

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE
HELD ON 15 MARCH 2017 FROM 7.00 PM TO 7.55 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Keith Baker (Chairman), Charlotte Haitham Taylor, Anthony Pollock, Malcolm Richards and Angus Ross

Other Councillors Present

Chris Bowring
Richard Dolinski
Lindsay Ferris
Clive Jones

120. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Mark Ashwell, Pauline Jorgensen and Julian McGhee-Sumner.

Councillor Chris Bowring attended the meeting on behalf of Councillor Ashwell. In accordance with legislation Councillor Bowring could take part in any discussions but was not entitled to vote.

121. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

122. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

In accordance with the agreed procedure the Chairman invited members of the public to submit questions to the appropriate Members.

122.1 Sabine Heine-Bickle asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question

Do you agree that any investment decision by the Council should only go ahead if it offers value for money against all other available options?

Answer

Thank you very much for your question Sabine and for meeting with me last week.

Investment decisions are made in the light of a business case that consider the costs of a proposal and the outcomes sought against established objectives.

Had the recommendation tonight been to approve the expansion of Aldryngton it would have taken account of a number of factors including:

- 1) the current construction costs which are markedly higher than when this Council invested in building the three new primary schools in 2013;
- 2) the long term value achieved by replacing part of a 50 year old building and aging temporary buildings with a modern energy efficient building with at least a 60 year life expectancy; and

3) the need for primary school places in Earley.

Supplementary Question

The other three school expansion schemes it is recommended that you approve tonight are estimated to cost £8.4m combined and will create 75 new places per year group across these schools. This is in comparison to an estimated cost of £4.8m for just 15 places per year group at Aldryngton. All these schemes involve an element of refurbishment of existing buildings as well as new buildings. Taking into account that each of these places will cost £16k how do you judge the cost of £48k for each Aldryngton place, 300% the cost of the spaces created across the other schemes, to be good value for money?

Supplementary Answer

There are a number of different factors that have to be considered when considering Aldryngton. As you know, as a parent there, there are a number of site constraints. We would be creating new car parking spaces, taking away existing buildings that are already there some of which as I have said are 50 years old, and building a two-storey building which is more expensive than building a one-storey building and putting in a new play area. So there are lots of different things that add up to a significant amount of money being spent at Aldryngton which in some of the other places are not necessary.

In Beechwood, for example, it is a one-storey building so that is much cheaper to construct and they have got a site which is easier to expand going into a one-storey building. So each site is always different whenever we do expansions. It has be done looking at what is existing and what will make a better school in the future for those existing places and for the places that are going forward to create the extra capacity.

122.2 Toshiko Tani asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question

Do you think it is important that your decision tonight is based on facts?

Answer

Thank you Toshiko and thank you for meeting with me last week.

Executive decisions are taken following consideration of Officer reports presenting national and local context (as appropriate), options, financial considerations and recommendations. Statements of facts are clear as part of these considerations.

The recommendation to consider the expansion of the school was based on evidenced demand for school places in Earley. In particular the position in 2015/16 when 30 Earley children had to be found places outside of the Earley area due to the lack of local school places;as you know and we have discussed several times.

In 2016, the following year, the facts were that despite offering 30 additional places at Loddon School in Earley all Earley school places were allocated and once again a number of children living in the Aldryngton primary school designated area could not be offered places at this local school and also we have expanded Hawkedon in 2012 as well and that was an extra 20 places within the Earley area as well.

So the recommendation not to proceed with the Aldryngton expansion project is based on the actual number of applicants; information that could only become available at this point in the admissions process. Again this is factual information.

Supplementary Question

At the Planning Committee we saw decisions being made based on misleading or at the very least inaccurate information about school placed demand. Unfortunately because the format of the Committee prohibits any interaction we could not point out the number of false statements that affected the Committee's decision. Basically they focussed, I think, on the last two years where there were unfortunately some pupils who couldn't be offered Aldryngton places, although they lived in the catchment area, but that doesn't mean that the situation will always be the same as the last two years.

