

Forest Bridge School

In accordance with Part 4 A15 of the Constitution, the 23 March 2017 Cabinet decision relating to the item 'Forest Bridge School' has been called in for review by this Panel.

Reasons given for Call-in

The Heads of Terms, referred to in the decision, include a 125 year Lease to the Education Funding Agency (EFA) on an identified site situated within Braywick Park. The impact of the loss of this land, currently available to local residents and community groups for various leisure purposes, has not been discussed in any public forum or considered by the Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Specifically, there has been no consideration on how it might impact the aspirations of current users and other activities planned to be moved to Braywick Park, including the new Leisure Centre and any ability for its future expansion.

Options

Having considered the Call-in, Members may:-

if satisfied with the decision, resolve

a) to take no further action,

if still concerned about the decision, resolve

b) to refer the decision back to Cabinet for reconsideration, setting out the nature of the Panel's concerns; or

c) to refer the matter to Council for consideration.

A copy of the Cabinet decision is attached at Appendix 1 and a copy of the Cabinet report is attached at Appendix 2.

CABINET – 23 MARCH 2017

FOREST BRIDGE SCHOOL

Councillor Dudley left the room for the duration of the discussion and voting on the item. Councillor Coppinger assumed the Chair for the item.

Members considered Heads of Terms arrangements alongside the timetable for signing the lease of the site with the Education Funding agency (EFA) by 24 March 2017.

Cabinet was addressed by Jo Haswell, Vice Chair of Governors at Forest Bridge School. Ms Haswell explained that Forest Bridge was a special school set up by a group of parents with children on the autism spectrum. The school provided a unique blend of therapies and education. Currently 58 pupils were on roll. The school was currently located in the old Oldfield School site on Chiltern Road but had reached capacity. There was a waiting list showing demand from both inside and outside of the borough. An expert in applied behavioural analysis from California University had recently visited and said the school was a centre of excellence. The school wanted to move to a permanent home to enable an increase of 40 additional places. She requested the support of the council in leasing the proposed land to the school.

The Lead Member explained that the council had worked with the EFA to find a suitable site; over 30 had been considered. A parcel of land in Braywick Park had been identified as the most suitable option. If the Heads of Terms were signed with the EFA, the planning process would still need to run its course.

The Lead Member for Culture and Communities explained that the current leases on the land with the Maidenhead Shooting Club and the driving range were both due to come to an end in the next few months. A potential new site for the shooting club had been identified. The council was talking to Braywick Nurseries to adjust their boundary to allow the school to access the site. The plan was also to share outdoor and sports facilities with the school.

The Lead Member for Planning commented that as ward Councillor he was supportive of the proposal, without committing himself to the planning elements. Given the anticipated increase in demand for primary places, he was pleased that the council would retain the Chiltern Road site for educational purposes once Forest Bridge vacated the site.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Cabinet:

i) Note the Heads of Terms agreed with the Education Funding Agency, see Appendix A, which enables them to submit a planning application for Forest Bridge School to relocate into a new building in Braywick Park.

ii) Delegate to the Strategic Director of Corporate and Community

Services to agree an extension of the current lease for Forest Bridge School to remain in the Chiltern Road site for a third year.

Councillor Dudley re-joined the meeting at 8.25pm