

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY - CALL IN PANEL

MINUTES of the meeting held in the Ground Floor Committee Room - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on 15 June 2016 from 10.00 am - 10.42 am

Membership

Present

Councillor Josh Cook
Councillor Glyn Jenkins
Councillor Sue Johnson
Councillor Andrew Rule

Absent

Councillor Azad Choudhry
Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora
Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan
Councillor Neghat Nawaz Khan
Councillor Brian Parbutt
Councillor Anne Peach

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Rebecca Ironmonger - Group Assistant
Lucy Juby - Project Manager
Rav Kalsi - Senior Governance Officer
Nick Lee - Head of Access and Learning
Councillor Sam Webster - Portfolio Holder for Education, Employment and Skills

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

RESOLVED for Councillor Glyn Jenkins to be appointed Chair for the purpose of the meeting.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

4 CONFIRMATION OF VALIDITY OF CALL-IN

Councillor Glyn Jenkins (Chair) explained the procedure for the hearing to the attendees. He outlined the reasons for the call-in and requested the Panel to confirm its validity.

RESOLVED to confirm the call-in request as valid on the following ground:

(1) Viable alternatives not considered:

The decision does not refer to a viable alternative being considered such as a new school in Wollaton and therefore we would challenge the need to spend £100,000 at this stage.

5 CONSIDERATION OF CALL-IN REQUEST

Following the report from the Head of Democratic Services, the Committee was asked to:

- consider the information provided in relation to Delegated Decision 24523 Early works including design development in relation to the potential expansion of Middleton Primary School and the reasons given for requesting a call-in of that decision and use that information to inform questioning and discussion;
- focus on the reasons for the call-in as given in the call-in request form, and based on the evidence from the Portfolio Holder, his supporting colleague(s), and the councillors who requested the call-in decide to either:
 - i) require that the decision is reconsidered, and make recommendation(s) as to what should be taken into consideration; or
 - ii) agree that the decision does not need to be reconsidered and can be implemented.

Councillor Sam Webster, presented the Panel with the following information in relation to the reasons for taking the decision:

- (a) Middleton Primary School serves citizens from both Wollaton West and Wollaton East and Lenton Abbey and there is an immediate need for school places in these areas;
- (b) Nottingham City Council has a commitment to ensure that every child in Nottingham is taught in a school judged good or outstanding by Ofsted and this has been included in the Council's Plan (agreed at Full Council in 2015). Nottingham City Council has committed £33 million to support this;
- (c) The Council has already agreed to extend Fernwood Primary School in Wollaton and this decision is for early design works to establish if an expansion to Middleton Primary is at all possible. This is a necessary step before any consultation can take place;
- (d) Local authorities no longer have the power to build new maintained school, one of the few options remaining is to expand existing provision and the decision taken was to establish if this is even feasible.

Councillor Georgina Culley (call-in signatory), responded with the following information:

- (e) A request for background information was denied yesterday by the Admissions Team, a matter which had been escalated to the Council's Monitoring Officer. In response, Rav Kalsi, Senior Governance Officer clarified that the request had been made less than 24 hours before the Call-in Panel and it would have

taken significant time to provide a response. In light of this, the Monitoring Officer supported the view that the information would be provided within 5 working days, in line with the usual response deadlines for councillor enquiries. It was also felt that, had the request been made at an earlier stage then the information could have been provided in advance of the Call-in Panel;

- (f) Consultation with the local community should take place before money is spent on producing design works;
- (g) the Council's policy of expanding schools sites across the city is not viable and continues to increase pressure on surrounding areas, in terms of traffic and access;
- (h) Other viable sites for a new school have not been considered. There should have been an extensive search and an explanation given as to why the Council is not building another school. By commissioning design works it gives the impression that a decision to expand Middleton Primary has already been taken.

Councillor Sam Webster raised the following in response to the points raised:

- (i) Contrary to what was stated on the Call-in request form, the Portfolio Holder had discounted doing nothing as the Council has a legal duty to provide school places for children in Nottingham;
- (j) The Council is not opposed to academisation and new academies such as Bluecoat Primary Academy have been developed with the Council's support;
- (k) Before the Council consults on a potential expansion to Middleton Primary School, it is essential to establish whether it is even feasible. Once design works have taken place, those consulted would at least be able to see what they are being consulted on;
- (l) Any new schools in the city would need to be a free school which does not go through the same rigorous consultation process applied to local authorities.

Panel members raised the following points:

- (m) There had been an initial discussion about the catchment areas for both Fernwood and Middleton Schools but the view of the governing bodies was that this would be counter-productive and damaging;
- (n) The value of delegated decision 2453 is £100,000, which is small proportion of the £33 million set aside to ensure that every child in Nottingham is taught at a good or outstanding school;
- (o) Traffic and congestion concerns around schools is common around all schools in Nottingham and there would have been objections had the Portfolio Holder opted to do nothing at all in the circumstances.

RESOLVED to agree that the delegated decision 2453 – ‘Early works including design development in relation to the potential expansion of Middleton Primary School’ does not need to be reconsidered and can be implemented for the following reason:

- **The decision is for early design and feasibility work that engages the school to develop a potential expansion at Middleton Primary, before consultation with the wider community. It is a reasonable step for this to take place so that, should the proposals progress, those being consulted understand what they are being consulted on.**