

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & SKILLS COMMITTEE

4.00pm 19 SEPTEMBER 2016

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL, NORTON ROAD, HOVE, BN3 4AH

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor:

Chapman (Deputy Chair), Brown (Opposition Spokesperson), Phillips (Group Spokesperson), Daniel, Taylor, Penn, Wealls, Mitchell and Moonan

Co-optees:

Ms B Connor, Mr K Darvas, Ms K Kybble, Ms A Holt, Mr M Jones, Ms A Mortensen, and Mr A Muirhead

PART ONE

19 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

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19(a) Declarations of substitutes

- 19.1 Councillor Mitchell for Councillor Bewick
Councillor Moonan for Councillor Russell-Moyle
Ms B Connor for Ms M Ryan
Mr A Muirhead for Mr B Glazebrook

19(b) Declarations of interest

- 19.2 There were none

19(c) Exclusion of press and public

- 19.3 In accordance with section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 ("the Act"), the Committee 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 business to be transacted or the nature of proceedings, that if members of the press and 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 100(I) of the Act).

19.4 **RESOLVED-** That the press and public not be excluded

20 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chair stated:

We are all ambitious for our city's schools. We want every child to have a great education and a great school experience. Secondary school is where future careers can be shaped, where lifelong friendships form and where vital life skills are learned, inside and outside of the classroom. But it can also be when some children are left behind, leading to poor employment opportunities and social problems that can persist for generations. This is an issue where the political and the personal can be in contradiction. People's aspirations for the city or for education in general, can be very different when viewed from the perspective of your own child, or your own neighbourhood. No child is more important than another. We have a responsibility to support all our schools, so that they can ensure every child reaches their full potential.

School catchment areas inspire strong emotions precisely because they are so important. Successive administrations of all colours have struggled to resolve it. There is no perfect or obvious answer, but that is no reason to duck the issue. It is why each party has sought to come together on this working group to find the best answer we can, to understand the balance we have to strike, and take responsibility - on behalf of those that elect us - for making the difficult choices. That's why our mission over the coming months, and beyond, is to support all of our family of schools, to dispel any myths or incorrect assumptions some may make about our schools and to challenge those who put some of our schools and teachers down. We need to be here to support all our schools and highlight the good work that they do.

This year our secondary schools bucked the trend nationally and improved on their GCSE results, against a backdrop of a national drop in results. We need to build on that success, and give parents, children and schools the confidence that our aim is for all schools to achieve excellence.

The cross party working group brought councillors from all parties together, to agree and bring a proposal forward. We did that in the clear understanding that there will always be some parents and children disappointed by the results, just as some will be given opportunities that had previously been closed to them. There is no 'silver bullet', no perfect answer that satisfies everyone. That's why, when this group was formed, we set out six priorities to inform our decisions. We understood that no final proposal could satisfy all of them equally, but striking the best balance between them would ensure an equitable and deliverable outcome. One measure the group was clear on was to ensure those children from disadvantaged circumstances were not excluded. Hence we are proposing that eligibility for free school meals is taken into account. Throughout March and April we carried out over twenty engagement events with the public and presented three different ideas of how the admission arrangements could work. I attended twelve of these engagement meetings across the city and although it was clear that there were many different views, there were some common themes. This working group has taken the feedback from these events as evidence in our work, as well as evidence from head teachers, governors and councillors of all parties. The group has debated the issues extensively, and we have emerged with the proposals set out in the committee paper before us.

Considering the importance of this issue, and the efforts of those who took the time to contribute to this proposal, I hope it is something we can use to demonstrate to the public that all parties can work together, with shared goals, to improve both educational attainment and social mobility in the city. Of course, the council must not only address the schools children attend today, but how capacity can be extended in the future.

I was hoping that, today, we could put forward final proposals that would go out to formal consultation in a few weeks and so it is disappointing that the location of the new University of Brighton free school has not been confirmed. Understandably we cannot go out to formal consultation without a confirmed site for the new school. I can assure everyone that the council is working with the University of Brighton and external stakeholders, to confirm the site as soon as possible. Once the site is confirmed then this cross party working group will reconvene to discuss next steps.

