



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
CABINET

Held: MONDAY, 11 MAY 2009 at 1.00 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Willmott- Chair
Councillor Osman - Vice-Chair

Councillor Bhatti
Councillor Dempster

Councillor Connelly
Councillor Draycott

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Coley – Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group
Councillor Mugglestone – Leader of the Conservative Group

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276. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Aqbany, Cooke, Kitterick and Wann.

277. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests they may have in the business on the agenda and/or declare that Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applied to them. No such declarations were made.

278. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet, held on 20 April 2009, be confirmed as a correct record.

279. SURE START CAPITAL STRATEGY 2008-2011

Councillor Dempster submitted a report that informed Cabinet of the work undertaken to date on the Sure Start Capital Strategy 2008-2011 and proposed how these funds might best be deployed to meet the government requirements and contribute to the 'One Leicester' vision.

It was noted that this presented good news for all young children in the City, as

they would have a centre within a reasonable distance. The comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board were noted.

RESOLVED:

that Cabinet:

- 1) approves the Sure Start Early Years Quality and Access Grant Priorities as detailed in the main report and approves the application of the £2.927m early years and sustainability grant funding in block C of the Children & Young People's Services (CYPS) capital programme;
- 2) approves the process for assessing the grant applications by the Sure Start Grants Panel and delegates authority to the Corporate/Strategic Director in consultation with the Lead Member and Service Director, A.I.P. for individual awards;
- 3) approves the location of the Phase Three Children Centres and approves the application of the £1.738, Children Centres phase three funding in block C of the CYPS capital programme;
- 4) receives a further report to agree the sites for the phase three centres;
- 5) delegates authority to the Corporate/Strategic Director in consultation with the Lead Member and Service Director A.I.P. for virement between the Early Years Quality Improvement strand and Children Centre strand if required.

280. DEVELOPMENT OF BURIAL LAND AT GILROES CEMETERY

Councillor Connelly submitted a report that enabled Cabinet to approve the burial land extension scheme of £420,000 included in the 2009/10 Capital Programme approved in March 2009.

Councillor Connelly stated that there was a longer-term issue with burial site provision, and a report would be submitted to a future meeting of Cabinet. He also stated that he was pleased that the additional revenue costs of the extended burial site had been absorbed within the current budget allocation.

RESOLVED:

that Cabinet:

- 1) approves the burial land extension scheme of £420,000 at Gilroes Cemetery which was included in the 2009/10 capital programme as a scheme approved by the Council but requiring Cabinet approval;
- 2) requests a further report setting out the longer term strategic

requirements for the provision of land for burials and cremations in the future.

281. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 09/10: IN-HOUSE ELDERLY PERSONS HOMES (EPH'S)

Councillor Willmott, in Councillor Cooke's absence, submitted a report that described the proposed use of the provisional capital allocation to Elderly Persons' Homes in the 2009/10 budgets.

The comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board were noted.

RESOLVED:

that Cabinet:

- 1) notes the required standards for regulated provision and the importance of maintaining these for the benefit of residents;
- 2) agrees the capital allocation for 2009/10 of £58,000 as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

282. TENANTS' AND LEASEHOLDERS' INVOLVEMENT & CONSULTATIVE ACTIVITIES - UPDATE

Councillor Willmott, in Councillor Aqbany's absence, submitted a report that provided an update on tenants' and leaseholders' involvement and consultation activities and the resulting outcomes in terms of service improvements.

The comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board were noted. It was also noted that there would be a new way of the tenants' and leaseholders' consultations working with Community Meetings, and that significant sums of money would be available for the local community to administer. Councillor Draycott stated that, following Cabinet approval, guidance would be circulated to Councillors and officers, and she hoped that good working relationships would develop through the process.

RESOLVED:

that Cabinet:

- 1) notes the outcomes achieved through the new involvement and consultation structure agreed by Cabinet in January 2008;
- 2) agrees the new flexible funding arrangements for Tenants' and Residents' Associations' activities;
- 3) agrees the proposed consultation mechanisms for the Environmental Works element and CRI funding of the Housing Capital Programme.

283. PROGRESS ON BLACK WORKERS GROUP REPORT ON WORKFORCE REPRESENTATION

Councillor Osman submitted a report that updated Cabinet on the work that had been undertaken across the organisation following the 1 October 2008 Black Workers Group on Workforce Representation and presented the Reach Higher Programme.

The comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board were noted, and their request to receive six-monthly update reports was welcomed.

RESOLVED:

that Cabinet notes the report and progress made on workforce representation and the Reach Higher Programme.

284. RIVERSIDE BUSINESS AND ENTERPRISE COLLEGE: BUSINESS CASE FOR CLOSURE

Councillor Dempster submitted a report that summarised conclusions drawn from the options review of Riverside Business and Enterprise College and an immediate recommended course of action to address this situation.

Councillor Dempster stated that six options and suggestions from the governing body, staff and unions had all been considered. However, taking into consideration parental preference, the falling admission numbers, demographic projections, the educational and social outcomes for the students, and the amount of resources that would be required in future years, to the detriment of other schools, the last resort option to consult on closure was being recommended. She drew Members' attention to the representations made and responses to these at the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

Councillor Dempster stated that Cabinet recognised the dedication and commitment of the staff at the school, and she thanked the staff and governing body for their work. She stated, in response to concerns from parents, that initial notification letters had been sent out through pupil post, and that, when it was brought to officers' attention that not all letters had been received by parents, a further letter was sent by Royal Mail. All future letters to school parents regarding consultation would be sent by Royal Mail.

Councillor Mugglestone stated that closure should be a last option, and he felt that not all options had been exhausted, such as academy status. He also stated that a school was the heart of the community and that standards at Riverside had improved, so time was needed to increase confidence in the school. He drew comparison with New College, which had been turned around in the last few years.

Councillor Coley stated that he recognised the reasons behind the recommendation, but felt that there had not been debate on the options or how to increase intake at the schools. He stated that there would be no negative cost impact for the next year and felt that the school needed time to improve its

profile. He mentioned new housing developments in the vicinity, which would impact on the admission numbers. He also suggested that a 14-19 school or an academy would be more desirable than closure. He felt that, if all city parents sent their children to city schools, there would be insufficient capacity, and this could be an issue as city schools improved.

Councillor Willmott thanked the Opposition Group Leaders for their comments. He stated that full discussion had taken place, and that a decision was required based on the facts in the report. He emphasized that closure was the last option and its recommendation had not been taken lightly. The Council's commitment to the school had been demonstrated by the high staff/student ratio and the large financial investment in the school.

In response to the Opposition Group Leaders' comments regarding 14-19 schools, Councillor Dempster stated that the County Council had identified that this system did not work very well. It had also been identified that the academy option would also not be possible.

Councillor Osman pointed out that staff at the school had identified that the school was not viable in its current situation, and that the Cabinet had a duty to look at it in the best interests of the pupils in the city, otherwise central Government may step in and close it.

Councillor Connelly stated that feeder schools in his ward would be affected, but that the location of the school meant that it did not have such a community focus as other schools. He stated that the Chair of Governors had recognised at the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board that the financial issues could not be disputed. Councillor Connelly stated that the previous suggestion to link the school with Fullhurst School had been identified as unviable. He also felt that, even though there would be no detrimental financial effect for the next year, the Council still had a duty to ensure that all funding was spent as wisely as possible.

In response to concerns from parents and union members who were present at the meeting, Councillor Willmott stated that it was important for the Cabinet to be honest with staff, pupils and parents, and that this was the beginning of the process, not the end. People would have full opportunity to make their views known through consultation, scrutiny and Council. He made people aware that they could submit questions to scrutiny committees and Council, even if the matter was not to be considered at that meeting.

RESOLVED:

that Cabinet,

- 1) notes the options that have been considered for the future of Riverside Business and Enterprise College;
- 2) notes that there are pressing educational, financial and business reasons to close the School as soon as practically possible. These include falling admission numbers, parental

preference, demographic projections, educational standards, social outcomes, resourcing requirements and value for money considerations;

- 3) authorises officers to commence a period of immediate further public consultation upon the business case for closure in accordance with DCSF guidance;
- 4) agrees to receive a further report on the outcome of this consultation prior to publication of any statutory notice and detailed proposal in connection with the recommendation from the consultation;
- 5) considers the above recommendation to be urgent, on the grounds that a delay would be prejudicial to pupils' interests, and therefore, in accordance with Cabinet Procedure Rule 12(d) of the Council's Constitution, prevents any exercise of call-in.

285. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 1.46pm.

