

COUNCIL MEETING – WEDNESDAY 9 SEPTEMBER 2015

MOTION - STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE – CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

This Council recognises, given the urgent and projected demand for more secondary school places in Merton, that there is still not a suitable site agreed with the Department for Education (DFE). Furthermore, even if the process can shortly be concluded, Council is concerned about the extremely long time it has taken to identify a site for a new secondary free school in the borough that fully meets the needs of parents and pupils across the whole of Merton.

The search for suitable sites for a new school commenced in 2012 and this Council believes that:

- If a secondary school site cannot be made ready now then this administration has run the serious risk of not having enough provision in place and of Merton losing millions of pounds of funding from the Department for Education for the construction of a new school.
- This administration has further exacerbated the current school places problem by discouraging and not assisting a provider approved and selected by the DFE and they have now compounded this error by the long process taken in finding a suitable site, close to where pupil numbers will be highest in the west of the borough.

This Council notes that many parents, teachers and children don't want split site secondary schools for a variety of reasons, such as safety, travel issues and lack of flexibility. Nor do they want to see popular primary schools, such as Joseph Hood and Wimbledon Chase, adversely impacted by proposals for a new secondary school on their existing sites. The lack of clarity over a suitable site for a new secondary school is a cloud that has hung over many families for years, simply because they want to ensure their children can access a high quality school close to their home.

This Council therefore urges the Cabinet rapidly to progress a single site location for a new secondary free school in the west of the borough, as close as possible to the area of greatest need that a) would not adversely affect existing schools in Merton and b) could accommodate a new secondary school on a single site thereby avoiding the need for a split site.

Cllr Charlie Chirico

Cllr James Holmes

Cllr Abdul Latif

Cllr David Simpson

Cllr Linda Taylor

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