CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & SKILLS COMMITTEE	Agenda Item 46(a) Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:		**Petitions**		
Date of Meeting:		**15 January 2018**		
Report of:		**Executive Lead for Strategy Governance & Law**		
Contact Officer:	**Name:**	**Mark Wall**	**Tel:**	**01273 291006**
	E-mail:	**mark.wall@brighton-hove.gov.uk**		
Wards Affected:	**All**			

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

1.1 To receive those petitions presented to the full Council and referred to the committee for consideration.

1.2 To receive any petitions to be presented or which have been submitted via the council's website or for which notice has been given directly to Democratic Services.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 That the Committee responds to the petition either by noting it or writing to the petition organiser setting out the Council's views, or where it is considered more appropriate, calls for an officer report on the matter which may give consideration to a range of options, including the following:

- taking the action requested in the petition
- considering the petition at a council meeting
- holding an inquiry into the matter
- undertaking research into the matter
- holding a public meeting
- holding a consultation
- holding a meeting with petitioners
- calling a referendum

3. PETITIONS

3.1 The following petitions have been referred to the committee from full Council:

i) **West Hove Catchment Area Changes – Keep Our Community Together**
Petition from Mr. K. O'Sullivan referred from the Council meeting held on the 14th December, 2017 (1,436 signatures).

"We the undersigned petition Brighton & Hove Council to abandon proposals to change existing catchment areas until the Education & Skills Funding

Agency confirms the site and the opening date for the proposed Brighton & Hove Academy."

ii) **Keep Our Community Together**
Petition from Mr. O. Tait referred from the Council meeting held on the 14th December, 2017 (1,368 signatures).

"We the undersigned petition Brighton & Hove Council to abandon proposals to change existing catchment areas until the Education & Skills Funding Agency confirms the site and the opening date for the proposed Brighton & Hove Academy."

Additional Information

1. The proposed changes will have a serious and detrimental impact on the wider community. The proposal to move residents living between Boundary Road (Hove) and Coleman Avenue into the Portslade Aldridge Community Academy (PACA) catchment area will forcibly split friendship groups established at Hove Junior school. Approximately 30% of Hove Junior students will no longer have the same options as their class friends. This will not only create unnecessary stress and anxiety for the children directly affected, but also change the fabric of a close-knit, established and family friendly community.

2. We believe that every child in Brighton & Hove should have access to quality local education and not be bussed across the city. Under these changes, the children affected would be unable to walk to school and would be faced with up to 5-mile return trip to school at peak hours in our already congested city. With only a small number of children affected, their safety, their ability to participate in activities out of school hours, and their ability to engage with the local community around the school will be compromised by this extensive commute.

3. We acknowledge that there is a need to relieve pressure on numbers on current schools but the proposed changes set a precedent that could have a negative impact for all parents across Brighton and Hove. The two principles that received the greatest support in the Council's 2016 consultation on catchment areas were minimising pupil's journeys to school and allowing children to move to secondary school with their friends. Both principles are abandoned in this proposal. With further population bulges predicted in the next few years, we believe this seemingly arbitrary setting of catchment areas sets a precedent that could open the way to even more dramatic changes. Parents will no longer be able to argue on grounds of distance to school if the council decrees that their child should be sent to a school out of the city.

4. We request that catchment areas remain unchanged until a site and opening date for the proposed Brighton & Hove Academy is confirmed. We believe the proposed changes fail to take into account the possibility that the proposed Academy may open later than 2019, may not be located at the current preferred site or may fail to open at all. We argue that children in the area must remain in the current catchments until the

situation of the new school is confirmed. If not, families with children coming up to secondary after this two-year period risk having their children schooled in different schools.

5. We believe the Council's so-called "light touch, temporary" proposals create significant disparity in choice and outcome for children in Brighton & Hove, which is at best unfair, and at worst discriminatory. We contend that the proposals are not in the best interests of the children who live in the areas designated to move catchment.

Note: A minute extract of the council meeting's proceedings and recommendations therein are attached at Appendix 1 overleaf.

Subject:		**West Hove Catchment Area Changes – Keep Our Community Together and Keep Our Community Together – Petitions: Extract from the proceedings of the Council Meeting held on the 14 December 2017**
Date of Meeting:		**15 January 2018**
Report of:		**Executive Lead for Strategy, Governance & Law**
Contact Officer:	Name:	**Mark Wall** **Tel: 01273 291006**
	E-mail:	mark.wall@brighton-hove.gov.uk
Wards Affected:	All	

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

Action Required of the Children, Young People & Skills Committee To receive the item referred from the Council for consideration.
Recommendations: That the petitions be noted and considered by the Children, Young People & Skills Committee.

