

## Minutes

### Petition Hearing - Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services

8 November 2010



Meeting held at Committee Room 6 - Civic Centre,  
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW

	<p><b>Member Present:</b> Councillors David Simmons</p> <p><b>LBH Officers Present:</b> Chris Spencer, Anna Crispin, Terry Brennan, Gill Brice</p> <p><b>Also Present:</b> Councillors David Routledge, Dominic Gilham, Judith Cooper, George Cooper, Paul Harmsworth</p>	
1.	<p><b>TO CONFIRM THAT THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING WILL TAKE PLACE IN PUBLIC</b> (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that the meeting would take place in public.</p>	
2.	<p><b>TO CONSIDER THE REPORT OF THE OFFICERS ON THE FOLLOWING PETITIONS RECEIVED</b> (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p>	<b>Action by</b>
	<p><b>PROPOSED EXPANSION OF WHITEHALL INFANT &amp; JUNIOR SCHOOLS, COWLEY ROAD, UXBRIDGE</b></p> <p>Councillors Routledge, Gilham, George Cooper, Judith Cooper and Paul Harmsworth attended the meeting as Ward Councillors.</p> <p><i>Concerns and suggestions raised by the first petitioner at the meeting included the following:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Possible expansion had been discussed since December 2008 and continued through to 2009.</i></li> <li>• <i>Alternative options had been looked at since 2009 but little had been done in the interim.</i></li> <li>• <i>Whitehall School was a confined site and it was not felt that a 4<sup>th</sup> form of entry could be accommodated.</i></li> <li>• <i>The Cabinet Member had visited the site and had seen the problems that both schools encountered on a daily basis.</i></li> <li>• <i>It had been stated several times that there had been a temporary 4<sup>th</sup> form of entry in 1996, although this was designated as a 4<sup>th</sup> form of entry it never operated as such.</i></li> <li>• <i>There had never been a year group with a greater number of pupils than 100.</i></li> <li>• <i>A large number of children at the schools already travel long distances with 44% travelling more than ½ a mile, 27% more than a mile with 4 or 5 other schools passed on route.</i></li> <li>• <i>Whitehall School was proud of its community.</i></li> </ul>	<p>Anna Crispin Terry Brennan</p>

- *There was an imbalance on forms of entry in schools within primary planning area 6.*
- *There were concerns that the quality of education that the school provided would go down if the school was expanded.*
- *The reduction in the play space was not felt to be satisfactory.*
- *It was not clear what alternatives had been considered in relation to the following:-*
  - *Expansion of Hermitage and St Mary's*
  - *Primary School at Uxbridge High*
  - *Building of a school on Hillingdon House Farm as this would be at neutral cost.*
  - *Bringing forward the building of a school on RAF Uxbridge.*
- *It was not true that the Local Authority had worked closely with the school.*
- *Plans had not been shown to the school prior to them being submitted to the planning department and were a fait accompli when presented to the Head Teachers.*
- *A 2 storey building had been proposed by the school to reduce the footprint of the building but this had not been taken forward.*
- *Assurances had been given that the boundary for the Children's Centre would be moved as too much of the playing field had been taken up.*
- *The Schools do not currently share play space.*
- *Traffic problems currently exist in the area if site extended this would exacerbate the situation in the surrounding residential area.*
- *Could the slip road and green at the front of the school be included in the school site?*
- *The ethos of the school with every child being known made the school a happy place and may affect their development.*
- *A letter sent to officers in March 2010 had not yet been replied to, can the Cabinet Member ask officers to respond.*
- *There were insufficient toilet and kitchen facilities in the schools and the DFE regulated the number required.*
- *Not convinced that the funding was available.*
- *In answers provided to question at Council last week it was not felt that the Cabinet Member had been properly briefed.*
- *The schools had tried to support and co-operate with the Local Authority but they had not told the school the truth.*

A Ward Councillor addressed the meeting making the following points.

- *The local feeling about the school expansion was very high and assurances needed to be given that all options had been fully investigated and costings scrutinised.*
- *Ensure that the development of the Whitehall School site would provide adequate education.*
- *That the cost of expanding Whitehall School was not more expensive than other options put forward.*

- *That adequate play space and larger halls were to be provided as part of the proposals to meet the needs of the pupils.*
- *The expansion needed to be looked at holistically for the long term benefit of the community.*
- *Traffic implications and a stop and drop need to be properly planned and considered before any planning application was submitted.*
- *There were concerns raised in relation to the reduction in play space would the remaining space be above the current standard required?*
- *Pinkwell School had expanded to a 5 form of entry successfully. Expansion was possible with the school if the Local Authority worked together.*

Councillor David Simmonds listened to the concerns of the petitioners and responded to the points raised.

