

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE CABINET MEMBER MEETING

4.00pm, 5 OCTOBER 2009

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Brown (Cabinet Member)

Also in attendance: Councillor Fryer (Opposition Spokesperson, Green) and Hawkes (Opposition Spokesperson, Labour)

Other Members present: Councillors Allen, Davis, Fallon-Khan, Oxley, Kemble and Phillips

PART ONE

15. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

15a Declarations of Interest

15.1 There were none.

15b Exclusion of Press and Public

15.2 In accordance with section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 ('the Act'), the Cabinet Member for Children & Young People 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 nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press or 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 100I(1) of the Act).

15.3 **RESOLVED** – That the Press and the Public be not excluded from the meeting.

16. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

16.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2009 be approved and signed by the Cabinet Member as a correct record.

17. CABINET MEMBER'S COMMUNICATIONS

17.1 The Cabinet Member informed everyone that a Public Service Awards that had taken place in the previous week and noted that she was pleased to report that local foster carers, Mr & Mrs Emery, and the staff from Drove Road in Portslade, had both received

an award. The Cabinet Member explained that Mr & Mrs Emery had, over many years, fostered babies, toddlers and primary age children and were now also providing vital parent and baby placements, whilst the staff at Drove Road provided residential and respite care for disabled children with learning difficulties and/or challenging behaviour. She reported that the staff at Drove Road had also successfully turned a 'satisfactory' Ofsted rating into an 'outstanding' rating. The Cabinet Member congratulated both parties.

- 17.2 The Cabinet Member noted that she would also like to congratulate the Chair of Governors at Westdene Primary School for being appointed the South East Governor of the Year. She reported that the governor would be attending the National Governor of the Year Awards, which would take place in London later this month. She wished him every success.

18. ITEMS RESERVED FOR DISCUSSION

- 18.1 **RESOLVED** – All items were reserved for discussion by the Cabinet Member.

19. PETITIONS

- 19.1 The Cabinet Member received the following petitions:

19 (i) Petition – more primary school places in Hove and to build a new school for local families

- 19.2 Councillor Davis had submitted a petition signed by 971 people, requesting that more school places were provided for families in Hove.

- 19.3 Mr B Howitt, local resident and representative of 'School 4 Kids', presented the petition and noted the great support received from local residents for additional school places to be found in the BN3 area. Mr Howitt referred to the report being considered at today's meeting, detailing the options that are being considered for providing more school places in the city. Mr Howitt noted that local parents would have liked to see more concrete solutions; however, they welcomed the report and the options considered as a step forward to address what has been an ongoing problem of shortage of places in the Hove area. Mr Howitt requested that residents be fully considered in any process of consultation.

19 (ii) Petition – More primary school places in the BN3 area

- 19.4 Councillor Davey had submitted a petition signed by 184 people, requesting more primary school places in the BN3 area, to build 1 secondary school in the city centre, and to call on all faith schools to increase their number of community places.

- 19.5 Councillor Phillips presented the petition and noted the problems that local families currently faced in relation to the shortage of local primary school places, namely: children having to travel long distances to get to a school which, in turn, led to additional strain on families and children not attending school with anyone who lived close by. Councillor Phillips noted that the current situation had a negative impact on communities, families and children; she welcomed the efforts currently being made to

find the appropriate solutions and noted that it was important that the city took real and sustainable action to ensure local children were able to attend a more local school.

19 (iii) Petition- A new primary school in Hove

19.6 Councillor Oxley presented a petition signed by 56 people, highlighting the need for a new primary school in Hove and requesting that interim measures be put in place to alleviate the acute shortage of primary school places in the area. Councillor Oxley referred to the frustration put forward by those parents who had approached him over this matter and acknowledged the work that parents had done to support this issue, which was of general concern to the residents in the Hove area.

