

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

4.00pm 17 JANUARY 2011

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Brown (Cabinet Member)

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

Other Members present: Councillor Kemble

PART ONE

53. ITEMS RESERVED FOR DISCUSSION

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

54. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

54.1 **RESOLVED-** That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 December 2010 be approved and signed as the correct record.

55. PETITIONS

55.1. Mr Knutsen presented a combined paper petition and e-petition opposing the possible closure of Bright Start Nursery. The petitions had received a total of 5,125 signatories. Mr Knutsen supplemented that the majority of people who had signed the petition and used the Nursery opposed the council proposals to offer the Bright Start as a community asset under legislation from the proposed Localism Bill.

55.2. **RESOLVED-** That the Cabinet Member note the petitions.

56. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

- 56.1. Bob Schooley presented a public question to the meeting “On 20th December 2010 the government announced that the city wide School Sports Partnership funding would be reduced to provide for only one day a week per secondary school. In the light of the decision does the Council have any future plans to maintain and further refine high quality physical education in all schools and the city wide community?”
- 56.2 The Cabinet Member answered that it was not yet clear how the School Partnership funding is to become available, whether it will be given as one grant or will be distributed to each school. The Schools Sports Partnership which has been managed through Dorothy Stringer school has been very effective in developing competitive sport and in helping many young people to become engaged in healthy activity. This had been greatly valued. We will be working with schools and especially Dorothy Stringer to make best use of the funding so as to continue with as much of this important work as possible. There is some work underway to explore how this funding could fit into the wider City council agenda of developing Healthy Lifestyles. Collaborative working would maximise the impact of this Schools Sports Partnership funding. However, there would need to be many more discussions before she was able to give a full response to the question.
- 56.3 Bob Schooley asked a supplementary question “are the Council in a position to fund or part fund the School Sports Partnership”?
- 56.4 The Cabinet Member said that discussions were continuing on the matter and therefore she was not in a position to answer the question at this time. She emphasised that great value was placed on the School Sports Partnership.
- 56.5 Tac Carters presented a public question to the meeting “in light of the new proposals to seek other people to take over the running of Bright Start nursery, was it a mistake to feed misleading information to the media about the cost of necessary building work? What is the true cost of building work that needs doing?”
- 56.6 The Cabinet Member replied that there was a range of options for capital work that could be done at Bright Start and these will be outlined in the next consultation paper. The paper considered at the Cabinet Member Meeting in October accurately stated the estimated cost of a comprehensive refurbishment to bring the nursery up to a good standard and was produced independently by NPS. However many parents responding to the consultation stated that they are happy with the existing layout of the building. The future level of capital spending on the nursery will be one of the areas that any organisation running the nursery in the future will want to consider.
- 56.7 Dave Jones presented a public question to the meeting “what will be done to ensure that Bright Start can promote itself to new parents? We have not been able to take on new children with the threat of closure hanging over us. In order to remain viable, we need to be able to reassure parents that our future is secure”.
- 56.8 The Cabinet Member responded that the paper within the agenda included a proposal to guarantee to parents that the status of the nursery will not change before September 2011. Bright Start will continue to be listed by the Family Information Service in the same way as the Children’s Centre nurseries and the proposals from the consultation for improving the marketing of the nursery will be considered.

- 56.9 As his supplementary question, Dave Jones asked if there was any intention for a public re-launch as many prospective parents were under the impression that the Nursery had no future.
- 56.10 The Cabinet Member stated that the consultation was ongoing and this would be brought forward as a suggestion.
- 56.11 Alex Knutsen presented a public question to the meeting “during the previous consultation period, the Unison representative at Bright Start was denied facility time to deal with the consultation document by senior management. Can the Councillor please give assurances that staff representatives will be given adequate facilities to take part in the consultation”.
- 56.12 The Cabinet Member answered that the Unison representative had requested facility time of a day a week for 3 to 4 weeks. This was not considered reasonable under the Trade Union Facilities Agreement. Reasonable facilities time was made available to the local representative but in addition the Council also provides release for full time Trade Union representatives to support staff.
- 56.13 As a supplementary question, Alex Knutsen noted that he hoped the original decision could be re-considered.
- 56.14 The Cabinet Member answered that such a decision was not part of her role and was decided corporately by Brighton and Hove City Council.
- 56.15 Diana Leach presented a public question to the meeting “the report to the Cabinet Member Meeting refers to a ‘Parents Advisory Committee’. Unison, staff and parents are unaware of its existence. Staff, unison and parents came up with many ideas during the consultation period to improve the nursery and reduce the subsidy. What steps will be taken to facilitate this?”
- 56.16 The Cabinet Member replied that an advisory committee was established in 2006 with staff and parents representatives but had not met recently. The group was attended by the nursery manager, the deputies and representatives from parents with children of different ages. Officials will write to Council and community parents asking for nominations to renew the membership of this group. She was already considering a proposal to increase the fees at the nursery which was suggested by the staff and many parents. The paper also explained that other proposals will be considered including reviewing the age breakdown of the children and the establishment of the nursery.
- 56.17 As her supplementary question, Diana Leach noted the apparent contradictory statements from the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member on business cases put forward by interested parties and asked for clarification.
- 56.18 The Cabinet Member clarified that one parent had put forward a viability plan for the nursery.

