

HERTFORDSHIRE SCHOOL ORGANISATION COMMITTEE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 JANUARY 2005

PRESENT

Schools

Peter Fielden
Alan Gray [from item 6]
David Kennedy
Sally Somerville
Michael Taylor

Church of England

Alick Burge
Jon Reynolds

Roman Catholic Diocese

Paul Goggins
Mike Pittendreigh
Alan Scouller

HCC

Robert Gordon [Chairman]
Michael Downing
David Lloyd
Richard Smith
Julian Taunton
Elam Singham
Ian Simpson [withdrew for item 7]

Learning and Skills Council

None

In attendance:

Dinah Tuck
Jim Dalton
Lindsay Martin

Secretary to the Committee
Assistant Director CSF Planning
Senior Planning Manager School Places

1. Apologies, membership and attendance

Apologies had been received from Roger Martin from the CE group.
David Kennedy attended as alternate for Dena Coleman {Schools Group}.
Michael Downing attended as alternate for David Billing and Elam Singham attended as alternate for Tanis Kent [LEA group].
Mike Pittendreigh attended as alternate for Sally Livesey [RC group].
Members noted with regret the death of Alan Grant, the alternate Primary Head on the Schools group.

2. Representation of nursery schools on Schools group

Members noted that a representative governor from the County's fifteen nursery schools was being sought and that an update on pupil numbers and the membership of the Schools group would come to the SOC meeting in March.

3. Member interests

Members of SOC noted the legal advice received on keeping an open mind on the issues under discussion, unfettered by previous considerations.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2004

Subject to amending David Lloyd's absence to items 6 and 7 the minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2004 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

5. Matters arising

None.

6. School Organisation plan -update

Members noted the larger printed version of the pupil forecasts. The Chairman reminded members to raise queries with CSF Planning before the SOC meeting in March.

7. Stevenage: Pin Green Primary School

The Chairman welcomed visitors to the meeting and explained the procedures by which the SOC operated.

The following members of SOC indicated that they had expressed views or been party to discussions on this matter previously but would address the issues afresh at this meeting.

Robert Gordon, David Lloyd and Paul Goggins at Cabinet

Richard Smith, Elam Singham and Jon Reynolds at Education Panel

Michael Downing had attended public meetings and declared a non prejudicial interest as Chair of Fairlands Primary School in Stevenage.

Ian Simpson had attended Education Panel and public meetings and stood by the views he had expressed previously. For this reason he withdrew from the SOC meeting for this item.

Lindsay Martin introduced the LEA's proposal to close Pin Green Primary School in Stevenage. The proposal was set against a background of surplus primary places in Stevenage which is currently predicted to rise to 31% by 2010/11.

The LEA commentary deals in detail with points set out in the objections received, including the consultation process, the movement of pupils out of Pin Green, the geographic distribution of pupils and SEN/disability access.

There are currently 23 children in Pin Green who will need an alternate primary places in September 2005 and an allocation process would be put in place for these parents.

The LEA has reviewed the format of consultation in light of comments received.

Neil Timberlake, Chair of the Pin Green Action Group, spoke to the meeting about concerns in the community over the consultation process and the loss of local facilities.

He highlighted the potential closure of a mother and toddler group which the LEA undertook to follow up.

Following discussion within their groups the LEA, Schools and RC groups voted to approve the LEA proposal. The CE group abstained.

The SOC therefore approved the proposal to close Pin Green Primary with effect from 31 August 2005.

8. Future meetings

Members agreed to meet at **2pm on Friday 25 February 2005** if required to consider the creation of an EBD primary support unit at Berry Grove Primary school in Garston.

The Secretary would inform members by the end of January if this meeting was needed.

Meetings were also arranged for:

10am on Thursday 17 March 2005 to consider :

the opening of a new Jewish Secondary school in Borehamwood,

update of the School Organisation Plan,

establishment of a Speech and Language Unit at Longdean Secondary School, Hemel Hempstead, update on pupil numbers and composition of the schools group.

10am on Wednesday 25 May 2005 to consider proposals for south Stevenage primary provision.

The meeting closed at 3.20pm