

**By: Peter Sass: Head of Democratic Services and Local Leadership**

**To: Scrutiny Board – 15 July 2010**

**Subject: Kings Hill School Expansion**

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## **Background**

The Cabinet Member was asked to clarify a number of issues relating to the decision to expand the Discovery School at Kings Hill. A Member raised concerns about the following:

- whether the decision to expand the Discovery School at Kings Hill by one class was a formal Cabinet Member decision
- whether the expansion of the Discovery School was subject to consultation with the relevant local schools
- what the formal process for authorising expansion of schools is.

The response from the Cabinet Member has been reproduced below, however this item has been called in to the Scrutiny Board as the Member who originally raised this issue remains unsatisfied with the response.

Mr Chris Jones, Area Children's Services Officer will be in attendance at the Scrutiny Board meeting to answer any questions Members might have on this issue.

## **Response from the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education**

A decision was taken to expand the Discovery School at Kings Hill in consultation with KCC Officers in response to discontent from a considerable number of anxious parents who were resident on Kings Hill and unable to be placed in either on of their local schools.

All local schools had been subject to consultation with officers over a period of several months and were appraised of the potential need to expand school places locally if the suspected pressure on places materialised. The true extent of the problem was not known until offer day. The Local Authority had hoped to manage the pressure within surrounding school provision but received several complaints from parents based on Kings Hill concerned that their allocated school in Watlington was a five mile journey away and equally complaints from Watlington parents concerned that placing children from Kings Hill would potentially displace children from the village in later years as the sibling link would afford children from Kings Hill priority over local children to the school.

Having considered these factors the Local Authority took the decision to temporarily increase the numbers at the school to ease these pressures. The Local Authority has not formally increased the Published Admission Number this is a temporary measure taken to ease a problem specific to Kings Hill in 2010.

In regard to the formal process for the expansion of schools, there are several avenues and approaches that can be taken, but in this instance this was not a formal expansion of a school, the Published Admission Number (PAN) has not been increased. A decision was taken by the Local Authority to allow the school to admit above its admission number to ease the pressure on places locally.

The School Admissions Code clarifies in section 1.19 that in the case of maintained schools, the Local Authority, as the strategic commissioner of school places, has the final decision over whether a school can admit above its published admission number. The code goes on to say that....admitting above the admissions number does not amount to an increase in the school's admission number which can only be changed via the determination of admission arrangements or via an in year variation if already determined.

### **Options for the Scrutiny Board to consider**

Decisions by Officers and Council Committees:

The Scrutiny Board may:

- (1) comment to the Chief Executive and the relevant Senior Manager
- (2) report to the Council
- (3) refer any issues arising from its debate

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