In the public document pack for this meeting there are a number of notable errors and omissions eg on page 5 of the pack it is stated "the number of applications for reception places in Earley has not increased as projected". At no point has Wokingham Borough Council projected an increase in reception application numbers in Earley for 2017. In fact the Council projected that there would be a year on year fall in demand this year and a surplus of places in Earley. Similarly the summary of statutory consultation responses contained in the pack contains a number of significant omissions. In our view the information in the public document pack does not meet Department for Education requirements specified in a strategy consultation process. Do you agree that you are happy for us to raise hands and present facts when false or misleading information is presented to the Executive during the meeting tonight?

Supplementary Answer

Thank you for raising a number of issues. In terms of the planning consideration it was a full Planning Committee and I know that a number of people made representations on behalf of the School and also people made representations against the planning application and for the planning application and that was considered in the way that a normal planning application would be considered. I know that some members who represented themselves at that Planning Committee were unhappy with some of the things that were said there and they can make a complaint to the Council about that and I know that some people may wish to do so but there was evidence produced to support the application at that Committee.

The recommendation tonight is, as you know, not to go ahead with Aldryngton so that is the recommendation today and it also says in the recommendation it is "subject to further consultation". So you may think that the consultation has not been satisfactory but I would disagree but it is subject to further consultation and review of alternative options for growth as well.

In terms of the numbers of pupils coming through we have always said, and I want to reiterate that tonight, that this expansion would only go ahead if the numbers of admissions were sufficient to demonstrate that this expansion was needed. We have always been factual and honest in saying that school place planning was not an exact science but the figures we have used, and we have got a number of different sources of data and we have used all of those to the best of our ability to bring them together, to form a coherent strategy to try and project the numbers that we need in the whole of Earley and, indeed, throughout the whole of the Borough. If we do not plan ahead then we risk not meeting our statutory duty to provide enough school places. The reality for parents, when this actually happens in a specific area, is really heart wrenchingly gutting and highly

impractical on a daily basis. Whilst I am lead Member for Children's Service I will doggedly plan ahead to continue for school places in the right places at the right time so that we don't risk parents having the risk of not having enough places at the right places and at the right times.

So tonight I am satisfied that other Members of the Executive have all the information available and I am satisfied that members of the public and parents of the school have had an opportunity to enter this consultation. We have held a consultation meeting at Maiden Erlegh and I know that many of the faces that are out there tonight have taken part in that consultation process. All of the information has been available for Members to look at in terms of the responses back.

The recommendation tonight is for Members of this Committee not to approve the Aldryngton expansion this year. If the recommendation comes back to the Executive at a later date for expansion everyone will get the opportunity once again to review evidence and there will be further consultation. You will get another chance to put in comments and another chance to air your views about the expansion of this project and the data and the evidence supporting to go ahead with this. At this time, as I reiterate again, the recommendation is not to expand it this year.

The Leader of Council stated that unfortunately we have a formal process in our Constitution that does not allow us to have that interaction here. I know that is probably sad for you but it is just the way we operate.

122.3 David Nader asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question

Do you agree that a £5m investment in the expansion of a school should be based on a high level of confidence of long term local demand for school places rather than a single year's data?

Answer

Thank you Mr Nader for your question tonight and for your helpful questions and e-mails throughout this process and your other questions.

Our primary school strategy, including the investment decisions, is based on the knowledge that demand has risen across the Borough for much of the last decade.

Using Earley, as an example, the need for school places has risen over a number of years, not just over a single year, so when making long term decisions about any sum of investment of course we need to weigh up factors that support a recommendation and endorse a proposal being a sound investment.

Additional capacity both at Hawkedon and at Loddon primary schools has been created to meet this need so Hawkedon was 20 places and Loddon was 30.

However, even with this capacity, which has led to the 50 additional Reception class places in Earley all of the available Reception places were allocated in 2016; leaving no capacity for families moving into the area.

This year demand has not increased and this allows the Council the opportunity to pause and review options and future need in the Earley area.

Supplementary Question

The current primary places strategy is based on analysis carried out in 2015. Since then the central Government's policy on immigration has changed, economic forecasts have changed, and house sales in the Aldryngton and Loddon catchments have dropped by nearly 60% in volume terms. The forecast estimates whilst showing the correct trend of a spike in demand, but then reducing again from 2017 onwards for the last two years, has overestimated demand.

