

This paper provides a summarised version of the notes taken at council run public meetings held during the School Admission Arrangements 2026/27 public consultation which ran between 6th December 2024 and 31st January 2025.

Online meeting – 12th December 2024 10am – 11:30am. A link to a recording of the meeting is available in YourVoice: [School Admission Arrangements online consultation meeting - Meeting Recording on Vimeo](#)

The opening presentation was made by Cllr Jacob Taylor and by Richard Barker.

Questions and Comments:

Attendee: I just wanted to say that in this new proposal, the chance of a child in a specific area getting into certain schools is as low as 1 in 4 if they don't have certain priorities. Do you think that's reasonable?

Council response: Yes, the data shows that a high percentage of children within catchment are getting a place, but those without certain priorities would have a lower chance. The council is trying to address this without redrawing catchments. Whether the balance is right at 20% for open admissions is for discussion and consultation. If people feel a lower % in the Open Admissions and therefore a more balanced % chance across the catchments would be a better option that is certainly something the Council could consider.

Attendee: I note that no one has mentioned travel times. Increasing choice for certain parents is understandable, but Brighton's unique geography means some children face long commutes. I'd like to hear if council members would expect this for their own children, as it impacts mental health. Why do you think this is ok as appropriate collateral damage?

Council response: There are already 3 preferences, and we propose increasing to 4. If a child doesn't get a catchment place, the admissions process reverts to other preferences. If none are available, the nearest school is offered. It is possible for the parent/carer to consider other schools that also have places available which may be further away but may have an easier journey to get to. I commute to work and would be happy for my child to attend any secondary school. Mapping possible journeys in detail is very difficult to do and it would require a large amount of assumptions on how people might express their preferences.

Person B: I wouldn't send my children on long journeys, especially with SEND needs like my child. I don't think he could physically cope with that long journey and I urge you to listen to parents on this. The feedback from the Engagement Exercise shows parents are concerned about the real impact on children's lives. People might withdraw from the school system if facing long commutes.

Council Member: I agree. The council will review the Home to School Transport policy and bus routes with the bus company to make journeys more viable. We can't promise changes until admission arrangements are set, but we aim to align bus routes with new catchments. We understand that people are frustrated that we do not yet have a full and final travel plan which shows how all children will get to school but that's because we need the allocations to take place, then we can work with the bus company to ensure the provision is right. There is also the rail system which doesn't get talked

about as much – sometimes train travel is going to be quicker/more direct, especially to BACA.

Attendee: I broadly support the proposal but have questions about the uptake of out-of-catchment applications – do we know from elsewhere in the country or abroad how that may be used by families? And what is the timescales for agreeing these priorities?

Council response: There is no direct comparison to other Local Authorities, so our modelling is based on our own geography and preferences. We must set admissions by the end of February for the following September, but to be clear we can make some amendments to proposals following the consultation process. I'm really aware these proposals present a reasonable amount of change for the city – and we want to ensure there are not unforeseen adverse consequences that go too fast or too far. An officer added that we also see some changes after the offers are made in march, for awareness. For example, school admission appeals are heard and waiting list (we call it reallocation pools) places are offered. Therefore we can see in the region of 130 child whose place alters from the start of March. All should also be aware that Cardinal Newman Catholic School is also consulting on their admission arrangements to potentially introduce a free school meals priority.

Attendee: I fully support the efforts to balance the system but am concerned about the impact on a specific community with high FSM eligibility and non-English speakers – the area of Kemptown that is to move into Longhill area – I am worried they will be educationally disproportionately affected. What are your thoughts on this catchment change? I am also concerned that the children at Queens Park and St Marks (both requires improvement) will now lose the chance to attend a Good secondary school.

Council Response: The data shows a small change in FSM percentages between catchments – it is not a great change but it is a step towards a balancing. You are right that there may be seen to be a swap of pupils, but this is one of the areas we are seeking to balance the views on. Also within the proposals there is also the open admissions priority which families in single school catchment areas can use. We know that many families in that area already have to travel by vehicle to school as Kemptown and Whitehawk are a long way from schools. All schools should support families from diverse backgrounds, and the council offers services to help. We will complete an Equalities Impact Assessment to consider the impact of boundary changes on the council's equalities duties.

Thank you. The transport issue is a bit moot as other schools have good transport links and different educational outcomes.

Attendee: Thank you for the updated information. How will you ensure schools like Longhill remain viable and thrive?

Council Member: School viability depends on pupil numbers and funding. Schools get funded in a very formulaic way – predominantly on numbers through the door but with some adjustments. Reducing PANs at larger schools helps balance numbers. The council is also looking at capital funding and investments to improve schools. We also think some of our schools are very large

Attendee: I want the council to understand the emotional trauma caused by these proposals. Crime rates are a concern, and expecting children to travel long distances is unacceptable – I am particularly worried about sending my daughters on multiple buses in the winter. That's utterly unacceptable and inherently dangerous. The council should focus on improving underperforming schools.

Council Member: Thank you for sharing your opinions, they've been expressed and heard loud and clear. I'm sorry to hear that. We are trying to balance fairness and address the attainment gap without traumatising families. It's a difficult area, and we are considering the impact on all families.

Attendee: Thank you. I also believe there is a conflict of interest with you leading this proposal – you are a former pupil and a former governor at Longhill.

Council Member: There are laws governing conflicts of interest, and it's not corrupt. Thank you for your opinion.

Attendee: The proposals are complicated and not clearly explained. Are they reasonable, clear, objective, and procedurally fair as per the School Admissions Code? Is it fair to ask parents to decide without knowing the impact of each change? Why aren't you sharing the data for admissions in the year before?

Council response: Yes, we believe the proposals are clear enough to be put forward. We are consulting on multiple things, and it might be that not all will be taken forward. The feedback form allows parents to respond to each proposal. We cannot publish the data relating to 2025 applications ahead of National Offer Day but we are exploring what we are able to share.

Attendee: The council needs to provide more clarity for people to make decisions. The proposals seem to force children to fill places in certain schools, which is not acceptable.

Council response: We will consider the feedback and unintended consequences. The modelling shows that pupils may be offered places at other schools, not just Longhill or BACA.

Attendee: The language used about schools is concerning. How will these proposals create sustainable schools and address funding disparities?

Council response: We need to balance fairness in admissions and address the attainment gap. The council is working on making schools more inclusive and supportive.

Attendee: The proposals are complicated and unfair to many communities. Why should out-of-catchment children get priority over in-catchment children?

Council response: The Sutton Trust suggests that only using catchment or distance can enforce economic unfairness. We aim to balance choice and fairness in over-subscribed schools. The FSM quota applies to all children, but we don't expect a significant impact from outside the city. We appreciate that families are considering how the proposals are likely to affect them but we are seeking your views and your responses – you are not being asked to make the decision.

Attendee: Why are you proposing a PAN reduction at Dorothy Stringer when it is a high performing schools? Why don't you mention it's academic performance?

Council response: Yes, agreed – we have very high performing schools. With the situation of falling pupil numbers the council has some choices on how it can address this – sometimes that means considering the size of your schools vs the number of schools you can keep open. Sadly, this is what we had to consider with our primary schools this time last year. We also proposed reductions in other schools but some of those were overturned in appeal. We feel it is reasonable and proportionate, given the overall levels of falling pupil numbers, to seek what we feel is a modest reduction in some of our schools. So it's a difficult balance, there is no perfect or easy answer, but we think this one is a reasonable proposal given the citywide picture.

Attendee: I am concerned that it can take around 3 years to get a neurodiversity diagnosis. EHCPs have been mentioned but what about all the other SEND children? What consideration has been made for their needs?

Council response: We've been thinking about this very deeply and have heard from families sharing their specific circumstances. We already have priority 2 within our admission arrangements which does allow for the consideration of some child specific circumstances. These are also matters that can be addressed at a school admission appeal hearing. Also the council is working actively on looking at how it addresses the inclusivity of mainstream education across the city. We also may hear more from the Government on their plans for this area of policy.

Attendee: I was initially concerned about education and travel but I am now also concerned about the consultation itself – I feel messages are changing tack and I think this is a major issue of trust. The council isn't saying anything about what happens to the children who do not gain a place within their catchment area. Could the council clarify the data presented as it looks like a figure should be amended. I don't understand the points the council are making about increasing fairness, when children with no other priority other than catchment area are being impacted by very low chances of gaining a place. These children then are not eligible for the open admissions criteria either. Finally, I've seen a piece in the local paper by the Council Leader which didn't clarify that children in the central areas will end up with no choice – also an article by a ward councillor not stating it – why are you only presenting one side?

Council response: We'll take that data point away and look into it. We've tried to explain the range of challenges we face as a city and how the council proposes to take forward some work to mitigate these. We are actively trying to break down divisions in the city, not create new ones – however we all know they are there. Interestingly, Brighton has some very similar demographics to somewhere like London around things like wealth and inequalities – but our geography is different, we have some very ditincy geographical segregations within the city – and part of our work here is to look how to break down the impact of those. We have families that live really close to Stringer or Varndean but might only be in the catchment areas for Patcham or BACA – how do we look to give them an opportunity of choice whilst balancing the choice within the catchment area?

Attendee: Cllr is deluded if you think the bus company will change its routes. So there will be children just waving to each other as they cross the city. It's not sustainable. I have a daughter and I won't be having her travel on the bus in the middle of the night. They'll lose too much of their day. This isn't levelling up, it's levelling down. You're just going to bring the average down and it's not acceptable. I worry about children's mental health and I believe you have a conflict of interest.

Council response: We already work with the bus company and commission some routes directly so there is scope to work with them. As mentioned before, we are needing to balance up a number of issues here and a number of objectives the council is trying to achieve and that's not easy.

Attendee: Will the council be conducting a full impact assessment of the proposals? I mean separately from the equalities impact assessment that has been produced? And how will you know if this has worked if the attainment data won't come out for another 5 years?

Council response: You are right – looking at the attainment gap is long term and it's not just about secondary – it's about interventions and provision you have from early years upwards. We proudly run nurseries and these are really effective at reaching children from disadvantaged areas. You are right to say that we may not see all of the impacts of these changes straight away. Politicians have to make decisions for the longer term. We've published an equalities impact assessment for the consultation process. The report that went to Cabinet last week does already set out a range of the impact considerations but this is also what the consultation is for – to hear from people and then to reflect on that for the final proposals.

Attendee: On social media people are posting a lot of different numbers however, even in the council documents there are still a significant number of children not gaining a place in a catchment area school. If people are openly saying that they will not be sending their children to the schools that have places left, eg Longhill and BACA then how will this work for your objective to keep all schools going with enough children?

Council response: Yes, these are the points we need to consider – including the unintended consequences that could occur. It's not true to say that people will always be directed to Longhill or BACA – it also depends on where they live in the city or what other preferences they've given on their forms.

Attendee: I'm concerned about the comments and language being used here and elsewhere - people work there, families happily send their children there – can we all think about how we are speaking about other parts of the city. I'm interested to hear about how these proposals will create sustainable schools. If we consider the challenges faced by schools with high concentrations of disadvantage – challenges in recruitment and retention of skilled staff and in the ability to get resources. If we look at a school in a more affluent area of the city – they have low FSM children and get just under £100 per child on role per year from parental donations – but a primary school not far from it but in a poorer area has over 40% FSM children and less than £10 per student per year from donations. This has a direct impact on how schools can support their children.

Council response: Interesting points and certainly until recently the Ofsted system has not been able to recognise this imbalance. There is evidence to suggest that the cohort and make up of schools is a strong driver of the measured outcomes of attainment and attendance so I do think we need to be doing more to balance the schools. We also want to ensure we have a system whereby all can have choice without it being driven purely by where you can afford to live.

