DEPUTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meting of the Council for the hearing of deputations from members of the public. Each deputation may be heard for a maximum of five minutes following which one Member of the Council, nominated by the Mayor, may speak in response. It shall then be moved by the Mayor and voted on without discussion that the deputation be thanked for attending and its subject matter noted.

Notification of two Deputations has been received.
The spokesperson is entitled to speak for 5 minutes.

25(a) DEPUTATION CONCERNING CONNEXIONS

Ms C Summers (Spokesperson)
Deputation on Connexions
"There's nothing much along this street: a cafe' that shuts early, a convenience store, hairdresser...hardly a hub of youth activity and interest. Yet at Hollingdean Dip the flagship centre for Brighton & Hove Connexions services has never been busier. In the two years since its opening more than 140 13-19 year-olds receive careers and personal advice at their Tuesday drop-in facility per month. And that's not all. The rest of the week is set aside for many other services for youngsters such as crime prevention, school inclusion, sexual health work and NEET engagement and prevention. It is labour intensive employing 14 regular staff alone in this deprived area of the city.

Two years is not long enough to see a young person through troubled times - particularly at school - and set them on the right tracks to a meaningful and fulfilling academic, work or social life; it's not enough time to equip them and reassure them of their enormous value in society. The staff at Connexions committed to their work for the long haul and if the staff (who are modestly paid) are willing to do that so likewise should their employer.

Yet despite the overwhelming need, and proven success, of this centre the Administration has chosen to abort it. We understand the difficulties of this decision and we recognise the challenges for any local council in navigating through the current climate of reduced spending and imposed cuts. However, there are surely those times when an authority, such as this Administration, ought to make a stand for the city which it governs. It ought to protect the services that help the most vulnerable and it ought to make a case to central government for doing so.

There is a "To Let" sign outside the Connexions building in Hollingdean because the contract with the private owner expires in 10 days time, so we have to ask: what will happen to all the local young people on the 1st November? Where will they go? The nearest alternative is the Young People's Centre in Ship Street; by no means within walking distance and an entirely different environment. And what about the staff in Hollingdean? Their jobs have now been secured until the New Year but where do they go next month? Some of them are here now and would very much like to know where they

should turn up for work on Monday 1st November and what work they will be expected to do. It's the not knowing that is so upsetting and rightly so.

So why close the Hollingdean centre? Is it because the rent is unaffordable? At £8,000 per year this simply does not compare with Marmion Road in Hove, for example, where rent is three times this amount and not even for frontline services – it is purely administrative support.

The Administration have made reference to evidence of outcomes from the money spent on the services being not as positive as they could be. We are curious to understand the nature of this evidence and what would be considered as positive outcomes by the Administration, when the staff and young people themselves continue to report good news. If, as was also stated, funding will continue for careers advice in schools what happens to the young people who attend schools that don't have a careers teacher? What happens to children from broken families who need advice that teachers simply are not trained to give? And what happens to the really vulnerable older ones who are not in education, employment or training?

Many questions, not many answers, and one struggles to believe that the Cabinet has done its homework properly. Do they really appreciate the long-term effects on a struggling young generation of closing down any of the city's youth services let alone the busiest at Hollingdean Dip?

For the sake of the city's young people and the enormously dedicated staff that make such a difference to their lives we strongly urge the Administration to take the following actions:

1. rescind their decision to close down the centre in Hollingdean Dip,
2. commit to a full Equality Impact Assessment as required by law,
3. depending on the results that emerge, guarantee that the centre will remain open and continue to be fully staffed,
4. lobby central government for the return of their grant."

Councillor Brown, Cabinet Member for Children & Young People, will respond.

Deputation supported by:
Ms. C Summers
Mr. L Walter

25(b) DEPUTATION CONCERNING THE PROPOSAL TO TURN PORTSLADE COMMUNITY COLLEGE INTO AN ACADEMY

Ms P Tindall (Spokesperson)
"Portslade Community College IS the heart of the community.

It is central not just to the education of our children but hosts a whole range of extra curricular activities for children and a whole range of extra curricular activities for adults.

It provides facilities for recreational events from the sporting and leisure to the celebratory to the entertaining.
Local charities rely on its facilities, such as Quad, the charity for those suffering from Downs Syndrome.

From very small children to those residents in their mature years, PCC provide a COMMUNITY service, responds to the needs of the community, is at the heart of the community.

All this is under threat, or felt to be under threat by the proposal to transfer the school from the jurisdiction of the local authority to that of Mr. Aldridge and his proposal to turn it into an academy.

From being an institution which is accountable to the community directly, and politically through its status as a maintained school, it will pass into the hands of an unaccountable businessman (or some other party bidding for the sponsorship) with no links to the community, and quite frankly, with no interest in the educational welfare of our children; in fact he has conceded on previous occasions that he is not an educationalist.

The decision making will be concentrated in the hands of Mr. Aldridge and his appointees, (or some other party bidding for sponsorship) with no obligation in law for him to consult or even discuss what he does with the school once it passes into his hands.

The record of Mr. Aldridge's involvement in the education system in our city does not inspire confidence if the academisation of Falmer High School is anything to go by, and since the current head has overseen such significant improvements in academic performance, we are alarmed that that progress will be severely disrupted by this development.

We, the concerned stakeholders in the school therefore urge the local authority to reconsider the whole proposal, and move away from any further consideration of Mr. Aldridge's (or any other interested party) involvement, and instead make a firm decision to keep the school under local authority jurisdiction, as a COMMUNITY school.

And if the local authority is in any doubt about the strength of feeling regarding this issue, then at the very least they should organise a GENUINE consultation exercise, and ballot all those involved with the school: parents; staff; residents, those with a stake in the future of the school, and those who, at present feel that the local authority is moving forward on this issue without taking their views and concerns into consideration.

Deputation supported by:
Ms. P Tindall
Mr. C Ellis
Mr. P Tindall
Mr. S. Guy
Mr. A Clark