Finally, I would like to record a few thanks from me and the group. It's important to thank the officers who have put a great deal of effort into this piece of work, by producing numerous documents and modelling different scenarios for the cross party working group to consider. They also organised and ran more than twenty engagement meetings across the city earlier this year. Thank you to the head teachers and governors that attended the admissions working group. Their experience and knowledge was incredibly valuable to the process. I would like to thank fellow councillors from all parties for their contributions to the working group, and the constructive way we have put party politics to one side in the interests of the city's young people.

It was noted that this was the last meeting of the Youth Council representative Krisztian Darvas. He thanked Krisztian for contributions to the Committee and wished him well for the future.

21 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

21a Petitions

21.1 The Committee considered the petition Brighton Kids Not Commuters which was presented to Council on 21 July 2016 by Naomi Campbell and Natalie Cowell.

The Chair stated:

I would like to thank Naomi Campbell and Natalie Cowell for their petition.

The working group have taken advice from a large number of respondents including the Brighton Kids Not Commuters campaign and the petition you have brought through council in July to this committee today. I would like to thank you for your involvement and your efforts to ensure the voice of your community is heard during this phase of the work. In not taking forward the options put forward in the engagement phase I hope the petitioners can see evidence of the working group listening to their concerns.

21.2 RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the report.

21b **Written Questions**21.3 **(i) Secondary School Admission Arrangements**

Ms H Deeley presented the following question:

Why can't the whole consultation process be started again, (because the recent one was flawed and results massively skewed dependent on geographical location) looking at the real problem (social equality) and coming up with a better solution that actually is fair and offers ALL children in the city a choice rather than just a few ?

The Chair provided the following response:

Thank you for your question to the committee. Whilst I appreciate you feel that the consultation was flawed and skewed by the volume of respondents from certain parts of the city I can assure you that the working group that I have chaired have understood the pattern of responses received. However a full range of views have been discussed and considered. As the report states, we know we would not be able to please everyone. The working group's conclusions are the result of considering all views and opinions. The working party will reconvene when the site of the new school is known and any future change to admission arrangements will require a formal consultation when residents will be able to express their views.

Ms Heeley asked the following supplementary question:

How come the working party has drawn conclusions from the consultation and come up with new proposals based upon these results when they know they are skewed? How is that fair to the underrepresented areas.

The Chair provided the following response:

Whilst areas may have been underrepresented in the amount of responses received we have heard what all areas of the city have said. It is not possible to provide a system that meets all parent's wishes whether that be for choice, for certainty, for safe and reasonable journeys or to address social equality. The working group's conclusions have endeavoured to balance the aims and priorities of all those affected by school admissions. Any proposed change will be subject to formal consultation.

21.4 **(ii) Secondary School Admission Arrangements**

Ms S Fearn presented the following question:

Brighton University planned to provide a new school for children in the central and east of the city. How can the council's plan for this school to be placed into the existing central catchment offering those children three choices be fair for the children in the east who will continue to have only one "choice".

The Chair provided the following response:

We must await the confirmation of the permanent site for the new free school before final proposals are developed for future catchment areas.

In 2018 if, as expected, the school opens without a catchment area then the parents of children in the east will be able to state a preference for this school as well as their catchment school. The concerns expressed about choice for those in the east of the city have been heard and when the working party reconvenes I know the members will give it due consideration.

Ms Fearn asked the following supplementary question:

Does the chair person agree that these plans discriminate against the children of working families in east Brighton many of whom are on low incomes but are not entitled to free school meals simply because they work and that it would have been fairer to ALL children to adopt option B with a consensus of 65% representing a compromise for all.

The Chair provided the following response:

All our schools are on the journey of improvement that can be seen in some great results last year. Children in east Brighton have access to improving schools and in 2018 it is expected that they will have access to the new University of Brighton secondary school. The wish for more choice was heard by the working group alongside the views of others about extra journeys, distance to schools, safe routes to school, going to school with friends and maintain the community feel of schools. The working group will continue to explore the issues when the permanent site of the new school is known. However the need for compromise is a theme that I am sure will come up again.