Attendee: Can people apply for the FSM priority from outside of the city?

Council response: Yes – they can.

A short summary of some of the points and questions raised in the MS Teams chat of this online meeting. Some were responded to during the meeting.

- **Impact Assessment and Data Analysis:** Councillor Taylor mentioned that impact assessment and data analysis would be provided during the consultation phase. When will this data be available to make informed decisions and answer the survey accurately?

- **Priority Rationale:** What is the rationale for priority 6 being above priority 7? How does this align with the objective of providing good education for all pupils in the city?
- **Catchment Area Numbers:** Shouldn't the DS/V number not getting a place in the catchment area be 144 instead of 125?
- **Open Admissions Priority:** Did the Council explain the proposed "open admissions priority" without addressing what will happen to children who don't get a place in their catchment area?
- **FSM Criteria Analysis:** Why not wait until the September 25 analysis based on the new FSM criteria is done? Why rush something so important with many unknown impacts?
- **Modelling Proposals:** Are you going to do modelling on various combinations of proposals and compare them to the current situation? When will this modelling be available?
- **Proposal Interactions:** If all proposals were made at once, some might cancel out the benefits of others. For example, including Whitehawk in the DS/V catchment might reduce the chances for those without priorities. Is this correct?
- **Priority 7 Concerns:** Are you missing the point that there is no choice for DS/V if they are in priority 7 and get neither?
- **Traffic Modelling:** What is the traffic modelling for extra car journeys and free bus passes for children who have to travel across town or towards Woodingdean?
- **Sibling Link:** If an older sibling gets allocated an out-of-catchment area school, will the younger sibling be given a sibling link with this school?
- **Single Catchment Area:** Why not have a single catchment area across Patcham, Longhill, BACA, DS/V, or dynamically change the 20% parameter to ensure equivalent children have the same probability of getting a place?
- **Travel and Mental Health:** Many issues were raised about travel, mental health, and impact on attendance during the engagement exercise. Are there impact assessments that will be published soon?

Online meeting – 16th December 2024 5:30pm – 7:00pm A link to a recording of the meeting is available in YourVoice: [2024-12-16 School admission arrangements consultation meeting recording on Vimeo](#)

The opening presentation was made by Cllr Jacob Taylor and by Richard Barker.

Questions and Comments:

Attendee: I just wanted to say that in this new proposal, the chance of a child in a specific area getting into certain schools is as low as 1 in 4 if they don't have certain priorities. Do you think that's reasonable?

Council response: Yes, the data shows that a high percentage of children within catchment are getting a place, but those without certain priorities would have a lower chance. The council is trying to address this without redrawing catchments. Whether the balance is right at 20% for open admissions is for discussion and consultation. If people feel a lower % in the Open Admissions and therefore a more balanced % chance

across the catchments would be a better option that is certainly something the Council could consider.

Attendee: Expresses concerns about the impact of proposals on children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), questioning the timeframes for reviews and the adequacy of the consultation period.

Council response: Clarifies that the slide mentioned ongoing work started 1-1.5 years ago, not new consultation items. Mentions a specific review of the home-to-school transport policy in the new year. Discusses extensive work on SEND, including support for schools and increasing sufficiency in placements for autism and social, emotional, and mental health needs

Attendee: Expresses frustration about the consultation process and the impact on children with SEND

Council Response: More details about SEND children are given in the cabinet report and there is ongoing work with the parent and carer council.

Attendee: Asks about the metrics used to measure outcomes, including attendance, behaviour, and performance.

Council response: Explains that the attainment gap is a narrow measure set by the government, but other outcomes like attendance, behaviour, and happiness are also considered. Work is happening to gather young people voice during the consultation.

School leader also responds: Emphasises the importance of supporting school leadership in measuring progress and including student voices in the consultation.

Attendee: Expresses disappointment with the consultation process and concerns about the impact on her community, particularly regarding school catchment areas and social segregation.

Council response: emphasises the importance of considering the social mix in the city and the need for informed decisions. Also clarifies the role of the Council in focusing on local authority community maintained schools.

Attendee: Raises concerns about the impact of the proposals on her children's school choices and the cost of travel.

Council response: acknowledges the need to balance between social mix and transport costs

Attendee: Suggests considering a tiebreaker based on the shortest journey to the nearest school with places.

Council response: Explains the challenges of using distance as the sole determinant for school admissions.

Attendee: Asks for clarification on the admission criteria and the impact on children with free school meals (FSM)

Council response: Provides clarification on the admission criteria and the calculation of FSM percentages explaining that the higher priorities would count towards the quota.

Attendee: Seeks further clarification on the allocation process for children on FSMs if it's oversubscribed in priority 4 or 5

Council response: Confirms the process - tie breaker in place is random allocation.

Attendee: Asks about the precedence of the proposed changes in other cities.

Council response: Explains that there are no national benchmarks for catchment area admissions.

Attendee: Raises concerns about the impact of the proposals on his child's school choices and the performance of certain schools.

Council response: Responds to concerns, discussing the focus on improving outcomes at all schools and the balance between fairness and transport considerations.

Attendee: Questioned the extent of consultation with teachers and the impact on students.

Council response: Acknowledges the need to hear from a range of stakeholders.

Attendee: Further emphasises the importance of consulting with classroom teachers.

Attendee: Raises concerns about the impact of the proposals on working families and the need for schools to work together.

Council response: Responds to concerns, discussing the importance of collaboration between schools and the impact on working families.

Attendee: Questions the decision to go against the advice of an advisor about waiting for FSMs data and questioned the reduction of the PAN at Stringer.

Council response: Explains the rationale behind the decisions and the need to consider long-term impacts.

Attendee: Raises concerns about the potential unintended consequences of the proposals

Council response: Acknowledges concerns and confirms there is a need to consider potential unintended consequences.

Attendee: Questions the transparency of the consultation process and the publication of results – whether they will be clear.

Council response: Confirms that the results of the consultation will be published clearly.

Attendee: Raises concerns about the calculation of FSM percentages and the impact on school admissions.

Council response: Acknowledges the concerns and discusses the need to assess the impact of the policies.

Attendee: Raises concerns about the impact of the proposals on statutory services and the holistic impact on families

Council response: Acknowledges concerns and discusses the need to consider the impact on statutory services and families.

A short summary of some of the points and questions raised in the MS Teams chat of this online meeting. Some were responded to during the meeting.

- The need for proposals to be available in simpler language or format to improve understanding and engagement.
- Concerns about the relationship between travel distance to school and attendance, particularly for children with SEND needs.
- The impact of increased travel distances on the prioritisation of the needs of "the city child".
- The effect of travel distance on absenteeism and attainment.
- The reliability of public transport and its impact on students' punctuality.

- The stress and negative impact on behaviour and attitude due to a stressful start to the day.
- The complexity and perceived unfairness of the proposals, leading to confusion and dissatisfaction.
- The potential stress and negative impact on families relying on the appeals process.
- The need for consultation with children and young people to gather their views.
- The short timeframe for reviewing responses and making changes to proposals before the council must make a decision.
- The impact of travel time on accessing extracurricular activities and the overall well-being of students.
- The potential economic impact of increased traffic congestion due to parents driving their children across the city.

In Person meeting at Hove Town Hall – 7th January 2025 6:00pm – 7:30pm

The opening presentation was made by Cllr Jacob Taylor and by Richard Barker.

Questions and Comments:

Attendee: (this question was submitted and it was asked that it was read out in the meeting) I feel the target of 20% does not go far enough. The system currently in place is inherently unfair, denying choice of education for families who cannot afford to move home within Brighton. Already at my daughter's school families who are able to move are leaving Brighton. Is the Brighton school organisation team committed to equity in education? There will be a lot said about children who need to bus across the city should changes be made. This is a reality for children out of central areas already, in fact my daughter would need to bus to school under the current arrangements however is within walking distance to the more central secondary's. If change is not made it feels like certain children's needs are prioritised over others

Council response: These points take us to the point that we are attempting to reflect upon within the proposals. Whether this is the correct set of proposals is what needs to be discussed. Regarding the fairness of the catchment area lies, agreed – when you draw a line and there are schools which are more popular than others, there will be individuals who will consider this to be unfair.

Attendee: We live in 5 ways and I am struggling to understand what these changes might mean. I've heard that we've only got a 1 in 4 chance of gaining a place at the school I want – I don't know how true that is. I won't be putting my child on two buses to go to a failing school. I want to know whether the council has considered polling residents to see how many people are thinking of leaving because of this policy?

Council response: We don't have any failing schools and I reject the use of that language. In terms of polling no – and we wouldn't do one as a referendum. As part of the survey people can add in comments and people are welcome to share those thoughts with us.

Attendee: I have a year 5 daughter who would be impacted by these proposals. The data you've presented here today is interesting and I'd like to hear more about it. You mentioned attainment – but what does success look like here? Is success moving children around to keep numbers up in some schools?

Council response: The data is what has been provided in other meetings and was in the cabinet paper at the start of the consultation. We have not published a % chance of gaining a place at a particular school but you are right that with some of what we propose it may reduce the chances of gaining a place at a catchment area school. The Sutton Trust is encouraging councils to consider their school admission arrangements to consider how access to popular and oversubscribed schools can be given fairly across a wider than typical range of pupils. We mainly use geographical factors here, with catchments, so we are exploring what else we may be able to do. Regarding success – we’re trying to tackle a number of things at the same time. If we only had falling pupil numbers we may do a more limited number of changes but because of a range of issues here we need to look at a range of measures we need to take. If we continue to have such large schools it means numbers continue to fall at other schools and they will become more difficult to sustain. We’ve had to close some schools in the city already. We believe these are moderate changes in PAN. In terms of success then I want to see a smaller attainment gap, more choice and sustainable schools.

Attendee: I feel your answers are contradictory – you said we have oversubscribed schools therefore those living outside the catchment area cannot get it, but you are also saying that pupil numbers are dropping so you need to remove places. Why not keep the larger schools – where you know people want to go to. You are moving that unfairness, not resolving it.

Council response: We have a range of issues we are trying to address. If we maintain large schools we may end up with some other schools which are inviable. We have a choice – do we want to close schools or do we want to make moderate changes to help sustain all.

Attendee: I live in Fiveways and you are reducing my local school by 30 – but there are already over 100 you say will not get a place. Why would you still make that reduction? The current year 5 children are the ones worst hit by Covid – they had their first few years of education significantly disrupted and now you want to do more.

Council response: We feel we have to balance the fairness and I hear that you are saying you think we’ve gone too far in these proposals. I hear that. We are exploring how to balance things up. We’re trying to get to a system that is broadly fairer for all. As before, if we just had one issue to fix it would be a simpler debate – but we are looking to address a range of issues here.

Attendee: You mentioned Cardinal Newman potentially bringing in a FSM priority. Have you asked King’s to? If no, why not.

Council response: We have spoken to Kings before and would be happy to do so again, yes.

Attendee: Regarding the increase in preferences – would you consider going up to 6. I am thinking about those in the dual school catchment areas – this might help them stay in the city if they have more chance of gaining a school they’d be happy to go to. Have you considered some schools might academise? Are you worried people might go to school outside of B&H?

Council response: Yes – London allows 6 preferences and it’s something we’ll consider. Regarding academisation, yes that is something we hear is a risk. It’s a risk I don’t want – however anything we do around school admission arrangements carries that risk. We are looking at how we can reinforce the LA offer to schools to ensure they

want to stay with us. Yes – we don't want people to go to a school outside of the city – when that child goes, their funding goes with them. We want B&H families to pick B&H schools.

Attendee: Will children get a detention at Longhill if they are late because they missed the bus as it was too full to take them?

Council response The council and the bus company will work together to ensure demand can be met.

Attendee: Does your data take into account children that may come out of the private school system?

