



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Held: THURSDAY, 7 MAY 2009 at 5.30pm

P.R.E.S.E.N.T.

Councillor Mugglestone – Chair

Councillor Corral	Councillor Hall
Councillor Naylor	Councillor Potter (for Cllr Joshi)
Councillor Newcombe (for Cllr J.Blackmore)	Councillor Russell
Councillor Suleman	

Co-opted Members

Mr Michael Asquith – Church of England Diocese

Also In Attendance

Councillor Dempster	Cabinet Lead Member for Children, and Schools.
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406. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J. Blackmore, Councillor Joshi, Councillor Westley, Mr Edward Hayes, Rebecca Barrow, Jess Evans and Cem Turhan.

407. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests they may have in the business on the agenda, and/or indicate that Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applies to them.

Councillor Naylor and Russell declared non-prejudicial interests in Appendix B 'Sure Start Capital Strategy 2008-2013' as they were both members of a Sure Start Governance Board.

Councillor Naylor declared a non-prejudicial interest in Appendix C 'Options

Review: Riverside Business and Enterprise College' as he was part of an organisation which used land at the college for its activities.

408. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 April 2009 were confirmed as a correct record.

409. PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

410. QUESTIONS/ REPRESENTATIONS/ STATEMENTS OF CASE

There were no questions, representations or statements of case.

411. TRACKING OF PETITIONS - MONITORING REPORT

The Service Director, Democratic Services submitted a report that updated Members on the monitoring of outstanding petitions.

The Service Director, Democratic Services explained that following a request at the previous meeting, the schedule now contained a graphical representation of the current progress on each petition.

It was reported that some petitions had been submitted to the Council through unauthorised routes. The Service Director, Democratic Services encouraged Service Directors to ensure that all petitions were recorded centrally.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the current outstanding petitions be noted; and
- (2) That Service Directors be encouraged to ensure that all petitions were recorded centrally.

412. SURE START CAPITAL STRATEGY 2008-2013

The Interim Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Services submitted a report that informed the Board of the work undertaken to date and proposed how funds may best be deployed to meet the government requirements and contribute to the 'One-Leicester' vision.

The Head of Service, Early Prevention, introduced the report and explained that the key principles of the Capital Strategy were to improve the early years

quality and access for all young children and deliver five children's' centres in phase 3 of the programme.

It was stated that upon completion of phase 3 of the programme, all children will have access to a children centre service and those children living in the most disadvantaged areas will have one within pram pushing distance

Members welcomed the report and the provision of facilities in areas such as Evington Road and Hamilton. One Member of the Board asked officers to continually liaise with ward councillors in terms of the five new centres. One Member recommended that the Mayfield Centre be considered for the centre based in the Spinney Hills including Evington Road area.

A Member of the Board stressed for the need of an outdoor play environment within each of the five new centres.

RESOLVED:

That the Sure Start Capital Strategy 2008-2013 be noted.

413. OPTIONS REVIEW: RIVERSIDE BUSINESS AND ENTERPRISE COLLEGE

The Interim Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services submitted a report that summarised conclusions drawn from the options review and recommended an immediate course of action to address the situation.

The Director of Planning and Commissioning introduced a report and stated that the review had concluded that there were strong educational, financial and business reasons to consider closure of the school.

Six options for change had been reviewed as follows:

- 1) Maintain status quo.
- 2) Provide continued increased financial and other support to the School to ensure it remains viable and achieves sufficient improvements.
- 3) Federate with a school that is judged to be good or better on the basis of an OfSTED inspection and pupil performance and implement revised governance, leadership and management arrangements.
- 4) Establish flexible collaborative arrangements amongst other local authority maintained schools.
- 5) Continue to explore the option of Riverside becoming part of a collaborative Academy and other potential Academies in the City.
- 6) Consult upon phased school closure.

Further to these, it was explained that alternative suggestions made by the governing body, school staff and the NUT had also been considered within the business case at Appendix A.

In reviewing the position at Riverside consideration had been given to educational outcomes, resources deployed and the levels of additional funding to secure these outcomes and indeed the continued operation of the school.

It was reported that in 2007/08 the school had required an additional £250k and in 2008/09 an additional £300k to operate. In September 2009 only 29 pupils had expressed a wish to enter year 7. In 2009/10 and 2010/11 the school is therefore projected to require an additional £815k in each year to continue to operate at its current level.

The Director of Planning and Commissioning reported that it is judged that the school does not offer value for money and that the Dedicated Schools Grant cannot continue to provide this level of additional support.

In evaluating options it was stressed that it been determined that the key determining factor must be securing a position that is financially viable, practicable and be in the best long term interests of learners.

The Director of Planning and Commissioning stated that a report of this nature deals with difficult issues and naturally generates alternative views. Although the governing body do not dispute the basic demographic or financial facts within this report it was reported that the Department had received representations that it now wished to bring before OSMB for its consideration. A separate summary document reproducing these in full was circulated to members.

The Chair invited Geoff Over, Chair of Governors, to speak on this matter. He stated that although the admission numbers and financial costs could not be disputed, he felt that some of performance data within the report could be contested, and that a decision on the future of the school should only be taken when accurate position was available. He felt that the evidence included in the report painted an inaccurate picture of the school.

