

# Brighton & Hove City Council

Children, Families and Schools Committee

Agenda Item 44

**Subject:** Deputations referred from Full Council

**Date of meeting:** 22 January 2024

**Report of:** Executive Director for Governance, People & Resources

**Contact Officer:** Name: Francis Mitchell

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**Ward(s) affected:** All

## 1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 To receive deputations presented at the Full Council meeting held on 14 December 2023.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the committee responds to the deputation either by noting it or, where it is considered more appropriate, calling for an officer report on the matter.

## 3. Context and background information

- 3.1 To receive the following:

### **Deputations:**

#### **(1) Deputation concerning Bright Start Nursery**

Supported by:

Edward Armston-Sheret

Kiran Flynn

Suda Perera

Paul Gilbert

Alexander Paterson

#### Summary of deputation:

We are concerned by Brighton and Hove City Council's plans to cut Bright Start Nursery and move the service to the Tarner Centre. We believe they represent a

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closure of the nursery in all but name and are asking for a delay to these plans until 2025/26 to allow for a proper consideration of other options.

Bright Start is a fantastic nursery. The decision to cut the nursery is short-sighted. Brighton parents and carers are already struggling to find affordable childcare in the city centre. Cutting this service will drive families out of the North Laine.

The 'sufficiency survey' of childcare used to justify the cuts to this service does not take account of the fact that many nurseries are on the verge of closure or the fact that city centre childcare locations are used by people from outside of the city.

We understand that the Council is in a difficult financial position. Parents and carers have long expressed their willingness to work collaboratively with Council Officers and Councillors to secure the future of Bright Start. But these offers have been ignored, the move and cuts are now being rushed through. Parents and carers are only being consulted on the 'operating model' at the new site, and the wider community is not being consulted at all.

Alternative options that would save money while preserving the service have not been properly considered. We have also not been given appropriate detail about the plans, how the savings will be achieved, the suitability of the new building, and details of the service that will be provided there. This leaves us concerned that the proposed changes, which will be hugely disruptive children, will lead to a worse service and may not achieve the financial savings hoped for by the Council.

## **(2) Deputation concerning proposed closure of St Peter's Primary and Nursery School**

Supported by:

Anika Carpenter  
Carole Ward  
Kim Enticknapp  
Leanne Pocock  
Laura Whittington  
Alice Keogh  
Lucyna Taylor  
Patricia Sacre  
Kylie Wakeford

### Summary of deputation:

Concerns raised by parents/carers and other members of the community regarding the proposed closure of St Peter's Primary and Nursery School.

Concerns with regards to using falling pupil numbers as a reason for closing the school and nursery

It hasn't accounted for net migration predictions and trends. Net migration is unusually high – especially the last two years.

Concerns regarding the threat to SEND

There are not enough surplus places for all students starting academic year September 2024. Students who live in nearby West Sussex have not been taken into account.

Concerns regarding discrimination

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There is no clear guidance on how this benefits SEND children (those awaiting EHCP and those that have EHCP), those with English as a second language, lower incomes (Early Years entitlement), and single-parent families.

Concerns regarding finding alternative places for St Peter's pupils  
Committee meeting states that there are 4 schools within 1.0 miles of St Peter's. Out of those four options, two are faith schools – one CofE and one Catholic.

Concerns regarding mental health  
There is nothing to address the upheaval of those entering Year 6 in 2024 who would have to change schools again after their primary education ends.

Concerns regarding St Peter's nursery children  
In only 32 constituencies out of 533 did early years centres have more than 50 spaces for every 100 under-fives.

Concerns regarding the proximity to West Sussex border  
St Peter's close proximity to the West Sussex border has a huge impact on the school and its pupils, with just under half of students coming from this area.

Concerns regarding the lack of local nursery school provision  
St Peter's Nursery is one of very few school-led nurseries/local education nursery (council funded) in Brighton and Hove, and the only one in the South Portslade area and yet it was given just three sentences.

Concerns regarding how the decision to propose closure was reached  
No outline of how the school could be kept open have been considered by the council before coming to this decision.

Failure prevent situations that adversely affect the local community  
The Council said that the issue of unfilled school places '*has been kicked down the road for too long and left until this moment*'.

Plus

Failures to manage budgets:

Failure to support the needs of the community:

Failure to adhere to Department of Education policy Protecting the nursery (local authority)

Failure to address the equality impact of closing St Peter's School and nursery school

Concerns around the closure of the popular local authority nursery (council funded)

Concerns surrounding the timing of the consultation

Concerns around the Children, Families, and Schools committee

### **(3) Deputation concerning proposed closure of St Bartholomew's C of E Primary School.**

Supported by:

Azhar Naeem

Helen Banks

Rachel Christie-Davies

Leanne Wulitich

Keely Levy

Emily Thomas

Tessa Pacey

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## Summary of deputation:

St. Bartholomew's School has been an established part of Brighton for 150 years. At the heart of the school's foundation was a commitment to the education of the poor and vulnerable. A century and a half later, sadly, that need is still more than evident.

The Council's proposal to close our school is something that will profoundly impact vulnerable children and their families. Whilst acknowledging the need for cost-saving measures, the process that has been implemented lacks planning and totally disregards the effects on some of the most disadvantaged communities within our city.

Our school supports diverse groups, exceeding local and national averages in SEND, EHCP, Pupil Premium, EAL, and Global Majority pupils, including refugee families. This process lacks an anti-racist approach, and disadvantages BRM families. The potential closure poses a threat to opportunities for our students, and raises concerns about systemic discrimination.

The Council's proposal ignores the vulnerability of our children and will disrupt crucial support systems for them and their families. The proposal reinforces disadvantage and sends a message of neglect to these vulnerable groups, all of whom will be disproportionately affected. We are urging the Council to reconsider, to work with us and our families rather than against us, and to seek alternative solutions which are collaborative and will not further place our children in a less favourable position to others in the city.

In conclusion, we want to emphasise the welfare of our children and halt the closure of St Bartholomew's, which will only serve to deprive children of opportunity and security. Let us unite to prioritise their voices and well-being in this critical decision.

## **(4) Deputation concerning Bright Start Nursery**

Supported by:  
Edward Armston-Sheret  
Kiran Flynn  
Suda Perera  
Paul Gilbert  
Alexander Paterson

### Summary of deputation:

We are concerned by Brighton and Hove City Council's plans to cut Bright Start Nursery and move the service to the Turner Centre. We believe they represent a closure of the nursery in all but name and are asking for a delay to these plans until 2025/26 to allow for a proper consideration of other options.

Bright Start is a fantastic nursery. The decision to cut the nursery is short-sighted.

Brighton parents and carers are already struggling to find affordable childcare in the city centre. Cutting this service will drive families out of the North Laine. The 'sufficiency survey' of childcare used to justify the cuts to this service does not take account of the fact that many nurseries are on the verge of closure or the fact that city centre childcare locations are used by people from outside of the city.

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We understand that the Council is in a difficult financial position. Parents and carers have long expressed their willingness to work collaboratively with Council Officers and Councillors to secure the future of Bright Start. But these offers have been ignored, the move and cuts are now being rushed through. Parents and carers are only being consulted on the 'operating model' at the new site, and the wider community is not being consulted at all. Alternative options that would save money while preserving the service have not been properly considered. We have also not been given appropriate detail about the plans, how the savings will be achieved, the suitability of the new building, and details of the service that will be provided there. This leaves us concerned that the proposed changes, which will be hugely disruptive children, will lead to a worse service and may not achieve the financial savings hoped for by the Council.

