

Brighton & Hove City Council

Children, Families & Schools Committee

Agenda Item 56(c)

Subject: Public Involvement – Deputations

Date of meeting: 29 February 2024

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting of the Council for the hearing of deputations from members of the public.

The spokesperson is entitled to speak for 5 minutes.

1. Deputation concerning the poorly planned and poor facilitation of the proposal to close St Bartholomew's CE Primary School.

Supported by:

Katie Blood
Helen Banks
Leanne Wulitich
Emily Thomas
Tessa Pacey
Rachel Christie-Davies

The process that has been inflicted on the community of St Bartholomew's has felt unforgivably unkind and appeared to lack compassion for any of our community.

We have said many times that the time scale of the closure will have a detrimental effect on our children and there seems to be no clear argument to close the school in such an abrupt manner.

This proposal has no clear financial calculations to show how much it will cost and indeed, save, the council both immediately and over the next few years. There is no financial gain to the council in closing this school – there is only a cost, both human and financial.

There are no plans in place around supporting children to stay in friendship groups or to ensure siblings are placed together. No consideration has been made about how to support already financially challenged families with the additional cost of transport to school and new uniforms.

This closure is based on short term information around birth rates - only considering children who have already been born. This appears very short sighted of the council as the UK birth rate is predicted to increase within the next 10 years.

The Equalities Impact Assessment actions were not completed for the consultation and worryingly, this was considered acceptable by the CFS committee.

The consultation was a very difficult time for many members of our community and over 85% of respondents disagreed with the decision to close the school and expressed a number of concerns about this - it appears that is has been ignored.

The school has transition concerns for pupils - these are children who are already vulnerable in some way which is about 85% of St Bartholomew's pupils.

Launching a staff consultation about redundancy before a decision has been made is incredibly disrespectful and disheartening for staff. There is no option for staff to be redeployed into schools which was not made clear at the beginning.

There is little confidence that this school closure is being done with kindness and compassion towards our community and it is clear that the mental health and well-being of the community has not been considered.