

Subject:	Secondary School Places		
Date of Meeting:	19 April 2018		
Report of:	Executive Lead Officer for Strategy, Governance & Law		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Mark Wall	Tel: 01273 291006
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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 1,534 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 30th April, 2018.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION / CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:**3.1 The Petition**

We the undersigned petition Brighton & Hove Council to commit to making places available in a catchment area secondary school for the 38 children who applied for both Dorothy Stringer and Varndean Schools but have been allocated to schools outside their catchment area.

Lead Petitioner – Karen Hmaimou

Additional Information:

During the allocation of secondary school places in Brighton and Hove for September 2018, 38 children from the Dorothy Stringer / Varndean catchment area who applied to both schools did not obtain a place at either. These 38 children have been scattered to schools across the city, in many cases the only child from their class or school, often facing journeys of several miles to school alone. They are devastated at being separated from their friends and classmates.

Excluding a small number of children from their communities at this crucial time of transition from primary to secondary school will have a profound effect on them. We do not believe that the council has fully considered the safety implications of 11-year-olds travelling miles to school alone, and we do not believe measures have been taken to minimise these journeys by ensuring children are guaranteed a place at the next nearest school with places.

Furthermore, we do not believe that the council has conducted any assessment of the impact of being separated from their friendship groups and communities on children's wellbeing and educational attainment, and for these reasons we consider that the council is not exercising its duty of care to our children. The council was aware well in advance that the number of children in our catchment this year would exceed the number of school places. They proposed measures to address this including the building of a new school and changes to the catchment areas. These measures were opposed by the heads of Dorothy Stringer and Varndean schools who said in a statement at the time that their 'key aim is to provide support and stability to the families within our catchment area'. They expressed a wish to ensure 'greater stability to families in our current catchment area and to help avert temporary turbulence across the school communities'. Both schools committed to taking on 30 additional pupils as an alternative solution, however although Varndean School has made these places available in 2018, Dorothy Stringer School has said that they will not do so until 2019.

The minutes of the meeting of the full governing body of Dorothy Stringer on 11th December 2017 state that 'to accommodate an increase in student numbers by 30 Dorothy Stringer School would need two temporary classrooms, cupboard space and a catering pod.' Far from being insurmountable, these relatively minor alterations could be easily achieved by September 2018 if there was sufficient will and leadership from the council. It is unacceptable that this small group of children should be left in the lurch over such trivial matters. The council has failed to coordinate an effective response to a situation that was entirely foreseen, but these 38 children cannot be dismissed as collateral damage. We ask the council to use some of the funding allocated for the building of the new school to support Dorothy Stringer in making the necessary changes in time for September, or to put temporary measures in place, that would enable the 30 additional children to be admitted this year. After reallocation of places not taken up this would remove the need for any children to be sent outside the catchment area.

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) An amendment to the recommendation in paragraph 2.1 of the report or to add additional recommendations should be submitted by 10.00am on the day of the meeting; otherwise it will be subject to the Chair's discretion as to being appropriate. Any such amendment will need to be formally moved and seconded at the meeting;
- (iv) After the 15 minutes set aside for the debate, the Mayor will then formally put:
 - (v) (a) Any amendments in the order in which they are moved, and
 - (b) The substantive recommendation(s) as amended (if amended).

