

# Brighton & Hove City Council

## Cabinet

## Agenda Item 140(c)

**Subject:** Deputations from members of the public

**Date of meeting:** 19 March 2026

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed at each Cabinet meeting for the hearing of deputations from members of the public. Notification of 3 Deputation(s) have been received. The spokesperson is entitled to speak for 5 minutes.

### 1. The Potential of Middle Street Primary School

Supported by:

John Dow  
Taressa Brennan Dow  
Dawn Hayes  
Pippa Terry  
Rachel McLachlan  
Aranzazu Vilas Sarasua  
Claire Iacovou  
Emma Gallini  
Libby Holcombe  
Daniel Reeves

Summary of Deputation:

The current discussion has focused heavily on falling pupil numbers and budgets, but numbers alone do not determine a school's long-term future.

National evidence shows around 85% of schools placed in Special Measures recover, often within 2–5 years, when strong leadership and local authority support are in place.

The central question is therefore not simply decline, but whether Middle Street is given the opportunity to recover. The drop from 210 to 135 pupils appears to reflect a confidence shock rather than a permanent demographic shift.

When closure is signalled, parents understandably move children quickly. This can cause rapid falls in numbers that reinforce the case for closure even when underlying demand remains.

Middle Street has historically been a progressive, oversubscribed school with a strong reputation among families. The school provides mainstream SEND support, something many families actively seek and which aligns with the council's wider commitment to inclusive education.

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It is home to Brighton's only accredited Beach School, offering a distinctive and valued learning experience.

Middle Street is also the oldest school in Brighton, located in the Old Town Conservation Area and deeply embedded in the city-centre community.

The community response has been strong and constructive: parents, volunteers and local businesses have stepped forward to support the school, with organisations such as IKEA already providing practical help.

Schools like Middle Street are core civic infrastructure. Once a primary school closes, it is extremely difficult to recreate later.

This decision sits alongside the council's own housing strategy, which anticipates around 900 new homes per year until 2030, many aimed at families living in the urban core.

Closing Middle Street would remove the only primary school in the heart of the city at the same time the city is planning to attract more families to live there.

A time-limited recovery plan (3–5 years) would allow confidence to rebuild, improvement to take effect, and new families moving into the area to restore demand.

This is therefore a choice between a short-term response to current numbers, or a long-term investment in community infrastructure for the city centre.

"This decision will shape the city centre for decades. Please choose a future where families can still send their children to a local school."

## 2. **Deputation to Support Middle Street Primary School**

### Supported by:

Peter Evans  
Scarlett Ercelikcan  
Henry Acford Evans  
Alice Russell  
Elizabeth Lagrem

### Summary of Deputation:

Middle Street Primary School has, like many other schools in the city, experienced falling pupil numbers and rising deficits. But unlike those other schools, Middle Street's problems are not simply a response to shifting demographics, high costs and poor funding.

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Look at the data. The deficit grew from around £28,000 in 2021 to over £232,000 by late 2024, largely driven by spending on agency staff — the most expensive way to cover a classroom. The question is why.

The governing board's own minutes give us a clue. By autumn 2023, staff had recorded 82 certified sick days in a single term. The situation had become so entrenched that governors recorded in their own minutes that a staff well-being survey would likely not be seen as anonymous, and that staff would be reluctant to participate at all.

A long-standing member of staff, said publicly that warnings were raised time and time again — but went unheard.

Now to the decline in pupil numbers. This wasn't just a case of smaller pupil numbers at reception entry point. It was due to the scores of parents removing their children mid-year and sending them to the nearest available school to Middle Street or homeschooling.

They did this for predominantly two reasons. Because of staff turnover, many children had no permanent class teacher for years. This had a devastating impact on their education and their well-being.

And then there is safeguarding. Multiple complaints were made to the governors and to the council about keeping the children safe in school. But they were never dealt with properly.

When the IEB finally examined those concerns, they found that many incidents had never even been logged on the school's safeguarding system.

This community deserves answers — and we are calling for an independent external investigation into how this was allowed to happen and to ensure this never happens again.

We are also demanding that the council commits to keeping Middle Street open, and gives this community the second chance it deserves. This is not a school that failed. It is a school that was failed. It must never happen again.

### 3. **Deputation to Cabinet – Middle Street Primary School**

#### Supported by:

Ruth Swift-Wood  
Gabriella Salvi  
Laura Elliott  
Victoria Handley  
Alice Dewar-Mills

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Tom Adams  
Emma Rivera Cordero

## Summary of Deputation:

### **Purpose**

This note sets out the key concerns of families, children and staff affected by the closure of Middle Street Primary School, covering three areas: transparency of impact data; support for those affected; and the future use of the school building.

### **Background**

Middle Street Primary has served central Brighton as a walkable, secular school for low-income families. Its closure has consequences for children's stability, parents' working lives and community cohesion. The affected community includes a high proportion of SEND pupils, single-parent families and households navigating language barriers – groups who would benefit from targeted Council support through this transition.

### **Key issues and requests**

#### **1. Measuring the Fallout**

A single, publicly accessible resource tracking the impact of the closure would help families and staff navigate the transition. It should cover redistribution of pupils, staff redeployment and family resettlement over time. Where possible, data should be disaggregated by socioeconomic group, as SEND pupils, low-income families and staff on temporary contracts may face greater disruption. Information should be in plain language and updated regularly – current IEB minutes are difficult for most parents to access.

#### **2. Proactive Support**

Where monitoring identifies groups experiencing difficulty, early intervention is likely to be more effective than waiting for issues to escalate. SEND pupils in particular may need sustained pastoral support both immediately and over the medium term. The following low-cost interventions are requested:

- A named Council contact for every affected family
- A peer support group for displaced staff via existing channels
- Translated guidance documents, produced once and distributed widely
- Briefings to receiving schools on children arriving from Middle Street
- A named officer should take public ownership of these outcomes.

#### **3. The School Building**

**Transparency:** Plans for the site at any stage of development would benefit from being made publicly visible, allowing the community to understand the Council's intentions and contribute where appropriate.

**Interim use:** Between closure and any formal change of use, the building could be made available to community groups, voluntary organisations or early years providers needing affordable space in central Brighton.

**Maintenance:** Maintaining the building to a standard that preserves future educational use would keep options open as school place pressures in Brighton & Hove evolve.

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## **SUMMARY OF REQUESTS**

- A single, plain-language public resource tracking the impact of this closure, disaggregated by socioeconomic group where possible and updated regularly.
- A support model using monitoring data to identify those who may need assistance early, with named officers responsible for children, families and staff.
- Transparency about plans for the building, interim community access where feasible, and maintenance to a standard that preserves its potential for future educational use.

### Supporting Information:

Please see attached appendix.

