

CABINET

Thursday, 1 October 2009

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	S Foulkes (Chair)	
	Councillors	S Holbrook G Davies P Davies G Gardiner S Kelly	M McLaughlin R Moon J Quinn J Stapleton

138 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The members of the Cabinet were invited to consider whether they had a personal or prejudicial interest in connection with any of the items on the agenda and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of such interest.

Councillor Foulkes declared a prejudicial interest in minute 141 (Review of Primary School Places - Phase 5) by virtue of him being friends with the caretaker at one of the schools referred to in the report.

Councillor G Davies declared a prejudicial interest in minute 143 (Review of Secondary School Places Phase 1) by virtue of him being a governor at one of the schools referred to in the report.

Councillor Quinn declared a personal interest in minute 142 (Review of Secondary School Places Phase 2) by virtue of her husband being a governor at one of the schools referred to in the report.

Councillor P Davies declared a personal interest in minutes 140 (Relocation of Gilbrook Primary School) and minute 143 (Review of Secondary School Places Phase 1) by virtue of him being a member of the governing body of Gilbrook Primary School and Wirral Metropolitan College.

Councillor Stapleton declared a personal interest in minute 142 (Review of Secondary School Places Phase 1) by virtue of her being a member of the governing body of one of the schools referred to in the report.

139 ANY OTHER BUSINESS - LIBRARIES

The Chair agreed to consideration of this item as a matter of urgent business.

The Leader of the Council made a statement on a proposal to revoke the Cabinet's previous decision on investment in 13 Neighbourhood Centres and the planned closure of 11 libraries. This decision would then be subject to Council.

The Leader of the Council moved a motion which was seconded by the Deputy Leader of the Council and circulated to the Cabinet and members of the public, it was then -

Resolved –

(1) In the light of the national debate now taking place over the future of libraries and the Government's imminent review, this Cabinet endorses the recommendation of the Leader and Deputy Leader to recommend to Council that the original Cabinet decision to close 11 libraries and invest £20m in 13 new and modernised Neighbourhood Centres be revoked.

(2) Cabinet recognises that this decision has serious budgetary implications for the current financial year, which will require the approval of Council to an appropriate in year variation of the budget for 2009/10, and which leaves a gap of at least £830,000 in the revenue budget, as well as the need to find a further estimated £200,000 to cover immediate repairs.

(3) Cabinet further recognises that there are also serious implications for future budgets. Cabinet therefore asks officers to report back to Cabinet setting out the full budgetary implications of this decision, for this year and for future years, as a matter of urgency in order for Cabinet to decide how this gap in the budget is to be filled.

(4) Cabinet wishes to make it clear that this decision is limited to the impact on libraries and planned investment in Neighbourhood Centres alone. It does not affect any other decisions taken on the Strategic Asset Review which the officers are asked to continue implementing with all due speed, including the progression of the Community Asset Transfer process.

(5) Cabinet recognises, however, in the light of the reduced savings, that it is now essential to ensure that the remaining planned savings are made as quickly as possible and therefore requests officers to redirect staff resources in particular to ensure a rapid implementation of the Council Office Accommodation element of the Strategic Asset Review.

(6) Cabinet therefore resolves to:

Revoke paragraphs 7 to 19 (inclusive) of Minute 325, being all those elements of its decision on the Strategic Asset Review taken on 15 January 2009 that related to public libraries or Neighbourhood Centres (multi-purpose complexes); and recommends Council to identify a source of funding to meet the in-year financial consequences (£830,000) of not closing 11 libraries and investing in 13 Neighbourhood Centres.

140 RELOCATION OF GILBROOK PRIMARY SCHOOL - CONSULTATION

The Director of Children's Services reported upon statutory consultations which had been held for the proposal to relocate Gilbrook Special School to the former site of Arrowe Hill Primary School.

