

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD
Havering Town Hall, Main Road, Romford
24 November 2015 (7.00 - 8.30 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group	+Joshua Chapman, Steven Kelly, Robby Misir, Viddy Persaud, Carol Smith, Frederick Thompson and Linda Trew
Residents' Group	June Alexander, Nic Dodin and +John Mylod
East Havering Residents' Group'	Gillian Ford (Chairman) and Linda Hawthorn
UKIP Group	Ian de Wulverton
Independent Residents' Group	David Durant and Graham Williamson

Apologies were received for the absence of Councillors Lawrence Webb, John Crowder, Dilip Patel and Barbara Matthews.

+Substitute members: Councillor Frederick Thompson (for Dilip Patel), Councillor Joshua Chapman (for John Crowder) and Councillor John Mylod (for Barbara Matthews).

Councillors Keith Darvill, Jody Ganly, Ron Ower and Meg Davis were also present.

All decisions were taken with no votes against.

The Chairman reminded Members of the action to be taken in an emergency.

32 CALL-IN OF CABINET DECISION CONCERNING OUTLINE PROPOSALS TO ADDRESS EARLY YEARS, PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND SEN RISING ROLLS - PHASE III AND IV EXPANSION PROGRAMME

Prior to the meeting starting the Chairman advised Members that although Parsonage Farm School was shown in part of the report the expansion of Parsonage Farm School had already previously been agreed in an earlier phase and the granting of planning permission was to be considered by the Regulatory Services Committee.

Councillor Darvill commented that the reason for the call-in was to allow the public to see how the Council was less able now to determine how pupil numbers were now allocated. The public still believed that authorities were the best placed people to make decisions regarding future school provision but were perhaps unaware of the outside controls that they faced.

Over 700 responses had been received to the consultation regarding the provision of school places and the public had overwhelmingly expressed confidence in the local authority carrying out this duty.

Councillor Darvill commented that the Council now needed to encourage free schools into the area, although not in favour of free schools, parents needed to commit to the idea of free schools which could prove difficult if parents were unsure of what the free school offered.

Councillor Darvill also commented that the Council should be approaching existing secondary schools including academies to discuss expansion and the potential for all-through provision.

Evidence elsewhere in the country showed that children performed well at all-through schools.

All the schools selected for expansion were performing well and were popular schools which would lead to an increase in pupil numbers and therefore an increase in vehicles at schools.

Havering already had very high car ownership rates and existing congestion throughout the borough with cross borough travel on the increase.

Councillor Durant commented that free schools could be built where the investors wanted to build which was not necessarily where they were needed.

Councillor Durant suggested that the Board needed to carefully consider the effect of four form of entry on schools in the future as it was important not to create a large number of super-size schools.

Members were advised by officers that there was no evidence to suggest attainment levels decreased in larger schools; with increased funding larger schools could offer greater opportunities.

The Council's Assistant Director of Learning and Achievement highlighted a list of schools that had already expanded and those that were forecast to expand in future years. Members were advised that there still existed a strong demand for school places in the Romford area. Discussions had taken place with secondary schools, with regard to all-through provision, which were on-going and quite encouraging although in a recent survey parents had been less keen on all-through provision and work was needed with parents to explain the benefits of such schools. The Council had a good working relationship with the Regional Schools Commissioner who oversaw

the introduction of free schools and had helped introduce existing free schools provided by Oasis Community Learning and REAch2.

Members were advised that expansion in secondary schools was quite a challenging task as more facilities were required. Feasibility studies had been carried out with schools with maintenance funding i.e Priority Schools Building Programme (PSBP).

Members noted that officers were continuing to receive calls from parents concerned that places would not be available for their children. There was still a need for 340 places in September 2016 that had yet to be achieved.

The Council's Interim Head of StreetCare explained the measure that were being taken and could be taken to improve road safety around schools.

During the past year over 400 parkers had been moved on and over 1200 parking tickets had been issued. At present 55 schools in the borough were covered by 20 enforcement officers who could only cover approximately 5% of the operating times of schools.

Discussions were on-going between officers and Head Teachers, who were anxious to resolve the traffic problems, with regards to designing bespoke management programmes that would deal with the problems of parents breaking the rules regarding parking at school sites.

