

CABINET ADDENDUM ONE

5.00PM, THURSDAY, 5 DECEMBER 2024

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

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ADDENDUM

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Representation received on Item 113: School Admission Arrangements 2026-27 from Councillor McLeay

Representation received on Item 114: City Parks Service Standards 2025-26 from Councillor Pickett

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 109(c)

Subject: Deputations

Date of meeting: 5 December 2024

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting of the Council for the hearing of deputations from members of the public.

Notification of two Deputations has been received. The spokesperson is entitled to speak for 5 minutes.

1) Deputation: Council's analysis of public responses to the engagement exercise on secondary school admissions

We have been looking at the Council's analysis of public responses to the engagement exercise on secondary school admissions arrangements. While we appreciate the Council making this information available, we feel more detailed information is needed on the frequency and distribution of different responses, and we hope the Council intends to provide this. We would like to highlight some points from the Council's analysis and to express concern about issues from the engagement meetings that have been omitted from the summary.

The Council's summary analysis identifies the level of concern about distances to school under the Council's proposed options. Councillor Taylor also said in the previous Cabinet meeting that these concerns had been 'heard loud and clear'. The summary analysis also highlights concern about proposals that divide communities. This concern was raised across many different areas including Fiveways, Port Hall, Prestonville, the Friars/Surrenden area and Whitehawk. The Council's summary highlights that 'there were strong objections to reducing the size of well-performing schools'. This suggests a need to ensure published admission numbers (PANs) are aligned with where children live and reflect demand in different parts of the city. It also suggests there is not support for increasing numbers at Longhill School by decreasing numbers in schools that are regularly over-subscribed.

We are concerned about points from the public meetings that have not been captured in the notes. The Council was asked whether published admission numbers would be drawn up with a view to providing adequate places to accommodate children within their own catchment areas. The Council responded that published admission numbers have in the past been calculated in this way. The Council gave a similar assurance when it introduced its new FSM policy, when it said that the policy is unlikely to affect the chances of pupils within a catchment area obtaining a place at their catchment area school due to falling student numbers. This point has been omitted from the summary. We request the Council to confirm that this is still its position.

The Council has listed several sources by Prof Gorard but has not provided evidence of engaging with other sources. In the final public meeting, multiple people commented on the way in which Prof Gorard's evidence was being taken out of context. These concerns have not been captured in the summary. Prof Gorard's most relevant argument, based on the effects of Pupil Premium Funding, is that incentivising highly performing schools with a low proportion of disadvantaged students to take more disadvantaged students improves results for

those disadvantaged students without impacting adversely on other students in those schools. This evidence provides support for the Council's new FSM policy but does not seem to support measures that focus on preventing children attending their local schools.

These may be mere oversights in a complex note-taking exercise, but we are concerned in case the Council is continuing to be selective about the evidence it presents. This would run contrary to what has otherwise been a welcome change in the tone of the Council's leadership towards greater recognition of the legitimacy of many of the concerns that have been raised.

Supported by:

Mark Kennedy (lead spokesperson)

Sally Wright

Paul Bunkham

Matthew Boote

Adam Dennett

Imogen Miles

Tony Boland

Rebecca Korda

Tom Harrison

Esme Gaussen

2) **Deputation: Class Divide**

Class Divide is a grassroots campaign advocating for educational equality between East Brighton communities (Whitehawk, Manor Farm, and Bristol Estate) and the wider city. The group includes residents, education professionals, and those with lived experience.

Current Context:

- Brighton & Hove faces declining pupil numbers, with projected 500 surplus school places in coming years
- Recent engagement on admission reforms sparked concerns about travel times, friendship groups, school performance, and property values
- Not all community members have equal ability to voice their views or access consultation processes

Key Issues:

- Historical educational inequality has persisted in Brighton & Hove
- Some communities face barriers to participating in consultations (limited access to devices, data, professional networks, and resources)
- Current system perpetuates divide between "advantaged" and "disadvantaged" schools
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Class Divide's Requests:

1. Reform Secondary School Admissions to:

- Prioritise children from lowest-income families
- Provide meaningful school choice for all parents
- Maintain viability of all community secondary schools

2. Improve Communication:

- Exercise care when discussing schools to avoid stigmatisation
- Consider impact of language on students, staff, and families
- Acknowledge that all schools have strengths and challenges

3. Expectations for Leadership:

- Support proposal advancement to formal consultation if it meets above criteria
- Take bold action to address national issue of declining pupil numbers
- Create foundations for an equitable school system

Supported by:

Lewis Smith

Carlie Goldsmith (lead spokesperson)

Dave Bailey

Katie Mercer

Liza Zerb

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 110(b)

Subject: Member Questions

Date of meeting: 5 December 2024

A maximum period of fifteen minutes in total shall be made available at each meeting of the Executive for questions from Members of the Council. The questions included on the list of questions referred to above shall be taken as read at the Cabinet meeting. The question will be answered either orally or at the discretion of the Chair by a written answer circulated after the meeting. Officers may assist the Leader or a Cabinet Member with technical answers to questions. No supplementary questions shall be permitted.