The Governing body of Gilbrook School, a special school with 50 places for primary age pupils with emotional and behavioural issues, had expressed an interest in relocating to larger premises with improved facilities to carry out additional behaviour support work to mainstream schools. The school was currently located in a semi-

industrial area on Pilgrim Street, Birkenhead, but served pupils from the entire Wirral area. A Sports Barn was located on the Gilbrook site.

Relocating to the former Arrowe Hill Primary School, Glebe Hey Road, Woodchurch, which had closed on 31 August 2009, as a result of Phase 4 of the Primary Places Review, would increase the net floor area available to Gilbrook by a third, and although the school would no longer have access to the Sports Barn, the total site area available to the school would triple including a substantial increase in hard and soft play area. The Authority would retain the former Infant building for storage purposes.

At its meeting on 28 May 2009 (minute 9 refers) Cabinet had instructed that a formal consultation should be carried out with various stakeholders. Consultation had ended on 31 July 2009 and details of the outcome were given in the report.

The 2009/10 Schools Capital programme approved by Cabinet on 28 May 2009 included £200,000 to facilitate the move to the former Arrowe Hill building.

Resolved –

(1) That statutory proposals be published in respect of the statutory alteration to transfer the site of Gilbrook Special School to the former site of Arrowe Hill Primary School.

(2) That the Director of Children's Services be authorised to take all necessary steps to publish these proposals, ensure the prescribed procedures are followed, including requesting permissions from the Secretary of State in furtherance of the proposal.

COUNCILLOR HOLBROOK IN THE CHAIR

141 REVIEW OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES - PHASE 5 PLANNING AREAS AND COMMENCEMENT OF PHASE 6

(Councillor Foulkes having declared a prejudicial interest in this item (see minute 138) left the room during its consideration.)

The Director of Children's Services advised the Cabinet of the outcome of the consultation process which had taken place in the North Birkenhead planning area in respect of the options for consultation agreed at Cabinet on 28 May 2009 (minute 9 refers). The report described the responses to the various options put forward for discussion, including additional suggestions put forward during the consultation process, and made recommendations with regard to statutory proposals in that area. The Director also introduced the beginning of Phase 6 of the Review and requested approval of an amendment to that phase.

With the permission of the Chair the following speakers addressed the Cabinet on the various proposals within the report:

- Sister Patricia Goodstadt, Assistant Director of Schools for the Shrewsbury Diocese.

- Councillor D Roberts, ward councillor for Claughton.
- Val Chaderton, Headteacher of Cole Street Primary School
- John Cocker, Chair of Governors of Cathcart Street Primary School

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning brought to the Cabinet's attention the views of Frank Field, MP for Birkenhead, in particular his support for a new school while Government funds were available.

The Cabinet Member also remarked that the proposals should not be seen as a questioning of standards at Cole Street, Cathcart Street or St Laurence's Primary Schools, as all three were excellent schools but rather as how best to deploy resources in the most effective way when there were not enough children to justify three schools in this part of Birkenhead. The opportunity should be taken again to look at the possible option of a new build school adjacent to Birkenhead Park to replace both Cole Street and Cathcart Street Primary Schools.

Councillor Holbrook commented that any money saved from the closure of schools would be ringfenced to increase the amount of money available to be spent on all children within the Borough.

On a motion by Councillor Phil Davies, seconded by Councillor Holbrook, it was -

Resolved -

(1) That Cabinet agrees with the need to reduce surplus places in the North Birkenhead planning area and that this will require a reduction in the number of community primary schools by one.

(2) That Cabinet asks for a further report at the earliest opportunity which sets out a detailed options appraisal which looks at the relative merits with respect to:

(a) closure of Cole Street Primary School and retention of Cathcart Street Primary School;

(b) amalgamation of Cole Street Primary School and Cathcart Street Primary School in a new build school on a new site;

and seeks the views of parents, teachers and governors via a further short consultation exercise.

(3) Cabinet agrees to the closure of St Laurence's Catholic Primary School from August 2010 and that statutory proposals be published in respect of this.

