



# Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel

## Minutes - 4 November 2014

### Attendance

#### Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Julie Hodgkiss (Chair)  
Cllr Susan Constable  
Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre  
Cllr Michael Heap  
Cllr Peter O'Neill  
Cllr Martin Waite  
Cllr Daniel Warren  
Cllr Jas Dehar

Hadeel A Ahmad	Parent Governor Representative
Mrs R Watkins	Catholic Church Representative
Portia Tsvangirai	Parent Governor Representative

#### Employees

Earl Piggott-Smith	Scrutiny Officer
Bill Hague	Service Manager – School Places and Transport
Tom Knott	School Organisation Officer
James McElligott	Assistant Director, Learning and Achievement
Trevor Pringle	Head of School Planning and Resources
Marc Webb	Service Manager – Capital and Assets

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## Part 1 – items open to the press and public

*Item No.*      *Title*

- 1 Apologies for absence**  
Apologies were received from the following  
  
Councillor Paula Brookfield  
Councillor Lorna McGregor  
Cyril Randles  
Leanne Dack  
Tanya Kasinganeti
- 2 Declarations of interest**  
There were no declarations of interest received.

3 **Final Decision regarding the 2015 Primary School Expansion Programme**  
Bill Hague presented a report detailing the outcome of consultation with primary school communities regarding the 2015 Primary School Expansion Programme for pre-decision scrutiny by the panel.

Bill explained that there is proposal for a 10<sup>th</sup> scheme but details about the scheme will not be available till 17.11.14.

Bill commented on the overall aims of the programme and the responsibilities of local authorities to ensure that they have sufficient school places to meet demand. Bill explained that the Council had invested in increasing school places to meet rising levels of demand for extra primary school places.

Bill gave a brief summary of the comments, both positive and negative, received from schools about the proposals. Bill highlighted a number of common themes in the responses to the proposal, for example, increased parking problem, reduction in the quality of teaching, changes to the existing school ethos. Bill commented that while accepting these concerns there was a responsibility on the authority to minimise the disruption to the children's education during the expansion programme. Bill explained that the Council is not able to address all the issues highlighted in the responses to the consultation, but highlighted a range of potential mitigation strategies.

Bill commented on the recent press report about the level of parental support for the planned increases in school places. Bill explained that majority of negative responses were from one school and therefore not representative of the other schools where a smaller number of responses was received.

The panel made the following general comments and queries about the proposals:

- The panel queried the position of the authority in a situation where a school governing body was not in favour of a proposed expansion. Bill explained that a final decision about the proposed expansions will be the decision of Cabinet. Bill explained that while accepting the concerns, their priority is the meeting the needs of the children and if the school is capable of coping with change of increased demand for places.
- The panel queried if there was a risk that a school governing body which was against a proposed expansion would consider moving to academy status, in response. Bill explained that a lot will depend on the relationship with the school. The current guidance relating to schools stresses the importance of parental choice and legislation offers schools the option to move out of local authority control.
- The panel queried whether the local authority would be expected to fund the expansion if a school decided to change to academy or free school status. Bill explained that the local authority would have to fund the expansion regardless of the status of the school.
- The panel queried the impact of the expansion on the pupil/teacher ratio. Bill Hague clarified that it was the size of the schools that was increasing, not the individual class sizes. Bill Hague explained that the schools would be expected

to act in accordance with the School Admissions Code and Infant Class Size Regulations.

- Panel noted that the increased demand will have an impact on secondary schools. Bill explained that an increase in the demand for the secondary school estate was expected in 2017. Bill explained that a new free school is likely to be opened which will increase capacity. In addition, the Royal School is proposed to convert to Free School status. If the proposal is accepted by the Education Funding Agency then the school will be able to provide extra capacity, in both primary and secondary phases.
- The panel queried the process for the future planning of secondary school places. Bill explained that a full assessment of the secondary school estate will be undertaken in order to ascertain future capacity in the City's secondary schools. Bill explained that a report will be produced annually on school place planning.
- The panel commented on the impact of rising demand for places on the education appeals service. Bill explained the challenge in managing the large number of mid-year appeals. There is a need for work to be done to explain to parents the low success rates for appeals as schools are constrained by legal limits on class sizes. Bill explained that schools forum was consulted about the expansion plans.

The panel made the following specific comments about the outcomes of the consultation about primary schools included in the 2015 primary school expansion programme.

### **Bushbury Primary School**

The panel welcomed the proposed expansion in places. The panel commented on the plans for providing extra provision and specifically the type of accommodation. Marc Webb explained that the proposed expansion would be in permanent structures and not portacabins. In addition, the changes would have to meet environmental regulations.

### **Eastfield Primary School**

No comments

### **Loxdale Primary School**

No comments

### **Manor Primary School**

The panel commented on the late distribution of a letter by the School's Chair of Governors outlining and opposing the plans, which was distributed a few days before the end of the consultation period. Bill Hague summarised the list of parties who

were consulted with in the consultation process. The impact of increased number of children on the existing problem of traffic was highlighted. A concern was expressed about the proposal to increase the number of places by 50% in the pupil population. A comment was made about the level of co-operation with Dudley as they have a school close which may be affected by the decision to increase numbers. It was suggested that the school has spaces which could meet the needs of local parents. Bill Hague explained that the situation of schools in Dudley should not affect the decision to expand Manor Primary School. Bill reiterated that under current guidelines, Manor Primary school is an ideal school to be expanded due to its popularity and performance.

Marc Webb explained that the local authority will need Secretary of State Consent before using green spaces for development. A comment was made about the option of using before and after sessions such as breakfast clubs to help spread the congestion.

**St Martin's CE Primary School**

No comments

**Stowlawn Primary School**

No comments

**West Park Primary School**

No comments

**Westacre Infant School**

No comments

Resolved

The panel agreed that their comments would be summarised and submitted to Cabinet for consideration.