

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Tuesday 28 February 2017

Time: 2.00pm – 4.40pm

Present: Councillors J Whitehead (Chairwoman), D Brown (Vice Chairman), Sir P Brown, S Bywater, D Divine, P Downes, J Hipkin (substituting for Cllr S Taylor) S Hoy, M Leeke, Z Moghadas, L Nethsingha, J Wisson and F Yeulett (substituting for M Loynes).

Apologies: Councillors M Loynes (substituted by F Yeulett) and S Taylor (substituted by J Hipkin)

Also in attendance:
Councillor J Scutt

249. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Nethsingha declared a personal interest in Item 4 of the published agenda, the Review of Secondary Education in Cambridge City, as the parent of a child who currently attended Chesterton Community College and the parent of a second child who might attend Chesterton Community College in the future. Andrew Read declared a personal interest in the same item as a Trustee of St Bede's Inter-Church School.

250. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 17 JANUARY 2017 AND ACTION LOG

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairwoman.

The Action Log was noted. The Interim Executive Director, Children Families and Adults reported that the majority of outstanding actions would be addressed at the Committee's meeting in March.

251. CO-OPTION OF A DIOCESAN REPRESENTATIVE

It was resolved to co-opt Andrew Read, Director of Education and Chief Executive Officer of the Diocese of Ely Multi-Academy Trust (DEMAT) to the Committee as the representative of the Church of England Diocese of Ely as Rachel Beeson had stepped down from this role.

252. PETITIONS AND PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No petitions were received. Four questions were accepted from members of the public relating to the Review of Secondary Education in Cambridge City.

253. REVIEW OF SECONDARY EDUCATION IN CAMBRIDGE CITY

The Committee received a report from the Interim Executive Director, Children Families and Adults which described the growing demand for secondary education provision across the City of Cambridge and sought approval for the proposed strategy for commissioning additional provision to meet this demand.

The Chairwoman noted the high level of local interest in this issue and welcomed the large number of members of the public who were present to listen to the debate. She explained that in the interests of fairness she had decided to waive the usual practice of limiting public speakers to three per item and to accept one speaker from each of the nine schools covered by the review of secondary education in Cambridge, should they wish to speak. Four requests to speak had been accepted. Where more than one request to speak was received on behalf of a school the questioner had been made aware that they could submit their question or comments in writing and that they would receive a written reply within 10 working days of the meeting. Copies of all written questions, comments and representations had been circulated to members of the Committee in advance of the meeting.

The Chairwoman said that she proposed to consider the report in three sections with the Committee considering and listening to representations relating to each of the resolutions in turn and reaching a decision following discussion of each resolution. Resolutions (c) and (d) relating to Chesterton Community College and North Cambridge Academy would be considered together.

Recommendation (a): To endorse the six principles in Sections 1.5 and 1.6 of the report identified for reviewing and commissioning provision across the city.

The Head of Service for 0-19 Place Planning and Organisation stated that the Council had undertaken a detailed review of the pattern of secondary provision across the City of Cambridge in 2007 in the light of the major development proposals which were known at that time. This had led to the expansion of Coleridge Community College and the decision to open two new schools, Trumpington Community College (which opened in September 2015) and the Northwest Fringe (planned to open in 2020 as part of the Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust). An increase in the birth rate since 2008 had created significant pressure on primary school places within the city and in 2013 officers began a second city-wide review to examine the options for increasing secondary school capacity in preparation to meet the identified need for additional places. The issue was a complex one and since 2013 the Council had undertaken and commissioned reviews of the both the demographic forecasts and underpinning assumptions, including commissioning an independent review of the findings by Analytics Cambridge. On the basis of this comprehensive work officers were confident in the findings of the review.

