

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **School Organisation Sub-Committee**
held on Tuesday, 6th March, 2012 at Fred Flint Room, Westfields, Middlewich
Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor J Clowes (Chairman)

Councillors Rachel Bailey, R Domleo, H Gaddum and P Mason

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

It was moved and seconded that Councillor J Clowes be appointed as Chairman for the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor J Clowes be appointed as Chairman for the meeting.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Gaddum declared a personal interest in the proposed expansion of Oakefield Primary & Nursery School, Crewe on the grounds that she had at a meeting of 22 December 2011, given permission for the issue of the statutory public notice for the expansion of the school. However, Councillor Gaddum stated that she retained an open mind on the matter and, in accordance with the Code of Conduct, remained in the meeting to consider this item.

3 PROPOSED EXPANSION OF OAKEFIELD PRIMARY & NURSERY SCHOOL, CREWE

Consideration was given to the proposal to expand Oakefield Primary and Nursery School, Crewe.

The proposal for reorganisation had been made in response to a significant shortfall in the number of pupil places in the Crewe area and pupil forecasts, which indicated that this shortfall would continue. Details were included in the full proposal attached as an appendix to a report prepared by the Strategic Director, Children, Families and Adults.

Following the decision of the Cabinet Member for Children and Families Services of 14 November 2011, formal consultation had been undertaken between 22 November 2011 and 20 December 2011 on a proposal to expand Oakefield Primary & Nursery School, Crewe. The outcome of this process was considered by the Cabinet Member on 22 December 2011, whereupon permission was given to issue a statutory public notice for the

expansion of the school to increase its capacity from 315 pupil places to 420.

Following publication of the public notice a statutory 4 week representation period commenced on 18 January 2012 and concluded on 15 February 2012. Four objections had been received details of which were given in the report.

On behalf of the Proposer, the Principal Manager Organisation and Capital Strategy attended the meeting, as did two Objectors, all made representations and were questioned by Members of the Sub Committee.

The two Objectors, Mrs Roberts and Mrs Gillamore expressed concerns about the general impact on the locality of the proposed expansion. In particular they emphasised that existing highway and traffic problems would be exacerbated.

In response the Principal Manager Organisation and Capital Strategy gave information and made statements on the different matters raised.

In accordance with the Sub Committee's procedures Members then considered the matter in private, in particular they considered:

- the school organisation process followed by the Proposer to date and were satisfied that the documentation demonstrated that the procedures and documentation complied with both the law and the guidance;
- whether the need for additional primary school places had been proven and, given the increasing numbers of children being born in the area and the families moving into Cheshire East, Members concluded that the evidence did show that there was a shortage of primary school places;
- the Sub Committee also noted that Cabinet had already approved sufficient funding to deliver this proposal;
- given the concerns raised by the Objectors, Members spent a considerable amount of time reviewing the transport and traffic problems that were currently being experienced by local residents and the effect that this proposal was likely to have. They discussed how the School and the Proposer could work more effectively to manage the difficulties generated by this traffic, but decided that these concerns were not sufficient to justify refusing the proposal; and
- Members discussed Oakefield Primary and Nursery School being in Special Measures, but in light of the Proposer's assurances about the excellent progress being made by the staff and pupils, they were satisfied that the expansion of the School was viable.

The meeting then reconvened in public and the Chairman announced the decision.

RESOLVED:

1. That the expansion of Oakefield Primary and Nursery School, Crewe from 315 school places to 420 with a proposed implementation date of January 2013 be approved;
2. That in the light of matters raised and debated at the meeting, the decision letter sent on behalf of the Sub Committee:-
 - i) express the Sub Committee's disappointment that a member of the governing body of Oakefield Primary & Nursery School was not present at the meeting and that the report did not include any information from the School's Governors or Senior Leadership Team about their view of the proposed expansion;
 - ii) urges the Governors and Senior Leadership Team of the School to continue efforts to develop effective relations with the community that it serves; and
 - iii) encourages the Proposer and the Governors and Staff of the School to take cognisance of the concerns regarding the potential for increased highway and traffic problems, for example by formally requesting that a Travel Plan is developed and adopted by the School, which examines the possibility of;
 - providing significant additional visitor and staff parking with the school boundaries to reduce the amount of on street parking in the vicinity of the School;
 - introducing appropriate road safety and traffic management solutions in the vicinity of the School with the Highways Services; and
 - investigating the feasibility of reopening the entrance at Ryebank Avenue.

The meeting commenced at 1.05 pm and concluded at 2.40 pm

Councillor J Clowes (Chairman)