member invited Councillor Allen to ask his questions.
- 69.2 Councillor Allen thanked the Cabinet Member for the opportunity to speak. Councillor Allen also recorded his appreciation for Councillor Hyde, the Chairman of the Planning Committee, for, at its previous meeting, the committee having agreed to defer a decision on the application for extension at Balfour Junior School, which would now be subject to a site visit.
- 69.3 Councillor Allen asked the following question:

“Would Councillor Brown please explain why her department failed to ensure that local residents were consulted with regard to the proposed extension to Balfour Junior School?”

69.4 The Cabinet Member read out her response, which had been circulated at the meeting:

“The statutory process that has to be followed with a project of this nature is the planning process that follows the need to provide additional accommodation for the expanded school.

It is for the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to ensure that this legislation is followed. Considerable discussion was undertaken with officers of the LPA prior to progressing the design to ensure that the principle of development was acceptable in planning policy terms. There was also considerable discussion with the head teacher and governing body of the school to ensure that the design proposals suited the schools operation and curriculum delivery. The size of this proposed development means that it is not considered a major development in planning terms, it is a relatively small extension to a local primary school that does not impact on a major strategic long view.

As a result of all these factors it was not considered necessary to carry out a widespread pre application consultation with the local residents regarding the form of the building.

Consultation is part of the planning process and the necessary notices were placed on the street and in the local paper. In addition to this the nearest neighbours were written to regarding the planning application, although I understand that this was somewhat later than should have ideally been the case. However the time for responses to the planning application was lengthened accordingly.”

69.5 In his supplementary comment, Councillor Allen indicated that the consultation process in relation to the extension of Balfour Junior School had been an optimum opportunity for a more integrated approach to consult neighbours in a more proactive way. He expressed his disappointment that officers had failed to make a good use of such opportunity.

69.6 The Cabinet Member acknowledged Councillor Allen’s concerns. She indicated, however, that residents had the opportunity to make their objections as part of the Planning Application that had been submitted.

69.7 The Assistant Director, Schools, Central Area and Schools Support, also welcomed Councillor Allen’s comments and thanked him for his encouragement for better communications between all parties. He reassured Councillor Allen that communication with all the interested parties would always be the first step forward in any consultation process, and a step that officers would keep encouraging in future consultations.

69(ii) Question – Inflexible timetabling and routing on the part of the bus is making it difficult for children in Prestonville attending Hove Park School to take full part in after-school activities.

69.8 Councillor Allen asked the following question:

“Inflexible timetabling and routing on the part of the bus company is making it difficult for children in Prestonville attending Hove Park School to take a full part in after-school

activities. As the children live almost three miles from school walking is not a realistic option. Would Cllr Brown please ensure that the council's transport officers negotiate seriously with the bus company over this matter? "

69.9 The Cabinet Member read out her response, which had been circulated at the meeting:

"I cannot agree that the bus company are inflexible in relation to bus services for schools. Over many years we have had a good degree of cooperation from the bus company in meeting the travel needs of schoolchildren. In the current timetable there are a number of school buses which are provided commercially by the operator, at no cost to the city council as well as school services which are financially supported by the Council. A number of years ago, the bus company accommodated our request for Service 96 to be extended to serve Hove Park Lower School, at no additional cost to the city council, and, more recently, the bus company went to a considerable degree of reorganising their routings in order to provide the same facility in the afternoon, again at no cost. Equally, Service 56 was revised to provide a morning outbound journey for children at Hove Park Lower School.

Whilst the Council and the CYPT are supportive of after school activities the provision of additional bus services for schools at varying times after school (there being no set finish time for such activities) would be impractical in terms of vehicle availability and financially prohibitive. Children at all secondary schools will be in the position of needing to use scheduled services in order to return home from after school activities. I can inform you that Service 56, which is financially supported by the city council, has departures from Godwin Road, which is a short walk from Hove Park Lower, at 4.24 and 5.24, allowing children to participate in later activities, and still return to BHASVIC/Seven Dials / Dyke Road Churchill Square/ Preston Circus areas. In addition there is the commercial Route 5 / 5A / 5B from the Grenadier which runs past Churchill Square and links with other services. Whilst the City has a good bus service infrastructure it is not practicable to expect direct services to meet all travel needs, whether for school pupils or other users. The services currently available in the vicinity of Hove Park Lower School provide good links to other parts of the City.

The Public Transport Team has regular meetings with the Brighton & Hove Bus Company to monitor the way in which bus services meet the needs of travellers in the City, for school travel and all other travel needs. It supports the interests of all those users and negotiates improvements within the limits of cost and the availability of vehicles."

69.10 Councillor Allen requested that the situation of those parents living in the above mentioned areas was considered with sensitivity and requested the Cabinet Member looked into this matter again.

69.11 The Cabinet Member thanked Councillor Allen for his questions and comments, and reassured him that she would ask the CYPT Admissions and Transport Team, the Public Transport Team and the School Travel Plan Officer to work with the school to review travel patterns and make recommendations on school travel needs based on that evidence.

