

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

WEDNESDAY, 8TH SEPTEMBER, 2021

PRESENT: Councillor A Lamb in the Chair

Councillors E Flint, B Flynn, A Forsaith,
Z Hussain, J Illingworth, S Lay, J Lennox,
A Marshall-Katung, K Renshaw,
M Shahzad and R. Stephenson

CO-OPTED MEMBER (VOTING)

Mr E A Britten – Church Representative (Catholic)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING)

Ms C Foote – School Staff Representative
Ms H Bellamy – School Staff Representative

1 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals.

2 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no exempt items.

3 Late Items

There were no late items.

4 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

5 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bithell, Senior and Gruen. Councillors Lennox and Shahzad were in attendance as substitutes.

Apologies were also received from co-opted members Kate Blacker, Andrew Graham and Jackie Ward.

6 Minutes - 3rd March 2021

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held 3rd March 2021 be approved as an accurate record.

7 Co-opted Members

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report which sought the Board's formal consideration for the appointment of co-opted Members.

The Board noted that the following nominations for statutory voting co-opted members had been received:

- One Church of England diocese representative – Mr A Graham
- One Roman Catholic diocese representative – Mr E A Britten

Parent governor representatives were noted as follows:

- Parent Governor (Primary) representative – Kate Blacker
- Parent Governor (Secondary) representative – Jacqueline Ward

In addition to the statutory voting co-opted members, the Board also acknowledged the nominations for non-voting co-opted members.

RESOLVED – That in addition to the above statutory voting co-opted members, the following be appointed as non-voting co-opted members to the Scrutiny Board for 2021/22:

- School Staff Representative – Helen Bellamy
- School Staff Representative – Celia Foote
- Young Lives Leeds – Laura Whitaker

8 Outcome of statutory notice on a proposal to permanently increase learning places at St Edward's Catholic Primary School from September 2022

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report that presented information from the Director of Children and Families on the outcome of the statutory notice on a proposal to permanently increase learning places at St Edward's Catholic Primary School from September 2022.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Jonathan Pryor, Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education
- Sal Tariq, Director of Children and Families

- Shaheen Myers, Deputy Director for Learning
- Tim Pouncey, Chief Officer, Resources and Strategy
- Viv Buckland, Head of Learning Systems
- Darren Crawley, Lead for Sufficiency and Participation
- Anne Gilpin, Head Teacher at St Edward's Catholic Primary School

The Chair briefly highlighted the purpose of the agenda item and then invited the Director to provide a further explanation surrounding the statutory process for increasing learning places and the specific proposal relating to St Edward's Catholic Primary School.

It was highlighted that 26 representations, including 17 formal objections, had been received during the Statutory Notice period for the proposal to expand St Edward's Catholic Primary School to permanently increase the number of places offered at the school in Reception from 20 to 30 places from September 2022. Further details surrounding the representations received during the statutory notice period had been provided to the Scrutiny Board as part of the Director's report.

It was acknowledged that the areas of concern raised during the statutory notice phase were largely the same as those raised during the initial consultation phase in respect of traffic issues, faith-based admissions, impact on climate and carbon emissions and whether there is genuinely a need for additional places in the Boston Spa area. However, it was highlighted that additional concerns had also been raised in relation to how the representations made during the initial consultation phase had been reported to the Executive Board during its meeting on 23rd June 2021.

In consideration of the proposal, the Scrutiny Board addressed the main issues/areas of concern in more detail as follows:

- *A need for additional primary school places in the Boston Spa area.* The Director of Children and Families advised the Board that there is an identified need for additional primary school provision in the Boston Spa area due to changes in the birth rate, increases in the numbers of children of primary school age and several new housing developments.
- *Other options considered.* In response to a query, Members were advised that there are five schools in the Boston Spa planning area, however only two of these schools, St Edward's Catholic Primary School and St Mary's Church of England Primary School, were viable options for expansions. While it was reported that, at present, an additional 10 places would be sufficient to meet anticipated demand, the Board was advised that it is possible that both schools would need to be expanded to 30 in future years dependent upon general growth and further housing coming forward in the area. The Board then sought further clarity as to why preference had been given to expand St Edward's Primary School at this stage. Linked to this, the Board was informed that all schools and governing bodies in the local area had been involved in conversations regarding the selection process for the

last five years and that the Council continues to work closely with each school.