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

COUNCIL

4.30pm 14 DECEMBER 2017

COUNCIL CHAMBER - HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Marsh (Chair), Simson (Deputy Chair), Allen, Atkinson, Barford, Barnett, Bell, Bennett, Bewick, Brown, Cattell, Chapman, Cobb, Daniel, Deane, Druitt, Gibson, Gilbey, Greenbaum, Hamilton, Hill, Horan, Hyde, Inkpin-Leissner, Janio, Knight, Lewry, Littman, Mac Cafferty, Meadows, Mears, Miller, Mitchell, Moonan, Morgan, Morris, Nemeth, A Norman, K Norman, O'Quinn, Page, Peltzer Dunn, Phillips, Robins, Russell-Moyle, Sykes, Taylor, C Theobald, G Theobald, Wares, Wealls, West and Yates.

PART ONE

50 PETITIONS FOR COUNCIL DEBATE

(i) WEST HOVE CATCHEMENT AREA CHANGES – KEEP OUR COMMUNITY TOGETHER

(ii) KEEP OUR COMMUNITY TOGETHER

50.1 The Mayor sated that where a petition secured 1,250 or more signatures it could be debated at the council meeting. She had been made aware of two such petitions which related to the same issue and would therefore take each in turn, and noted that details of the second petition had been included in the addendum papers. She also noted that there was an amendment to the covering report's recommendation relating to the second petition from the Green Group.

50.2 The Mayor then invited Mr. Kevin O'Sullivan as the lead petitioner to present the first petition calling on the Council to abandon the proposals to change existing catchment areas until the Education & Skills Funding Agency had confirmed the site and the opening date for the proposed Brighton & Hove Academy.

50.3 Mr. O'Sullivan thanked that Mayor and confirmed that the petition had 1,456 signatures in the West Hove area who objected to the proposed changes to catchment areas. He noted that Varndean, Dorothy Stringer and Blatchington Mill schools had offered to accommodate more pupils during the next two years and therefore questioned the need to review the catchment areas. Should the proposed changes be taken forward, it was

felt that they would have a detrimental affect by removing choice of schools, affect friendship groups, and result in extended travelling for a number of pupils and increased costs for parents. He noted that the council was obliged to follow the school admission code which stated that actions had to be fair, clear and objective. He believed that the current proposals were some way from being fair, clear and objective. It was hoped that the council would reconsider the matter and noted that parents were considering the option of funding a judicial review to ensure the best outcome for their children.

50.4 The Mayor then invited Mr. Ollie Tait as the lead petitioner to present the second petition which also called on the Council to abandon the proposals to change existing catchment areas until the Education & Skills Funding Agency had confirmed the site and the opening date for the proposed Brighton & Hove Academy.

50.5 Mr. Tait thanked the Mayor and confirmed that the petition had 1,368 signatures from the Elm Grove area, who believed that the proposed changes were counter to the council's aims for pupils transferring to secondary school and should not be implemented until a decision had been made on the new Academy. The outcome of the proposed change would see pupils having to travel over 6 miles and a travel time over seventy-five minutes which would impact of studies and friendship groups. There was also the potential impact to the nature of the area with an increase in the number of HMOs given the neighbouring universities and families being put off from moving into the area, thereby affecting the pupil numbers at the local primary schools. Whilst the secondary schools have offered to increase their intake, the cross-party Working Group has questioned the numbers but he would suggest that the Working Group's own figures could also be questioned. It was recognised that previous decisions had not helped and consequences were being faced, however it was felt that until the proposed new school opened, maintaining the existing arrangements was the least worst option. He noted that parents were preparing for the matter to be taken to judicial review and that they has already been advised that the proposals did not meet the school admissions code and it was hoped that the council would reconsider the matter and listen to the views of those affected.

50.6 The Mayor thanked Mr. O'Sullivan and Mr. Tait for attending the meeting and presenting their petitions and called on Councillor Chapman to respond to the petitions.

50.7 Councillor Chapman thanked the petitioners for their presentations and stated that both petitions and the points raised, as well as the strength of feeling in relation to the issue would be taken into consideration by the Children, Young People & Skills Committee. He noted that there had been similar concerns raised by members of the public at previous meetings of the committee and that the cross-party Working Group had been looking at the in-balance of secondary school places across the city. He expected the cross-party Working Group to report to the next meeting of the CYP&S Committee in January and that a decision would then be reached.

50.8 Councillor Phillips moved the amendment to the covering report's recommendation in relation to the second petition, 'Keep Our Community Together' on behalf of the Green Group. She stated that there was a need for more action to be taken to address the difficulties encountered by parents in securing a preferred school place for their children and for a full report to come to the committee in January. The amendment sought to ensure that necessary information on options for secondary places, population assessments and equalities impact assessments was provided so that an informed decision could be taken and parents given clarity and certainty over their children's futures.

