

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

4.00pm, 20 APRIL 2009

COMMITTEE ROOM 3, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Mrs Brown (Cabinet Member)

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

Other Members present: Councillors Davis, Mitchell and Kemble

PART ONE

93. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

93a Declarations of Interest

93.1 There were none.

93b Exclusion of Press and Public

93.2 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).

93.3 **RESOLVED** - That the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Item 106 in Part Two of the agenda.

94. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

94.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2009 be approved and signed by the Cabinet Member as a correct record.

95. CABINET MEMBER'S COMMUNICATIONS

95.1 There were none.

96. ITEMS RESERVED FOR DISCUSSION

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

97. PETITIONS

97.1 No petitions had been received.

98. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**98 (i) Public Question – Mr McGregor**

98.1 Mr McGregor asked the following question:

“The Somerhill Governors are disappointed to note that the proposed expansion has been sent to informal consultation before suitable plans have been made available to parents. At no time since January 2008 have Davidgor & Somerhill schools been consulted together, and any combined activities have been initiated by the schools, not the Local Authority. The proposed feasibility study undertaken in July 2008, turned into nothing of substance and I wrote to Di Smith about this in September 2008 expressing concerns. This could almost be considered a deliberate attempt to minimise engagement, despite words to the contrary. However, I would like to concentrate on the future and would like to ask the Cabinet *Member* how they propose to ensure that real and effective participation will be actively supported by the Council, to ensure that any expansion is innovative and visionary, to ensure that we have schools fit for learning and teaching for the next 25 years.”

98.2 The Cabinet Member thanked Mr McGregor for his question and gave the following reply:

“As Cabinet Member for the CYPT, I attended the public consultation meeting held at Somerhill on 2 April 2009 where assurances were given regarding the issues you have raised. I am happy to reiterate these assurances and confirm the following:

- The Council through its officers will willingly collaborate openly with both schools on all aspects of design, planning, approval timelines and building stages.
- It is recognised by the Council that feedback from both schools must be considered together as represented by our agreement to publish statutory notices in parallel and to consider responses to these consultations at the same time prior to determining whether the expansion of both school is to go ahead.
- That all of the current outside space for the two schools, i.e. play and sports areas, will be protected wherever possible and every attempt made to maximise the existing space and to increase it where possible.
- That B&HCC will apply a strategic and 21st century vision for schools and include this proposed expansion to ensure that every opportunity for innovation and improvement is seized.

- That B&HCC's architects and planners will involve and consult with the two schools' appointed working parties to seek their approval and to achieve the highest quality building that befits these two schools and the site they share.
- That all residents in surrounding streets affected by the building programme will be consulted by B&HCC's Planning Department and be invited to view the architect's plans at an early stage in the planning process.

I am glad that both school governing bodies are eager to work together and with the Council in planning this potentially very exciting expansion of two successful and popular schools enabling greater numbers of children within the locality to attend their local schools."

98.3 Mr McGregor indicated that he thought there was little information to base this proposal upon. He stated that Mr Healey, the Head of School Admissions & Transport, had visited Somerhill Junior School and provided the governing body with figures about the expected expansion of the population in the Hove area. Mr McGregor queried how robust those figures were.

98.4 The Cabinet Member stated that the information provided was based on current data. The Head of School Admissions and Transport further explained that, according to that data, there was an indication that the expanding population trend was due to continue. He acknowledged that any trend was potentially subject to change at any given time; however, the city council was working with the information that was currently available.

99. DEPUTATIONS

99.1 No deputations had been received.

100. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

100 (i) Letter – Primary School Admissions, East Brighton Area

100.1 A letter was received from Councillor Mitchell regarding the primary school admissions in the East Brighton Area.

100.2 The Cabinet Member thanked Councillor Mitchell for her submission and gave the following reply:

"Following the meeting on 2nd March, officers have started to look in detail at the options for providing additional local primary school places in the longer term for children living in the area which might be described as south-east Kemptown. Officers have looked at the numbers of pupils currently attending maintained schools who live in that area, where they currently go to school and how they might have improved priority for access to reasonably local places. This covers not only capital options for the provision of places, but the degree to which this group of residents can expect to access any additional places provided within the published admission arrangements.