The Chairwoman invited Andrew Hutchinson, Executive Principal of Parkside Federation to address the Committee on behalf of Trumpington Community College, Coleridge Community College and University Technical Colleges. Mr Hutchinson expressed concern at what he perceived to be the difference in the approach taken to the two reviews and asked the Committee to consider whether appropriate consultation with providers had taken place. The first review had involved extensive consultation with head teachers and governing bodies, but this was less evident during the second review and no further consultation had taken place since July 2016. He felt that this had produced a piecemeal rather than comprehensive solution. He felt that the 2007 review had demonstrated that the catchment area model had not been working even then and that to stay with this model would create further problems long-term.

A Member asked Mr Hutchinson what principles he felt should be followed if a catchment area model was not appropriate. Mr Hutchinson felt that this should be explored through more dialogue with head teachers to identify solutions which all schools could sign up to. The Director of Education noted that all respective trusts/

governing bodies of the City secondary schools were Admissions Authorities for those schools, with responsibility for setting the admissions criteria and determining catchment areas.

The Chairwoman invited Jodh Dhesi, Headteacher of Parkside Community College, to address the Committee. Mr Dhesi said that the growth of St Matthew's Primary School had led to confusion and uncertainty for parents about whether they would be able to get a place for their children in their catchment school. Parents living outside the catchment area of their preferred school were also unsure about whether their child would get a place. Expanding one or two schools caused further confusion and it was very important that both primary and secondary headteachers were consulted.

The Chairwoman asked Mr Dhesi whether he was saying that there should be a return to fixed catchment areas. Mr Dhesi said that he was not proposing a specific answer, but he felt that there should be more consultation with headteachers and he raised the question of reviewing catchments.

The Head of 0-19 Place Planning and Organisation said that officers always tried to match growth in provision to the area where demand was located. However, there were occasions where it was difficult to expand an existing school to meet demand in the local area. Officers remained open to participating in any further reviews regarding catchment areas.

It was resolved to:

- (a) Endorse the six principles in Sections 1.5 and 1.6 of the report identified for reviewing and commissioning provision across the city.

Resolution (b): Endorse officers continuing to work with the Local Planning Authorities to secure site(s) for new schools(s) as needed in line with Local Plan policies.

The Chairwoman said that she would hand over the chair to the Vice Chairman during consideration of resolution (b) as she wished to speak to this item in her capacity as a local Member.

The Head of 0-19 Place Planning and Organisation stated that opportunities for further expansion in schools south of the river were currently limited and the need for a new school had been identified. Agreement had been reached in principle to a potential secondary school site being provided as part of the North of Cherry Hinton development, subject to adoption of the Local Plan. It was recognised that this was not an ideal location, but it had not yet proved possible to identify a viable alternative. It was accepted that Members might wish to keep this under review.

The Chairman invited Cllr Whitehead to address the Committee in her capacity as the local Member for Abbey division. Cllr Whitehead said that she welcomed the commitment to continued discussion about the location of a site for a new secondary school in the south of the city given that Section 4.3 of the report seemed to suggest that a decision on its location had already been taken. She recognised the difficulty in identifying a suitable site in the east of the city, but emphasised her belief in the importance of establishing a community school to serve the population of Abbey division and Barnwell, the most deprived area in the city. She expressed serious concerns about safe access and cycle access from the east of the city to the proposed site at North Cherry Hinton. Cllr Whitehead said that paragraph 7.3.2 on page 55 of Appendix

C made clear that just one school in the East of the City at Cherry Hinton would not be sufficient for the increased housing in the East of the City so there would be need for another site in the not too distant future. She acknowledged the question of whether land adjacent to Abbey Meadows Primary School was common land, but said she would like to see this explored further and that she felt that officers should continue to pursue the search for a site within the Abbey area to serve the local community.

The Head of 0-19 Place Planning and Organisation reaffirmed that the North of Cherry Hinton site was not ideal, but explained that this was the only option so far which had achieved any level of agreement with the Local Planning Authorities. The Director of Learning gave an assurance that officers would continue to explore alternative options.