The following written questions have been received from Members:

(1) Councillor Meadows- School Admission Arrangements 2026-27

Do the proposed changes to the PAN for secondary schools mean children living next door to their first or second choice will lose their place in favour of a child with higher priority needs who has to travel across the city?

(2) Councillor Meadows - School Admission Arrangements 2026-27

Dorothy Stringer and Blatchington Mill school are both losing places. Does this make it even more likely that local children will lose their place to children with higher priority needs?

(3) Councillor Meadows- School Admission Arrangements 2026-27

Why is Longhill School, which serves a poorer community, having more places removed than schools in more privileged locations?

(4) Councillor Meadows- School Admission Arrangements 2026-27

How many children do we expect will have higher priority and will be able to move outside their catchment area? Will this in effect remove the need for catchment areas?

(5) Councillor Meadows- School Admission Arrangements 2026-27

How will the free school meal data (available in March 2025) impact on these catchment area changes? Why are these catchment area changes being implemented (in February 2025) before we have free school meal data?

(6) Councillor Meadows- School Admission Arrangements 2026-27

How can we be confident that our PAN reductions are in the right areas?

(7) Councillor Meadows- School Admission Arrangements 2026-27

Are we concerned that the new admission priority 6 will undermine the four schools it affects, and is it essentially indicating a loss of confidence in these school's ability to provide a good education?

(8) Councillor Meadows- School Admission Arrangements 2026-27

The proposed system of allocating places seems to be more complex than the current one. How will parents have confidence in knowing where their child will go to school?

(9) Councillor McNair- City Parks Service Standards 2025/26

Can the council guarantee that Patcham & Hollingbury and Westdene & Hove Park Wards will have their verges cut 6 times per year as outlined in the report (paragraph 3.6) as opposed to the usual two?

(10) Councillor McNair- City Parks Service Standards 2025/26

Can the council confirm that lawn graves in Patcham & Hollingbury and Westdene & Hove Park Wards will receive 10 cuts per year as stated in the report (paragraph 3.34)?

(11) Councillor Hill- School Admission Arrangements 2026-27

Young parents under 35 years old were underrepresented in the consultation at only 3.2% of respondents. Many other groups such as care experienced individuals, people with disabilities and black and racially minoritised individuals similarly were underrepresented. Given that traditional consultation processes aren't reaching these groups, what is the administration doing to try to ensure their views are not lost in consultation processes? Is Cabinet open to the principle of using citizen's assemblies to bring a more representative group round the table to help inform key decisions, like on catchments?

(12) Councillor Pickett- City Parks Service Standards 2025/26

Protecting biodiversity during the month of May is vital for our city's wildlife. How can the Cabinet claim the new verge cutting policy is biodiversity driven or claim to be promoting no mow May when they are cutting the verges during the month of May?

(13) Councillor Pickett- City Parks Service Standards 2025/26

A number of years ago, the Council agreed to limit the number of cuts in order to promote wildlife and biodiversity within the city. Statistics show that this limitation was key to enable the numbers of insects, small mammals and birds to flourish. These same statistics have proved that limiting the number of cuts in the spring/summer months has meant that more wildlife was found in these areas. Why has the Council returned to former policy and what is

the purpose of depleting our already struggling patches of green space within the city?

(14) Councillor McLeay- School Admission Arrangements 2026-27

Recommendations in the school admissions paper suggests further consultation on school admission arrangements for September 2026 will take place between 6 Dec 2024 and 31 Jan 2025. However, advice given by academics during a scrutiny meeting was to wait until the outcomes of the Free School Meals policy can be properly seen and assessed. Will BHCC officers and cabinet members have sight of data from the FSM policy before 31 Jan to base informed decisions on?

(15) Councillor McLeay- School Admission Arrangements 2026-27

Based on the information laid out in these cabinet papers, parents in the Stringer & Varndean catchment area are concerned that "as many as 150 kids could be displaced out to Longhill or BACA". Increased distance and transport are an understandable concern for families. What reassurance can be given for how BHCC might support with the transport impact of this outcome – particularly for low-income families in the grey area of low-income but not low enough for FSM eligibility?

(16) Councillor Sykes- TBM Month 7

Given the continuing historically high CT collection rate deficit and the resulting cost to the council, is it time to review our respective approaches to CT collection and support to those most in need?