Two options have been identified for a more detailed feasibility study. These are:

- Extend Queen's Park Primary School by 15 places (half a form of entry) from 45 to 60. There are limitations to the site and before this can be considered as a likely option a thorough assessment of the site and the building options would be necessary. A further issue for consideration is the possibility that any additional places would be taken up by children living closer to the school. Clearly this only yields 15 places whilst the indication is that around 30 children in every academic year group live in the south east Kemptown area. The school is filled to the current capacity of 45 every year.
- Extend St Mark's CE Primary by one form of entry. Geographically St Mark's is the closest school to the area in question. (Queen's Park is the third closest, but the nearest Community School). The main issue here would be the school's voluntary aided (VA) status, where the Governing Body rather than the Council is the admission authority. At present places are allocated with priority to those with a religious affiliation, and the school is filled to capacity every year with the current admission number of 30. In order to take this option further it would be necessary to negotiate with the Governing Body and the Diocesan Authority about the possibility of a second form of entry being allocated to children simply living within the Parish of St George's (which includes Kemptown) who may not have a religious affiliation. This would not change the school's VA identity, and would be consistent with advice given by the DCSF to VA schools on making a proportion of places available to the local community. It is possible that some parents would not be in agreement with their child attending a school with a religious ethos. Again, a detailed assessment of the potential site and building limitations will be undertaken.

Officers have had preliminary discussions with the school Head Teachers and the Church of England Diocesan Authority. Members will be kept informed of the progress of the feasibility study."

100.3 Councillor Mitchell recorded her thanks for the feasibility study being undertaken to address the issue. She requested that ward councillors were kept informed of the progress in relation to this matter and asked what the process was, in terms of the Cabinet Member Meetings timescales, for further reporting on this matter.

100.4 The Schools Futures Project Director indicated that discussions would be taking place with the Head Teachers and Governing Bodies of St Marks CE Primary School and Queens Park Primary School; he also stated that other issues, such as the Brighton Marina development, would also be considered in this process. The Director indicated that the process should be concluded by the end of the Summer term and only after that officers would be in position to report back.

100 (ii) Letter – Davigdor Infant and Somerhill Junior Schools' expansion

100.5 A letter was received from Councillor Davis regarding the expansion of Davigdor Infant and Somerhill Junior.

100.6 The Cabinet Member thanked Councillor Davis for submitting her letter in relation to the above matter.

- 100.7 Councillor Davis noted that her submission was similar in content to the public question previously considered and, therefore, she had received the same response to her letter.
- 100.8 Councillor Davis stated that she wished the proposed expansion of Somerhill Junior to be a positive initiative for the council and the city, and be worthy of winning awards, as opposed to being a proposal decided upon in a rushed manner. She indicated that she was reassured that consultation was taking place on the proposal.
- 100.9 Councillor Davis noted what had happened in relation to Davigdor Infant, which had resulted in retrospective planning permission, and urged the Cabinet Member to ensure that proper consultation was carried out with all the relevant parties to avoid people's frustration with unwanted developments they are unaware of.
- 100.10 The Cabinet Member noted Councillor Davis's comments and reassured her that it was also her wish to avoid future difficulties where such developments were concerned.
- 100.11 Councillor Hawkes noted that there existed a need for a better corporate and democratic response where public interest was concerned and supported Councillor Davis's request for a thorough consultation with whole areas as and when required.
- 100.12 The Schools Futures Project Director referred to the similar proposal to expand Longhill School. He reported that a meeting had taken place at the school with residents and the planner, which had worked very well; he indicated that this was a practice that officers would like to encourage schools to support and build upon in future as a way forward in consultation processes.
- 100.13 The Cabinet Member proposed that Councillor Davis contacted her, or officers, to indicate which local areas she would like officers to consult with in relation to the proposal for the expansion of Somerhill Junior.
- 100.14 **RESOLVED** – That the letters be noted and a copy of the responses given be sent to Councillor Mitchell and Councillor Davis respectively.

101. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

- 101.1 No Written Questions from Councillors had been received.

102. NOTICES OF MOTIONS

- 102.1 No Notices of Motion had been received.

103. REVISED ADMISSION FORUM MEMBERSHIP AND FUNCTIONS

- 103.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children's Services, concerning the revised Admission Forum membership and functions, which outlined the key changes as they affect the Brighton & Hove Admission Forum (for copy see minute book).
- 103.2 The Head of School Admissions & Transport noted the value of an Admission Forum and its role in monitoring local admission arrangements. He highlighted the key changes

proposed and how those applied to Brighton & Hove. He noted that the maximum number of core membership was now 20 and that any community members identified had to be appointed by the core membership rather than the Council. He also drew attention to the fact that representation from Falmer academy would now be included and that the option of automatic school attendance and voting rights for all schools had been removed.

103.3 **RESOLVED** – That, having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendations:

- (1) That the proposed membership for the Admission Forum be approved.
- (2) That the changes to the Admission Forum role arising from the Education and Skills Act 2008 be noted.

104. PROPOSED EXPANSION OF SOMERHILL JUNIOR SCHOOL

104.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children's Services, concerning the proposed expansion of Somerhill Junior School. The report set out the background and the rationale for the proposal and sought endorsement for proceeding to the next stage of the statutory process, which was the publication of the required statutory notice (for copy see minute book).

104.2 The Schools Futures Project Director indicated that it was sensible to run the statutory notices for Davigdor Infant and Somerhill Junior Schools in parallel. He explained that the importance of this parallel process was that if both proposals were agreed, both would proceed; however, if one was refused, both would fail. He indicated that the publication of the statutory notice, which was currently being sought, would allow a further four weeks of consultation.

104.3 The Opposition Spokesperson for the Labour Group welcomed the proposal and recorded her satisfaction to the way that officers were conducting the process and involving the planning department in it. She thought this was a sensible move in order to avoid the faults made in the past.

104.4 **RESOLVED** – That, having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendations:

- (1) That the proposal to expand Somerhill Junior School by one form of entry from September 2011 be noted and endorsed.
- (2) That the publication of the required Statutory Notice to progress this proposal be agreed.
- (3) That the results from the statutory consultation process be referred to Cabinet Member Meeting in July 2009 for decision.

105. PROPOSED EXPANSION OF LONGHILL SECONDARY SCHOOL

- 105.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children's Services concerning the proposed expansion of Longhill School. The report set out the background and the rationale for the proposal and sought endorsement for proceeding to the next stage of the statutory process, which was the publication of the required statutory notice (for copy see minute book).
- 105.2 The Schools Futures Project Director referred to the breakdown of responses received in support of and against the proposal following the initial consultation. He explained that the main concerns raised were around traffic and around parking on public highway adjacent to the school, and reported that a planning meeting had taken place to consider the matter. It was also pointed out that some extra parking spaces had already been found.
- 105.3 The Opposition Spokesperson for the Green Group enquired whether the school had a travel plan in place.
- 105.4 The Head of School Admission confirmed the school had such plan in place, and that it would be a requirement of any planning consent that the travel plan was revisited. He also said that school buses stopped on the school premises, which improved travel safety for pupils and kept the adjacent main road clear of buses loading and unloading.
- 105.5 **RESOLVED** - That, having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member accepted the following recommendations:
- (1) That the proposal to expand Longhill School by one form of entry from September 2010 be noted and endorsed.
 - (2) That the publication of the required Statutory Notice to progress this proposal be agreed.
 - (3) That the results from the statutory consultation process be referred to Cabinet Member Meeting on 6 July 2009 for decision.

106. PART TWO MINUTES - EXEMPT CATEGORY 3

- 106.1 **RESOLVED** – That the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2009 be approved and signed by the Cabinet Member as a correct record.

107. PART TWO ITEMS

- 107.1 **RESOLVED** – That the above item and the decision thereon remain exempt from disclosure to press and public.

The meeting concluded at 4.30pm

Signed

Chairman

Dated this day of 2009