Council response: Yes – we factor that in our forecast data and as yet we are not seeing a significant move back in from the private sector but we'll continue to monitor that locally.

Attendee: You talk about wanting to reach between 5 and 10% surplus places – where are these surplus places currently? On the outskirts of the city?

Council response: Yes that's right – broadly speaking surplus places tend to be at BACA, PACA and Longhill.

Attendee: This presentation is really clear – has it been shared?

Council response: It'll be presented at each public meeting and is available on YourVoice.

Attendee: I live in Fiveways and I am a teacher – I don't feel there has been any consultation with schools. You've spoken to Headteachers but not other teachers. If you did, you'd get good feedback. If you spoke to teachers you may hear that being with their local community is a really important factor when it comes to attendance. We have high absence rates in the city – belonging is a really key thing. I have serious concerns about bus journeys. I worry about behaviour and there being no adult supervision.

Council response: Regarding travel and absence – our data shows that Cardinal Newman and King's, where people travel further to reach, have some of the lowest rates for persistent absence. Belonging is a really important and complex issue for the city. Our community is brighton & hove and whilst there are of course local communities within that, there are also wide ranging communities. For the areas where there are dual school catchment areas they have many communities within them. Is Surrenden and KempTown part of the same community? Regarding teachers – we encourage everyone to complete the survey and people can indicate they are school staff so we'd welcome responses from teachers and other school staff too.

Attendee: I'm a parent living in Bevendean, which is part of a single school catchment area. We have no choice. Almost everyone where I live goes to BACA regardless of what we apply for. I'm pleased the council is looking at this as the current system is really unfair. I'd like it to be more radical though – more than 20% and a complete overhaul of catchment areas making them more rational. Our children have the right to a good education. We live in a deprived part of town and the current system only intensifies the amount of deprivation in the area. We have real issues with social segregation and I hope the council will now continue to focus on that. Are you removing the sibling link? This is really important for our families to ensure the sibling link remains. Travel to BACA can be easier so any displaced children could be supported to go there?

Council response: Yes we'll be looking at travel options thank you. Regarding sibling link – our proposal is to retain the system that is currently in place and if the council moves your catchment area we'll still honour the sibling link.

Attendee: I'm an educator, a teacher at Longhill. I see success stories every day there. I have students going to the best colleges who are praised. My daughter went there and is an astrophysicist. All schools are trying their best and doing well. My concern is whether we are going far enough with this? I want all schools to be able to deliver a broad curriculum and I wonder if we should go further to support that?

Council response: Yes, we have great success stories in all our schools. You are right to mention the breadth of curriculum – we want schools to be able to thrive in that area.

Attendee: I support your proposals but would like to know what happens if this doesn't get voted through. I can see there is a lot of opposition to this. What happens to the schools that might struggle, if these proposals don't go through?

Council response: Of all the types of consultations a council can do, it's the ones that affect children and their families that can be the most difficult of course. Yes there is a lot of opposition but also this is not a referendum. We need to understand the issues and the impacts of these proposals. There is also other work going on with schools outside of this, such as the work on potential collaboration models between schools. We also hope that one day the numbers of families may start to rise again, so we need schools to survive to accommodate future children.

Attendee: I'm a parent from the preston park area. I am pleased to see the council trying to tackle inequality and support the proposals. One issue I have is that in order to pacify the opposition you may go with a smaller % of open admissions. By making smaller the number of displacements, it makes it harder for travel planning. Has the council considered what the tipping point is for what makes it suitable?

Council response: It's a good question – would it better to have larger number of children travelling to make it viable. This is something we have to consider during this consultation.

Attendee: I want to talk about wellbeing – people are very concerned about these proposals, about the impact on their children and on their own lives. I know my daughter and I know travelling for her won't work so this is highly undesirable. We must consider the wellbeing of the children.

Council response: We hear that and we are not uncaring. I do understand how families are feeling about this even if I don't share those concerns for mine. This is important policy work here and we are listening to what everyone is saying.

Council response from another Cllr: I represent Woodingdean and I want to mention Rudyard Kipling School and the proposal to increase its PAN. I want it noted that I support that proposal and the schools plan for a transition to vertical groupings and more sustainable finances. Regarding secondary – more children from Woodingdean are going to Lewes than Longhill – so families can make a choice about travel. Success for me is that more children want to go to schools within the city.

Attendee: Why are you rushing this through in February when you said that you can publish the data on FSMs in March?

Council response: Legally we have to do the consultation and decision making at this time, before the end of February, if we want to make changes for entry into school for September 2026. I don't think this is rushed – this is an issue the city and the council has been grappling with for years and has been a focussed area of work for the

administration since gaining power. I think the process is reasonable and there is plenty of time to draw a range of views out from the public. I think this is a process which is well and de

Attendee: I think that there is a lack of impact evidence base. No impact assessment on travel, truancy, attendance. It's not helpful to bring up Cardinal Newman and King's when talking about absence. You need to do a cost impact of all of this. Regarding attainment – are you looking to elevate standings for all, or close the gap? If I wanted to build 20 homes I've have to submit so much paperwork – I cannot believe you can make these changes with this information here.

Council response: I want to elevate the standings for all. We've heard from some that the cabinet papers have too much information in them but I hear your views.

Attendee: Have you spoken with the people from the single school catchment areas? Is it choice they are frustrated by or is it the quality of education they have available to them?

Council response: I cannot speak for parents but am informed by some of course – I genuinely think there is a mixture of both feelings out there. Everyone's child is different but so many families have no option around considering which school offer might suit their child the best.

Attendee: Class Divide have spent 5 years thinking about this – but maybe we should just focus on fixing poverty.

Council response: Sadly we don't have the power to do that – there are more things the council could do but we don't have all the levers. However we cannot just ignore admission arrangements as that is very much something we can do something about. We know that a lot has been said about attendance and it is really important – there is a clear link with attainment. We have a whole team working on this in the council and the schools themselves of course are doing most of the work in this area.

Attendee: I've been listening to the debate and my concern is that the attainment of my child (I live in a dual school catchment area) will go down through this policy.

Council response: We've had academic research shared with us believes there is a linear relationship between clustering of poverty and attainment – AND that there is a levelling up effect of mixing.

Attendee: My primary concern is around buses – my child would have to travel 2.5 hours a day on a bus under this proposal and that is a big thing for me.

Council response: I understand – I hear what you are saying about concerns over long bus journeys.

Attendee: Is there a link between journey times and attendance and is there a link between attendance and attainment?

Council response: We are looking to draw this out more – it's hard to model accurately. But yes – nationally there is an observed link between those factors and we know there is a link between attainment and attendance. We are a small city in comparison to a lot of areas and there are a number of easier journeys that could be made to other schools.

In Person meeting at Jubilee Library –11th January 2025 10:00am – 11:30am

The opening presentation was made by Cllr Jacob Taylor and by Richard Barker.

Questions and Responses

Attendee: Thank you for putting so much energy into these consultation events. I am a single mum and I chose Preston Park for the ease of going to school. As a safeguarding concern, if the train gets delayed, I rely on the community to help. This creates some anxiety for me about the future. Please offer a perspective on what I should do in this situation. I don't understand how the concept of increased choice affects attainment and making schools viable. Also, increased attendance issues could affect attainment. Additionally, the sense of social belonging, which the EOCD cites as an issue, is already trailing behind. The sense of belonging can be really localised.

Council response: Thank you for sharing; it's really important to hear people's stories. On community – yes, I agree – we have different types of communities across the city. When you layer it on to schools, it gets more complex. We cannot set a secondary school community tightly aligned to a specific geographic community as they are too large. Regarding additional choice, we are trying to achieve different things at the same time, which makes it complex. If we didn't have reducing pupil numbers, we wouldn't need to look at reducing school sizes. We are looking at whether we can add in some more choice but have to balance that with the impact on families within the central areas. We are doing some better work on what the impact of travel looks like. It's really important that the council listens to people in the city; it's their children, their families, and their working lives.

Attendance: I appreciate what you are doing to reduce inequality in the city – and I also think schools should be the heart of communities. I don't want to see children travel far and tear apart communities. By your model, there are 144 children who may not get into Dorothy Stringer or Vardnean – Patcham is not an option due to being oversubscribed. Blatchington Mill and Hove Park will also be unreachable for us under these proposals. So if you don't have a sibling link, where do you think they'll go? I support what you are trying to do, but have you modelled this approach other than this spreadsheet? Have you looked at other LAs? What impact on mental health, etc.? We've also missed reception and year 1 due to the pandemic. We've already got huge gaps in their learning, and I am worried this will have a huge impact.

Council response: We've seen elements of what we are proposing elsewhere but not area-wide. I understand what you are saying about whether this is experimenting. If you are changing things, you are trying to see how things shift. If it's any other area of council policy, it may be different – but this is children and family life. I do get the worries. Catchments as they are drawn have quirks already. Under the current arrangements, there are people who live closer to DS/V than those in Kemptown. In terms of sibling link – this is important, and we've kept this in our arrangements. We maintain sibling links if we move your catchment area. Regarding where you'd go, it would be the nearest school with spaces available unless you get another school of preference. Many families don't want to make long journeys but some do more already – CNCS/Kings – have the lowest level of persistent absence.

Attendee: I live in a single school catchment area and only have BACA as a choice. My closest school is Varndean. I'm not in receipt of FSMs, so it feels really unbalanced and unfair that my daughter doesn't have the chance to go to their closest schools. More children in my area would have choice under these proposals. My child is now in year 8 at BACA and whilst I was not keen to start with, she loves it. I'm proud of her and the school. It's got stigma, but it's really improving. However, I think this choice is good. I

did have some issues with buses, and I emailed the bus company, and they responded ASAP, and it's been better since then. I feel the bus company will adapt if this goes ahead. Thank you if you can give families meaningful choice.

Council response: Regarding the bus company – we have the highest bus usage outside of London, and they can adapt. I think a lot of people have concerns about going to Longhill, and there are no reasonable bus routes and clearly, we'd have to look at that. We have time until September 26 to sort out new routes. Regarding BACA, I agree, it's a great and improving school. Someone suggested I was talking BACA down in these proposals, quite the opposite. They are great and are getting good results. We see fantastic results from all schools in the city.

Attendee: Regarding the 144 potentially note getting a place from that area, quite a substantial increase compared to other areas. Why is it that the Dorothy Stringer PAN will be reduced – why not wait until the population falls in later years?

Council response: Regarding the reduction – we acknowledge that we are trying to solve more than one issue, which isn't ideal for the city. We're being open that we are looking to make moderate changes to Dorothy Stringer and to Blatchington Mill School to allow other schools in the city to thrive – and not everyone likes that.

Attendee: I am a mum of a child living in Hanover. I want to ask about Longhill – why are you reducing two classes worth there when the number of pupils is already low. Also, how are you working with headteachers across the city, and what are their views on the PAN and catchment area proposals?

Response: Regarding Longhill – the reality is that the number of children coming through the doors is lower than 270, even lower than 210. So we think this will give them a better base for planning from. I'm not speaking for them, but we don't think this will have an immediate impact on them. They are yet to respond, but I believe they are comfortable with the proposal. I know all secondary Headteachers well and work with them closely. I'm not aware of secondary schools publicly being vocally against the catchment area proposals. We've not heard anyone being concerned about the communities joining the schools. On PANs – each school will make their response. We haven't heard yet that any school will appeal. I think all schools understand the city position. Blatchington Mill and Dorothy Stringer may have questions about the capacity this takes out of their schools but our view is that at 300 they would still be in the top 10% of school size in the country. It's a very healthy budget to deliver a broad curriculum.

Attendee: Regarding the 144 figure – what's the denominator for that – how many children are in that catchment area? Is the FSM priority quota stacked on top of 1-3?