21c Deputations

21.5 There were none.

22 MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

22a Petitions

22.1 There were none.

22b Written Questions

22.2 There were none.

22c Letters

22.3 There were none.

22d Notices of Motion

22.4 There were none.

23 SECONDARY SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2018/9 AND 2019/20

23.1 See Item 24

24 SECONDARY SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2018/9 AND 2019/20

24.1 The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Children's Services regarding the secondary school admission arrangements for 2018/19. The report was presented by the Assistant Director, Children's Services and the Head of School Organisation.

24.2 The report provided an update on the outcomes of the engagement phase, held earlier in the year, and the conclusions reached by the Cross Party School Organisation Working Group (CPSOWG) regarding proposed revisions to the admission arrangement for the city's secondary schools. The report noted that there was not yet confirmation of the permanent site for the new school, nor determined admission arrangements for schools that were their own admission authority. It had not therefore been possible to put forward proposals as part of city wide admission arrangement for September 2018.

24.3 The Legal Advisor confirmed the following:

- That the Committee would not be setting the admission criteria for 2018/19 at this meeting.
- That the Committee was noting that there would be no proposal for a formal consultation for the 2018/19 arrangements, for the reasons set out in the report.
- There would be a future paper setting out the arrangement for 2018/19 which would come to the Committee in due course.
- When the Committee did consider that report, it would be advised of the admission arrangements adopted by those schools whose admission arrangements were not set by the Local Authority.
- The report being considered at this meeting would not bind the Committee on future arrangements for 2019/20. The admission arrangements for 2019/20 would need to be set by February 2018, which would mean that any formal consultation would have to commence in Autumn 2017.
- The Committee would only be bound if it agreed Recommendation 2.6 in the report, which related to Free School Meals being included in any formal consultation on future admission arrangements.

24.4 Ms Mortensen noted that the majority of the responses to the public engagement had come from those residing within the current catchment area for Dorothy Stringer and Varndean, and was concerned that the opinions of those from other parts of the city, particularly East Brighton who had contributed less to the public engagement, would not hold as much weight. The Head of School Organisation confirmed that all responses were considered equally by the CPSOWG.

- 24.5 Councillor Phillips thanked officers, Councillor Chapman and fellow members of CPSOWG, for all the work undertaken to date. Councillor Phillips said she supported the proposal to consider the introduction of priority for pupils in receipt of Free School Meals. The Assistant Director, Children's Services said that the CPSOWG had looked at how the needs of the more challenged families in the city could be met, and the current legislation allowed Admission Authorities to introduce priority to those in receipt of Free School Meals.
- 24.6 Councillor Phillips was concerned that a permanent site for the new school had not yet been confirmed. She noted that it may be necessary to open a temporary secondary school whilst the site of a permanent school was agreed, and asked for assurance that any temporary school would not use portacabins. The Head of School Organisation said that temporary accommodation may have to be used, but if there were portacabins they would be of a high standard. The Executive Director Families, Children and Learning said that it was very disappointing that a permanent site had not yet been confirmed, and at the moment it was too early to comment on any temporary site or what facilities would be available.
- 24.7 Councillor Brown thanked Councillor Chapman, officers and fellow members of the CPSOWG for their work to date. Councillor Brown said it was regrettable that no permanent site had yet been confirmed and the uncertainty that that created. The Conservative group noted that the schools currently under the most pressure were within central part of the city, and it therefore made sense to place the new school there. However, that would then mean that there would be three schools in one catchment area, and the option of putting that school as a dual catchment school with Longhill was preferable. There was consensus amongst the CPSOWG to introduce a priority in the admission criteria for those in receipt of Free School Meals. The current admission criteria allowed for random allocation for over subscribed school, and that would continue to be supported by the Conservative Councillors. Councillor Brown noted that the admission criteria for those schools that were their own admission authority had not been agreed, and hoped that that did not indicate any problems. The Assistant Director, Children's Services confirmed that those schools were keen to continue working with the Local Authority, and it was simply that their admission criteria had not been confirmed at this stage.
- 24.8 Councillor Mitchell shared the disappointment that the site of the new school could not yet be confirmed and hoped that that would be resolved as soon as possible. As a Councillor for East Brighton, she thanked officers for their engagement with those in that part of the city.
- 24.9 Councillor Wealls referred to Free School Meals and asked if the percentage of places were not taken up within catchment areas, and so some were allocated to those out of catchment, whether that would deny some children who lived in the area a place. The Head of School Organisation said that the expectation was that it would not dislodge any catchment area child from being offered a place. Councillor Wealls asked that that scenario be tested thoroughly.
- 24.10 Councillor Wealls asked that if Brighton Aldridge Community Academy (BACA) and Portslade Aldridge Community Academy (PACA) did not agree to use the Local Authority's admission criteria that Councillors be notified. The Assistant Director,