57. DEPUTATIONS

57.1. No Deputations had been received.

58. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

58.1. No Letters from Councillors had been received.

59. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

59.1. No Written Questions from Councillors had been received.

60. NOTICES OF MOTIONS

60.1 The Cabinet Member reported that one Notice of Motion had been referred from Council which read:

“This council notes Bright Start is a vibrant city nursery, located in the heart of Brighton. It caters for the children of council employees and those living in the surrounding area. As such, it is a valuable local resource that benefits the wider community.

The nursery is staffed by excellent and loyal professionals who have worked there for many years, offering a steadfast and continuous service that the children enjoy, and their parents and carers implicitly trust.

Bright Start has never been allocated a marketing or advertising budget. As a result many local parents are either not aware of the nursery’s existence or believe that it is for council staff only, and thereby not available to them.

It has suffered from cutbacks in the past, and currently receives just £87,000 per year from the Council, as opposed to £200,000+ per year in the past.

The city’s birth rate is currently rising. It has been doing so for some years and the 2011 figure for 0-4 year olds is projected to be almost double that of 2001.¹

The Deputy Prime Minister has pledged to provide nursery places for all vulnerable 2-year-olds.

The council further notes the Conservative administration intends to withdraw funding and close the nursery in April 2011. At a Cabinet meeting on 11 October, and in the presence of a large number of parents and supporters who all called for the nursery to

stay open, the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People effected a consultation process which is perceived to be the first step towards closure.

This council believes previous efforts to maximise take-up of Bright Start places have been ineffectual and the consultation proposed is totally inadequate. It therefore calls on the Cabinet to recognise that:

- *Bright Start nursery is a highly valued local resource available to all pre-school children in the vicinity.*
- *With effective marketing, Bright Start could attract many more users and be a viable concern.*
- *Projected figures will place more and more demand on nursery places in future years.*
- *Failure to consult the wider community on the loss of Bright Start renders the consultation process fundamentally flawed.*
- *The council regrets that the proposal to withdraw the total amount of subsidy from the Bright Start Nursery was published in advance of the formal ending of the consultation process and the proper consideration of its outcome.*

Furthermore council calls on the Cabinet, as part of its consultation process, to consider:

- *Identifying all parents of pre-school children within a 500m radius of Bright Start and including them in the consultation.*
- *Ensuring, before any decision is taken on the nursery's future, that all those who are eligible to use the nursery are aware a) of its existence and b) their eligibility to use it.*
- *Ensuring that consultation on the future of Bright Start and the possible withdrawal of a staff benefit is extended to all Brighton and Hove City Council employees, not just those who use the nursery.*
- *Undertaking to take the results of the consultation into account and especially, if a majority of those consulted express a desire for Bright Start to remain open.*
- *Bringing a detailed report to the Children and Young People Cabinet Member Meeting on the 17th January 2011 setting out how the proposals in this Notice of Motion will be taken forward along with options for the future running of Bright Start as a viable city centre children's nursery."*

60.2 **RESOLVED-** That the Notice of Motion be noted.

61. **FUTURE OF BRIGHTSTART NURSERY**

- 61.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Strategic Director, People. The report recommended the withdrawal of the proposal to close the nursery and an extension of the consultation period in light of the responses to the consultation and the Council meeting held on 16 December 2010.
- 61.2 Councillor Hawkes conveyed her deep unhappiness with the way the subject had been handled. Councillor Hawkes questioned the viability of the proposal for the nursery to be run as a community asset and the marketing of the nursery hitherto especially with regard to local business and other public bodies in close proximity. She re-iterated that the Nursery had not been saved and the decision on closure would still have to be made at some point in the future. Councillor Hawkes noted with concern that trade union representatives felt ostracised from the process and urged the Strategic Director and officers to strengthen their co-operation in order to achieve the best outcome for all parties.
- 61.3 The Strategic Director, People reassured Councillor Hawkes that their co-operation and relations with trade union organisations were taken very seriously.
- 61.4 The Cabinet Member noted that the fact that the consultation had been extended showed that input from all groups was given full consideration. She referred to a community run playgroup based in Fiveways which was one of the city's best, as indication that such proposals could be viable.
- 61.5 Councillor Fryer relayed her fundamental disagreement with the consideration of closure of the nursery. As the city's second largest employer, she believed the provision of nursery facilities was an essential duty of the Local Authority. Councillor Fryer asked how the consultation on the proposal for the transferal of the nursery to a community asset would be delivered.
- 61.6 The Cabinet Member clarified that the Parents and Workers Group consisting of the nursery manager, senior practitioner, practitioner, line manager and parents would be re-established to consider proposals and advise the Local Authority on the matter.
- 61.7 **RESOLVED-** That the Cabinet Member agrees to:
- 1) Withdraw the proposal to close the nursery by the end of April 2011 and, to reassure parents and staff that there will be no change to the status of the nursery before September 2011.
 - 2) Increase the fees for the nursery from April 2011 in line with fees increases in other Council run nurseries in the city and to consider other measures to improve the sustainability of the nursery.
 - 3) The development of a proposal for how the Bright Start nursery could be offered as a community asset in advance of the Localism legislation and to consult on this proposal before making a final decision about the future of Bright Start including the option of closure.

