

EDUCATION, CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL

MINUTES OF A MEETING of the Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel held on Friday 24 June 2011 at 2pm in the Civic Offices, Portsmouth.

(NB These minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting)

Present

Councillors: Steve Wemyss (Chair)
Paula Riches (Vice Chair)
Margaret Adair
Lee Mason (appointed 14 June 2011 replacing
Councillor James Williams)

Also present

Councillor Rob Wood (Cabinet Member for Children & Education)
Councillor Simon Boshier, proposer of the Notice of Motion to the City Council on 22 March to review admissions to Springfield School

Mike Fowler, Head of Transforming Education Services
Sue Barratt, Admissions Officer
Mike Allgrove, Assistant Head of Planning Services
Jacqueline Boulter, Principal Planning Officer
Lynn Evans, Head Teacher, Springfield School
Nigel Webb, Assistant Head Teacher (Admissions) Springfield School
Derek Good, Chair of Governing Body, Springfield School

26 Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 1)

Councillor Steve Wemyss declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest in that three years ago he had unsuccessfully applied for a place for his son at Springfield School.

Councillor Paula Riches declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest as she is an appointed governor of Highbury College.

Councillor Simon Boshier declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest in that his youngest son was just leaving Springfield School as a pupil.

Councillor Rob Wood declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest in that his son-in-law works for The Harbour Schools.

27 Apologies for Absence (AI 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Peter Eddis and Caroline Scott. Duncan Cope, the parent governor representative, also tendered his apologies and asked that Portsmouth's public notice concerning admission numbers for 2012/13 be circulated to the panel to take into account. The document was tabled at the meeting and is attached to these minutes as appendix one.

28 Minutes of Meeting held on 10 June 2011 (AI 3)

The panel was advised that the minutes of the meeting of 10 June would be presented at the meeting on 8 July.

29 Housing relating to existing and proposed development (AI 4)

Mike Allgrove, The Assistant Head of Planning Services introduced the report on forward planning for new housing development and decisions on planning applications, both related, where relevant to the Springfield catchment area. He explained that the Portsmouth Plan included new housing development targets.

The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) is a process employed to assess the availability of land for housing available in the city and to identify potential sites. The SHLAA has identified a number of possible housing development sites in the Springfield catchment area and these are set out in the report. However, there is no guarantee that sites identified for housing development will get as far as the planning application stage or be approved by the Planning Committee. Furthermore, the SHLAA does not consider the capacity of schools in the housing development area to absorb any resulting additional demand for school places.

Education provision is one of the topics reviewed in the City Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Projections indicate that secondary pupil numbers will drop to 8,500 in 2016 but are expected to rise in 2018 to 8,900.

Mention was made of the Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which includes a formula for calculating developer contributions towards education provision and it was pointed out that £75,000 was collected from the development of 165 units on the Highbury College site.

The Head of Planning Services will be bringing a report to the Cabinet on 4 July seeking approval for consultation on the Draft Charging Schedule for the Community Infrastructure Levy and then submission to an independent examiner. The charging schedule, if approved, will permit levies to be charged to developers contribute towards strategic infrastructure costs, including the cost of additional educational provision, resulting from housing and other developments.

In response to questions from the panel, the following points were discussed and clarified:

- It is difficult to estimate the demand for secondary school places which results from housing developments as it depends on the type of housing. In general, affordable housing developments give rise to a higher demand for more places than market housing developments. Developments containing three and four bedroomed houses result in higher demand than developments containing flats or two bedroomed houses.
- The head teacher of Springfield School mentioned that research had been carried out in relation to future demand for education for the under 5s and it was found that new dwellings in the area tended to be purchased by families with children due to the known reputation of the schools in the area.
- The Southern Electric and the Station Road sites were mentioned as housing development sites with the potential to provide additional dwellings in the Springfield catchment area. The development would bring more families into the Springfield catchment area thus increasing the demand for school places. The Assistant Head of Planning Services advised that planning permission had not yet been obtained for these sites but impacts of the development would be considered as part of the application process, including the impact on educational establishments.

Panel members made the following points regarding the potential impact of housing developments on demand for secondary school places in the Cosham/ Drayton/ Farlington areas:

1. Councillor Wemyss suggested that there was the potential for planning applications for up to three hundred houses to be built on the two development sites mentioned. He referred to the Portsmouth SPD in which it states that Portsmouth City Council uses a formula to calculate child yield for each new residential dwelling. The formula for three bedroomed houses is 0.772 per dwelling. Therefore, on that calculation 300 three bedroomed houses should generate 231.6 pupils.
2. Councillor Mason commented that over the next five years there was the potential for over 1,900 new residential dwellings to be developed in Cosham. One area of Cosham High Street was earmarked for high rise development and more development was proposed for the Highbury site.
3. The Head Teacher commented that the Southern Electric and the Station Road sites were very close to the school and would mean that any resulting applicants to the school would be more likely to succeed in gaining places at the school thereby making it more difficult for those who live at the eastern and southern boundaries of the catchment area to obtain school places, as they are farthest away from the school.