50.9 Councillor Gibson formally seconded the amendment and reserved his right to speak later in the debate.

50.10 Councillor Peltzer-Dunn welcomed the two petitions and presentations made by the petitioners and noted that the Chair of the Committee had given his undertaking to take all the information that comes forward into consideration when the matter came to committee.

50.11 Councillor Daniel stated that she fully supported the parents and noted that the Working Group had a difficult job in trying to enable greater certainty about school places and this had been added to with the recent offer from certain schools to expand their numbers. She felt that all councillors needed to know what the implications and impact of any expansions would mean e.g. regarding sibling links and financially for individual schools etc. She asked that the Working Group would continue to engage with Ward councillors on the issue.

50.12 Councillor Nemeth stated that he believed the proposed changes to catchment areas were ill-conceived and noted that parents had expressed an intention to seek a judicial review of the process. He stated that as things stood there was a likelihood of children having to pass empty school buildings at their local school having been directed to an alternative school. He acknowledged that the schools offering to take more pupils could have made their position known earlier but now that there was capacity it should be taken up and any court action avoided.

50.13 Councillor Gibson stated that there was a need to support the parents of all those affected and to resolve the matter favourably. It was important to engage with the schools at an early stage as this may then have prevented pupils from being directed to other schools when spaces were clearly available and would have not led to the upset and distress that has been caused for parents as clearly shown by the strength of response to the proposals to date.

50.14 Councillor Brown stated that as a member of the Working Group she wanted to thank the parents for putting forward their concerns which were being taken into consideration by the Working Group. It was a very difficult situation for everyone concerned and there was no easy solution to the matter. With more information coming forward there was a need to give further consideration to the potential solution and to make recommendations to the Committee and full Council in January.

50.15 Councillor Page stated that parental choice was an important factor and that needed to be accounted for in any proposals that were made; as well as the need to prevent detachment from peers and to maintain communities which were important to their local schools. He noted that previously a number of parents had not been given any of their 3 preferred choices of schools and this needed to be avoided in the future. An offer had been made by some schools and this should be taken up to ensure that pupils could attend schools of their choice.

50.16 Councillor Chapman thanked everyone for their contributions and stated that he wished to reassure councillors and parents that all the views and information provided would be taken into consideration for the report to the Committee in January. He also stated that he did not feel that the Green Group's amendment added anything to the process as the actions would be part of the overall formulation of the report and therefore could not accept it.

50.17 The Mayor noted it was recommended to refer the first petition to the next meeting of the Children, Young People & Skills Committee and therefore put the recommendation to the vote which was carried unanimously.

50.18 **RESOLVED:** That the petition be noted and referred to the Children, Young People & Skills Committee for consideration at its meeting on the 15th January 2018.

50.19 The Mayor then noted that an amendment to the recommendation referring the second petition to the next meeting of the Children, Young People and Skills Committee had been moved. She also noted that a request for a recorded vote had been made and was supported by a sufficient number of councillors and therefore put it to the vote as detailed below:

		For	Against	Abstain			For	Against	Abstain
1	**Allen**		x			**Marsh**		x	
2	**Atkinson**		x			**Meadows**		x	
3	**Barfod**		x			**Mears**		x	
4	**Barnett**	✓				**Miller**		x	
5	**Bell**		x			**Mitchell**		x	
6	**Bennett**		x			**Moonan**		x	
7	**Bewick**		x			**Morgan**		x	
8	**Brown**		x			**Morris**		x	
9	**Cattell**		x			**Nemeth**	✓		
10	**Chapman**		x			**Norman A**		x	
11	**Cobb**		x			**Norman K**		x	
12	**Daniel**	✓				**O'Quinn**		x	
13	**Deane**	✓				**Page**	✓		

14	**Druitt**	✓				**Peltzer Dunn**	✓		
15	**Gibson**	✓				**Penn**	Not present		
16	**Gilbey**		x			**Phillips**	✓		
17	**Greenbaum**	✓				**Robins**		x	
18	**Hamilton**		x			**Russell-Moyle**		x	
19	**Hill**		x			**Simson**		x	
20	**Horan**		x			**Sykes**	✓		
21	**Hyde**		x			**Taylor**		x	
22	**Inkpin-Leissner**		x			**Theobald C**		x	
23	**Janio**	✓				**Theobald G**		x	
24	**Knight**	✓				**Wares**		x	
25	**Lewry**	✓				**Wealls**		x	
26	**Littman**	✓				**West**	✓		
27	**Mac Cafferty**	✓				**Yates**		x	
						Total	**17**	**36**	**0**

50.20 The Mayor confirmed that the amendment had been lost by 17 votes to 36 and therefore put the recommendation as listed in the covering report to the vote which was carried unanimously.

50.21 **RESOLVED:** That the petition be noted and referred to the Children, Young People & Skills Committee for consideration at its meeting on the 15th January 2018.