62. CYPT FEES AND CHARGES 2011/12

- 62.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Strategic Director, People that reviewed the CYPT fees and charges in accordance with corporate policy.
- 62.2 The Cabinet Member noted that item 3.3.2 should read “the average *daily* cost of a day nursery in the city was £42.85 last September” as opposed to “*hourly*”.
- 62.3 In particular reference to nursery fees, the Head of Sure Start supplemented that one of the aims was to introduce a simpler, more uniform approach across Council run nurseries as well as reducing the council subsidy. Where significant increases were being proposed these would be staged to reduce the impact on parents.
- 62.4 Councillor Hawkes conveyed her agreement with the principles of the proposals but recommended that they be constantly monitored due to the potential for difficulties particularly in regard to the uniformity of nursery charges.
- 62.5 Councillor Fryer expressed her concern with the proposals in particular the 30% reduction in funding to The Music Service. Councillor Fryer also queried the provision of free school meals at Brighton Aldridge Community Academy (BACA) as addressed in item 3.9.1.
- 62.6 The Cabinet Member clarified that BACA was a part of the primary and special schools meals contract. She also explained that she had a lot of admiration for The Music Service and the decision was not made lightly. The proposal would be reviewed again after the decision on the Music Grant in the Henley Report was made.
- 62.7 Councillor Hawkes queried the rise of 40% in the cost for hire of Surrenden Pool.
- 62.8 The Cabinet Member responded that although 40% appeared a steep rise on the surface in real terms this would be less than £1 per child and was still considerably lower than other pools in the city. Furthermore, this charge was not paid for by the children but by the school who received funding for this activity as part of their annual budget share.
- 62.9 **RESOLVED-**
- 1) That the position on fees charged for nurseries as detailed in section 3.3 and appendix 1 be noted
 - 2) That the proposed charges for 2011/12 for the Learning Development Centre as detailed in section 3.4 and appendix 2 are agreed.
 - 3) That the fees and charges for 2011/12 in respect of Surrenden pool as detailed in section 3.5 and appendix 3 are agreed.
 - 4) The position on fees and charges for the Music and Performing Arts Service as detailed in section 3.6 and appendix 4 be noted.
 - 5) That the position on fees charged by the Portslade Community College in section 3.7 be noted.

- 6) That the position on fees charged by the Portslade Sports Centre in section 3.8 and appendix 5 be noted.
- 7) That the position on the charges for school meals as detailed in section 3.9 be noted.

63. CAPITAL RESOURCES AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2011/12

- 63.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Strategic Director, People that gave notification of the available capital resources allocated to the service for 2011/12 and sought recommendation to Cabinet of the Capital Investment Programme for 2011/12.
- 63.2 **RESOLVED-** That the level of available capital resources totaling £10.406m for investment relating to education buildings financed from capital grant, revenue contributions, reserves and capital receipts be noted.

64. REVIEW OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

- 64.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Strategic Director, People. The report enabled the Cabinet Member to monitor progress of the Children and Young People's Plan and the Section 75 Improvement Plan. The Commissioning Strategy and Transformation Plan were also submitted for the Cabinet Member's approval.
- 64.2 Councillor Hawkes praised the report authors for their work so far but asked that any uncertainty over the contribution from the Primary Care Trust be addressed.
- 64.3 Councillor Fryer asked if the direct payments were intended to go straight to carers and if so, would assistance with financial planning be given if required.
- 64.4 The Strategic Commissioner confirmed that payments would go straight to parents. Those that might require help were identified and referred to an advisory group for help.
- 64.5 **RESOLVED-**
 - 1) That the Cabinet Member notes the progress in relation to the timescales set out in the review scoping paper.
 - 2) That the Cabinet Member approves the Commissioning Strategy and Transformation plan thus sanctioning the action plans to be taken forward.

65. PART TWO MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (EXEMPT CATEGORY 1)

- 65.1 **RESOLVED-** That the Part Two minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 December 2010 be approved and signed as the correct record.

66. PART TWO ITEMS

- 66.1 **RESOLVED-** That the above items do not remain exempt from disclosure from the press and public.

The meeting concluded at 4.53pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of