Children's Services confirmed they would. She added that the Authority had regular partnership meetings with those schools and they had reiterated that they wanted to continue to work with the Council.

24.11 Councillor Taylor said that he represented the Withdean ward, and wanted to thank officers for their engagement with local residents. He was concerned that there was a bulge year approaching of children due to start secondary school and he was concerned that no site for the new school had been agreed. He hoped it would be resolved soon to alleviate any uncertainty over school places. The Chair reassured Councillor Taylor that the Authority was working hard to locate a site for the new school.

24.12 Ms A Holt noted that there was a Green Paper on future education, and was concerned that if schools were not reaching the desired level of attainment there could be pressure for the new school to be a Grammar School. Ms Holt asked that the CPSOWG factor in the Green Paper during their discussions. The Chair said that the Green Paper was still in its infancy and would be considered in due course.

24.13 Mr M Jones thanked everyone for their hard work in this matter. He said that the statistics of those in receipt of Free School Meals 2015 differed from the percentages used by the CPSOWG. The Head of School Organisation said the figures from 2015 were students who were at secondary school at that time, but the working group had been looking at primary school children who would be moving up to secondary school.

24.14 Mr Jones said that schools had different levels of attainment in GCSEs and suggested that unless all school/s in a particular catchment area were credible families may move to a different part of the city to attend an alternative school. The Assistant Director, Children's Services said that the CPSOWG had looked at many different options, and whilst schools did currently have different levels of attainment the focus was to improve the standards in all schools. Ms Mortensen added that all schools provided a good education, but it was important to improve the perception of some schools.

24.15 Krisztian Darvas asked if the views of children at primary school had been taken into account by the CPSOWG, and was advised that they had with 731 responses received from pupils in Years 3 and 4.

24.16 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:

- (1) Noted the responses to the engagement activities which had helped to inform the current proposals developed by the Cross Party School Organisation Working Group for future admission arrangements.
- (2) Noted that, as their own admission authorities, Cardinal Newman Catholic School, King's School, the Brighton Aldridge Community Academy, Portslade Aldridge Community Academy and the new University of Brighton Academies Trust secondary school were responsible for their own admission arrangements.
- (3) Agreed that in view of the lack of greater certainty regarding the site of the new University of Brighton Academies Trust secondary school it would be premature to

make significant and potentially uninformed changes to the admissions arrangements for September 2018.

- (4) Requested that a report be provided to the Committee in due course in respect of progress in finding a site for the new school, including, if required, a temporary site so as to provide for the opening of the school in September 2018.
- (5) Noted that pending the identification of a suitable catchment to reflect the site of the school, the new University of Brighton Academies Trust secondary school had agreed (subject to approval from the DfE) to adopt admission arrangements for September 2018 which would provide for parents across the city to seek admission, but that those admissions arrangements would be the subject of further review for admissions in 2019 as the Trust were fully committed to being part of city wide co-ordinated admissions scheme.
- (6) Agreed that any future formal consultation in respect of admission arrangements should include the proposal for the introduction of a priority for pupils in receipt of Free School Meals.
- (7) Noted that a report to determine the admission arrangements for maintained community schools, for entry in September 2018, would be presented to this committee for consideration in due course.

25 ITEMS REFERRED FOR COUNCIL

25.1 **RESOLVED:** That no items be referred to Council

The meeting concluded at 5.30pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