During discussion of Cllr Whitehead's comments several Members expressed the wish that work should continue to try to identify a more appropriate site in the south of the city with safe access and which would continue to encourage the culture of cycling to secondary school which was seen widely across the city. Members also indicated their willingness to liaise with colleagues on the City and District Council to facilitate progress in identifying suitable alternative sites if this would be helpful. The Head of 0-19 Place Planning and Organisation confirmed that officers would continue to act to support and secure the provision of safe routes to school and to encourage students to cycle and walk to school.

The Chairman noted that a number of sites had been considered over the years, but that the issue of finding sufficient land to accommodate a secondary school site to serve this part of the city had proved consistently difficult.

It was resolved:

- (b) To endorse officers continuing to work with the Local Planning Authorities to secure site(s) for new schools(s) as needed in line with Local Plan policies.

Resolutions (c) To support the expansion and re-development of Chesterton Community College with a planned completion date of 2019/20, noting the College's willingness to come to a mutual agreement with the Council, the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) and Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust (CMAT), the sponsor of North Cambridge Academy (NCA), about the timing at which new places beyond its current intake of 210 will be opened up and (d) To support the proposal that officers work with North Cambridge Academy to develop plans for the expansion of the school to meet anticipated further growth in demand.

The Chairwoman resumed the chair for the remainder of the meeting. The Head of 0-19 Place Planning and Organisation stated that both Chesterton Community College (CCC) and North Cambridge Academy (NCA) both offered the potential for expansion to help meet the additional demand for places in the north of the city. It was proposed that this would be achieved in two stages through the permanent expansion of capacity at CCC by 2019/20 followed by further expansion of NCA. In proposing this solution officers had taken account of CCC's willingness to come to a mutual agreement about the timing at which new places would be opened up. Officers acknowledged that paragraphs 4.6.3 and 4.6.4 of the report had been a misrepresentation of CMAT's proposals, but confirmed that Members had been advised of this error in advance of the meeting in a written submission from CMAT.

The Chairwoman invited Mark Woods, Executive Principal of Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust (CMAT) to address the Committee. Mr Woods said that the information contained in the report was ill-considered, based on inaccurate information and did not represent a long-term solution to the issue of the provision of sufficient secondary school places in the city of Cambridge. On this basis he felt that a decision should be deferred. The proposals would create a surplus of places by the mid-2020s, but North Cambridge Academy (NCA) had 350 surplus places currently available. NCA could admit additional pupils for a number of years via over-admission to accommodate predicted need so there was no need to rush the decision. Mr Woods felt that the proposal to expand and redevelop Chesterton Community College was about improving the school's building condition rather than meeting basic need and he questioned what priorities had been adopted in formulating the proposals.

A Member noted that CMAT's proposals included using primary school accommodation as an interim measure to accommodate some secondary school students and asked if this was still proposed in the short term. Mr Woods said that primary school accommodation had been proposed as a temporary measure in Northstowe. He did not think this was necessarily the right solution, but it could be used as a short-term measure and would be more financially appropriate.

A Member questioned the financial viability of NCA if it was experiencing a shortfall in pupil numbers and was being kept going by CMAT by using money generated by its other schools. Mr Woods said that NCA had a number of pupils requiring significant support and it had also admitted large numbers of pupils via the fair access protocol. NCA anticipated that it would make a marginal gain in funding through the proposed new National Funding Formula and CMAT might consider a land disposal at some point.

The Director of Learning said that officers' interpretation of the data was that, with the exception of the year 2023/24, there was no projected surplus of secondary school places when student numbers were considered on a city-wide basis. The forecast figures indicated that the proposed expansion of CCC would not meet the full future demand for places and the Council was committed to working with NCA to meet this further future demand.

