

Members of the Commission,

You are asked to consider whether Cabinet should have explored the details of the Business Plan for the all-weather pitch project at Blatchington Mill School when deciding whether to loan money.

It might assist your decision to consider the nature of schools today – staffed by experienced professionals and run by Governors who apply their own considerable professional expertise unstintingly in pursuance of excellence in the education, both socially and academically, of the young people in our community.

Prior to 1982, the business management of schools was entirely in the hands of the Local Authority. But in that year, Local Management of School began a process which has continued steadily until today – the professionalism of the officers in schools, and significantly increased financial responsibilities for school Governors – who have risen to this challenge by ensuring that Governing Bodies comprise the appropriate professionals.

That increased responsibility is at the heart of the Education Act 2011 – the ultimate expression being Academy status. At Blatch, in common with other Community Schools in Brighton and Hove, Governors have made the conscious decision not to explore academy status but to continue in partnership with the Local Authority, believing that this is best for the young people of the City as a whole; a PARTNERSHIP that is evolving across all schools in the city with the intention of securing protocols which satisfy the new relationships between the LA and schools.

Blatch is a ten million pound organisation with 250 employees. It employs professionals to ensure that it delivers value for money and the current Business Manager is typical of the new breed of professional the schools recognise they need to employ in today's environment.

Prior to working at Blatch, he was Finance Director of a company that grew from one to ten million during his nine years there; spent six years as an accredited business adviser working with companies in all sectors across Sussex, latterly as the Director of the Enterprise Hub for the Gatwick Diamond and his last position was as General Manager of the Falkland Islands Development Corporation – responsible for facilitating the development of business in the whole country.

He has worked intensively during that time on numerous business plans and has shown the application of his experience to his current position by studying with the national College of School leadership and gaining a formal qualification as a School Business Manager.

The Governors' Finance committee is a further illustration of the business professionalism of today's schools. Its members include two successful businessmen, a Chartered Accountant, and experienced construction contract professional and a marketer – they all give generously of their time and professional expertise, unpaid – and their awareness of the responsibilities they carry to their successors are heightened precisely because they are unpaid.

They examined the business plan exhaustively and in detail, rejecting earlier versions until they were satisfied that the risk to future was at an acceptable level.

Members, the nature of schools nowadays is very different from even ten years ago. The Local Authority no longer runs schools – they are run by professionals, both professional employees, and volunteer Governors who apply their considerable professional expertise in pursuit of excellence for the education of our young people.

You are asked to consider whether the Cabinet should have themselves examined the business plan. It is absolutely right that you should consider this, but I am confident that you will reflect on the professional nature of schools and recognise, as the Cabinet clearly did, that the financial future of schools is in the safe hands of the officers and Governors who know their schools very well indeed, and conclude that the cabinet decision is safe and should be endorsed and that they should be applauded for helping the school to continue to provide the very best facilities for the young people of the city, both now and in the future.

Not forgetting the original imperative for considering this proposal in the first place. It will provide a world class facility for students in ways outlined in the appended list.

Thank you.