Peter Flack, NUT and Gary Garner, UNISON were also invited to speak.

Peter Flack stated that the inception of the Samworth Academy had taken away some pupils who may have attended Riverside. He explained that he had previously been advised that this would not have a detrimental effect on Riverside. He also raised concerns with the speed of the process, and felt that a re-evaluation of the school catchment areas could have helped to avoid the current situation. Peter Flack was of the view that the current projected results were good despite challenging circumstances. He felt that Option 4 should be looked at in greater detail, and felt that more of a creative solution was required.

Gary Garner stated strong opposition to the threat of closure. In particular, he stated that the effect on staff would be damaging, as employees based at schools were not entitled to the same redeployment opportunities as all other Council employees.

A Member of the Board asked for clarity on the ratio between the number of pupils and staff, including all non-teachers. The Director of Planning and Commissioning stated that he did not have such a figure available as the ratio had been calculated in terms of qualified teaching staff (the most expensive component) but that the ratio would inevitably be significantly different than all other schools in Leicester if calculated on this basis.

A further question was asked around whether there had been improvements in results in the past two years. Jenny Vickers explained that Riverside had been listed as a National Challenge School due to its performance, but acknowledged that there had been a slight improvement in results. The meeting heard that 22% of pupils achieved 5 A* - C Grades last year, and that the Key Stage 3 results did not indicate sufficient progress.

The option of split sites for the school was briefly discussed. One Member felt that such moves between school sites disrupted the education of children and that the two sites also had difficult physical barriers between them, such as Narborough Road.

A Member questioned whether the letters sent to parents stated that the school was likely to close. The Director, Planning and Commissioning reported that the letters were delivered to the school on the evening of 28 April and distributed on 30 April 2009 to all parents via pupil post. Letters to all prospective parents for the September 2009 intake were sent on the 28 April 2009 via Royal Mail. The letter informed parents that an options review was taking place and stated the recommendation before OSMB. The Director, Planning & Commissioning also stated that a further letter had been distributed by Royal Mail on 7 May 2009 assuring parents that they would be kept informed of developments. This letter explained that pupils who stated a preference to attend Riverside would continue to be admitted, and that funds were available to support the school in the 2009/10 and 2010/11. The letter also indicated a willingness to support and retain staff to deliver education outcomes throughout any consultation process or following period. It was reported that a five-stage consultation process had been proposed, and due to this, there would be no plan to immediately close Riverside, but that, if agreed by Cabinet, it would close in a phased fashion.

A Member of the Board asked whether the option of Riverside becoming part of a collaborative academy was viable. In response, Jenny Vickers reported that the option had been explored with possible lead sponsors, but that all had indicated that it would not be viable due to the current admission numbers.

In response to an additional question around the decrease in admission numbers, it was stated that although officers had been aware of the decrease in numbers, the collapse in parental support was not apparent until earlier this year and had not been predicted. Members heard that efforts had been made to address the situation as Riverside had been presented as an option to parents across the city seeking a school place, but that the ultimate factor was parental preference. It was made clear that Riverside had not been mitigated against in any way by the Admissions Service. Furthermore, the meeting

heard that the school itself and its energetic Acting Headteacher had worked tirelessly to increase the uptake in admission numbers.

A number of points were made in connection to the financial situation at the school. The Director, Planning and Commissioning informed Members that all schools were funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), and that the level of grant provided was determined by pupil numbers. It was explained that Riverside's base budget and additional monies required could be sufficiently funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant until 2011. However pupil numbers across the city are predicted to fall prior to rising once again and consequently, Riverside's additional requirements would no longer be able to be funded from the DSG at this point.

Whilst discussing the subject of catchment areas, the Director, Planning and Commissioning made it clear that there was no strict correlation between living in a particular area and the absolute right to attend a school in that area. It was explained that widening catchment areas would not necessarily solve the issue of apportioning pupils to particular schools as parents were entitled to express a preference for any school in the city.

A Member of the Board asked what the fundamental difference was between the current situation at Riverside and that of New College several years ago. It was stated that New College had experienced a significant increase in parental preference during recent years, and that there were many reasons behind parental choice. One Member of the Board felt that one reason that had led to a fall in parental support for Riverside was the previous proposal to house infant and junior schools on the same site of the college. Another Member of the Board was of the view that efforts made to transform New College had not been similarly replicated with Riverside.

Councillor Suleman seconded by Councillor Mugglestone proposed that options 4 and 5 as well as other creative options, in consultation with elected members, trade unions, senior officers and the senior management of the school be considered as a way forward to address the situation at Riverside, and that Cabinet be recommended to not consider the option of closure. Upon being put to the vote, the motion was lost.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted, and that the comments of the Board be passed to the Cabinet.

414. PETITION TO COUNCIL 17 FEBRUARY 2009: REQUEST TO REMOVE DOUBLE YELLOW LINES FROM FRENCH ROAD

The Service Director, Regeneration, Highways and Transportation submitted a report that dealt with a petition submitted to officers on 17th February 2009 by Mr. J. Sader on behalf of residents of French Road.

