

CABINET

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

12 November 2007

The meeting commenced at 9.00 a.m. in the Avondale Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

The Mayor (Stuart Drummond) - In the Chair

Councillors: Gerard Hall (Adult and Public Health Services Portfolio Holder),
Cath Hill (Children's Services Portfolio Holder),
Robbie Payne (Finance & Efficiency Portfolio Holder),
Victor Tumilty (Culture, Leisure and Tourism Portfolio Holder),

Officers: Paul Walker Chief Executive,
Michael Ward, Chief Financial Officer
Adrienne Simcock, Director of Children's Services
Paul Briggs, Assistant Director (Resources and Support Services)
Sue Johnson, Assistant Director (Planning and Service Integration)
John Mennear, Assistant Director (Community Services)
Dave Stubbs, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Graham Frankland, Head of Procurement and Property Services
Stuart Green, Assistant Director (Planning and Economic Development)
Antony Steinberg, Economic Development Manager
Neil Harrison, Disability Inclusion Manager

125. Apologies for Absence

Councillors Pam Hargreaves (Deputy Mayor) and Peter Jackson (Neighbourhoods & Communities Portfolio Holder).

126. Declarations of interest by members

None.

127. Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2007

Confirmed.

128. Building Schools for the Future: Proposed Brierton Community School Closure – Representations Made to Published Statutory Notices *(Director of Children's Services)*

Type of decision

Key Decision, test (i) and (ii) apply.

Purpose of report

To request Cabinet to note the outcomes of the statutory notice period regarding the proposal to discontinue Brierton Community School and to determine the next stage of action.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Children's Services Portfolio Holder reported that Hartlepool Borough Council had been admitted to the BSF programme in 2007 as a Wave 5 Authority. Hartlepool had been set a timescale for its first year as a BSF authority and it is essential to adhere to this timescale in order to ensure it receives its funding allocation. Agreement on the number of schools and number of places within each school is an essential feature of the Strategy for Change, the first part of which is due to for submission in December 2007.

The Portfolio Holder presented the detailed report to Cabinet setting out the three consultations stages undertaken and the timescales involved, prior to the statutory notice being issued. A copy of the Statutory Notice was attached at Appendix 7 to the report. The key issues covered in the notice were:

- Discontinuance of Brierton Community School on 31st August 2009
- Enlargement of the five remaining mainstream secondary schools
- Transfer of specialist provision for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorders from Brierton Community School to Manor College of Technology.

During the six-week statutory notice period 195 responses were received.

1. Letters received that were signed by "people who work in the community" – 88 individual copies (Appendix 1 to the report)
2. Letters received that were signed by "a parent of a child attending Brierton" – 103 individual copies (Appendix 2 to the report).

Detailed responses to the issues raised in these and other consultation responses were set out in the report. The responses, briefly, covered the issues of the timing of the closure, the joint working arrangement with Dyke House School, building and site issues and the effects on staff and pupils. These issues were covered in detail in the report and with Cabinet during the meeting.

The Mayor questioned the potential effect that agreeing to a closure of Brierton School without the agreement of the Schools Adjudicator to the increases in the other remaining schools. It was reported that preliminary discussions had been held with the Schools Adjudicator's office and the indication was that it was unlikely that the proposals would be refused. There were other arrangements that the authority could put in place.

Members questioned the potential impact of the government's recent announcement on the extending of school leavers age to 18. The Director of Children's Services commented that BSF was planning the arrangements for 11-16 year old children. The provision for pupils aged 16+ would be addressed through the 14-19 Strategy Board.

The Portfolio Holder highlighted that the proposals were being fully endorsed by the Head Teachers in the town. The Mayor noted the excellent work that was being done at Brierton in partnership with Dyke House School. He considered this would lend impetus to the arrangements for the transfer of children. It would no doubt be a difficult period for the children, their parents and staff but the Mayor was confident that there would be no detrimental effects on pupils' education.

The issue of the security and future of the buildings once the closure was complete was raised. Officers stated that over the next 20 months, an officer working group would be looking at this issue together with safeguarding pupils education and staffing issues. Should the building not be required immediately after the closure, demolition could be progressed speedily. However, there may be some decanting arrangements that may be needed for a period after the closure.

Cabinet unanimously supported the recommendations put forward in the report.

Decision

1. that the outcomes of the statutory notice period relating to the proposed Brierton Community School closure be noted.
2. that the closure of Brierton Community School (conditional upon agreement of Schools Adjudicator to enlargement of the other five mainstream schools) be approved.
3. that approval be given to implementing the closure over two phases, beginning on 1st September 2008, with the school finally closing with effect from 31 August 2009.
4. that the subsequent transfer of the additionally resourced provision for pupils with ASD from Brierton Community School to Manor College of Technology also with effect from 31 August 2009 be approved.
5. that the Schools Adjudicator be requested to approve an in year

variation to the admission numbers of the five remaining secondary schools referred to earlier in this report at section 1, paragraph 4.

J A BROWN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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