Council response: We've been asked for the denominator figure and we are exploring what data we are able to put into the public domain. Regarding how we calculate the FSMs – I want to be really clear. Under the 2025 proposals, the city average quota is only taken from priorities 4 and 5. For 2026, we made an amendment in the Cabinet report to show our intention. For 2026 we will start counting the other earlier allocations towards the quota – this is because we have amended the catchment area and bought in an open admissions priority. We do not want the FSM averages in the schools to be so polarised and we think the distribution should be more evenly spread. However we are suggesting a change in how we do this for 2026 so that we don't see such a sharp rise in some schools that they struggle to manage.

Attendee: I've lived in Bevendean since 2010 and I've been a teaching assistant in Dorothy Stringer - so a foot in both camps. One concern is that Dorothy Stringer is already facing funding cuts this year and is already looking at resource cuts. We've previously tried to get extra funding for the canteen. The school was built for 500 – but now has 1600. The canteen holds 100. The children can't fit and have to eat outside. Lesson changeover time is chaos. I worked to support children with complex special needs and I saw the overcrowding being an issue for them. If children have Autism or even just anxiety, they'll be impacted. Therefore, funding cuts will impact that – there is a safe space for children with Special Needs, but it's also the staff room for TAs. So it's noisy. Yes, I do think parents need to have a choice – but it needs to be pragmatic. I'm also concerned about travel – will there be good bus routes? Since Covid, there have been more parents driving their children to school.

Council response: Regarding the school, yes I agree, it was designed for a smaller number of intakes. The large increases there only really expanded in the last decade when there was a bulge, and now we are taking steps to address that by proposing a reduction. So there is an argument to take it smaller, but I understand why parents who want to go there don't agree. All schools are struggling with budgets, even those that are full and popular. The government is putting more funding into public services, but budgets are still difficult. Regarding the buses, routes sometimes need to change and often do. The position in the city is that the council already funds a number of school buses, and then there are bus company-provided routes which turn into commercial routes after the school run and then there are just general commercial routes that children travel on too. Whitehawk at the moment has three buses going to Longhill and we can explore them starting from more easterly locations such as Hanover and Elm Grove.

Attendee: I'm a therapist who has worked in BH schools, currently work at Varndean. Firstly – the attainment gap. Over the past 15 years, I've seen all the cuts that have happened, from Sure Start to family support workers, etc. There are kids who arrive not ready to learn. And Covid really impacted that. I am fearful that bussing children across the city isn't really addressing the issues of attainment. For example, invest in early years – this is what will make a difference. Anxiety is massive, it's really grown, and we see this across the city and I am concerned about Emotionally Based School Avoidance. I have kids 10 minutes walk away from school that won't come in, with trying to push more kids across the city, I am concerned this will make it worse.

Council response: I don't want to get too political, but the previous government has degraded public services. I echo and hear what you are saying. I was shocked when I started to understand the numbers of referrals for mental health support we are seeing from schools. Covid, social media, news cycles, etc. are all contributing factors. Clearly, we don't want to pursue policies that make this worse and we need to consider that. We do have to consider, though, that there are communities already impacted. But you are right on this concept of EBSA and the correlation with transport implications.

Attendee: I've got a child who has recently been diagnosed as Autistic. Can the council guarantee that my child will get an EHCP in time? The council does not have the capacity to cope with applications for EHCPs. I know my child cannot get a bus to school. Her needs are so extreme, to leave for school can take hours. She won't move

outside her community. You are going to have a wave of parents trying to apply for EHCPs. The council can't even work with the number they've got.

Council response: I'm sorry that you've had that experience through primary about the time it's taken to get this for with your diagnosis and application. We do hear this from families, unfortunately. We're not trying to block EHCPs, and in fact, we're issuing a lot more, reflected nationally. We don't want a system where all are trying to get an EHCP. We do have priority 2, exceptional circumstances, within our arrangements already. I don't meant to imply the circumstances you describe will necessarily gain a place but just for awareness – it needs to have independent supporting evidence. You do not need an EHCP to apply for that priority.

Attendee: I'm a data scientist, we have well-established rules in our professional society and I cannot see that you are following them. I cannot see your workings. I cannot understand how you are choosing to ignore how our community works. I don't know why you think it's acceptable here. I was appalled by the first questions in your engagement exercise survey. It seems like there are no lessons learned. Are you willing to apologise or learn lessons? Show the code as everyone else does.

Response: Regarding the process and the data – I don't accept that we're not being transparent and open with the public. Regarding the questions in the initial engagement exercise, we've heard that people found them leading. I'm not going to apologise for them. Yes, we do learn and accept where there are lessons to learn. We do this and will continue to reflect on the engagement exercise. Just to be clear, that was not a formal consultation. There is a high level of peer review work on this. I'm not a data scientist or academic, and we're not trying to be defensive.

Attendee: I wanted to second a lot of the opinions that have come up. On our street there are three children that now might go to different schools potentially. The parents all help each other out. We have a lot of parents that need to commute so need support in case of children needing picking up etc. We'll lose all of that, we'll get into serious trouble and not know what to do. And that's aside from the anxiety that families will feel. I had stress to get on the bus every day to get out to school. If you go to schools and see the kids who haven't made it on time – those kids just won't go to school. I could never go to sports events or friends' houses. I can see why people are emotional. You imply I've had choice in my live, I live where I live to commute to London. I don't think we've had enough understanding of how this will ruin our lives.

Council response: I hear what you are saying, and we need to weigh these things up.

Attendee: I grew up in Ukraine and this top-down social engineering doesn't work. There is a lot of 'whack-a-mole' going on – you are not listening to the professionals. I've not heard proper responses. You are not just fiddling with families' futures, you are fiddling with your political career. If mistakes are made, this will bite your political career.

Council response: Can't any change we make be considered social engineering? What about when the catchment areas came in in 2007? I understand the challenge. I know the politics and history really well. It's a difficult situation. I'm not in politics to further a political career, I want to make a difference to residents in the city.

Attendee: How do you square away the additional travel? My child would go to Longhill which is 3.6 miles away, over an hour. How do you square away those distances? If a child got a place at Dorothy Stringer or Varndean from near Longhill – they travel 5 miles

and mine nearly 4. 3000 children being moved. We don't want to drive our children to school.

Council response: It's a good question, how do we square this away. I hear from many people that they broadly support the aims of what we are looking to do here, although I note Adam Dennett doesn't. The dilemma is, is the increased travel worth the changes we're proposing?

Attendee: I'm here as an education researcher. My child is at BHASVIC. We felt really privileged to have a choice. I hadn't realised others had no choice. I was in a street where all children went to another school, but we maintained communities. If you live near a station, it's very near to get to BACA. Our concern is that some of our children will be going alone. So if you have more going together, if this happens as a cohort, it could be affirming as it will enable you to build the links of transport/childcare, etc.

Council response: Adam's work has been mentioned, I'm reading all of it and thinking of all of it. Regarding geography, Brighton is affected by this. We have hills and hollows, which makes us different from London, which is the system we are aspiring to in some ways. Regarding whether it is binary decision to take this forward as is or not take it forward, it won't be like that – we can make some reasonable amends to the policy when making the final decision but what we cannot do is wholesale changes without consulting on them.

Attendee: I am raising a family in the DS/V area and I have a wellbeing concern about the possibility of going to Longhill. It's not about the school; it's about the distance. The knock-on effect on our child, then on us and then on our jobs etc. I've also got concerns about travel times. I suspect that travelling from central to east will be very problematic with congestion delays. I am really concerned about the impact on the child.

Council response: I know I gave a similar answer earlier, I have children who are young, and my friends live in the centre of Brighton and beyond. The well-being of families and how their lives are affected is really important. This is not an exercise, it's a policy exploration for the benefit of families.

Attendee: I also live in the DS/V area, concerned about my child and ripping apart of our community. We walk everywhere and I've also had the community at the heart of this. It's not just about my child, I might be lucky, but if his other friends go elsewhere this would be bad. Communities ripped apart. I've brought my family up with the roots in their community.

Council response: Thank you – I hear it and understand your comments.

In Person meeting at Varndean School –13th January 2025 6:00pm – 7:30pm

The opening presentation was made by Cllr Jacob Taylor and by Richard Barker.

Questions and Responses

Attendee: My oldest child will be priority 7 under these proposals. His year group has been hit hard by Covid. He lives 3 minutes from school. Why is the council ignoring attendance issues? BACA has the highest rates of absence. What are you doing about it? This feels rushed; we need to make evidence-based decisions.

Council response: We are consulting on fairness and the citywide picture. Attendance is crucial, and we have a team working on it. Varndean focuses on improving

attendance for those persistently absent. Attendance will remain a focus for the council. We have data and are considering it. We won't rush decisions that may harm the city.

Attendee: I moved here from Medway for the schools. My daughter had a traumatic experience. There are reports of girls being attacked by males. What steps have you taken to mitigate these risks?

Council Response: We understand people move for schools, but we must consider all families. Violence against women and girls is a serious issue. Many children take the bus, and safeguarding discussions take place internally⁴

Attendee: As a secondary school teacher, I see the importance of after-school support. Many children rely on after-school detention. Have you consulted with teachers and SLTs on how travel impacts behaviour policies?

Council response: We have worked on after-school clubs at Longhill. Behaviour policy has not been raised, but we will discuss it with schools

Attendee: As a parent of a child with SEND, what is the evidence for a "city child"? What impact will these proposals have on young carers? Why hasn't an EIA been done for vulnerable groups?

Council response: Priority 2 can be used for these children, and there is an appeal process. City child is a concept that has been used in the city for some time.

Attendee: When will you release the confirmed bus routes?

Council response: We will review the Home to School Transport policy before finalising bus routes. The bus company will adjust routes as needed.

Attendee: Do you think the current bus routes for BACA are working?

Council response: There have been issues with BACA, and we work to rectify them with the bus company.

Attendee: Why the rush? There are many unknowns, and we need to take our time to make evidence-based decision.

Council response: We have evidence and will have more before making proposals. We are considering all points carefully.

Attendee: Why are you reducing the PAN at DS when 144 children won't get a place?

Council response: With falling pupil numbers, we face choices like reducing school sizes or closing schools. We think it's reasonable to reduce one class at larger schools.

Attendee: What about environmental concerns of increased travel?

Council response: We have to weigh up environmental concerns along with other considerations.

Attendee: How will you ensure support for children with SEND with reduced PANs?

Council response: Schools with lower PANs already support children with a range of needs. We are discussing this with schools.

Attendee: What does SEND mean in the context of priority 2 and other admission arrangements?

Council response: Children with an EHCP are outside of admission arrangements. Exceptional/compelling cases are considered by a community paediatrician amongst others.

Attendee: I work for ESCC for Adult social care. For interest, they have a School organisation plan published – it's really clear on its vision, data, etc. This shows children who go to school. I couldn't find one for B&H and it would really help me to have that info when responding to the information. Where is it and can I see it?

Regarding inflows and outflows - the maps you are showing imply that we operate in a vacuum – which we don't. For example, Saltdean going east. I am not seeing your awareness of the outflow and how this is being factored in. I saw a tiny point – 2031, even with these changes, you are forecasting an 18% capacity – where is your vision for that? I couldn't see that – and I hope I can find it and if I can, my faith is very low. I grew up in Brighton – and went to DS getting a bus 40 minutes each way – It was horrendous.

Council response: We also work closely with West Sussex and East Sussex on school place planning and you are right that at both ends we have movement. Regarding emotion and anger, I am really sorry to hear that and it hurts and upsets me. I don't want you to feel that. The council needs to hear that – we hear that and it's more than numbers on a page. As a Councillor, I deal with lots of resident issues but clearly, children's lives are the most important.