Do you agree that any decision on the school expansion in the future should be based on a revised forecast that takes into account the latest data and where the decision concerns Aldryngton that it should include some detailed analysis of the school's catchment?

Supplementary Answer

Of course any decision in the next year or two years will take into consideration any new and relevant data. I couldn't bring back a decision to the Executive recommending anything other than the use of new and up to date data. But what I think is interesting this year has been the fact that first preferences for Loddon have gone up 25% so that the 30 places that have been created there have obviously been used and the first preferences for Aldryngton have gone down by 22%. So overall in the whole of Earley, in the designated area which covers seven schools (so a lot of schools) there were only 13 less numbers applying in the normal application round so that is just under 3%. So it is not a significant swing downwards, it is not the 15 places upwards that we had anticipated but we have made the preparations in case the 15 extra places were needed at Aldryngton but tonight we have seen that we don't need them so we are recommending not to expand this year.

122.4 Jason Sutton asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question

Do you agree that the Council's statutory duty is to provide school places to every child in the Borough, but that this duty does not extend to: ensuring every child is allocated a place in the catchment it lives in every year, ensuring there is a place for every child at the school that its parents choose or providing places for children who live outside of the Borough?

Answer

The Council has a clear duty to ensure that every child living in the Borough has a school place under the Education Act 1996.

A range of other duties and responsibilities provide the context that explains how we set out to satisfy this core requirement.

- 1) The first being to satisfy a high proportion of parental preference is an important concern and one that is scrutinised closely every year when offers are made. A focus on expanding our popular schools is important if parental preference is to be satisfied.

- 2) We know that one of the key factors influencing the popularity of the school is proximity so it is important to consider expansion proposals that would create places that are closer to children's homes.
- 3) This also helps to reduce the number of children being delivered by car; something that contributes to the reduction in traffic congestion on key routes, another of the Council's objectives. This was top of the list of priorities for parents when we surveyed them creating the previous Primary School Strategy and they told us that they wanted a local school that they could walk to;
- 4) The Council also has duties under the admissions law to children living in other areas i.e. outside of the Borough. The Council cannot reserve places for Wokingham residents so if some schools are preferred by Reading for example and not Wokingham residents, the Council must allocate to Reading families even when this means that too few places are left for the local children of Wokingham.

Supplementary Question

Will you therefore commit to, as a first choice, utilising the places available in Earley schools to meet any demand increase in Earley before considering a local expansion and if you are able to answer this question with a yes or no if that is possible?

Supplementary Answer

Tonight the recommendation is to use the places that are available before doing any expansion so if there are surplus places, or if we are projecting that there would be surplus places, then we would not be doing an expansion leading to a huge surplus of places in one school or another leading then maybe to some inconsequent results where maybe one school has far too few pupils and another reaching their full capacity for example. So yes in short.

122.5 Hannah Selman asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question

The issue of funding in education is currently high on everyone's/ the political agenda at the moment, both nationally and within Wokingham Borough, with many schools facing the challenge of ever-tightening budgets. Do you agree that given the current financial situation in schools maintaining surplus places could be considered a considerable, and uneconomical, financial burden?

Answer

Schools funding is an issue that is very close to my heart and I continue to press central Government Ministers, the Secretary of State for Education and local MPs to listen to the local challenges and specific issues that our schools are facing with current funding levels and they will face under the Fairer Funding Formula if it is implemented in its current form. Indeed I will be meeting with the Secretary of State for Education very shortly to discuss this very subject and there will be a full debate on this topic next week at full Council so if you are available please come along.

One of the most pressing challenges in Wokingham that we have faced over the last decade has been to ensure that there are sufficient places to make sure that all of our children in this Borough can be allocated a local school place.

A small percentage of surplus capacity is necessary to ensure places are available for families moving into the Borough to allow parental preference and to have some real and practical effect.