The Chairwoman invited Lucy Scott, Headteacher of Chesterton Community College (CCC), to address the Committee. Ms Scott said that there was an urgent need for additional secondary school places, especially in the north of the city. The shortfall in places was not a temporary problem and as such she questioned the viability of short-term solutions and emphasised the negative impact which she felt that these would have on students. CCC was a standalone academy which faced its own challenges, including having a high number of students with special educational needs or English as an additional language. She called on the Committee to endorse the proposed expansion of CCC.

A Member sought confirmation of CCC's commitment to achieving a mutual agreement with the Regional Schools Commissioner and CMAT about the timing with which new places would be opened up at CCC beyond its current intake of 210 students per year group, and questioned whether this commitment was enforceable. Ms Scott said that CCC was keen to see all local secondary schools thrive and be successful and that she was happy for that commitment to be placed on the public record as a mark of CCC's integrity.

The Chairwoman invited Cllr Scutt to address the Committee in her capacity as the local Member for West Chesterton division. Cllr Scutt said that every child was entitled to a school place and an excellent education delivered via excellent teachers, facilities and curriculum. These factors were all necessary and interlinked. She supported the proposed re-development and expansion of CCC both in its own right and to support the NCA as she wanted both schools to be equipped to provide the best education possible to their students. She felt that the use of temporary accommodation should be used only as a last resort and should not form part of a planned solution to meeting an identified long-term need where this could be avoided. She acknowledged that NCA had experienced difficult times in the past and she commended Martin Campbell, Principal of NCA, on the tremendous job he was doing in turning things around. Over time she felt that parents would be showing an increasing preference for their children to attend NCA and she supported the proposals contained in the report that officers should continue to work with NCA to develop plans for the expansion of that school to meet the anticipated growth in demand in excess of that which would be met by the proposed expansion of CCC.

One Member asked whether Cllr Scutt opposed the use of temporary accommodation at all costs and the Vice Chairman noted the use of temporary accommodation at Burwell Village College during a period of significant building work. Cllr Scutt acknowledged that there would be cases where temporary accommodation would need to be used, but said that she felt that this should be an action of last resort and that it should not be an initial planned solution unless there was no other viable alternative.

One Member asked what support Cllr Scutt felt might usefully be offered to the NCA to support its continued development. Cllr Scutt suggested that the NCA could be invited to host some North Area Committee meetings to encourage local residents to go inside and see the excellent facilities it offered. The Council might also consider whether it could make use of the facilities offered by NCA. The Principal of NCA could also be asked for his views on how the Local Authority could offer its support.

The Chairwoman invited Cllr Hipkin to address the Committee in his capacity as the local Member for Castle division. Cllr Hipkin said that the report demonstrated the difficulty in producing accurate projections and noted the inherent uncertainty relating to some factors such as migration rates both into and out of the city. However, he felt that it was prudent to assume that growth would continue during the period under consideration and noted that the City Council's own housing projections suggested that the speed of housing development in the City had previously been underestimated. He highlighted the issue of parental preference and the possibility that a failure to expand good schools could lead to more families choosing to place their children in independent schools. In conclusion, he felt that the report was fair, balanced and thorough and suggested limited surplus capacity and even a possible further shortfall in provision. There would always be an element of risk regarding projected figures and on balance he felt that the proposed expansion of CCC was wise.

The Chairwoman said that Cllr Ian Manning had hoped to attend the meeting and speak in his capacity as the local Member for East Chesterton division, but had been unable to do so due to work commitments. His written comments had been circulated to Members of the Committee in advance of the meeting, but for the benefit of the members of the public present she asked that these be read to the meeting:

Cllr Manning's written comments: "This decision should, I believe, be a no-brainer for the committee, despite the layers of obfuscation that have been piled onto it. It is in

fact the first of multiple decisions to be made about expanding places, as the figures show clearly that demand is to rise across the whole north area. This is reflected in the recommendations in the rest of the paper, and specifically d).