19.7 The Cabinet Member thanked all speakers for attending the meeting, for presenting the petitions and for speaking in support of this matter. She reassured all present that she understood the concerns raised; she noted all the comments made, and gave the following response to the above petitions:

“The Council is investigating options to increase the number of primary school places in Hove and parts of Brighton in response to an unprecedented increase in the number of school age children. This increase is particularly evident in Hove, and Councillors will be aware of the moves already made to permanently increase the size of the Davigdor and Somerhill schools, and the provision of additional places at West Blatchington Primary School. Further options of both new build and the extension of existing schools have been evaluated with the aim of providing two additional forms of entry in Hove beyond the permanent additional places already proposed.

We have GP registration data showing the numbers of children resident in different parts of the city, but at best that provides us with 3½ years notice of likely primary school numbers. From this data we recognised the growing numbers in Hove, and reacted more than a year ago by starting the process to expand Davigdor and Somerhill schools. At the same time additional places were provided at West Blatchington on a shorter term basis. Since that time we have been examining both the likely longer term need for school places in Hove and the options for providing places. In the first place we must be satisfied that the upward population trend in the area is likely to be sustained. It would be wrong to commit the Council’s limited capital resources to build places that will not be needed in the longer term. However, the recently available GP data for the 2007/8 birth year suggests a continuing trend and that we will need another five forms of entry in the longer term.

The options for a new school in Hove are limited, although the few possibilities that are there have been considered. Options for expanding existing schools have also been considered. The outcome of these options are being formally presented at this Cabinet Member meeting in order to confirm which of the options will be the Council’s preferred solution.

The Council unfortunately does not have readily available uncommitted capital for school buildings, the capital strategy which includes our PCP allocation is fully committed, and any new build or school expansion not yet included will require an imaginative re-working of the capital plan.

I do understand the frustration of parents who want to be able to send their children to a local school. The Council is actively planning to meet the need for places in Hove, and will work to deliver them in the shortest possible time scale. However we must be sure that within the limited options we have to create those places we are making effective use of our resources and building the places where they will best meet the need.

Turning to the suggestion of a new secondary school in the city centre, the Building Schools for the Future programme is a Government programme designed to rebuild, remodel or refurbish all secondary schools in England in due course. The BSF strategy, which is at an advanced stage, is predicated on the improvement and in some cases enlargement of existing secondary schools, not the building of a new school. This is in line with school population forecasts developed for the BSF proposals. Whilst some growth in the number of places required is forecast, particularly in Hove, there is no indication that a new secondary school is needed to meet the demand for places.

With regard to the suggestion that the Council call on faith schools to increase the number of community places, this is something that could be considered. However, Voluntary Aided (VA) schools act as their own admissions authorities and the council is unable to force these schools to provide community spaces. It is already the case that VA schools admit community pupils where they have spare capacity. In one case (St Andrew's CE Primary) the Governors make 20% of places available to local children who are not practising members of the Church of England.

Finally, with regard to the suggestion that the Council seek to use private school buildings for state school provision in the event of private school closures the Council's legal services team has advised the CYPT that the Council has no powers to compel independent schools to bring unused school buildings back into use. Nor does it have powers to bring failed or failing independent schools within Council control or acquire their premises. The Council is not able to bring about any legal changes or challenges to allow such action, which would require changes to primary legislation. The LA only has a general duty to secure that there are sufficient schools for primary and secondary education in its area (section 14 of the Education Act 1996), and has the power to establish new schools to enable them to fulfil this duty.

I have to add that we are not the only Council struggling with primary school places at this time. A fifth of council's across the country are having the same problem but as you know we do have a paper at this meeting setting out our options for providing sufficient school places, particularly in Hove and on the Brighton/Hove border where the most pressures are. We have also put in a bid for the additional capital monies to the DCSF under the Basic Need Safety Valve. We await a response from the DCSF."

19.8 The Cabinet Member thanked everyone for coming to speak to the petitions and invited all present to stay for the consideration of the paper regarding primary school places, which would be taken at today's meeting.

19.9 **RESOLVED** – That the petitions and the respective response be noted.

20. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

20.1 No public questions had been received.

21. DEPUTATIONS

21.1 No deputations had been received.

22. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

22. No letters had been received.

23. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

23.1 The Cabinet Member considered the following question from Councillor Davis:

“Could the Cabinet Member update us on the progress the administration is making to find more primary school places for BN3 residents in the short, medium and long term?”

23.2 The Cabinet Member referred to the response given to the petition presented by Councillor Davis earlier on the agenda, which covered the points made by Councillor Davis’s question.

23.4 Councillor Davis noted the response and requested that reassurance be given that the group ‘School 4 Kids’ would be consulted in the process of the options available for creating more primary school places in the Hove area. She considered that the group had a valuable contribution to give.

23.5 The Cabinet Member reassured Councillor Davis that the above group would be included in the consultation process.

23.6 Councillor Davis had asked a further question:

“Could the Cabinet Member tell us what aspirations the BHCC has for increasing the number and the quality of free school meals to school children, and how the expansion of Davigdor and Somerhill schools and the new shared catering facilities will achieve these?”

23.7 The Cabinet Member gave the following response:

“A report was prepared for the CYPOSC meeting held on 16 September 2009 which set out in some detail the barriers to the take up of both paid and free school meals, and the Council’s actions to increase the numbers of children taking free and paid school meals. The report also sets out the work undertaken to provide healthy menus and to encourage children to eat healthily and improve their appreciation of a wider range of foodstuffs. Action has already been taken to streamline the free meals claims process, and more will be done including working towards an online free meals claims system. The introduction of an online payment system is expected to increase meals take up for those who pay, and will offer a range of other benefits to schools and the Council, including detailed analysis of children’s eating habits. This will assist the development of menus that are both popular and healthy, and will provide useful data to support the CYPT’s anti-obesity work. The Council is committed to work towards the national target of 43.5% for meals take up.

With specific reference to Somerhill and Davigdor, a recent visit by officers indicated that the lunchtime experience for all pupils could be improved; to facilitate this, BHCC would suggest adopting a "Lunchtime Improvement Plan". This would include:

1. Fostering partnership working and identify all relevant stakeholders – pupils through student council, teaching staff, head/SMT, lunch time staff and kitchen staff, BHCC – School Meals Team – how does each of these groups view lunch time?
2. View service and layout of items, customer flow, how are free meal entitled children recorded, is the system in place in line with recommendations of non identification for free meals pupils.
3. Develop action plan from feedback, discuss and agree its implementation. Options include:

Fixed lunch sittings to utilise the hall space efficiently, reduce queuing time and enable pupils to sit in peer groups rather than by lunch choice

Taster sessions for pupils to introduce dishes that pupils are not sure of and to sample new dishes prior to them appearing on the menu

Parent taster sessions to show quality of meals served

Implementation of changes to the dining layout and introduction of new equipment as required e.g. Salad Bar, plates, bowls etc

4. Implement changes in manageable stages with clear roles and responsibilities identified
5. Upgrade equipment in the shared kitchen to cope with the increase in food production."

23.8 Councillor Davis thanked the Cabinet Member for her response. She indicated that she did not want the city to lose sight of healthy school meals due to concerns with the logistics aspect of the expansion of the two schools.

23.9 The Cabinet Member assured Councillor Davis that the aim for all parties was to deliver healthy school meals.

23.10 The Opposition Spokesperson, Green Group, indicated that she welcomed the fact that the current administration was looking to address the issue of free and paid school meals and was pleased that the referred CYPOSC report was also being considered as part of this process.