Attendee: I feel rejected and I feel I need to leave the city I was born in. It will have an impact on Adult Social Care as I live near my mum and won't be able to if I move.

Attendee: I don't disagree that changes need to happen to make for a fairer and more inclusive system – when you talk about fairness you need to give a decent notice. Many of us have broken ourselves to stay in this catchment area, so we can send these kids to these schools. My son already knows his walk to school and may not be able to go with his friends. Please can you explain open admissions more – if it's all about disadvantage, how come you are letting in all postcodes from outside? As it's random, all 120 places might go to those with Withdean. On a personal note – regarding the COVID factor. This year 5 group in particular has had a really tough time – they missed 50% of reception and 50% of year 1. This is a particular cohort of children – and now you are saying to my child that you can't go to the school he already knows how to walk to.

Council response: I really don't think that this whole area is wealthy. But what you've referred to is that families have to save up and stretch themselves. Is that the basis of the system we want – and what about families that cannot do that? Saunders Park is currently in the BACA CA but is closer to here. When you look at any admissions arrangements there will be people that feel it is okay. I'm not arrogant to think we've got it perfect in this proposal. Regarding Open Admission – we did look at the School Admissions Code to see if we could prioritise based on other financial factors. So we are looking at open admission – to address fairness – to look at how to help single school catchment areas have more opportunities.

Attendee: But you'll only have 1 year – and we don't have that to make an informed proposal.

Council response: We've not predetermined the outcome of this. We might change all or none of the points. Everyone is considering very carefully.

Attendee: I assume you'll be sharing the forecasting of your proposal.

Council response: Yes.

Attendee: The issue is though that you are taking children out of here and bringing others in.

Council response: I've been open – we're trying to do address multiple issues at once.

Attendee: You keep using the word fairness – but this is the cohort losing 144 – higher than everywhere else. This doesn't feel fair. It's an intolerable level of uncertainty.

Council response: People have asked if we're targeting this area. The key point here is that these schools are oversubscribed.

Attendee: Just touching on some points already raised – one of the concerns is the variability of the impact of all the options on the page. We have no idea which one you are going to take. Why don't you take the feedback and then consult on that? It feels we have no control over this. We have no idea about the ramifications. With the sheer increase in vehicle journeys, especially with the concerns about buses. Is there no environmental consideration here – I thought this was Brighton.

Response: We cannot do a consultation outside of the period. We cannot do a consultation for a future year – you have to do it 18 months in advance. We can do more engagement but not a formal consultation. But I understand the point on whether we should take longer.

Attendee: You want to improve attendance and attainment – I fail to see how this will improve if getting on two buses at 7:30.

Attendee: Do you think there will be unintended consequences? If yes – what are they? If not, what is that based on? 10 years ago you had Random allocation and got rid of it.

Council response: Clearly we have to consider this with any policy. Clearly, we may not know the unknown ones. We're hearing from people that there is a concern about Whitehawk children not getting a place. We haven't got rid of random allocation.

Attendee: Is there a show of hands of those thinking of leaving Brighton? (Approx half of the room put their hand up). What risk analysis have you done on this?

Council response: Clearly we don't want people to leave and that has been relayed back to us and we're hearing that. We're not going to do a poll, and you can share your thoughts as part of the survey.

Attendee: I'm a grandfather and this affects whole families – my main comment is that I've read all documents. It comes across as an ideologically driven mission which may affect thousands of children's lives. You've refuted a lot of very good academic evidence in this and ignored it. You are still here talking about it as if it's happened but details are important. This is an ideological way of solving a resource matter.

Council response: I don't agree – you could say that about anything. This is informed by values – we're looking at how we want to fulfil this.

Attendee: Everyone would appreciate the ambition to have good schools for all – I don't understand how this works. What work is being taken to make all schools good? At the moment it doesn't sound like a labour policy to help people get an advantage.

Council response: We have School Improvement Boards at some schools – there are a number across the city. The council has a reasonably good record on school improvement – that is the core of the strategy of what the council does. This is looking at the broader issues of catchments etc. So to be clear this is not instead of school improvement – it's alongside.

Attendee: Unintended consequences – if a lot of kids drop out of mainstream, that will accelerate the drop in pupil numbers – particularly affecting BACA / Longhill. As people will not be taking up their places. Have you considered that?

Council response: Yes – understood. We don't want this at all. As you've highlighted, any pupil not in one of our schools is a child not bringing funding in.

Attendee: The title of the slides is school organisation. We're not talking about schools/numbers – we're talking about children. Each number has a story and a real life. I commend everyone who has spoken about their story. I've heard a lot of contradictions from you in this meeting. You talked about the city child – you want to explore policy which applies to the city child. Then you've talked about different

communities and I think we all feel a sense of belonging. You said that you'd been thinking of this for a while – if you think this is well thought out, this is embarrassing. This is not right for the children of this city.

Council response. School organisation is what we've referred to for years, it's a technical phrase. But your point is right – this is about families. I'm sorry if this is a process that comes across as about families. We hear this and understand it. Clearly, this is what we have to weigh up.

Attendee: There are many studies that show that happiness will be increased? We should have more ways of understanding that children's happiness increases.

Council response: The council cannot give compensation – but I agree with the point.

Attendee: I wanted to make the point that you started by saying you want to make things better for children who are disadvantaged. This is very narrow and not looking at diversity. I want to publicly thank Varndean GB for giving children in SEND. Nothing in the consultation about SEND – you say it's okay you can apply for priority 2 but it doesn't work. It's going to increase massively – what are the impacts on those managing that? Clearly, it's not going to work. It's too narrow to consider the lens of disadvantage.

Attendee: You said that safeguarding was important but you are asking very many young children to get on buses in the evening. Buses are not safe. They are not savvy enough yet to look after themselves. If they manage to sense danger – so it compromises. I googled crime – lots of crimes on buses at the times our children will be travelling.

Attendee: I've been waiting the whole time to talk. We've only just touched on this. I cannot believe that SEND is not coming up. You could put under 2 that you could put diagnosis – that won't help those waiting. There are hundreds of children with additional needs. So no EHCP, no formal diagnosis – what about those with siblings with SEND needs? No one has assured us that there are plans for supporting these children. They are just sitting on lists.

Attendee: You said that you are not sure how you'd do a consultation, I've run public consultations. Good practice is that you give them a good summary, 12 weeks, and a good impact analysis. The council saying that there would be an EIA at the end – we've not had that. A good consultation doesn't look like this. I really believe in your primary objective of increasing access to good schools. We need to see the cost-benefit analysis – cost of buses, costs on girls, costs of environmental impact. How about you abolish this for everyone – and set the timer again. There is no published info about the impact. We need to see this.

Council response: I'm not saying this is perfect. We're trying to get lots of info out and hear from lots of people – we have to get things right for something so important.

Attendee: I'd like to say, in terms of fairness. This catchment area has two schools. Is that fair that I only have a 40% chance of getting in? How does that compare to other areas? I live in Hollingbury where many people struggle, just below FSM – but we might replace them with children from Withdean. No sense of fairness or inequality. This cohort needs extra care and support because of COVID. Her friend is a key reason to go to school – if they didn't go together I'd have to home educate. There are lots of children that would do that then put their children through this. Safety of girls is key – one friend is still impacted by that. The impact on our children – our vulnerable is our year group.

Attendee: How are we supposed to calculate the displacements? FSM – counted these as 1, 2, and 3. Yes, is that the case? For 6 and 7 – does that exclude children on FSM?

Council response: In 2025 it's calculated just from priorities 4 and 5. We made an amendment at the cabinet report – our intention for future years is to include the allocations for the higher criteria too. That is what we intend to publish. That's what we're looking at and modelling. We don't want to swing schools too much. So yes – we count 1, 2, and 3.

In person meeting at Blatchington Mill School – 14th January 6:00pm – 11:30pm

The opening presentation was made by Cllr Jacob Taylor and by Richard Barker.

Questions and Comments:

Attendee: I wanted to get clarification on how the consultation process works. My daughter is in year 4 – we were at West Hove Infants when it proposed closure. It felt at the time that it was a done deal. If we do all have a comment/opinion – will that be taken into account?

Council response: Good and important point. I want to assure you that we can take forward a range or none of the approaches – I've not made my mind up.

Attendee: Re increasing the number of preferences on a form – is this done deal or is it a proposal?

Council response It's just a proposal.

Attendee: So why 4 and why not 6 – that would match London and give it more options for families. I had more and it was really helpful.

Council response: It's a balance that we have to make – we don't want people to feel overwhelmed. But we'll consider it.

Attendee: Re the reduced PAN, this school will be about a million pounds down over 4/5 years – Longhill will be 2 million down and it looks like within 18 months both schools will look at redundancy and fewer forms etc. What work are you doing with those schools to mitigate that and work with the teachers? Will this have the opposite impact of CNCS and Kings and make them more popular? What assumptions have you made about the new Sackville road development? We have thousands coming in – and we can only guess but how has that been factored in?

Council response: Re Sackville Road – yes we do factor matters like that into our forecasting work. Both for primary, secondary and for permissioned houses that are coming into. I'm always surprised that you get many fewer children coming in through new developments. But yes, we have an accurate record of forecastings and this is included. Re CNCS and Kings – we're not the admission authority and cannot control their numbers. Interestingly, CNCS is consulting on FSM. Those schools are oversubscribed and yes that might rise – however they are not expanding so it won't make a real difference and we are only making a small reduction here. Re Longhill – it's not going to make that difference there as they already have fewer children and they are working hard to expand number. For Blatchington Mill that is a really important point/question. We do understand that there will be impacts and we've had a discussion with the school and they may be submitting a formal response. At 300 BMS would still be a really large school nationally. Large school with large intake with a good

level of resources coming in each year – in comparison to some of the smaller schools. I want to reassure but yes you are right, there would be a reduction and we'd need to continue to work with the school on that.

Attendee: I also want to ask about consultation. I understand the frustration about the tightness of timings and how it's before your learnings from 2025 here. Your modelling is really difficult on how you'll show the impacts – you've got PAN, open admissions, 4 preferences (I think it should be 3 or 4 because of the sheer number of schools – I don't want my child to go to 5th or 6th preference school). We're already looking to give those in a single area child more choice and if you give them 6 choices – they will get more choice over those in central. I think that needs to be further considered. I can see why you are saying about the open preference and the admiration about your overall aims – but I am concerned about the overall impact and how we cannot understand the impact. When Cllrs make decisions – will they have access to the 2025 data?

Council response: I agree with the timings frustrations – the two processes rub up against each other. However to reassure you, we have all the applications in – we've not done the allocations but we can start to get a good sense of where people want to go, how the FSM data will work - we cannot imply allocations before 1st March – I can assure you that that will be considered. We'll look to publish a summary of insight in the cabinet paper. Re future years – yes understood, we could be back here next year.

Attendee: I work at Blatchington Mill School – Thank you for your awareness of the impact on budget £2700Million over those 5 years. My question is about consultation – you talk about family choice which is really important. But I don't understand that these measures being introduced about choice but elements of fixing other areas (e.g., PAN) – so that feels contradictory. The council doesn't pay us for children that isn't here – so why can't you leave it up to families to choose how much money we get?

Council response e: The issue is that we are tackling a number of issues at the same time. If we were not looking at attainment/choice etc and just falling pupil numbers – we'd have to look at a stark choice – we went through this last year in primary. If you have a 1 form entry primary school and cannot get the people through the door – you have a choice – do you even them out or do you close some primary schools. We did a number of those last year – which was really sad. We also tried to reduce the size of larger schools – some choose to do it. If you leave everything purely to choice – if that was the only measure – you'd start to see smaller schools would really struggle to set balanced budgets. None are easy choices. My view is that with 10 secondary schools in the city it is about right – I don't want to see any school close. So I am proposing a moderate change (albeit with a budget impact) for the good of all. We're also looking at fairness too – and addressing catchment areas and priorities etc.