A number of options were available to deal with the issues and included changes to school opening times, hard hitting campaigns, school travel plans, fixed cameras and the enforcement of Public Space Protection Orders.

Officers commented that a proactive rather than reactive approach was required to deal with the problem and it was mostly about educating parents and enforcing a policy change to ensure the problem of nuisance parking was dealt with. It was also noted that it was the minority of parents that were abusing the system.

A panel of Members and officers had been established specifically to consider parking near schools.

The Council's School Provision & Commissioning Manager updated Members on the current situation with regards to free pre-school childcare.

Currently, all three and four-year-olds, of working families, were entitled to 15 hours free early education a week. Local authorities were given Central Government funding to pay for the scheme, which they then passed on to nurseries.

Members noted that there was a possibility that the amount of hours of free education may be upgraded following the Chancellor's Spending Review which was due to be announced the following day.

The Council's Deputy Chief Executive, Children, Adult and Housing advised Members that the Council had a statutory duty to provide school places and could be fined if provision could not be achieved.

The Council was currently talking to and would only work with providers who offered a quality service. Expansion of schools should only take place at good schools that were able to cope. Visits had taken place to various schools and the Head Teacher's comments taken on board. It was important in the case of free schools that the provision was located close to parent's homes. Members noted that schools that had already expanded were doing very well.

In response to a question regarding funding for a drop off point at James Oglethorpe School, officers advised that Highways officers were in consultation with Children's Services and the school and were exploring all feasible options.

In reply to a question regarding the yield figures in Hornchurch officers advised that projections were based on actual fact but could change in the future. Projections were updated on a regular basis to take into account new developments in the area and the housing mix.

Members raised concerns regarding safety around school premises and suggested that safety measures were implemented as soon as possible at all schools. The Chairman asked that Members be informed of progress of the safety works via the Member/officer group.

Officers wished to re-assure Members that all schools would be visited and those schools that had already been expanded would be re-visited. Each school would also be looked at individually rather than on bulk.

In response to a question regarding whether funding would be made available for traffic measure, officers confirmed that funding would be made available.

Members also discussed the possibility of investigating positive ways of reducing traffic around schools and suggested that traffic plans needed to be proactive and not just there to punish parents. Mention was made of successful schemes in Tring Gardens, Harold Hill and Harold Wood School. Officers advised that engineering solutions would be used where possible. Enforcement could only be used when parents parked on zigzag lines or keep clear hatches and not when parked on single or double yellow lines.

Members also commented that there existed a problem around Branfil School with inconsiderate parking it was also felt that local residents were not helping the situation by parking in the road as opposed to their driveways.

Mention was also made of inconsiderate parking around Mead School in Amersham Road, Harold Hill which had exacerbated since the expansion of the school.

In reply to a question regarding the provision of faith based education officers advised that a need had already been identified.

A Member asked that careful consideration be given to expansion of some schools over others. Officers were advised that Brady and Rainham Village Schools were possibly better options for expansion than the previously selected Parsonage Farm School. The Head Teacher at Brady Primary School had also expressed a possible interest in expanding to two form entry.

The Chairman advised Members that Local Government Association was lobbying for more power over admissions and the development of new schools

Officers also wished to re-iterate that schools would not be expanded if it was felt that they could not cope.

In summation the Cabinet Member for Children & Learning commented that Members felt re-assured by officer's reports and comments and those officers were doing a very thorough job in achieving a cohesive plan for the future which would have additional phases later on along the line.

The Chairman reminded Members that this phase was only at the consultation stage and that the decision to proceed with the expansion plans could be called-in again at any stage of the process.

At this point the Cabinet Member for Children and Learning left the room whilst the Board voted on the decision as to uphold or dismiss the call-in of the Cabinet decision taken on 4 November 2015.

The vote for the decision as to whether to uphold or dismiss the call-in was carried by 13 votes to 2.

Councillors Durant and Williamson voted for the resolution to uphold the call-in.

It was **RESOLVED** that the call-in of the Cabinet decision taken on 4 November be dismissed and reported to Council, as previously agreed, at its meeting on 25 November 2015.

Chairman