Simplistically we cannot meet this statutory duty or family requirements without any surplus capacity; particularly given Infant Class Size legislation limiting infant class size to no more than 30 pupils.

Too high a level of surplus places can be difficult for schools to manage so the recommendation not to proceed with the Aldryngton expansion this year will help guard against the risk that the other six Earley schools might be placed in this situation in the future.

Supplementary Question

In the course of expansion discussions Children's Services and local Councillors have stated that the Aldryngton expansion is necessary in order to provide places for children who move into the catchment area during the school year. As funding is provided on a per pupil basis it is surely good financial management for schools to fill all available places at the start of the academic year in order to maximise their budgets. In addition to this Aldryngton is an outstanding school and has successfully offered places to out of catchment children in all but two of the last 30 years. As a result this has left no room for children who move into catchment mid-year. As a popular and extremely successful school this is always going to be the case regardless of how many additional places are created through expansion. As for example in April 2016 after the national offer day for primary school places 55 out of catchment children were placed on the waiting list for Aldryngton Primary School. Do you therefore agree that expanding the school will not address the issue of creating school places for children moving into catchment during the school year as any available spaces are likely to have already been filled by out of catchment children?

Supplementary Answer

We are by recommending for expansion, with all of these schools and four were within these proposals and three are recommended tonight for expansion, we not only look for the initial admissions round, which is in September, but also in-year places as well because the Government recommends that we have 5% surplus of places. We try to get them spread equally around the Borough because there is a lot of movement and particularly within Wokingham Borough there is a significant amount of movement in and out of the Borough.

This year there will be a very, very, small amount of surplus potentially at Aldryngton but if there are any children who qualify for places over the next few weeks, because they are children in care for example, then that very small headroom at the moment will be taken up straight away.

I would like to see an even spread of extra capacity so that when children and families move in it is not difficult to instantly get a school place locally so that they are not having to travel significant distances. Throughout the year I get a number of e-mails in particular hotspots throughout the Borough from families who may get one child into one school but they cannot get a child into another school and it means that perhaps one partner is having to think about changing their job or stopping work altogether. So whilst I understand that there is the wish perhaps not to have any headroom of space and therefore it is perhaps easier for schools to budget that way my recommendation, I think, is

to have a very small amount of headroom meeting the Government's recommendation of 5% throughout the whole Borough. But it is very hard to plan and get that evenly spread and at the moment with certain trends in certain areas we don't always meet it.

122.6 Martha Ahijado had asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question. The response which was given in her absence is as follows:

Question

Do you agree that the Council's decisions should be made following a transparent set of decision making criteria?

Answer

All of the Council's formal decisions are made transparently at Executive, following a report containing all the appropriate contextual information including the objectives and rationale behind the recommendations. Reports follow a defined template to ensure that all relevant information is captured in a systematic manner.

In the case of the matters being considered tonight, the report has also been guided by statutory guidance for decision makers.

So relevant elements include:

- the outcomes and benefits to the community;
- the financial implications of the proposals;
- the need for school places;
- the outcomes of consultation with key stakeholders;
- confirmation that the quality and diversity of local schools has been considered; and
- travel and accessibility issues and so on.

122.7 Ian Head asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question

Do you have faith in the Aldryngton Primary School governors to make the best possible choices and exercise sound judgement for the pupils of the school?

Answer

The Council has faith in the Aldryngton School to make appropriate choices and exercise sound judgement over the matters that it has responsibility for.

The Council should not expect or require the governing body to take responsibility for matters that are the Council's own responsibility; including the duty to ensure there are sufficient school places.

In considering the expansion of Aldryngton primary school, the Council has to consider the interests of the pupils attending the school as well as the needs of other Earley children who are prospective pupils at the school.

Without advance planning to ensure sufficient school places, some of these children might not secure a place at a local school, despite living within the school's designated area.