Attendee: Re the vote – will the labour party have a free vote? Our Cllrs says they don't want it and will be pressured to vote for it.

Council response: We are whipped and expect councillors to vote our way but they also have to represent their wards – this is the balance we have to face all the time in the council.

Attendee: We've got a child in year 8 and year 5. We went through the admissions process with our child in year 8. We're in a one school catchment area – we didn't get any of our preferences. We feel there is a real lack of choice. We're quite high on the criteria of the ones to say to move but no one will take our child.

Attendee: I don't see how increasing the preferences helps those of us in a single

school catchment area. Why are some schools, like CNCS are very oversubscribed and are you looking at why that is?

Council response: Yes – it is true that we could up the number of preferences but if we don't make other choices, there isn't genuine choice. The meaningful and real choice is the interesting bit. Why schools have different levels of preferences – it's complicated and sometimes it's on reputation. But sometimes on myth. Re Longhill – they've had some reputational difficulties – they've got a new headteacher who is turning that around. Clearly, outside of this discussion here tonight we want all schools to do well and be popular etc. Sometimes the council runs a school improvement board to support schools improve. So we do that as well.

Attendee: I have a daughter in year 5. One comment and 2 questions. It feels that much of the conversation has focused in the east. Can you talk through the FSM priority and how that works? Then – please refer to the consultation process. I've spent 25 years running and defending them. There seems to be a lot of changes to documents – you've said that we have trouble giving us data. You are required to tell us a reasonable assessment of the impact. I don't feel I can make that judgement - especially as you've admitted you are trying to do a number of points.

Council response: Thank you. This is disappointing to hear and I don't want to be defensive. We've tried to be responsive, and it is legally legitimate to publish things as it goes along. The council doesn't always get it right but we try to learn all the time. We don't always reach all that we need to. I'll explain FSMs – for 2025 you can see that this is working in priorities 4 and 5. We are planning on writing in to our arrangements that higher priorities count towards the % for 2026. The reason we are proposing that change for the coming year is because of the desire to ease the distributions of FSM especially now we have some catchment area changes proposed in the east and the introduction of open admissions. In terms of your challenge about trying to do too many things. Yes, I hear that. Re falling pupils we're trying to reduce the size of some schools. For disadvantage and attainment we're trying to look at FSMs and the choice point.

Attendee: My question is the open admissions criteria. So you could live in Portslade and put down and get Dorothy Stringer? What is the impact please on travel? The other point is – who are you offering increased choice to – what about the families who only just get by and are not eligible for FSM. If it's only the better-resourced families who can take up this offer – what impact will that have?

Council response: The FSM priority is already there – aimed at offering more choice to the poorest. I understand the point of your point re whether more people may take up the options. Transport is really important as we are assessing more for the cabinet report. We're also reviewing our HTST policy to look at addressing this. In terms of environmental – it's hard to assess how the preferences will be used. However, we need to make an assessment in the final report about increased journey impact and whether bus routes need amending.

Attendee: Are you saying you don't have that information now? How can I make an informed response?

Council response: We're doing that work now and some of it will be done when the system and allocations are known. That's the balance we have to make in this consultation.

Attendee: My school says they've not been told about this consultation. Have any young people been consulted? Traffic – what might you do to support young people to

not be within catchment area who would have been able to walk/cycle to school – what will you put in place for them to have good safe access. Where will the good nice walking route be?

Council response: We have informed all headteachers about the consultation – clearly there is a misunderstanding somewhere. We're not consulting year 5 pupils but doing work with young people. Re transport – schools are required to have travel plans. If we make these changes – we'd need to make changes. Firstly bus routes but also walking routes. The applicability to free support on bus routes. We cannot make the bus company change until we know the policy.

Attendee: To echo what others have said – it feels like it a done deal. It's hard to believe it's a consultation – when I've been through two consultations that have happened. My daughter has already gone through 3 primary schools due to matters like this. I don't want her to go to secondary and then things change. I don't want that to happen to that child. You referred casually to SEND, just to go through that in, what impact do you think this will have on children in schools, and those yet to come. Choosing your child's school most important decision you can make. What affect might Hove Parks campus closure have on this. This will force more children on one site – something they'd previously shouted about. The pupils haven't been thought about. It's all about budgets. What affect will a school losing £2M – the care is poor as it is – it will only get worse.

Council response: Re Hove Park – the school and the governors there have decided to consultation on that, we've not pushed it but we support them. The school have made the decision to suggest it. They feel they can maintain their offer better if they are on site. That is their view and the council wish to support. Impact? They will stay as the same overall size – so 180 but on one site. The consultation at St Peters was tough and I am really sorry that happened to you. It was a really sad thing to do. Interesting your later point about reducing BMS is the very issue we're trying to look at. There are not that many things we can do to solve falling pupil numbers. I understand why you and many others would feel that they are not open consultations – but we do change some of the proposals. Sometimes we tweak, amend or abandon it. In terms of SEND – I'm sorry that you feel that was added in but we were trying to highlight that there is a whole programme of work and that isn't in isolation. We're doing lots of work to improve SEND and I hear your concern about the SEND offer at BMS if we reduce them. We also have to recognise that SEND pupils can come with funding too. We have to hold that at 300 this school would still be very large – and should still maintain a strong SEND offer.

Attendee: People have mentioned staff concerns at schools – can you explain what the partnership model is and how that might work?

Council response: Explained a number of ways in which collaborations between schools already exist and are being explored by a group of school leaders with the council.

Attendee: If I live really close to this school, will I get into this school or will I have to go elsewhere?

Attendee: It's a very complex system and it's uncertain to parents to an unacceptable degree. Giving me more choice is a fantasy. Do you think parents will have any certainty about where children will go to school? It's not reasonable to not know until 1st March the chances of gaining entry at a school.

Council response: Understood and there has been feedback on this. There is a

balance and pay off between level of choice and opportunity to others and certainty to those already in the system. There is never certainty in any admission system. Re the chance of gaining a place and we are really clear that we wouldn't do an offer. What a parent is having to consider – where does my child meet which priority. Where there is a child likely to go. We recognise that if you are in priority 7 – this is a concern for this. We've heard from families in this list about concerns about where their list is.

Attendee: I've got children in year 4 and I live close to Dorothy Stringer and Varndean – we get hit in a number of different ways. We're being hit in a number of ways – open admissions and PAN. Given the complexity of all of this – are there examples of other places in the country and what have we learnt?

Council response: We're the first LA to introduce FSM across all arrangements – I'm proud that we are leading the way to look at this. We're the first to do this for marginal ballots. We got some input about Dr Greaves and it can work well – but we know there isn't vast evidence etc.

Attendee: I see a sibling link description has changed. If a child goes in via open admission – they won't get one.

Council response: Wouldn't it be better to maintain it – we've heard that a lot. However, the more you add to the criteria at the top is the more people may be displaced in catchment area. It's a strong bit of feedback.

Attendee: Do your numbers take into consideration the numbers of families choosing home education due to lack of provision? I work in Early Years – there is only 1 specialist nursery and 2 special schools. Why are too many children going into mainstream? Somewhere like St Peters would have been great. You are increasing nursery ratios which is creating risk.

Council response: Really interesting – I didn't know that we had a specialist one. We have 7 council-run nurseries – bit of an outlier. In terms of SEND provision in the schools – we are trying to increase provision both in mainstream and specialist. We do need more provision and we're rolling out a range of work.

In person meeting at Longhill High School – 15th January 2025 5:30pm – 7:00pm

The opening presentation was made by Richard Barker.

Questions and Comments:

Attendee: What is a priority 2 definition and how is that decided?

Council response: Broadly, it's a reason why a particular school is needed for a particular child. We've had questions about the needs of children with SEND and are reviewing how others describe and manage it. We have a panel arrangement with the community paediatrician, which may need to be reviewed.

Attendee: Have you worked out, for the popular schools, how far down that criteria you might get to? Will you be letting in those in priority 7?

Council response: Yes, we have a slide that covers that. Adding in additional priority reduces the opportunities to get in via a lower priority.

Attendee: It doesn't make sense to do this now when your data isn't out until March?

Council response: Agreed, but we have to do it now. Cllr Taylor wanted to make a change last year but decided to wait for this year.

Attendee: On the slide with the data showing the number of children who may not receive a place at a Catchment area school – what does it mean when there are zero children being offered places for out of catchment area schools?

Council response: It means that school has already taken its 30% quota of FSM children up to priority 4. Therefore, no children will be allocated to priority 5, but those children will then be considered for priority 8.

Attendee: Have you modelled what fewer % of open admissions looks like?

Council response: Yes, we have modelled that.

Attendee: Have you got the information on what the schools % of FSMs will end up as?

Council response: Yes, but it is harder to accurately predict. Some schools may go above 30% as we cannot restrict children's admission based on them being FSM.

Attendee: Doesn't the data show that you are undermining what you've already done to get FSM in?

Council response: No, we had different planning assumptions. The % of FSMs might be different in September.

Attendee: Do you know how many children may lose their transitional protection?

Council response: Not a % that I have to hand.

Attendee: Why are you reducing DS while you are also showing the number of children in that catchment area is over what is available?

Council response: We are looking to address the falling pupil numbers in the city. This would mean that all our community schools are a maximum of 300 places.

Attendee: Is there data behind that – you are just saying it's nice that it would be done. I'm not seeing any data to support that?

Council response: We've made efforts in our primary schools to reduce the size of large schools, but we don't have control of that now.

Attendee: Are any schools under pressure of closing?

Council response: A number of schools could be at risk if you look at the pressures. As a council, we are looking to ensure all 10 schools can stay open.

Attendee: If your pupil numbers are dropping – are you not delaying the inevitable?

Council response: We're doing school organisation strategy alongside this approach too.

Attendee: You'll have the thorny issue eventually if numbers dip?

Council response: Part of our work is looking at other ways we can also support schools to remain open.

Attendee: I love that in principle – but if there are 144 children that have to travel – I cannot see that travel routes are easy. Have we considered the costs of increased buses and after school clubs etc.?

Council response: Yes, and more information will be in the next report. This is one of the thorny issues we're grappling with during this consultation.

Attendee: Is there a general size to keep a school viable – how small can a school be to be viable?

Council response: When we work with our secondary heads, we think 180 is a minimum viable school.

Attendee: Parent at the school – largely unimpacted by this. The question was around that there is risk of school closure is a massive concern and really damaging to hear that about their school. So disheartening for families. My question was around, outside of the LA are there discussions with ESCC?

Council response: Yes, we talk to colleagues regularly about intelligence. But we cannot control what they do – or where they have additional places offered.

Attendee: I live in DS/V – right on the west side. I have a daughter. We're a two catchment area school catchment area but we're unlikely to get in. But we cannot apply for the other schools either – but they'll all be oversubscribed by the time we get to that point.

Attendee: The fairness element is key to consider. We've made a proposal and given reasons for it. Ultimately, politicians have to decide on where the scales of fairness and reasonableness lie.

Attendee: I've heard the vote will be a whipped labour vote. Is that true?

Council response: Yes, the labour group is whipped.

Attendee: Re Lewes – the journey is shorter to Lewes. Do we know how many children might choose to go to Lewes instead?

Council response: Just because you have the data from last year doesn't mean you know. That number does fluctuate.

Attendee: I think that the 144 children displaced will choose to go to Lewes as it's easier than to get here. So my point is that this might make this worse for Longhill too.

Council response: They could get out at Falmer first, but we hear your point.

Attendee: The cohort that come here have no choice. Without these changes, albeit difficult consequences, this school will close. East Brighton is part of B&H and deserves a local school.