30 Capital and Pupil Planning (AI 4 continued)

Mike Fowler, Head of Transforming Education Services introduced his report on capital and pupil planning. The public notice regarding school admissions for 2012/13 was tabled at the meeting and is attached to these minutes as appendix two.

He referred the panel to the secondary pupil projections in the table in paragraph 3 of the report. He further explained the point made by the Assistant Head of Planning Services that over the coming years it was predicted that there would be some peaks and troughs in the demand for places at Springfield School. In some years the supply would be adequate to meet demand while in other academic years it might not. However, when taking the city as a whole there were more than enough secondary school places to accommodate all Portsmouth pupils. Plans were in place over the next few years to remove spare capacity in schools which were undersubscribed.

The local authority uses two methods for calculating demand for secondary school places: the number of known pupils in feeder schools and Hampshire County Council's small area population forecasts.

The Education Service enjoys good working relationships with the Planning Service and consultation took place regarding new build housing. However, it was difficult to make accurate predictions of demand for school places as planned developments did not always go ahead as predicted.

Regarding secondary school transfer pupil predictions taking account of five proposed developments including the Southern Electric, Station Road and the Highbury site, it was pointed out that in January 2012, the number of pupils in catchment would be 210-217 which would be within Springfield's Planned Admission Limit (PAL) of 220. However, there would be another peak in January 2014 when the projected number of pupils living in catchment would exceed the PAL.

Robust discussions had taken place regarding the extent to which Springfield could be expanded. From the Department for Education's perspective, the excellent performance of Springfield was due to the leadership and the governing body. If the school were to be enlarged, it could become more difficult to manage and to continue to achieve good results.

The possibility of reducing the school's catchment area is an option merely shifts dissatisfaction among local parents, especially those who have paid the higher property prices in the current Springfield catchment area.

The creation of a Solent Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) school for 300 pupils on a site in the city would create a niche market and possibly choke off some of the demand for places at Springfield.

Mike Fowler advised the panel of two further options for their consideration: firstly the need to improve more secondary schools in the ALNS ,St Edmunds and Priory schools all ought to performing around /above the Springfield level

The second option was to wait some 18 months – 3 years, when Portsmouth City Council will need to undertake a strategic review of secondary school places, given the likely impact of:

- a possible 11-19 Technical Academy
- the proposed Solent STEM Studio School
- future possible academies

In response to questions from the panel, the following points were discussed and clarified:

Lynn Evans, Head teacher at Springfield School explained that the STEM school option would not involve local authority control. The school would have links to the dockyard and local businesses. It could be argued that it is disadvantageous to pupils in that it would involve a change of school half way through their secondary education. As Springfield is already a specialist technology school, it would seem unlikely that the STEM would attract pupils from the northern part of the city and would therefore be unlikely to have any impact on demand for places at Springfield.

For this September's cohort a very small number of out of catchment applicants were successful in gaining a place at Springfield. These children either had a statement of special educational need with Springfield as their named school or they had a sibling link.

Nigel Webb, Assistant Head Teacher at Springfield School advised that 8.4% of current pupils lived outside the catchment area. These pupils were generally children who had originally lived in catchment when allocated a place at the school but the families had moved away during the children's school career. If a family moves outside the catchment area, the children tend to remain at Springfield School. The school experiences a very low turnover of pupils (turbulence). Over the last four years 122 parents had appealed to an Independent Appeal Panel against the decision not to grant their child a place at the school. Of the 122 appellants, 40 had been successful.

The Head Teacher explained that, following recent Independent Appeal Panel hearings for the September 2011 intake, 4 appellants had been successful which meant that in September year 7 would be 4 over the PAL. She was concerned for those on the waiting list, as now 5 children would have to decline a place before the start of the autumn term or leave during the school year before any could be admitted from the waiting list.

The impact of the Local Authority's Fair Access Protocol was discussed. It was explained that 12-15 additional children since 2006 were directed into the school by the local authority via this protocol which provides for 'hard to place' pupils to be shared among all the city's secondary schools. Increasingly, once a child is designated 'hard to place', parents request Springfield School. Hard to place admissions put extra pressure on the waiting lists since parents have to wait even longer for a space to become available. The problem of these additional pupils for Springfield is compounded in that being a successful school it is required to take more of these pupils than schools facing challenges. Schools which have recently come out of the special measures category are not required to take any 'hard to place' pupils for the following two years.