Supplementary Question

Therefore the governors' obligation, to make the best possible choices and exercise their best judgement, extends to future pupils as well. When considering the Council's proposed expansion of the school the governors considered the proposal in its entirety and concluded that they cannot support the plans for reasons of pupils' safety and because of site limitations and that they will adversely affect the wellbeing and experience of pupils not only of those already in the school but also for those of the additional intake. The selection of Aldryngton primary as a candidate for expansion was approved at the Executive meeting on 28 January 2016 yet the first time the school was consulted about the proposed expansion was in September 2016 and despite strong objections expressed by the school the Council proceeded with the plans. At the January Executive meeting approval was given subject to further evaluation and discussion with the school. Councillor Haitham Taylor was the Executive Member for Children's Services and also rightly stated that expansion was subject to the support of the school. Do you intend to honour this statement?

Supplementary Answer

I understand you are extremely worried about the issue of not only your pupils at the moment but also future pupils and we have discussed that earlier in the week. I think there have been disagreements about what we feel as a Council can be achieved by the expansion and what you feel are your views as a school about the expansion. I think that after today, and the recommendation, there needs to be some further work and much dialogue between yourselves and the Headteacher and we need to work through all of the issues that you have raised and the school have raised to work out if this plan is something that the school could be happy with in the future should the demand be needed.

The Leader of Council thanked Mr Head, the Headteacher and those who were also in attendance who he met with the other day which he found to be very useful and helpful and he felt had gone some way to start mending some of the bridges that we have to mend for the sake of the children.

122.8 Philip Martin Daniels asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question

Can you share the number of parents who attended the Council's pre-consultation meeting on the 16th of January?

Answer

The pre-consultation meeting was an open meeting where parents were not required to pre-register in order to attend or complete a register on the day; although I know that some parents did.

However, the meeting was successful in reaching out to a significant proportion of the school community who filled the Maiden Erlegh School hall and were able to express their views clearly. I was there and the hall was pretty jam packed with many people standing at the back as well and down the sides.

There were plans of the proposals available to view and a slide presentation and information on rationale for the proposals presented. There was an opportunity for a great number of questions to be asked from the floor and responded to by the number of Officers from the different departments represented as well. I am sorry that I don't have

the precise numbers for you but if you were there you will know that there was a significant number of people.

Supplementary Question

There was a significant lack of meaningful dialogue in the course of the Aldryngton expansion process. Many residents and parents felt that their voices were not heard although they have written numerous e-mails, submitted objections to the planning application and attended the pre-consultation meeting in January. The Council promised in the pre-consultation meeting to take note of the parents' and residents' comments and ensure that they were properly considered.

However according to the response to the Freedom of Information request No 8461 there has been no meeting which has taken place to discuss the concerns raised. By the time the pre-consultation meeting was held the statutory consultation was already scheduled to commence the following week and we did not see any change whatsoever made to the proposal based on the numerous concerns and questions raised during the meeting. Can we trust that you will engage the school, parents and residents at a more appropriate stage if the Council is to propose the expansion of Aldryngton again any time in the future?

Supplementary Answer

My commitment is that if this proposal goes ahead any time in the future we will have a meaningful consultation again and engage parents and, of course, the school and I have already promised that.

In terms of engagement over the consultation I would say there has been meaningful consultation and we have listened to the views of everyone. The majority of the views have obviously been against this proposal and a small number of views have come in, both via the consultation and e-mails, in favour of this proposal. We take consultation extremely seriously and I am somewhat amazed that you feel it has not been taken seriously and you feel there was a lack of meaningful dialogue. In terms of change from listening to the school and listening to parents there have been significant changes to even the proposals that went to the Planning Committee from the initial proposals of what the planning would look like to what was eventually taken through to the Planning Committee a couple of weeks back. So if this proposal does go through at any point in the future as a proposal and recommendation then, of course, we will be going back through this plan again and I am sure you will take part in the next round of consultation.

122.9 Carolyn Simpson had sked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question. The response which was given in her absence is as follows:

Question

Aldryngton School and its PTA have for the last 9 months put their capital investment on hold, from repairing the climbing frame, adding the planned new playground markings, to needed repairs etc. in order to avoid investing funds into infrastructure about to be demolished again. Do you agree that it is unreasonable towards the school and unfair to its current pupils to expect this to continue for the next three years that the planning permission would be valid for?

Answer

Thank you very much for your question and please pass on my thanks to Carolyn for her question.