Council response: Thank you – we've put forward a city-wide response.

Attendee: Buses – it would be great for all children to have free bus travel – we should be aiming for that. That would really help keep people in the city. Please can the council aspire to that?

Council response: We did inform all schools and we've asked them to remind people about the consultation.

Attendee: I think what everyone would really like is for all schools to be outstanding. The choice doesn't come into it. That's a nice idea. You are trying to do that a bit by sorting out social mix.

Council response: Thanks for the suggestion about the ordering. Even Ofsted are recognising the limitations of the judgement inspections now.

In person meeting at Queens Park Primary School – 16th January 2025 6:00pm – 7:30pm

The opening presentation was made by Richard Barker.

Questions and Comments:

Attendee: I believe there is a programme of work looking to tackle educational disadvantage? Is that not enough if you are having to make further changes?

Council response: No, that programme continues but the council is exploring what other levers it has available to support its aims.

Attendee: For our disadvantaged children, you are removing that choice that you talk about for others.

Council response: We recognise that some families may be affected, but we aim to

increase choice and opportunity. The council must consider what is fair and hear a range of views.

Attendee: If you look around the room, you'll see the lack of voice. There is a lack of information, and it hasn't been well explained. Many people may not know about the changes and their implications.

Attendee: Don't you have years of data available to know where people want to go

Council response: Yes, but that data is for the current admission arrangements.

Attendee: You are not really giving a choice.

Council response: By law, we don't give anyone a choice, but we are exploring how to manage the allocation of places.

Attendee: Some families can use the system to increase their privilege, which goes against the stated aims to support the disadvantaged.

Council response: We haven't directly analysed families moving out of the city, but we are aware that families with agency are more likely to make those and other choices.

Attendee: But that will impact families that can't move.

Council response: We haven't seen a local impact from the rise of the VAT levy, but we will continue to monitor.

Attendee: What's the net gain for the whole city in this policy?

Council response: There is some evidence that higher FSM percentages in schools can be beneficial, but we need to consider the broader impact.

Attendee: Is there evidence that mixing FSM numbers is positive for attainment?

Council response: There is some evidence to suggest this.

Attendee: It feels wrong to say that changing a child's school solves their problems when it's the family situation that needs addressing.

Council response: We need to discuss this in more detail. This is not the only work seeking to remove barriers for families, but it is an important area of council policy.

Attendee: A longer bus journey won't help them get there. Why don't consider whether Longhill can survive?

Council response: All schools serve a purpose and have communities they serve. The council must consider what is in its control.

Attendee: If you are keeping a school open that not enough people want to go to, you ought to close it and send those children elsewhere.

Council response: As above, this raises a question about what community means.

Attendee: We need to be clear on what other schools are facing and what we mean by success.

Council response: There is a school improvement board in place, and work is underway.

Attendee: My point isn't that Longhill is failing, but we need to hear what is being done to help a school improve.

Council response: Have you visited? What does success look like for you?

Attendee: I would like to see good pass rates and graduates.

Council response: Part of the work is looking at how larger schools can support smaller schools.

Attendee: Why have you drawn the catchment area lines where you have?

Council response: We try to draw along recognised routes and post code groupings.

Attendee: Can you confirm if people are using FSMs in 2025?

Council response: They are using it, but maybe not as expected.

Attendee: You are openly acknowledging it's an advantage not to send my child to certain schools.

Attendee: Unless I can get a sibling link to a school outside of my catchment area I don't see that as a choice.

Council response: We are considering the lack of certainty around sibling links.

Attendee: How are EAL families being supported in this consultation

Council response: We are working with youth services to gather youth voices and encourage schools to do the same. The normal support is in place.

Attendee: Why are you reducing school PANs and reducing the chances of getting in?

Council response: We are not just letting market forces decide which schools thrive but taking deliberate steps to support all schools.

Attendee: You were going to return to SEND and how the council's proposals may encourage more to get EHCPs?

Council response: We are hearing that some families are worried about not getting in and want to know what provision there is. The EHCP process is unchanged in these proposals?

Attendee: Why have you chosen the bottom of Kemptown?

Council response: It's an interplay of numbers and policy decisions.

Attendee: You are picking on a community less likely to fight back.

Council response: We consider Kemptown and its areas as having reasonable travel arrangements to the other school but we are hearing from people about their concerns.

Attendee: Are you considering impacts on other vulnerabilities in families?

Council response: We have to consider this as part of our proposals and include an equalities impact assessment. The consultation is to tease some of these issues out further.

Attendee: What are the financial implications of these consultations?

Council response: It's not just about money but also about the council bringing in support to the schools that need it. Ultimately, schools with lower pupil numbers are more likely to struggle financially.

In person meeting at Mile Oak Primary School (on behalf of the Portslade Primary Partnership) – 20th January 2025 6:30pm – 8:00pm

The opening presentation was made by Richard Barker.

Questions and Comments:

Attendee: Can you help explain the maths – how many children may want to go for 20% of places? It doesn't sound that many places are actually going to be available?

Council response: Let's take Blatchington Mill School as an example. They'll have up to 90 places for priorities 1-5 – and then 60 places for priority 6 . So that's potentially 150 places offered where some of those will be for outside of the area.

Attendee: How does this work for church schools?

Council response: This consultation is about admissions to community schools - make sure you refer to their websites for comprehensive information.

Attendee: How does the sibling link work? Does it work for outside of the catchment area?

Council response: The sibling link only applies within the catchment area. This means that for open admission there is no sibling link offered. This, along with the lack of travel enhancement, may limit families' ability or willingness to take up the opportunity.

Attendee: For proposed priority 6, does the school have to take up the 20% before moving on to priority 7?

Council response: Yes, that's right. It would be highly unlikely for a school not to get to priority 7 when allocating places.

Attendee: You said that BACA and PACA will broadly follow these arrangements. How broadly?

Council response: The website provides full details, but it covers children of staff and then distance as the main tiebreak. They work with us to allow us to make allocations based on their catchment areas.

Attendee: How many people may apply from outside of the area to come into this area?

Council response: That is hard to answer directly now and we've not modelled each separate scenario, but we do know that there will be limited spaces at oversubscribed schools based on forecasting.

Attendee: Re the slide with 144 on it – how did you come up with the 5? As it looks like there are enough places.

Council response: Because of factors such as EHCPs which get applied on top of this.

Attendee: Why do you have some catchment areas with one school and some with two? Are you looking at single catchment areas?

Council response: Not at the moment – the geography of the city makes that too difficult to decide on currently. However, the introduction of the FSMs priority and the potential for the open admission criteria seeks to give more areas of the city more choice of opportunities.

Attendee: The prospect of more choice is great. My concern is that it might drain more children away from schools like PACA, as the appeal of the more central schools continues. Has that been considered?

Council response: Yes, in part that is why there is also a proposal to reduce PAN at BMS and DS. We are considering that, but it needs to be balanced with offering more choice of opportunity to families. This also links closely to the school organisation strategy which looks to help all schools survive and thrive.

Attendee: How are you going to monitor the impact of this? We have families here with younger children who are interested, because once you make a decision it's sort of permanent and stays in for a long time. So it's important they understand. How are you going to monitor this and change it if it's not working?

Council response: Broadly speaking, the council consults on its arrangements each year so there is a potential to amend it. If some of these proposals go through, we can start to look at the impact of this as soon as people start applying in September. The problem is, we'll be consulting when you have some gaps in information.

Attendee: With the consultation, do you feel you've consulted with this area as much as others? There are not many people here today. Those voices in the middle are being very loud and we've not had the opportunity to be heard in the same way.

Council response: It's not about the loudness or volume of voices – sometimes it can be one voice that can be just as valid as another view inputted many times. I take the

point that maybe it was not enough. We are hearing from other areas of the city, including Portslade, and you'll see that in the report.

Attendee: The library was taken away from this community – that isn't fair.

Attendee: Even as you explain it now, it's still hard to understand. For the general public to understand this on a basic level it needs to be clear. It's fair to say this part of the city wasn't thought about – in terms of equity this now seems like a good move. We know there are parts of the city where people can buy an option at a school of choice. Not all families, not just in Portslade, can do that. We want to see equity of opportunity.

In person meeting at Fairlight Primary School – 21st January 2025 5:30pm – 7:00pm

The opening presentation was made by Richard Barker.

Questions and Comments:

Attendee: Why don't you wait to see how the first change goes before making further changes?

Council response: We feel that is important to take steps sooner to tackle the issues we've set out in the presentation.

Attendee: It's hard to know what 144 children look like, and it's being said that by others that 1 in 4 children will get in, so the majority of children won't get a place if priority 7. Is that true?

Council response: As a council, we don't give an indication of children's likelihood of gaining a place. You can get information from past allocations. It's difficult when you cannot predict how people will use their preferences and used planning assumptions. We don't recognise the risk in those communications from others. We are also still in the consultation and no decisions have been made.

Attendee: Can we see how many children got places in the higher priorities in past years?

Council response: You can view the information published in previous years – but it's hard to predict how many in each year and whether that will be from within the area or not. We also don't know how the FSMs information will be considered.

Attendee: Re FSMs – it looks like families can only get in at Patcham if they apply – will they know.

Council response: We've tried to share the information about FSMs but yes, they need to apply.

Attendee: I question the extra choice – if you don't get your first choice, don't you just get the school that's left with places?

Council response: It depends on what else people put down and how their allocations are made, etc. Some will be directed. We know there have been questions about where those places will be.

Attendee: How much has there been a consultation with the schools where there is underperforming? Clearly, there are issues with inequality – I wonder how much they've been spoken to.

Council response: As part of the engagement exercise and the consultation, we've been in contact with schools and there are regular updates on this at headteacher meetings.

Attendee: Are we consulting with them on alternative solutions? I'd hope there was support going to those schools too.

Council response: Yes, the wider school organisation strategy is part of that work. All schools ask for help and that is there available for them. If we're talking about Longhill and its Requires Improvement rating – we've put in place a School Improvement Board and will continue to engage with other schools to support them.

Attendee: Children with EHCPs – do they come under priority 2?

Council response: Those children are outside of these arrangements and are effectively allocated above all the other priorities, the impact then is on how many spaces are left. Those children may not live within the catchment area.

Attendee: If you have a SEND child, do they fall into priority 7?

Council response: Broadly speaking – any child without an EHCP can be supported by any of our schools. If they don't have a sibling, they'll typically be 7. What priority 2 is about is why a particular child can only go to a particular school. That is the current test. It does not catch every child who has SEND – because ultimately we expect all of our mainstream schools to be able to meet the needs of any child that goes there. But we are hearing from families that they are worried that if a child is displaced – they won't have the things available to them (local schools, friends, and families to support them), that they rely on to mitigate their needs. Technically – it would depend on that child's needs.

Attendee: The sibling link – can you explain that you've decided to only offer it within the catchment area. If a child is lucky to get into a school outside of their area, they cannot have a family relationship. Why is it being set that it's only inside the area?

Council response: We've got a longstanding arrangement that it applies inside the CA but we've heard from people within the consultation that families are worried that the opportunities we're offering for some may mean that their sibling may not get in as there is no proposed automatic priority.

Attendee: Can you further elaborate on the open admissions policy – what's the motivation for giving 20% of giving children outside of the area, over children inside the area?

Council response: This links to what the council is trying to achieve – which plays to where families have limited choice of opportunities for those that cannot choose where they live, that live in the outskirts of the city.

Attendee: But with your FSM policy too, doesn't that reduce too many children getting out of the area?

Council response: This is what why we want to hear from stakeholders during the consultation and we are hearing this from some and wondering if we are suggesting the right levels in these proposals. The council has to weigh this up at decision time.

Attendee: How much will the council take into account the views of parents/carers?