- *Summaries of representations.* In response to concerns raised by some respondents around the summaries of representations within the original report to Executive Board, it was noted that the report submitted to the Scrutiny Board by the Director had included the consultation responses in full to enable Scrutiny Board members to consider the accuracy of the summarised version that was reported to Executive Board. Board Members agreed that the Director's report to the Executive Board had provided an accurate summary of the key points made and the concerns raised at that time. While accepting that a summarised version may still be appropriate as part of the Director's formal reporting approach to the Executive Board, the Scrutiny Board recommended that Executive Board Members receive an electronic version of all the consultation responses received, in full, during the initial and statutory notice consultation phases to accompany the formal reports of the Director of Children and Families in relation to a school organisation proposal.
- *Implications of the faith-based admissions criteria.* In response to the concerns raised, the Scrutiny Board was advised that although St Edward's Primary School prioritises places based on faith criteria, it is a school that is popular with both Catholic and non-Catholic families. The Scrutiny Board was also advised that the majority of pupils attending St Edward's Primary School live within the Boston Spa area and as such, the expectation is for the proposed additional permanent places to continue to serve a local need.
- *Traffic and parking concerns.* The Scrutiny Board was assured that if the proposed expansion were to progress, then a full traffic assessment and Transport Statement would be commissioned. This next stage of the process would set out to understand the issues raised by residents and parents and to identify any mitigation measures that might be introduced to the area in order to address or reduce the traffic impact brought by the school. The Scrutiny Board was informed that although a decision has not yet been made as to whether this proposal will progress, the Council has already committed to undertaking a highways assessment as part of the design development process - should the Executive Board approve the expansion - to establish how the build scheme would be best delivered.
- *Specific congestion and parking issues on Westwood Way.* The Scrutiny Board acknowledged the specific concerns raised by respondents in relation to existing issues with congestion and parking on Westwood Way that are clearly likely to be exacerbated by expanding the permanent number of places at St Edward's Primary School. The Scrutiny Board therefore emphasised the need for the Council to produce a comprehensive travel, transport and highways plan to address the cumulative impact of such issues on Westwood Way should the proposed expansion to St Edward's Catholic Primary School go ahead.
- *Sharing consultation data surrounding highways and planning related matters.* In recognition that any proposed school expansion scheme is

likely to lead to residents raising highways and planning related issues and concerns, the Scrutiny Board discussed the potential merits of undertaking an assessment of highways and planning issues before a decision is taken by the Executive Board on a proposed school expansion scheme. However, it was acknowledged that by undertaking such assessments earlier in the process, this would result in the Council incurring significant upfront costs prior to the Executive Board determining whether or not such a scheme should be given approval in principle based on need. The Scrutiny Board was also advised that in committing to undertake such assessments either prior or during the initial and statutory notice consultation phases, local residents may feel that the decision has already been pre-determined by the Council. The Scrutiny Board was informed that while it is communicated to the public that issues surrounding highways and planning matters would be subject to a separate consultation and approval process, people are still encouraged to share such views during the initial consultation and information gathering stage of the process to help inform the next steps. Linked to this, the Scrutiny Board felt that, if legally permissible, any representations made during the initial and Statutory Notice consultation phases should automatically be submitted as part of the next stage of the highways and planning process to avoid respondents having to relay their issues and concerns again to the Council.

- *Climate emergency considerations.* The Scrutiny Board acknowledged that the Council continues to encourage sustainable travel and that an updated School Travel Plan would be commissioned in order to encourage travel by non-car modes by parents/pupils and staff. The Scrutiny Board also acknowledged that the school already promotes walking, cycling and scooting to school and runs a “Walk on Wednesdays” initiative, with the children who take part each half-term being entered into a prize draw for a £5 reward voucher. The Scrutiny Board also sought assurance that any build scheme would explore the potential use of renewable energy and energy saving technologies, with the aim of increasing sustainability and minimising energy consumption. The Scrutiny Board was advised that full consideration would be given to the use of sustainable materials as part of the detailed design discussion to ensure they were in line with the Council’s planning policies.

Having addressed the main issues/areas of concern raised during the statutory notice phase, the Scrutiny Board concluded that it did not wish to raise any objection in relation to the proposal to expand St Edward’s Catholic Primary School to permanently increase the number of places offered at the school in Reception from 20 to 30 places from September 2022.

The Chair explained that a Statement of the Scrutiny Board would be produced (in consultation with Board Members) to reflect the Board’s observations, conclusion and recommendations following its consideration of the proposal to expand St Edward’s Catholic Primary School and that the Board’s Statement will form part of the Director’s report to Executive Board for its meeting on 22nd September 2021, when a final decision on the proposal is

expected.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the contents of the report, along with Members' comments, be noted.
- b) That a Statement setting out the observations, conclusion and recommendations of the Children and Families Scrutiny Board be produced (in consultation with Board Members) and forms part of the Director's report to Executive Board for its meeting on 22nd September 2021, when a final decision on the proposal is expected.

9 Tackling the long-term impacts of Covid-19 on children and families - Draft Inquiry Report

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report that presented the Board's draft report following its inquiry into tackling the long-term impacts of Covid-19 on children and families.

RESOLVED – That the inquiry report 'Tackling the long-term impacts of Covid-19 on children and families' be agreed.

10 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The Children and Families Scrutiny Board is holding a remote consultative meeting on Wednesday 15th September 2021 at 10 am (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.45 am)