The Fair Access Protocol is locally determined and 'hard to place' pupils are referred to the Fair Access Panel.

The Fair Access Protocol could be changed but it would have to be locally agreed. It is necessary to have an equitable rather than an equal share out of 'hard to place' pupils. The idea is to prevent schools facing challenging circumstances from having to take more challenging pupils.

It was pointed out that the Head of Transforming Education Services' projected figures for 2013/14 were lower than the estimates provided by the Assistant Head of Planning Services. The Assistant Head of Planning Services stated that his figures were based on planning permission being granted for the Southern Electric and Station Road sites. However, given the current state of the economy in general and the housing market in particular, he was not optimistic about development on those sites taking place in the near future. He advised that currently they were only expecting development on the Highbury site.

The Chair made the point that the panel needed to recognise that there are more than enough school places in the city for all the projected numbers of pupils during the next few years. Therefore, the local authority is unlikely to obtain any Government funding to expand Springfield.

Councillor Riches suggested that one solution might be to look at making changes to City Boys School making it a co-educational UTC to take the pressure off Springfield.

Councillor Boshier referred to the geography of the catchment area and highlighted the fact that the areas of east Farlington, parts of Portsdown Hill and Highbury were the most remote from the school. This meant that many unsuccessful pupils from Farlington faced the ridiculous situation of having to go past Springfield and travel further away to get to their allocated school, thus contributing to traffic movement around the city. The situation with regard to the Highbury estate would worsen with the development of new houses on the Highbury College site increasing the demand for places.

The suggestion to change to a shift system, as suggested by Councillor Wemyss at the previous meeting, was discussed.

The following issues were highlighted by the Head Teacher.

There would be difficulties for parents to arrange child care to fit in with their work patterns, especially if a younger child goes to school in the morning and is at home in the afternoon and an elder child is at home in the mornings and at school in the afternoons. Generally, it is anticipated that parents' attitudes to this proposal would be extremely negative. Parents would not feel comfortable going out to work and leaving their 14 year old to get himself/herself to school.

There would be a lunch time overlap and the school dining room would not be able to cope.

It would not be reasonable to schedule unpaid time off for staff during the middle of the day.

Councillor Mason made the point that the proposal to make City Boys' School a UTC was too long term and would involve closing that school without adequate alternative arrangements being put in place. He believed that a quicker solution would be to make City Boys a co-educational school with a prescribed catchment area. He recognised that there would be additional costs in providing additional toilet facilities but these costs were insignificant compared to expanding Springfield. It was pointed out that City Boys' School was a trust school and so consultation and agreement with the trust would have to be undertaken. There was also the possibility that the Tipner development could go ahead and could have an impact on the demand for school places in the Tipner area which would presumably be in the catchment area of the co-educational school on the City Boys' site.

Councillor Wemyss mentioned the naval estate in the catchment area and the problems that naval families moving into the area experienced in getting their children into their catchment schools. The scrutiny support officer advised that, in accordance with the resolution made at the last meeting, she had asked for participation or a written submission from the Royal Navy. She had been in touch with the Naval Families Federation and had only that afternoon received a written submission from them via email. The submission was tabled for the panel to read. A copy is attached to these minutes as appendix three.

The Head Teacher advised that the school received a small grant to account for the number of service families in the area but this only amounted to the equivalent of 15 children. Applications from forces families are treated sympathetically in that closing dates can be extended.

Before the chair brought the meeting to a close it was agreed that, given the short lead in time to submit this report to the City Council in accordance with Standing Order number 32(d), it may be appropriate to recommend that a further in depth report be undertaken.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. An informal meeting of the panel be held on Thursday, 30 June at 5:00pm to consider the draft report and recommendations.**
- 2. The report on Housing relating to existing and proposed developments in the Springfield catchment area be noted.**
- 3. The report on the Capital and Pupil Planning be noted.**
- 4. The written submission from the Naval Families Federation be noted and included in the report.**
- 5. Submissions from the Head teacher and representatives from the Governing Body of Springfield be noted.**
- 6. The following information be submitted to the informal meeting of the panel for inclusion in the report:**
 - A summary of the UTC proposals be provided.**
 - A school by school analysis of places/vacancies over the next few years.**
 - The numbers on roll at the Charter Academy now and in September 2009.**
 - A copy of the Fair Access Protocol.**
 - A report on the possibility of transforming the City of Portsmouth Boys' School into a co-educational school.**

31 Date of Next Meeting (AI 5)

RESOLVED that the next meeting will be held on Friday, 8 July 2011 at a time to be agreed.

The meeting closed at 4:10pm.

Chairman