In relation to the allegations made by a petitioner the Cabinet Members asked that a formal complaint be made to enable a full investigation to be undertaken.

The Cabinet Member asked the petitioner that when one of the petitioners was a Councillor 1996 an increase in numbers was agreed for Whitehall School. If the decision was right in 1996 to expand the pupil numbers why was the decision wrong now?

The petitioner responded stating that he had, had a long association with the schools. . It was clear at that time that the increase in pupil numbers would not require a 4<sup>th</sup> form of entry. In 1996 the provision of additional resources for a new year 6 was provided by building on an area not used for play space. This was an opportunity to provide a temporary expansion at that time.

The Cabinet Member advised those present that Cabinet would be making a decision on the expansion of Whitehall School next week. This was a public meeting and anyone could attend to hear the debate. There had been a great deal of lobbying by Councillors and visits had been made to the schools. There had been a number of concerns raised by the petitioners and the Cabinet Member responded to the concerns raised as follows:-

- In regard to the practical implications of the management of the number of children on the existing site. There was a complicated set of guidelines as to what was enough space. It had been agreed in principle to look at practical ways of providing a temporary or permanent solution required to deliver the school places needed.
- Reference had been made to the preference for a two storey building this would be looked at again and a detailed response on the reasons why this was not a possible solution.
- An example had been given to where an expansion had worked well. There was no clear link between school size and school standards. The additional school places bought with it additional resources and this may help a school to do better.

- A concern had been raised about the ethos of the schools being lost if expansion was to go ahead. It was clear there was a good ethos at the Schools with individual identity of the children known to all staff, further comment and advice would be sought on this.
- In relation to concerns raised in regard to travelling distances to the school, it was clear that neighbouring primary areas were in a similar position to the Whitehall Schools. The objective was to provide sufficient school places in order to prevent an increase in the distance travelled.
- In regard to the predicted demand for schools in the south of the borough. This had been recognised from the birth rates south of the A40, assessment from the number of children registered with General Practitioners in the borough and future predictions made were supported by data from GLA and ONS.
- The new homes proposed for RAF Uxbridge would increase the pressure on school places within primary planning area 6. It was hoped that a new three form entry school would be secured as part of the proposed planning application. There was no guarantee of when the development would be built and school places needed to be provided in the next school year.
- It had been stated that alternative options should be considered the following options had been considered.
  - St Mary's School was on a small site and to expand it would require demolition and a re-construction.
  - Hermitage and St Andrews Schools were also on small sites, with St Andrews also being a Faith School
  - Uxbridge High does not have the space to accommodate a primary school but this advice would be checked.
  - Hillingdon House Farm was not an option as this site was in the Green Belt and restricted what could be built. To build a new school would be at a substantial cost and would not include the cost of the land if this needed to be purchased.

Concerns had been raised about the confined play space and what would remain if the proposal went ahead. A MUGA (All Weather Multi Use Games Area) was to be provided as part of the proposal, an off site playing field was also being considered. Officers advised that where a MUGA was provided this would count as twice the area it took up.

The petitioners present advised the Cabinet Member that they were not aware of the proposals for an off site playing field. The Cabinet Member concluded the meeting by informing the meeting that the new Government had taken back the funding for those Children's Centres that authority's had not committed to. There was therefore an urgent need to proceed with the expansions or the funding may be lost.

This was not the end of the process if the expansion was agreed by the Cabinet there would be an opportunity for more specific concerns to be put forward as part of the planning process.

	<p><b>DECISION</b></p> <p><b>That the Cabinet Member:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Noted the views of the petitioners.</b></li> <li><b>2. Advised the petitioners that:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>(a) the council had a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places;</b></li> <li><b>(b) before a final decision was taken, the Council would have regard to statutory guidance on school expansions, and that full consideration would be given to all concerns;</b></li> <li><b>(c) if proposals are progressed, any issues raised with regard to the local environment, school amenities, and parking would be considered and addressed by planning officers at the planning application stage.</b></li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p><b>REASON FOR DECISION</b></p> <p>The reasons for proposing the permanent expansion of Whitehall Infant and Junior Schools were set out in a report to Cabinet in May 2010. The proposals form part of the Phase 1 school expansions to address pressure for primary school places beginning from September 2010. Statutory consultation with all key stakeholders is necessary before providing permanent additional school buildings to accommodate children beyond 2011.</p> <p><b>ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED</b></p> <p>The alternative options are to undertake no school expansions. However it is already apparent from the high demand for Reception places that pressure in the Uxbridge area is real and growing. The numbers of births in Uxbridge confirmed by the PCT and ONS are the strongest and most reliable indicator that there will be a sustained increase in demand for school places.</p>	
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 6.30 pm, closed at 7.40 pm.</p>	

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Gill Brice on 01895 277655. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.