

# Agenda Item 5

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## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

4 AUGUST 2016

(7.15 pm - 10.05 pm)

PRESENT: Councillors Peter Southgate (in the Chair), Suzanne Grocott, Abigail Jones, Oonagh Moulton, Michael Bull, Agatha Mary Akyigyina, Mike Brunt, Joan Henry, Sally Kenny and Dennis Pearce

Co-opted Member Helen Forbes

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Mark Allison (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance), Adam Bush, Caroline Cooper-Marbiah (Cabinet Member for Education), James Holmes and Martin Whelton (Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing)

Paul Ballatt (Assistant Director Commissioning, Strategy and Performance, CSF), James McGinlay (Head of Sustainable Communities), Julia Regan (Head of Democracy Services), Yvette Stanley (Director, Children, Schools & Families Department) and Chris Randall, Director, New Developments, Harris Federation.

### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from:

- Councillor John Dehaney, substituted by Councillor Joan Henry
- Councillor David Williams, substituted by Councillor Michael Bull
- Councillor Imran Uddin, substituted by Councillor Agatha Akyigyina
- Councillor Hamish Badenoch, substituted by Councillor Suzanne Grocott
- Co-opted members Geoffrey Newman and Colin Powell.

Apologies were also received from Posey Furnish, Chair of Governors at Joseph Hood School and from the Education Funding Agency.

The Chair expressed regret that the Education Funding Agency, a key partner, had been unable to attend.

### 2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest for the public part of the meeting.

### 3 CALL-IN OF HARRIS WIMBLEDON SECONDARY SCHOOL - REQUIRED SITE APPROVALS (Agenda Item 3)

The Chair announced that the meeting would have two parts – a public session (minuted here) and a private session (minuted in an exempt document).

The Chair invited Councillor James Holmes to explain why he had requested a call-in on this matter. Councillor Holmes said that although he recognised that there were no easy answers to finding an appropriate site, he had concerns over the small size of the proposed site and the implications this posed for delivery of a full curriculum including sports. He also had concerns for pupil safety because the proposed site is surrounded by busy roads.

Councillor Holmes questioned the grounds on which alternative sites had been rejected and said that the decision making process had not been as open as it should have been, particularly in terms of his own involvement as lead opposition councillor and consultation with parents and potential pupils. He stated that he had found some of the reports misleading.

The Chair drew members' attention to the letter submitted by Posey Furnish, Chair of Governors at Joseph Hood School, set out on page 205 of the agenda. The Chair said that, in summary, the letter expressed surprise that the councillors who had called-in in this matter had not been in contact with the Headteacher or chair of governors, that the plan (to site the new school temporarily in the old Adult Education building in Whatley Avenue adjacent to Joseph Hood Primary School) is not ideal but represents the best possible scenario for the school community and that they had had constructive meetings with senior council officers. Councillor Oonagh Moulton added that she had spoken to Posey Furnish and was aware of the concerns and issues that the school has regarding the site. Members noted the invitation to visit Joseph Hood School.

The Chair invited Peter Walker to address the meeting. Peter Walker laid round a written statement (published with these minutes). He asked the Commission to reject the proposed site in favour of expanding existing secondary schools, using split sites and through schools. He urged the council to open a new secondary school in the east of the borough. He said that the proposed location was in the wrong place, too small for sport and would not be ready in time to meet the rising demand for secondary school places.

In response to questions from members, Peter Walker said that when he was Cabinet Member for Education, Harris had been in the driving seat, that the findings of a cross party review of potential locations had been ignored and that, as far as he knew, headteachers had not been involved in the decision on the proposed site.

The Chair invited officers to respond to the points made by Councillor Holmes and Peter Walker.

Paul Ballatt, Assistant Director, Commissioning, Strategy and Performance, said that projection figures of school places change and were now lower than when Peter

Walker was Cabinet Member. This is due to a smaller proportion of Merton primary pupils taking up Merton secondary school places combined with a lower population increase than previously modelled. Paul Ballatt said that six new forms of secondary school entry would be required in the west of the borough by September 2018 to be delivered by the new school, initially requiring a temporary solution of using the former adult education building in Whatley Avenue. He said that expansion of existing secondary schools, split site provision and all through schools had all been examined and found to be not practicable.

Paul Ballatt explained that government policy in recent years had changed the options available to local authorities which is why this work is now being done in partnership with Harris Federation and the Education Funding Agency. He said that the cost to the council for a new secondary school on the proposed site in partnership with Harris Foundation and the Education Funding Agency would be in the region of £10m compared to the projected cost in 2013 of between £30m and £40m when the council was solely responsible for provision. He reported that the Education Funding Agency had carried out their own site search and had stated that the Merton site search had been very thorough.

At this point the Commission agreed that to further their discussion that they need to move into a closed session

RESOLVED: That the public are excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following report(s) on the grounds that it is (they are) exempt from disclosure for the reasons stated in the report(s). The public part of the meeting closed at this point. Exempt minutes of the closed session have been published in a separate document.

At the end of the closed session, the Commission RESOLVED to decide not to refer the matter back to Cabinet. 7 members voted in favour of not referring back to Cabinet and 4 members abstained.

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