(4) That amendments be made to Phase 6 of the Primary Places Review:

(a) to move the Leasowe planning area to Phase 8 of the Review, pending the outcome of proposals for a Joint Church school in that area;

(b) to review Manor Primary School following that school's placement in Special Measures by Ofsted.

The Cabinet adjourned at 7.15pm and reconvened at 8.10pm.

COUNCILLOR FOULKES RESUMES THE CHAIR

142 REVIEW OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES PHASE 2

The Director of Children's Services updated Cabinet on the position in respect of secondary school places in Wirral and described recent developments, the current position, and issues for the future in relation to the proposed Phase 2 of the Secondary Places Review.

As in Phase 1 of the Review, there were four essential elements in looking to plan future secondary school requirements across the Borough. These were, firstly, the numbers of children expected to enter school over the next seven years; secondly the capacity of the current stock of secondary schools, individually and in areas; thirdly the impact of school size on standards, including the National Challenge, and finally various other factors with implications for place provision.

Following various recent developments, he also recommended that Phase 2 of the review be divided into two sub-phases, A to comprise Wirral West and B the Wallasey area.

Resolved -

(1) That approval be given to the division of Phase 2 of the review of secondary school provision into Phase 2A and Phase 2B, beginning with pre-consultation with Headteachers and chairs of governors in schools in Wirral West.

(2) That options arising from this initial consultation be the subject of a further report to Cabinet with the Director's recommendations for option(s) to proceed to wider, formal consultation with all stakeholders.

143 REVIEW OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES PHASE 1

(Councillors George Davies having declared a prejudicial interest in this item (see minute 138) left the room during its consideration.)

Cabinet were given an update of the progress so far with regard to the development of two proposed new Academies in Birkenhead. The Director of Children's Services sought approval for the two Expressions of Interest and for commencement of the statutory consultation process for closure of the three secondary schools affected by the Phase 1 proposals.

With the permission of the Chair, both David Hughes, lead sponsor of the proposed Boys' Academy, and Dr Colin Hankinson, representing the University of Chester, lead sponsor of the proposed mixed Academy, addressed the Cabinet and elaborated on both expressions of interest including their vision, ethos and specialisms for both academies. Both then responded to questions from Cabinet members.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning thanked the lead sponsors for sharing their visions with the Cabinet and remarked that this was

potentially the best opportunity the authority would have to make a step change in the life chances of young people in Birkenhead. He also took the opportunity to pay tribute to staff of Park High, Ridgeway High and Rock Ferry High schools.

The Director, responding to members' comments, stated that the proposed scheme was designed to look in a holistic way at secondary education in Birkenhead and was a single package which could not be split into different parts. Consultation would have to take place over the proposed closure of each of the 3 schools at the same time as consultation on the successor arrangements for the 2 academies.

The Leader of the Council welcomed the opportunity to improve the life chances of children within Birkenhead by the proposed injection of funding for a brand new purpose built academy and for a mixed academy.

Resolved -

(1) That Cabinet approves the Expressions of Interest for the two Academies and their submission to the Minister of State for Schools and Learners.

(2) That Cabinet requests that the Director of Children's Services undertake all the necessary formal consultation processes and that these consider the proposals in their entirety, not just the individual elements under review.

144 EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved - That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by the relevant paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act.

145 AIMING HIGHER

The Director of Children's Services recommended that Cabinet approve the procurement of short breaks services for 2009/11. The proposed services to be commissioned would support the delivery of the Wirral Local Area Implementation programme for Aiming High for Disabled Children in relation to Short Breaks provision. The commissioning and procurement process, resulting in these recommendations, had been robust, multi-agency (including voluntary and community sector involvement) and inclusive of parents, children and young people. Preliminary feedback had been given to both those groups recommended and those not.

Cabinet's approval was also sought to delegate capital spend within the programme to the Lead Member.

Resolved -

(1) That Cabinet approves the procurement of services outlined in section 3 of the report and contract negotiation with the identified services to be provided from 1 October 2009.

(2) That Cabinet confirm delegated powers to the Lead member in relation to the Aiming High capital programme.