In response to a question from a Member of the Board, it was confirmed that

that consultation with the emergency services took place as a matter of course when placing double-yellow lines.

RESOLVED:

That the decision of the Service Director to respond to the petition by the letter sent to Mr Sader be supported.

415. PETITION TO COUNCIL 14TH DECEMBER 2008: PROPOSED RESIDENTS' PARKING SCHEME IN THE BELGRAVE AREA

The Service Director, Regeneration, Highways and Transportation submitted a report that dealt with a petition submitted to Council on 14th December 2008 by Mr Praful Thakrar.

RESOLVED:

That the decision of the Service Director to respond to the petition by the letter sent to Mr Thakrar be supported.

416. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 09/10: IN-HOUSE ELDERLY PERSONS' HOMES

The Director of Older People's Services submits a report that described the proposed use of the provisional capital allocation to Elderly Persons' Home's in 2009/10 budgets, earmarked at £250,000 for the year.

Members generally welcomed the programme. Several Members stated that they had visited a number of homes as part of an investigation by the Adults and Housing Task Group.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

417. TENANT AND LEASEHOLDERS INVOLVEMENT AND CONSULTATIVE ACTIVITIES - UPDATE

The Corporate Director of Adults and Housing submitted a report that provided an update to Members on the tenants' and leaseholders' involvement and consultation activities and the result of outcomes in terms of service improvements.

The Interim Landlord Services Manager introduced the report and stated that it was recommended for the Area Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forums to merge into the existing Ward Community Meetings, and that consequently, these meetings would serve as the primary consultative mechanism.

Members were generally of the opinion that greater work was needed to encourage the younger generations to participate in Tenants and Residents Association (TARA) activities.

There was also an acceptance that Ward Community Meetings were a suitable arena for Tenant and Resident Issues, but that changes to the overall methods of consultation were required.

Members agreed that prior to the Housing Revenue Account and Housing Capital Programme being considered by the board, officers need to commence consultation with tenants and residents at the earliest possible stage, and that their views be presented to Members.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that the outcomes achieved through the new involvement and consultation structure agreed by Cabinet in January; and
- (2) That officers be asked to consult tenants on broader budget issues at the earliest possible stage and that their views be presented to Members.

418. PROGRESS ON BLACK WORKERS GROUP REPORT ON WORKFORCE REPRESENTATION

The Director of Human Resources submitted a report that updated Cabinet on the work that had been identified across the organisation in order to progress the 'quick wins' identified in the 1 October 2008 Black Workers Group report on Workforce Representation.

The Head of Equalities introduced the paper and explained that she had been commissioned to undertake a piece of work to increase workforce representation, and that this report formed part of the work. She reported that similar work in relation to employees with a disability and gay, lesbian and transgender employees was to be undertaken.

Simon Ighofose, Vice-Chair of the Regeneration and Culture Black Workers' Group (BWG) was also in attendance and informed members of the 'reach higher' initiative, which had been developed by several representatives of the BWG as a means to support candidates to develop their aspirations to progress a career in management.

Members welcomed the report, and in particular, spoke of their support towards the 'reach higher' initiative. One Member of the Board paid thanks to officers for their work in carrying out additional recruitment activity to widen the pool of applicants for Strategic Director positions. Furthermore, a Member felt that it was extremely beneficial to promote the council as an employer at community events, and asked officers to liaise with ward councillors when targeting particular events to attend. Officers welcomed this level of support.

Members asked for regular update reports to be submitted to the Board and it was agreed that a progress report on workforce representation be brought to the board every 6 months.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that the report be noted; and
- (2) that progress reports on workforce representation be brought to the board every 6 months.

419. REGENERATION AND TRANSPORT TASK GROUP - ACCESS TO CITY CENTRE - VERBAL UPDATE

Councillor Russell, Regeneration and Transport Task Group Leader explained that this review was ongoing and that the Task Group was assessing how access and inclusion projects had met inclusion needs.

420. JOINT REGENERATION AND TRANSPORT TASK GROUP - LEICESTER MARKET - VERBAL UPDATE

Councillor Russell, Regeneration and Transport Task Group Leader, explained that the Joint Task Group had met recently to look at the variety of goods and services that could be consumed from Leicester Market.

It was explained that Councillors Naylor and Newcombe had embarked on a site visit to Birmingham Market, and Councillor Russell stated that she was to similarly visit Bury Market.

A Member of the Board requested that the Markets Forum be kept informed of all developments made with the markets review.

Councillor Russell explained that she was not continuing to lead the Task Group, but that Councillors Naylor and Newcombe would now lead the markets review.

The Chair thanked all Task Group Leaders for their work over the course of the year. He welcomed receiving reports from those continuing to lead Task Groups and wished all the best to those existing Task Group Leaders who were taking up alternative roles.

The Chair reminded those Task Group Leaders who were finishing their duties to ensure that all existing work was appropriately carried over to new Task Group Leaders.

RESOLVED:

- That the Markets Forum be kept informed of all developments made with the markets review.

421. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 7:50pm.