

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE

5.00pm 22 SEPTEMBER 2014

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Shanks (Chair)

Also in attendance: Councillor Littman (Deputy Chair), Wealls (Opposition Spokesperson), Pissaridou (Group Spokesperson), Brown, A Kitcat, Lepper, Powell, Simson and Hamilton

Other Members present: Councillors

PART ONE

26 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

26(a) Declaration of Substitutes

26.1 Councillor Hamilton was present in substitution for Councillor Gilbey.

26(b) Declarations of interest

26.2 Councillor Wealls stated that he was a Governor at St Andrew's C of E Primary School and declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in item 30. Councillor Hamilton noted that one of the Written Questions under Public Involvement made reference to Brackenbury Primary School and as he was a Governor at that school he asked if he should declare an interest. The Lawyer advised that as there was no item on the agenda concerning that school there could be no personal or prejudicial interest.

26(c) Exclusion of Press and Public

26.3 In accordance with section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 ("the Act"), the Committee 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 business to be transacted or the nature of proceedings, that if members of the press and 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 100(I) of the Act).

26.4 **RESOLVED-** That the press and public not be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any item on the agenda.

27 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

27.1 The Chair gave the following communication:

The Contact and Assessment Service (ACAS) had become the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Assessment Service. MASH would continue to be the first stop for social care services where there were safeguarding concerns. The MASH team were a new team bringing children's services, health and police staff together.

Ross Beard, who works for the Virtual School for Children in Care, had been shortlisted for a Children's Award.

28 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

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28a Petitions

28.1 There were none.

28b Written Questions

There were two Written Questions submitted.

Mr S Jacques asked the following question:

There was an independent site search for a new school site undertaken in June 2014 (see 4.2 of Report). By whom was this carried out, what was the brief and can this be made available for inspection?

The Chair gave the following response:

The report was undertaken by Cluttons. It was commissioned on 30th May 2014 and the final report was provided on 30th June 2014. The basis of the commission was looking across Brighton & Hove for a site for a possible secondary school site but included all sites within the city that have any potential for school use, secondary or primary. With some limited redaction to remove any estimated site values this report can be made available for inspection.

The Chair asked Mr Jacques if he had a supplementary question and asked the following:

Which is the site referred to in 4.3 of the Report and who is the primary free school sponsor that has made an application?

The Chair gave the following response:

The site referred to is at Conway Court in Hove. The Montessori Free School had made a Wave 7 application to the Department for Education to establish a primary free school in Brighton & Hove. All Wave 7 applications including the Montessori Free School were listed on the Department for Education web site. The Department for Education had not as yet made decisions on Wave 7 applications.

28.4 Mr J Stanley asked the following question:

The Governors of our school have had to ignore the results of the 331 (86.64%) parents who said No! to expansion and proceed with a very tight vote in favour of proceeding, without the support of the majority of parents at the school due to the wholly artificial deadline imposed by the council. The data room did not include the 90 places at the Bilingual school which made the figures meaningless. There was no safety plan for the 990 children, the questionnaire issued to the small number of parents at the councils meetings completely lacked objectivity. We have also been informed of the dire situation at Davigdor school, where reception children are being taken directly to their classrooms at school drop off because the play ground is dangerously overcrowded. At lunchtime the queues are so long there is 'no time to play and no time to eat'. The latest 2014 bulge class has not been filled with local Hove children, but with those bussed in from well outside the catchment area. We have also been talking to our friends at Brackenbury who confirm that the councils mismanagement has led them to running £100k a year deficits and facing cut after cut in their budget leading to a dire state of affairs. As the LGA peer review from June 2014 notes: Overall, we question the strength of the relationship between the council and schools. As far as the parents off St Andrews, Davigdor, Stanford, Brackenbury and West Hove (Connaught Road) are concerned this relationship between the council and schools is broken. Can't the members of the Childrens and Young persons committee recognise that their prescription of over expanding schools at the centre and letting those at the periphery wither on the vine is ultimately doomed to failure, and that they must set out on a new path of building new schools in area of high demand, whilst transforming the way that they support schools on the periphery.

Can the chair and the committee confirm that the immediate first step today will be to put a halt spending £2.5 million plus on just 15 community places at St Andrews which is making things much worse for our children and is opposed by the vast majority of parents and our friends at West Hove (Connaught), and instead invest significant sums in Davigdor school to put right the disastrous situation that is unfolding there, as well as urgently committing to support our friends at Brackenbury?