70. NOTICES OF MOTIONS

70.1 No Notices of Motion had been received.

71. CONSULTATION ON THE EXTENSION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL CATCHMENT AREA FOR PATCHAM HIGH SCHOOL

71.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children's Services concerning the consultation on the extension of the secondary Catchment Area for Patcham High School, which sought views of both parents in the local area and affected schools, regarding a possible change in the catchment area for Patcham High school (for copy see minute book).

71.2 The Assistant Director, Schools, Central Area and Schools Support, indicated that the review of the general admissions process was due in 2012; however, this particular review of Patcham High catchment area came sooner as a result of the School Adjudicator's request.

71.3 The Assistant Director further indicated that, on balance, the views gathered through the different responses received to the consultation reflect the recommendations proposed in the report. He clarified that, if agreed, the changes proposed would be implemented for admissions in 2010.

71.4 The Opposition Spokesperson indicated that she had attended at least one of the meetings carried out as part of the consultation process and she thought that parents were able to understand the practicalities of such proposals. She stated that she supported the recommendations.

71.5 The Cabinet Member indicated that, after attending one of such meetings herself, she understood that parents were concerned about the lack of a safe crossing point in the vicinity of the junction with Carden Avenue. She reported that she had had a firm commitment from the Environment department to have this crossing in place by 2010, when the change is due to take place.

71.6 **RESOLVED** – That, having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendations:

- (1) That the response to the public consultation be noted.
- (2) That the Patcham High School Admissions catchment area be changed to include the Westdene and Brangwyn areas with effect from September 2010.
- (3) That the Council explores the provision of improved pedestrian crossing of the London Road in the vicinity of the junction with Carden Avenue.

72. PROPOSED EXPANSION OF LONGHILL SCHOOL

- 72.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children's Services concerning the proposed expansion of Longhill School by one form of entry and to carry out the necessary adaptations to the building to facilitate the expansion. The report sought the agreement to proceed to the first stage of the statutory process, which was the initial consultation period required by the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (for copy see minute book).
- 72.2 Officers indicated that they hoped to have the results from the initial consultation process in time for the next CYP Cabinet Member meeting in March 09. However, if this proved to be a tight deadline, they would bring it to the April Cabinet Member meeting. The Cabinet Member indicated that, if required, an extraordinary meeting could be held to consider this one item to avoid any possible delays.
- 72.3 **RESOLVED** - That, having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendations:
- (1) That the proposal to expand Longhill School by one form of entry be noted and endorsed.
 - (2) That the initial consultation with the staff, parents and carers and pupils of the school and any other interested party be agreed.
 - (3) That the results from the initial consultation process be referred to Cabinet Member Meeting in March 2009.

73. PROPOSED EXPANSION OF DAVIGDOR INFANT SCHOOL

- 73.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children's Services concerning the proposed expansion of Davigdor Infant School by one form of entry. The report set out the background and rationale for the proposed expansion and sought agreement to proceed to the next stage of the statutory process, which was the publication of the required Statutory Notices (for copy see minute book).
- 73.2 The Assistant Director, Schools, Central Area and Schools Support, indicated that, in considering how to deal with the shortage of school places in the Hove central area, the only two schools which could accommodate an expansion were Davigdor Infant School and Somerhill Junior School. He reported that a paper on the proposed expansion of Somerhill Junior School would be brought to the Cabinet Member meeting in due course, so that both proposals could be agreed together.
- 73.3 The Opposition Spokesperson welcomed the position taken to also expand Somerhill Junior School. She considered that both schools should work together in terms of forms of entry to avoid discrepancies and situations like the one the city has endured for many years in the case of Balfour Infant and Balfour Junior schools.

72.4 **RESOLVED** - That, having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendations:

- (1) That the proposal to expand Davigdor Infant School by one form of entry be noted and endorsed.
- (2) That the publication of the required Statutory Notices to progress this proposal be agreed.
- (3) That the results from the statutory consultation process be referred to Cabinet Member Meeting in June/July 2009 for decision.

74. CAPITAL RESOURCES & CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME, 2009/2010

74.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children's Services concerning the capital resources and capital investment programme 2009/2010, which informed Members of the capital resources and investment allocated and available to the CYPT (for copy see minute book).

74.2 The Head of Capital Strategy and Development Planning explained that the information detailed in the report would be part of a larger report that would be taken and considered at a future meeting of the Cabinet. She also indicated that a further report would be brought to the Cabinet Member meeting in March 2009, detailing how the department intends to spend the funding it will receive from the Capital Grant.

74.3 The Cabinet Member and the Opposition Spokesperson welcomed the report and welcomed the opportunity given to the council, through this government funding, to do something about the city's community schools buildings.

74.4 **RESOLVED** - That, having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendation:

- (1) That the level of available capital resources totalling £12.150m for investment relating to education buildings financed from supported borrowing, capital grant and revenue contributions be noted.

The meeting concluded at 4.40pm

Signed

Chairman

Dated this

day of

2009