24. NOTICES OF MOTIONS

24.1 No Notices of Motion had been received.

25. OPTIONS FOR PROVIDING SCHOOL PLACES

- 25.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children's Services regarding the options for providing primary school places, which set out the options available to meet the increase in demand for pupil places in the primary sector in Hove and on the Brighton-Hove border where the need is most acute and immediate (for copy see minutes book).
- 25.2 The Schools Futures Project Director highlighted the main points of the report. He indicated that the report puts forward options that were realistic and within the budget to provide solutions to the shortage of spaces. He stated that the report provided short, medium and long term provision; it recognised the need for temporary accommodation by expanding existing facilities, whilst looking at realistic permanent solutions. The Director also indicated that officers were reluctant about providing an over number of spaces, as had been the case in the past, where schools were still currently unfilled.
- 25.3 In answer to questions, the SFP Director explained that the option considered at Leicester Villas had not yet been fully explored because it was one of the late entrants for consideration in this option paper. However, further analysis would be taken in relation to it and what it could offer.
- 25.4 In relation to the competition element, The Schools Futures Project Director explained that the situation was that should it be authorised for a new school to be built, then the opportunity arose for anyone to bid for it. He explained that the LA wish was for community schools; however, he was aware that other parties might also be interested in putting an application forward.
- 25.5 The Opposition Spokespersons, Labour and Green, advised caution about the option for a new school and the element of competition. They were concerned about the possibility of faith groups applying for the competition and being successful in the bid. The Spokespersons supported the need for a relevant curriculum and supported the need for more community schools and felt that local parents would also welcome these factors.
- 25.6 The Opposition Spokespersons very much welcomed the report and the efforts to address the matter of shortage of places locally. They welcomed the options put forward and encouraged as wide a consultation as possible so that residents were aware that, where the LA cannot deliver, this would be due to legal and other technical difficulties.
- 25.7 The Opposition Spokesperson, Labour, noted that parents of secondary school children had been consulted over previous matters relating to school for their children. She stated that she hoped the relevant group of parents of primary school children would also be involved, consulted, and their views taken on board in this current consultation process.
- 25.8 **RESOLVED** - That, having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendations:
- (1) That the possible options for additional primary places within the City be noted.

- (2) That it be agreed that the CYPT will pursue the option of providing a new two form entry Primary School by further considering the top 4 scoring sites in Appendix 2: Hove Park depot, Hove Park Upper School, BHASVIC and Leicester Villas.
- (3) That it be agreed that, should a new primary school be developed, the LA will either enter the competition open to those who would wish to operate the new school or be assured that those competing would offer places to local children.
- (4) That it be agreed that the CYPT will consult with schools and their communities on the proposal to expand the following schools:
 - Goldstone Primary School (1 new form of entry)
 - Westdene primary School (1 new form of entry)
 - Queens Park Primary School (0.5 new form of entry)
- (5) That it be agreed that, should the creation of a new school not be possible in the necessary timeframe, the CYPT will consult with the following schools regarding proposals to expand by one form of entry:
 - West Blatchington Primary School
 - Aldrington or St Andrews VA Primary Schools
- (6) That urgent discussions with Westdene and Goldstone Primary Schools be agreed with a view to providing one extra form of entry at each school for September 2010, accommodated in temporary buildings, in order to help meet the immediate demand for places.

26. WHITEHAWK COMMUNITY HUB PROJECT

- 26.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children's Services regarding the Whitehawk Community Hub Project, which informed the Cabinet Member of the outcome of the co-location bid and the processes that need to be undertaken to deliver the project and sought approval to add the project to the capital Programme (for copy see minute book).
- 26.2 The Cabinet Member explained that Brighton & Hove had been one of the few authorities to receive the money, in recognition of the advanced work the city has done on integrated children's services.
- 26.3 The Opposition Spokesperson, Labour, congratulated the team of officers for the work undertaken in relation to this project. She noted that the facilities that would be available as part of this programme would be meaningful to all members of the community and envisaged that the impact it would have on the community and Whitehawk Primary would also be positive.
- 26.4 **RESOLVED** - That, having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendations:

- (1) That the content of the report and the processes that will be undertaken going forward be noted.
- (2) That the Director of Children's Services be authorised to enter negotiations regarding the disposal of land required to generate the necessary capital receipt.
- (3) That it be noted that further work will be done to determine negotiations regarding the sale of land declared surplus as a result of this project and the capital receipts required for the Co-Location project.
- (4) That the project be added to the Capital Programme.

The meeting concluded at 4.45pm

Signed

Cabinet Member

Dated this day of