

Subject: Deputations
Date of Meeting: 15 January 2018
Report of: Executive Lead for Strategy Governance & Law
Contact Officer: Name: Mark Wall **Tel:** 01273 291006
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Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

DEPUTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting of the Committee for the hearing of deputations from members of the public. Each deputation may be heard for a maximum of five minutes.

Note: Those deputations referred from full Council will be considered without the need for them to be re-presented; subject to the Chair's discretion.

Deputations received:

- (i) **Benfield Primary School:** Referred from the full Council meeting held on the 14th December, 2017; together with an extract from the proceedings of the Council meeting held on the 14th December, 2017 (copies attached).

Spokesperson Mr. S. Theobold
Supported by:
Sam Scerri
Jess Keilthy
Sylvia New
Clive Bolton
Sarah Brooking
Deborah Goghill

Subject: Benfield Primary School Deputation.
Extract from the proceedings of the Council Meeting
held on the 14th 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: Hangleton & Knoll

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 deputation 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

49 DEPUTATIONS

(ii) Benfield Primary School

49.5 The Mayor then invited Mr. Theobald as the spokesperson for the second deputation to come forward and address the council.

49.6 Mr. Theobald thanked the Mayor and stated, "I'm here to make a case for not reducing the PAN for Benfield Primary School to a single form entry. A lack of strategic planning with recent primaries in West Hove being expanded; one of which resisted being made bigger, as well as the opening of the Connaught who are welcoming their proposed reduction, has led to a surplus of primary school places in this area which has led to this proposal to reduce Benfield. It is not enough to say in hindsight we now have a surplus of primary places. This was known at the time as a governing body of Benfield School and as lead of the Portslade cluster across primary schools we were aware of the wider impact expanding schools in Hove and West Hove would have and these concerns have now been realised. The justification for the expansion of primary schools by council officers is wishing to give parents their first preference. Ironically the proposed reduction of Benfield Primary is at a time when as the first preference for parents it is exceeding a single form entry size and continuing to grow. This proposal will take away first choice preference for parents and this is important in the wider context of Portslade where we already have three single form entry primary schools. By making Benfield a single form entry the area will be served by four single form entry primaries with the only larger option being a church school able to set its own admission criteria when oversubscribed and not a choice for all families. Benfield School has progress data for all its pupils among the strongest in the city and in the top

25% nationally. This decision would not only take away Benfield as a first choice for many parents it takes away the choice of a larger school option too.

So is this about finances; Benfield School has worked incredibly hard and diligently on its financial planning in these challenging times both in terms of funding and fluctuating numbers. Our balanced budget year on year do not come easy they come through an exemplary leadership team making strategic decisions, effective management and prudent planning at a time when the Council is supporting schools in financial difficulty it is wrong to contemplate reducing one that is demonstrating financial excellence.

The leadership doesn't stop at financial planning. The school has been on a journey from special measures and a change in leadership and governance five years ago to pushing for outstanding now. That journey wasn't just inward it has looked outward and this is important because Benfield uses its experience, its rapid change and improvement and has reached out shared, collaborated and educated other schools across the city. The culmination of this approach was the prestigious awarding of Benfield Primary School as a teaching school this year. If any of you wonder the real relevance of this already in what seems a relatively short period of time the teaching School Alliance with Benfield leading as a two form entry Primary has eighteen schools across the city involved. Benfield is now leading in the development of our future teachers, our future education leaders and has its foundation as a successful two form primary school. This really isn't as simple as just losing a class, it changes everything for the school; it will change their structure, reduce their effectiveness in leading the Teaching School Alliance, reduce choice available to parents, all while operating on a balanced budget.

The evidence for this is available in the data, in the budgets, from feedback from other schools across the city, from parents preparing a huge petition of over 1,400 signatures to national leaders of governance telling you this is wrong. Your constituents do not want this, teaching staff and leaders do not want this, the Governors do not want this, the community do not want this. We ask that you leave the school as it is; managing its financial finances, providing excellence in education and now leading in the development of our future teachers across the city.”

- 49.7 Councillor Chapman replied, “I can assure you that, now the public consultation has concluded, your views and the views of all respondents are being taken into consideration. The Council had put forward proposals for a city-wide solution to a specific issue of surplus places in primary schools. The cross-party Working Group is currently looking at all the points raised and this will be reported back to the Children, Young People & Skills Committee in early January. It is the Council's aim to ensure that all schools remain open to serve their communities and to future proof the city for pupil rises. We need to find a solution that works across the city.”
- 49.8 The Mayor thanked Mr. Theobald for attending the meeting and speaking on behalf of the deputation. She explained that the points had been noted and the deputation would be referred to the Children, Young People & Skills Committee for consideration. The persons forming the deputation would be

invited to attend the meeting and would be informed subsequently of any action to be taken or proposed in relation to the matter set out in the deputation.

49.9 The Mayor noted that this concluded the item.

Deputation: Reducing Benfield Primary School to a 1 form entry school (PAN of 30) from a current 2 form entry status.

Summary

Benfield Primary School governors, parents, teachers, and the community the school serves strenuously object to the reduction of the school to single form entry. The arguments for this will be given to full council and will include:

1. Benfield is a 'Good' school with areas of Outstanding, with progress in the top 25% of schools nationally.
2. Benfield has been awarded 'Teaching School' status forming an alliance with other schools, achieving this on the excellence of its leadership and teaching standards. This has been awarded on the basis of the school as a 2 form entry.
3. The school has a balanced budget, a rigorous approach to financial management and planning, and has been able to accommodate varying school numbers year on year. Unlike other schools, it is not in a budget deficit and does not require additional financial support.
4. The local community the school serves already has a choice of single form entry schools. Removing Benfield as a 2 form entry reduces choice of parents going to a larger school as the only remaining larger option would be St Nicholas, a religious school able to set its own admission criteria if over-subscribed.
5. The council know single form entry schools are not financially efficient and not an ideal model for Primary Schools. The creation of a 4th single form Primary School in the local area not only reduces choice, but also sets up a poor financial model.
6. The council expanded West Hove and St Andrews schools against the schools wishes, with those schools feeling they were large enough already, and opening the Connaught School, without strategic foresight as to the PAN across the city. This poor planning has led to the schools on the boundaries that do not want to be reduced.
7. The argument for expanding certain schools has been 'to give parents there first preference', however this is contradicted by the secondary school boundary changes that take away choice from the same parents that they expanded Primary schools for, so they don't have that same choice for secondary.
8. Benfield Primary School is a school that has been showing year on year consistent improvement, development, and progress across all areas of the school. The council should not be pulling the rug from under a school that is demonstrating remarkable results from a diverse cohort which it welcomes, accommodates, makes safe, and ultimately makes learning enjoyable.
9. A reduction in PAN is not what the school wants, it isn't what the community wants, and ultimately will not save any money given the financial prudence of the school.

Petition: Presented to CYP&S Committee 13.11.17 Signatures objecting to the reduction of the PAN at Benfield Primary School: Online 1322, Paper 167, Total = 1489 signatures