The Chair gave the following response:

I would first of all wish to thank the governing body and the school leadership for the thoughtful, caring and balanced way in which they have considered this

matter. I know that they have been acutely aware of parents' views – not all of which were opposed to the proposal – and that they have debated long and hard on how to balance the views of parents with the needs of the local community and the responsibilities of a Church school in their community. Mr Stanley has set out his views very fully in writing and I'm sure the Committee will take these into account in reaching a decision. The Committee too is fully aware of the views that have been expressed during consultation. However, we have to consider the interests both of children already in schools and those who will need a school place next year and in future years. It is reasonable for parents to want a local school place for their children and it is equally reasonable for the Committee to consider how local places can be provided or whether parents must be asked to take their children to schools much further away. Mr Stanley's proposed solutions include a new school for which there is no site, which would cost considerably more than expanding St Andrew's and which offers no prospect of providing much needed additional places in the time required. The Council has to consider achievable solutions which will provide places when and where they are needed. The Council supports in a variety of ways the other schools in Hove and Portslade as the Committee will be aware. Mr Stanley's suggestions for further investment in these schools provide no additional places, which is the objective of the St Andrew's proposal. They would also require revenue funding, whereas the £2.5m available is basic need capital grant which must be spent on new school places. The report explains the position of the Bilingual School and the process for agreeing traffic safety and access plans. The proposed investment in St Andrew's will provide 30 new places: children who are offered foundation places are also likely to live in the local community or close by as there are other faith schools elsewhere in Hove and Portslade which serve their local faith communities. Providing new places where they are needed often presents challenging issues where competing needs have to be balanced and I'm sure the Committee will take all factors into account in reaching a decision.

The Chair asked Mr Stanley if he had a supplementary question and he asked the following:

Can the chair and the committee also confirm that they will meet on a cross party basis with all the committed parents we have met from these schools to break out of the limited ambitions they currently hold, and to work together with us to vastly improve the aspirations and outcomes around schools and education in Brighton and Hove?

The Chair gave the following response:

The Children & Young People Committee, which was cross party, would continue to consult with parents, professionals and Governing Bodies. The aspiration was always to improve the education in Brighton and Hove.

29 MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

29a Petitions

29.1 There were none.

29b Written Questions

29.2 There were none.

29c Letters

29.3 There were none.

29d Notices of Motion

29.4 There were none.

30 PROPOSED EXPANSION OF ST ANDREW'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL TO THREE FORMS OF ENTRY FROM SEPTEMBER 2015 (TO FOLLOW)

30.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director for Children's Services in relation to the proposed expansion of St Andrew's CE Primary School to three forms of entry from September 2015. The report was introduced by the Head of Education Planning and Contracts and the Head of Capital Strategy.

30.2 Ms A Mortensen thanked officers for the report. She said that she was a Governor at Westdene Primary School, and when proposals for increasing the size of that school had first been introduced there had been some opposition. However, there had in fact been many positives such as increased funding which had enabled the school to provide a better provision of education. Ms Mortensen offered to work with Governing Bodies which were considering an expansion to their school.

30.3 Councillor Simson asked if the Governors of St Andrew's had voted unanimously to support the progression of the consultation processes. The Head of Education Planning and Contracts confirmed that that was what was recorded in the draft minutes of the governor's meeting held on 15 September 2014

30.4 Councillor Wealls referred to Appendix 3 to the report and asked if the Conditions had been agreed. The Head of Education Planning and Contracts said that most of them had been discussed and agreed, and it was hoped agreement would soon be reached on the remaining ones.

30.5 Mr A Boyle was concerned that some people, who were not Church of England, could feel pressurised to attend St Andrew's because it was their local school and had a higher number of places. The Head of Education Planning and Contracts said that the other schools in the area were Community Schools and so parents would have options if they preferred not to attend a Faith School. Mr Boyle added that as St Andrew's would have improved facilities there could, again, be pressure to select that school. He was advised that other nearby schools had had capital investment so facilities were good, but in any event it was the teaching which was important rather than the building.

- 30.6 Mr Boyle asked if there were no alternatives to building on the Haddington Street car park. The Head of Education Planning and Contracts said that using the car park was the most favourable solution.
- 30.7 Councillor Pissaridou said that the Labour & Co-operative Group had concerns over schools being enlarged and would prefer a new school to be built. However, in the current situation the option to increase St Andrew's to three forms of entry was the best option.
- 30.8 Councillor Hamilton asked if the school had adequate catering facilities for an increased number of children. The Head of Capital Strategy said that the size of both the kitchen and the dining hall would be increased.
- 30.9 Councillor Wealls said that more school places were needed in the area, and was pleased that all the School Governors were supporting the progression to the next stage of consultation.
- 30.10 Mr Boyle referred to Appendix 2 and asked why Davigdor Infant School had increased its admission by 30 places rather than them being dispersed around the neighbouring schools. The Chair said that there was a legal limit of 30 children per class for Key Stage 1 and therefore other schools could not increase their class size by two or three additional children.
- 30.11 Councillor Littman said that the work being undertaken was a good example of partnership working and thanked all those involved.
- 30.12 Ms A Tilley suggested that the new plans include some small rooms to allow for one to one lessons to be held.
- 30.13 The Chair suggested that a plan of the proposed changes be placed in the local library to allow everyone to see the new plans.

30.14 RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Committee noted that any proposal to expand St Andrew's CE Primary School by extending its building on to the Haddington Street public car park would require not only planning consent but also a Traffic Regulation Order
- (2) That the Committee authorises the publication of a Statutory Notice on 1 October 2014 so that a further report can be brought to the Committee's meeting on 17 November 2014 for a decision to be made on the proposal.

31 ITEMS REFERRED FOR COUNCIL

- 31.1 It was agreed that no items be referred to Council.

The meeting concluded at 6.00pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of