Regardless of what is happening in the wider area, I need to be clear though that committee should approve Chesterton's expansion today. Demand from areas for which is the natural school is not being met currently, and would be by an expanded Chesterton. That Chesterton, which was first approached by The County Council about expanding in 2013, should still be waiting for a decision should be embarrassing for us all. Please approve item 4 as a whole and 4c in particular."

The following comments were raised in discussion of the report and in response to questions from Members:

- Members thanked those members of the public who had been in touch with them directly about this issue and noted that various Members of the Committee had attended local meetings and met with parents and teachers to discuss their concerns;
- Cllr Nethsingha commented that the Chairwoman and officers had been the subject of strong criticism from some quarters for the delay in bringing the report before the Committee whilst the demographic figures were subjected to further examination and external review. This additional work appeared very thorough and she felt that it cast doubt on CMAT's continued questioning of the validity of the figures presented;
- Members noted the development profile of the west of the City which included a three form entry primary school on the university site. However, the secondary school which the Local Plan envisaged would serve this new cohort was not yet being developed which would lead to significant pressure on secondary places in the area;
- Members emphasised the wish to avoid students needing to travel greater distances to attend secondary school which would necessitate the provision of additional school buses and increased road traffic;
- One Member questioned the significant costs involved to provide a relatively small number of additional school places and questioned whether the proposals represented good value for money to the Cambridgeshire tax payer. They also expressed concern at what they perceived to be the Cambridge City-centric approach to educational investment and questioned what would happen if the Education Funding Agency (EFA) grant application was unsuccessful. The Director of Learning acknowledged that the expansion of NCA would provide a more cost effective means of meeting basic need, but emphasised that the proposed expansion and redevelopment of CCC would secure a permanent increase in capacity throughout students' secondary education. He fully accepted that a proportion of the funding proposed would be used to address the condition of the school, but noted that this was the same approach which had been taken previously with a number of schools. He did also accept that EFA grant funding was not guaranteed and that the Local Authority was being asked to underwrite this sum;
- One Member commented that the number of children already attending primary schools within the City gave a clear indication of the shortfall in secondary school

places which would occur if additional places were not created. He also noted that around a third of the 350 spare places which were potentially available at NCA were in Year 10 or above and so could not be guaranteed to still be available in the longer term when additional places would be needed;

- One Members noted the improving performance being achieved at NCA and emphasised their wish to see this maintained;
- Officers noted that the diseconomies involved in opening new schools and expanding existing schools were recognised and were addressed through the Growth Fund which was currently top sliced from the Dedicated Support Grant and reviewed and approved annually by the Cambridgeshire Schools Forum;
- Members noted the strength of feeling about the proposals in both local schools and the communities which they served, but expressed the hope that once a decision was reached all sides would put aside their differences and work together to achieve the best possible outcomes for all of the children and communities involved.

It was resolved to:

- (c) Support the expansion and re-development of Chesterton Community College with a planned completion date of 2019/20, noting the College's willingness to come to a mutual agreement with the Council, the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) and Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust (CMAT), the sponsor of North Cambridge Academy (NCA), about the timing at which new places beyond its current intake of 210 will be opened up;
- (d) Support the proposal that officers work with North Cambridge Academy to develop plans for the expansion of the school to meet anticipated further growth in demand.

The Chairwoman called an adjournment from 3.30-3.45pm.

254. FREE SCHOOL PROPOSALS

Standing item. There were no proposals to discuss.

255. AGENDA PLAN AND APPOINTMENTS

The Committee reviewed the Agenda Plan and appointments. The Chairwoman asked for clarification of whether one or two appointments were made to the Adoption Panel.
(Action: Democratic Services Officer)

It was resolved to:

1. Note and comment on the Committee Agenda Plan and appointments.

256. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was resolved:

- That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following report on the grounds that it was likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information under Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (information relating to any individual and/ or information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual).

257. CHILDREN FAMILIES AND ADULTS DIRECTORATE LEADERSHIP REVIEW

It was resolved to:

- Discuss and comment on the report.

Chairwoman