This is an issue that I am indeed keenly aware of and we discussed it earlier on in the week when we went to the school. I will commit tonight that the Council will work with the school to explore how the investment that you referenced tonight can be delivered in ways that would add a long term value, if the expansion were to be agreed at a later date. This might be, for example, through new equipment that can be relocated should the expansion at Aldryngton be recommended at a later date.

If the proposed review identifies a better option for creating additional capacity locally, then of course we will formally step away from the expansion proposals so the school and its PTA will have greater long term confidence in the investment decisions that they may wish to take.

122.10 Tahir Maher asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question

Now that a decision has been made not to expand Aldryngton school this year will the Council use some of the money that was set aside to finance the expansion to repair and refurbish parts of the school.

Answer

The funding for the Aldryngton project has been agreed to meet a key Council duty which is to ensure that there are sufficient school places, so in this instance it cannot be used for another purpose.

However, the Council does have a capital budget for ensuring that schools are kept safe and operational. Decisions on the use of this budget are made by Council Officers in the light of individual requests by schools and the Council's assessment of the condition of the school compared to other schools.

Officers and the school are already in discussion over this issue and I hope that this will bring you some reassurance.

Supplementary Question

Presumably these discussions that you have with the school also include the governors so that together there is a programme of change worked out?

Supplementary Answer

I hope that it will include both the Head, the Deputy, and the governors should they wish to take part in the discussions.

122.11 John Russell asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question

Do you agree that Aldryngton School has successfully accommodated all foundation applicants from within the catchment area from at least 1998 until 2014-15 and that the school has been unsuccessful in accommodating all foundation applicants only in the last two years 2015-16 and 2016-17?

Answer

Aldryngton School was proposed for the expansion to ensure that there were sufficient places in Earley; not exclusively on the basis of the increased local demand for that school just in 2015.

The growth in the number of children in the Aldryngton school designated area in 2015/16 and 2016/17 exceeded the number of places available at the school and was without precedent.

This needs to be seen against the backdrop of rising demand in Earley primary school places; fuelled by families moving into the area to take advantage of the excellent education offered by all of our schools. Rather than a temporary shift, we need to be prepared that this is signifying a significant change in the local community.

Supplementary Question

The first part of the question I felt wasn't answered actually. Moving from the past and the present and future I would like to ask a question about the demand that would trigger an expansion of the school in the future.

What is the level of long term demand increase that would lead you to decide to spend the £4.8m you need to expand the school?

Supplementary Answer

Going back to your first question first of all there has been significant long term growth in the Earley area over the last 10 years which has led us to expand, as I have mentioned earlier, Hawkedon and the places in Loddon as well by 30 which has led to 50 extra school places. In terms of the long term demand as I said we have seen a trend of needing to build extra capacity. This year we have seen an increase in demand in Woodley so the places that we are recommending for expansion in Highwood and also in Beechwood they have been totally justified by the projections that the Officers have made in the recommendations tonight.

Going away from this evening and looking forward to the next year we will be looking at the data about what has been going on locally in Aldryngton but also in Earley and looking at the trends over the last number of years but also this year in terms of first, second, third and fourth preferences and the movements. There are lots of different data that informs our projections and before a decision is made for next year we will be needing to look really closely at the data but also we will have to wait, unfortunately, for next year's admission round when we get the numbers in then. Over the Borough we have seen an increase of demand in the admissions of over 100 places so we have seen the numbers going up so we do need more school places and will be taking a closer look at it again. It is not an exact science as we have said but we have to be there ready with new school places when they are needed otherwise we will be diverting more school children out of their areas and, as I have spoken before, for me that is not acceptable.

123. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

In accordance with the agreed procedure the Chairman invited Members to submit questions to the appropriate Members

123.1 Clive Jones asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question

You have advised me that you don't think that a new school in the Hatch Farm Dairies development, as an alternative to the expansion of Aldryngton School, is not a good idea.

Could you explain in detail why you have come to this conclusion?

