

Subject:	Keep Our Community Together – Petition for Debate		
Date of Meeting:	14 December 2017		
Report of:	Executive Lead Officer for Strategy, Governance & Law		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Mark Wall	Tel: 01273 291006
	E-mail:	mark.wall@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 Under the Council's Petition Scheme if a petition contains more than 1,250 signatures and is not petition requesting officer evidence, it will be debated by the Full Council.
- 1.2 The e-petition has resulted in triggering a debate at the council meeting, having exceeded the threshold with a total of 1,272 signatures confirmed at the time of printing the report.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the petition is noted and referred to the Children, Young People & Skills Committee for consideration at its meeting on the 15th January 2018.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION / CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:**3.1 The Petition****West Hove catchment area changes - Keep Our Community Together**

"We the undersigned petition Brighton & Hove Council to abandon proposals to change existing catchment areas until the Education & Skills Funding Agency confirms the site and the opening date for the proposed Brighton & Hove Academy."

Lead Petitioner – Ollie Tait

Additional Information

1. The proposed changes will have a serious and detrimental impact on the wider community. They place a dividing line between the families around Elm Grove, Lewes Road and Bear Road, splitting children in the area from their friends, classmates and the local families they've grown up with. This

will not only create unnecessary stress and anxiety for the children directly affected, but also change the fabric of a close-knit, established and family friendly community.

2. We believe that every child in Brighton & Hove should have access to quality local education and not be bussed across the city. Under these changes, the children effected would be unable to walk to school and would be faced with up to 7-mile return trip to school at peak hours in our already congested city. With only a small number of children effected, their safety, their ability to participate in activities out of school hours, and their ability to engage with the local community around the school will be compromised by their two hour daily commute.
3. We acknowledge that there is a need to relieve pressure on numbers on current schools but the proposed changes set a precedent that could have a negative impact for all parents across Brighton and Hove. The two principles that received the greatest support in the Council's 2016 consultation on catchment areas were minimising pupil's journeys to school and allowing children to move to secondary school with their friends. Both principles are abandoned in this proposal; the targeted area is neither the nearest to Longhill nor the furthest from Dorothy Stringer and Varndean. With further population bulges predicted in the next few years, we believe this seemingly arbitrary setting of catchment areas sets a precedent that could open the way to even more dramatic changes. Parents will no longer be able to argue on grounds of distance to school if the council decrees that their child should be sent to a school out of the city.
4. We request that catchment areas remain unchanged until a site and opening date for the proposed Brighton & Hove Academy is confirmed. We believe the proposed changes fail to take into account the possibility that the proposed Academy may open later than 2019, may not be located at the current preferred site or may fail to open at all. We argue that children in the area must remain in the current catchments until the situation of the new school is confirmed. If not, families with children coming up to secondary after this two-year period risk having their children schooled in different schools.
5. We believe the Council's so-called "light touch, temporary" proposals create significant disparity in choice and outcome for children in Brighton & Hove, which is at best unfair, and at worst discriminatory. We contend that the proposals are not in the best interests of the children who live in the areas designated to move catchment.

3.2 The options open to the council are:

- To note the petition and take no action for reasons put forward in the debate; or
- To refer the petition to the relevant Committee meeting; or

- To refer the petition to the relevant Committee meeting with recommendations.

4. PROCEDURE:

4.1 The petition will be debated at the Council meeting in accordance with the agreed protocol:

- (i) The Lead petitioner will be invited by the Mayor to present the petition and will have up to 3 minutes in which to outline the prayer of the petition and confirm the number of signatures;
- (ii) The Mayor will then open the matter up for debate by councillors for period of 15 minutes and will first call on the relevant Committee Chair to respond to the petition and move a proposed response. The Mayor will then call on those councillors who have indicated a desire to speak in the matter, before calling on the relevant Committee Chair to respond to the debate;
- (iii) Any councillor may move an amendment or recommendation, having regard to the recommendation in 2.1 above and any such proposal will need to be formally seconded;
- (iv) After the 15 minutes set aside for the debate, the Mayor will then formally put:
 - (a) Any amendments in the order in which they are moved, and
 - (b) The substantive recommendation(s) as amended (if amended).

