



**Brighton & Hove
City Council**

CABINET ADDENDUM

4.00PM, THURSDAY, 17 JUNE 2010

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

ADDENDUM

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Draft extract of the minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission meeting held on 8 June 2010 (copy attached).	

WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting for questions submitted by a member of the public who either lives or works in the area of the authority.

The question will be answered without discussion. The person who asked the question may ask one relevant supplementary question, which shall be put and answered without discussion. The person to whom a question, or supplementary question, has been put may decline to answer it.

The following written questions have been received from members of the public.

(a) Valerie Paynter

" When City College obtained planning consent a couple of years ago to demolish Pelham Street and build a new College there, publicity around that time alerted the public to the realisation City College would also be disposing of the Connaught Centre before long. Conservationists immediately began the process of seeking Grade 2 Listed Status for the building, to protect it from demolition, and got it. What work did Brighton & Hove City Council also do, then and since, to lay the ground for eventual acquisition of this building for re-use as an infant or infant primary school?"

(b) Mrs Stack

"I would like to ask the council why they did not think of leasing classrooms at the Connaught road school instead of spending huge amounts of money (million pounds each one) on mobile classrooms on playgrounds across the city?"

WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

The following questions have been received from Councillors and will be taken as read along with the written answer to be circulated the meeting. The Councillor asking the question may then ask one relevant supplementary question which shall be put and answered without discussion.

(a) Councillor Davis

“At the meeting held at Benfield School on the 27th May to discuss arrangements for the creation of two new reception classes at the school, the issue of transport to Benfield School and to West Blatchington School was raised.

Parents who have recently had their child directed to the new reception classes at Benfield School with an older child attending another school in the city and who work in central Brighton, outlined the difficulties that they face taking and collecting their children.

Given that the proposed numbers of children attending Benfield School, and possibly West Blatchington School, has now increased I would like to ask what plans the council is making in relation to school transport for these two schools.

Is the option of a special, supervised bus a viable option and when will this be known?”

Response from Councillor Brown, Cabinet Member for Children & Young People.

“Looking at the numbers of pupils allocated to the Benfield Reception classes, only five live beyond two miles, the distance at which the Council becomes responsible for providing assistance with home to school transport. For children of primary school age who are entitled to transport assistance we pay the equivalent of providing an adult bus pass plus the cost of the child fare for term time, approximately £500 a year. This means that the sum of £2,500 would be available to offset the costs of a school bus, which costs between £30,000 and £35,000 a year to hire. If the bus was to have an escort, this would be at an additional cost.

At the meeting held at the school officers undertook to look at the possibility of providing a vehicle, but with the caution that this would depend upon the number of pupils entitled to transport assistance. On the basis of current numbers, a subsidy of between £27,500 and £32,500 would have to be provided for a school bus to Benfield from Hove. Whilst we have every sympathy with the difficulties facing the parents offered Benfield, this level of support is not sustainable. If we were to provide a bus then other parents in the City living less than two miles from school would also reasonably ask

whether they could also have such a facility. That would place additional pressure on the home to school transport budget.

The question of a bus for West Blatchington was also raised at the Benfield meeting by Mr Howitt. At present 9 pupils are paid the bus pass equivalent totalling £4,500. Whilst more children than that attend from beyond 2 miles, 13 children with statements of special educational needs attend the special facility at the school, and are entitled to taxi transport so are not included in the calculation. From September 2010 a further 30 pupils living more than two miles from the school will join, assuming that they take up their allocated places. This will add £15,000 to the amount paid as bus fare equivalent. This would still leave a significant shortfall in hire costs, and again there would be an issue around a vehicle escort. The operation of such a route also assumes the availability of a vehicle at school time and that all those pupils living beyond two miles are living in central Hove and could access a single school bus route.

I am sorry that we are unable to be of more assistance with transport, but must look at potential costs in the context of current financial stringencies, legal entitlement to transport help and the local transport policy.

A letter has been sent to parents allocated the Reception places at Benfield setting out the position, as agreed at the school meeting.”

DRAFT EXTRACT FROM THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMISSION HELD ON THE 8 JUNE 2010**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMISSION****4.00PM 8 JUNE 2010****COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL****DRAFT MINUTES**

Present: Councillors Mitchell (Chairman); Pidgeon (Deputy Chairman), Bennett, Cobb, Elgood, Kennedy, Meadows, Morgan, Peltzer Dunn and Wakefield-Jarrett

6. SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME UPDATE

- 6.1 The Head of Communities and Equality distributed the Council's Single Equality Scheme and related leaflets. More copies were available including in different formats such as Braille, on request. As this was an area of changing legislation, Members asked that addendum slips be provided with future copies of the printed Scheme.
- 6.2 The Head of Communities and Equality updated the Committee on the effects of works on Equalities Impact Assessments, engagement with Communities of Interest and the launch of the City's Equalities and Human Rights Charter.
- 6.3 It was clarified that a revised version of the Single Equality Scheme was planned for January 2012 (report paragraph 1.3 refers). The Council placement of 4th overall in the national Stonewall index was based on achievements January – December 2009. The next Stonewall announcement would be in January 2011.
- 6.4 Preventing violent extremism was especially valuable in the community. Asked about the future, the Head of Communities and Equality said that when the outreach worker post comes to an end it is hoped that any projects which have been supported will be able to attract other funding to ensure their continuation.
- 6.5 Members noted areas of good progress including Glenwood Lodge and were pleased at the accessible staff bus on route 11X.
- 6.6 There was concern at the number (19) of Blue Badges that had been stolen in a six-month period; and a question as to possible measures that could help reduce this.
- 6.7 Members noted in the workforce profile, the small proportions of staff aged less than 24 and over 65 and asked for more information on the age range distribution, in the context of major initiatives in the City such as the Apprenticeship Strategy.

6.8 Members raised a point about disabled access to cafes in parks for buggies and wheelchairs.

6.9 Members wished to ensure that polling stations were as fully accessible as possible and at item 9 on this agenda asked for an officer report.

6.10 **RESOLVED –**

(1) That Overview and Scrutiny Commission note the ongoing work to reduce inequality across the city and progress made so far against the objectives set out in the Single Equality Scheme Action Plan.

(2) That the officers be asked to provide further information as minuted above.