Answer

You asked this question as a supplementary at the last Executive so for transparency and clarity I am going to read out the answer I sent out to you first of all and then carry on. I wrote back to you:

“Thank you for your suggestion for building a whole new school in Winnersh. Regrettably, £4.8m would not cover the expense of building a new school. The concept of a school at Hatch Farm Dairies is, of course, not a new one and has been on the table for some years now, but local need and land availability has meant that it has not been a front-runner to date.

Should the Officers recommend not to expand Aldryngton primary school in 2017 and it is anticipated that expansion is required in the future, then I would be happy to ask Officers to review all options. This would include reviewing the Hatch Farm Dairies site in Winnersh.”

Moving on to your question above. The Hatch Farm Dairies site in Winnersh will be considered as part of the review of options for Earley that will be implemented if the recommendation for Aldryngton primary school is approved. However, the site could not be considered in the development of the Primary School Strategy Implementation Plan because it was not available for development to enable a school to open in 2017.

Supplementary Question

Could you confirm that you have not spoken to developers about selling off the land that is designated for a primary school in Hatch Farm Dairies?

Supplementary Answer

Personally I have not spoken to any developers in the Hatch Farm Dairy area so I am very happy to confirm that. I will pass on your query to Officers in the Council. I, myself, have had no conversations with any developers about that whatsoever.

124. PRIMARY STRATEGY SCHOOL ORGANISATION APPROVALS

The Executive considered a report relating to Primary Strategy School Organisation Approvals which set out progress to date with the previously considered expansion schemes, the associated consultation, and the future timetable necessary to deliver school places in 2017.

The Executive Member for Children's Services reminded the meeting about the previous relevant reports that had been considered and agreed by the Executive; which included one on shared catchment areas for 2018/19. This item agreed a shared catchment area for Whiteknights expanding to Radstock and the designated area of Loddon to include Aldryngton; the purpose of which was to help mitigate some of the growth within these areas.

Councillor Haitham Taylor advised the meeting that extensive consultation had taken place on the proposals for Loddon, Beechwood, Highwood and Aldryngton primary schools. These proposals included:

- Permanent expansion of Loddon Primary School from September 2018 offering an extra 30 places per year group making it a three-form entry school taking it up to 630 places;
- Permanent expansion of Beechwood Primary School from September 2018 for 15 extra places per year group taking it up to a two-form entry school;
- Permanent expansion of Highwood Primary School from September 2018 for 30 extra places per year group taking it up to a two-form entry school;
- Not progressing with the expansion of Aldryngton Primary School for 2017 which would mean that the school would stay as a 1.5-form entry school i.e. 45 places per year group. It was noted that the proposal would be subject to further consultation including the consideration of alternative options for growth.

Members pointed that over time the demographics of particular areas changed which the Council had to respond to. Councillor Haitham Taylor stated that demographics actually change year on year in different areas of the Borough. This year had seen significant growth in Woodley and the north and a reduction in numbers in the south west of the Borough. As an example Beechwood primary school had previously reduced its planned admission number but the proposal was now to increase it. Over the last 10 years it had found that there was a need to grow school places over the whole of the Wokingham Borough area to meet the increasing numbers of people moving into the area which was due in part to the number of houses being built.

RESOLVED That, to ensure there are sufficient primary school places in Wokingham, the Executive agreed:

- 1) to the permanent expansion of Loddon Primary School from September 2018 to offer 90 places per year and for the school to grow annually to offer 630 places, this agreement being conditional on the grant of planning consent for the scheme by 01/09/17;
- 2) to the permanent expansion of Beechwood Primary School from September 2018 to offer 60 places per year and for the school to grow annually to offer 420 places;
- 3) to the permanent expansion of Highwood Primary School from September 2018 to offer 60 places per year and for the school to grow annually to offer 420 places, this agreement being conditional on the grant of planning consent for the scheme by 01/09/17;
- 4) to not progress with the expansion of Aldryngton Primary School for 2017 as the number of applications for Reception places in Earley has not increased as projected, and agree that the proposal will be:
 - Subject to further consultation including the consideration of alternative options for growth;
 - Returned for further consideration by Executive in the event of an increase in demand for school places in the period 2018 to 2020.