Council response: Any consultation has to hear the breadth of views and not necessarily be guided purely by the numbers of views. So there isn't a set number of responses which makes them sway one way or another. Ultimately the council is Political and Cllrs make a decision on what will be done.

Attendee: With more children traveling outside of their catchment area – you’ll see more children late, absence, more poor mental health, more isolation, etc. What kind of plans are in place to mitigate these risks around family life and wellbeing?

Council response: I would challenge whether distance is affecting the attendance as a blanket rule, children currently travel far to attend the two faith schools, both of whom have low rates of children who have persistent absence levels. As a council, we will have to undertake an EIA to consider the impact on things like journey times, etc. We would have to make some comments in relation to these proposals. and whether anyone with a protected characteristic is affected by those. We have to address this with decision makers. We’ve heard concerns about the potential impact on travel arrangements, particularly for DS/V area. We’re talking about arrangements for Sept 2026 and we have time to put arrangements in place. We have some children that already qualify for transport support as they already live more than 3 miles from a secondary school. How we arrange the transport for Sept 26 is something we’d have to look at. Once we know the impact of what’s actually agreed, we can look to recommissioning our arrangements. There is a frustration that people cannot make an informed comment without knowing – but that’s the situation we’re in.

Attendee: But when you get down to priority 7 – you won’t get support.

Council response: The Home to School transport policy sets out the current eligibility.

Attendee: Why are you reducing popular schools at the same time as reducing opportunity?

Council response: Because of the different issues we are trying to address at the same time.

Attendee: I understand why you would take them out of less popular schools – but why do it to popular ones?

Council response: Whilst we understand the adjudicator/government policy which is about favouring parental preference, however, we’ve still got to make decisions to address local issues. In the city the council has felt it essential to close two primary schools – which were not ‘popular’ but the usual measures of 1st preferences but still served important communities. The logical conclusion from not reducing is that we may find fewer and fewer children go to a school – the curriculum is less, and fewer children go there and we have to close it. That’s not what we’re wanting to do.

Attendee: Thank you for explaining the complex information – I do think that the clean air needs considering – there also needs consideration that whether disadvantaged children WILL do better at ‘the better schools’.

Council response: We do know that there is not another whole area which is looking to introduce what we are, so it’s hard to compare. We believe there are positive benefits to what we’re putting out there – but in the consultation it’s really important we hear from other people on what they think.

Attendee: For random allocation – would the council consider doing the lottery from primary school rather than individual? This might help people go to school together in their peer group – a whole class is either randomly in or randomly out? I know children are worried about this – about whether they’ll be able to go to school together or not.

Council response: A tie break has to be indisputable – distance is irrefutable. Primary school feeders would make it more complicated and hard to justify a whole school being excluded.

Attendee: Won’t that just push the issue to the 4+?

Attendee: Thank you for coming – I think it’s disrespectful for none of the Cllrs to be here – especially the ward cllrs.

Attendee: If there will be 450 places in 2031, why not close one of DS or Varndean?

Council response: The council does not wish to close any schools.

Attendee: Admirable but isn’t necessarily practical from a planning perspective. What provision is being given to help the primary schools to understand the process – it’s quite complex and there will be a lot of people who are left to deal with that. There will be people that are struggling to deal with it – if just left to primary schools and EMAS to deal with that.

Council response: There is research being done on the introduction of the FSM priority and that will help inform how parents have understood it, used it etc. It is right to highlight that there is very limited resource and what a great job schools and support services do to help families engage with our communications etc. We are hearing throughout this consultation concerns about whether everyone in the city is able to engage with these proposals / the system more generally.

Attendee: Schools like this often fall through the gaps, so how do parents here get that extra support? External groups won’t be able to provide it as their funding is really limited.

Council response: The council will have to provide additional support – may not be financial. We recognise that we are making a big change – and recognise the point you are making about how when the council makes changes, it needs to support people to understand them.

Attendee: I’m interested in the decision-making process – it sounds like it’s just one meeting in Feb – are you bundling it all together or making some decisions beforehand?

Council response: It’s likely that it’ll be Full Council in one meeting – before then a detailed report will be provided to look at a summary of consultation and take each recommendation one by one.

Attendee: It seems a lot for one meeting.

Council response: A week before the meeting a report will go from officers making a recommendation. In previous consultations, we’ve made ALL consultation responses available to Cllrs. We can’t make that fully public but we will share a summary of what people have said to us.

Attendee: It’s a lot to take to one meeting and you don’t know information on some of them yet.

Attendee: You disrespected a woman in the meeting earlier when you criticised her comment as implying that Longhill should close, but there was laughter when a man suggested Dorothy Stringer or Varndean should close.

Council response: Apologies – that was not my intention.

Attendee: If you are a priority 7 child out of catchment, you don’t get a sibling link for younger children?

Council response: We look to honour a sibling link within the catchment area. We have maintained that principle. We do understand that this might mean you’ll get lots of children in different schools – we have to consider the unintended consequences on what that might mean for families. We may have to amend this in the future.

Attendee: Consultation process – will you be looking at where responses from across the city. If there is low engagement from certain areas – will you be doing anything to target them?

Council response: We've put on a range of meetings. We won't be able to out more in a the end of the consultation however Cllrs will be aware of their residents views and it will inform their thinking when making decisions. They will have to draw their own conclusions on this. We think we've got a range of opportunities for people to engage in the consultation now. Remember in the council, Cllrs do represent wards across the city.

Attendee: This requires a smartphone, being plugged in, what about those without technology – or those who are not able to engage?

Council response: That is commonly the case across consultations. We are hearing from groups that support families. We do offer the opportunity to contact the council.

Attendee: Is there anything planned to do with those catchment areas where they have one option – is it just the 20%? If you give more choice there would be less demand.

Council response: We are only looking at the current proposals – the opportunities for one school catchment areas is FSM / Open Admissions.

Attendee: Is there a long-term plan to move Catchment areas?

Council response: The only proposal currently is the one we are consulting on at the moment.

Attendee: My understanding is that if you live in DS/V and live really close to the school, the chances of getting into the school is being well under 50%. This seems to be about levelling the schools out. The impact will be reduction in educational standards.

Council response: Part of the evidence we've heard is that if you raise opportunities one thing that can happen is that ALL outcomes will rise. As a council, we believe this was an approach worth putting forward, to close the gap – recognising we already have good schools.

Attendee: You don't have good performing schools. You've contradicted yourself – you said that families want to choose things that meet their child's needs best – but then you say all schools are good. Not true.

Council response: What different families want/need are different.

Attendee: Transport – children who live over 3 miles the council has an obligation. I feel that's too far. I live 2 miles to my daughter's school – which is already a long way to walk. If you add another half mile, etc. it's too much.

Council response: It's a government measure but we note the response in the consultation.

Attendee: Is the council able to offer more help for transport costs?

Council response: The council could choose to do that – but would have to pay for it. It would be a decision to prioritise spending on that over other matters. But yes, it's possible to do that.

Attendee: It would help families feel better about going to a school that wasn't their choice. Most families need supporting in other ways – but if they get transport paid for, that might help. Also, clean air would be better – if there were good bus routes.

Council response: One of the considerations we've got in introducing the FSM priority is that we didn't provide free travel. We've given families that opportunity but didn't change the policy on travel eligibility.

Attendee: As a parent, I'm desperately worried about the SEND position. We know that we have disadvantaged children with SEND and they need support.

Attendee: As a parent, I'm desperately looking for certainty. What we're doing is against government policy – what do you think you can win against an appeal?

In person meeting at Coombe Road Primary School – 24th January 2025 3:30pm – 5:00pm

The opening presentation was made by Richard Barker and Cllr Jacob Taylor.

Questions and Comments:

Attendee: Regarding open admission, what criteria will be used to select those places?

Council response: The tie break is random allocation. What we cannot do, is having a different tie breaker for different priorities.

Attendee: For a sibling link, why do you only have to live within the catchment area?

Council response: Yes, as things stand, the council only recognises the sibling link from within catchment area. We're hearing this from people in the consultation – that people may feel that the opportunity we are offering cannot be taken up if they do not get the sibling link. This might be an area for review in the future.

Attendee: Does your column 3 take into account the new data, currently under embargo?

Council response: No, this information was produced late last year – so before we had that new information. When we go to make the next report we have to find a way to be clear on what we know and what the impact might be of the proposals.

Attendee: Wouldn't it be better if all schools were good, then people wouldn't be defending their schools from outside people?

Council response: Yes, that is the idea position the city is in and lots of work happens about that already.

Attendee: I understand Cardinal Newman are keen to adopt similar priorities to the LA, do you know what that impact that might have?

Council response: Yes, you are right, Cardinal Newman have just consulted on introducing a FSM priority but we don't know yet what the impact might be.

Attendee: I want to understand why you are proposing a reducing in PANs as well as bringing in these other changes?

Council response: We are trying to solve a number of complex issues at the same time – therefore we are taking a number of approaches at the same time. Tackling falling pupil numbers is a really important part of the school organisation approach.

Attendee: With your different proposals, is this an all or nothing? If you get different range of feedback, can that influence what might happen?

Council response: We want to be really clear on this, nothing is already decided upon. We could do nothing, make not changes, we could make all of the changes or we could make some moderate changes following feedback received during the consultation.

Attendee: I think we should commend you that we are taking on a strong part of the city – in the name of fairness. You could just do nothing – but you are not.

Attendee : I've followed the online debate and I can see the opposition. I know you've said you cannot make a major change to what you've already proposed/consulted on when you go to Full Council in Feb. Do you think you might consider some of those for later on?

Council response: Yes – during this whole process we've heard calls for taking a longer-term approach at looking at some of these issues, regardless of what outcome

comes out of this consultation. For example, calls for a citizens assembly. What is clear is that there is interest in the topic and in having a longer-term discussion.

Attendee: If nothing happens, what do you think will happen with schools like BACA and Longhill?

Council response: You can see from our data, things get really tricky with pupil numbers by 2031 – and broadly there are two choices for LAs – reduce the size of larger schools, or consider closure. I’m not saying that’s on the cards – and there are more things that we are doing to better consider other ways of supporting schools to survive and thrive.

Attendee: How do we give feedback? .

Council response: We are taking notes today, we have a survey available, you are welcome to email. You can email councillors. You can also contact the school admissions team and verbally leave your feedback.

Attendee: Can I ask about priority 2 – I know there is a lot of debate about SEND children who may struggle to travel further distances. Is there any leeway in that process, nationally or locally?

Council response: At the moment, that priority is there where there may be a case for a particular child should go to a particular school. This has been raised a lot in this priority and we need to consider how we may better describe or manage that. At the moment, only a small number of children are admitted under that priority.

Attendee: I have two children – one with EHCP and I'm really happy with that. One doesn't but has needs. I know that now the requests are taking a lot longer. My problem will be that he is due to go to secondary school in 2027 – will my child have a chance of attending the same school?

Council response: Children who have EHCP don't fall within these arrangements. As things stand your son wouldn't be guaranteed a place as no one is unless they have a school named on a plan.

Attendee: The privileges in some areas of the city means some are being easier to hear – how will you take that into account?

Response: We've already heard from many but it's not a referendum – it's not a simple numbers game. It's about qualitative responses. Also, as a council, sometimes we have to make decisions many members of the public don't want us to do.

Attendee: What's the council doing to up quality in the schools?

Council response: We know that we have two schools have a not good Ofsted rating – but do read the reports as there are lots of good work happening there. School improvement is one of the core things the council does – and has school improvement boards. You are right, we are waiting to improve all schools.

Attendee: In the interest of balance, can we look at the slide with the catchment area map on it - what's the justification for having the cut out that excludes us from it, when my nearest school is Varndean?

Council response: You are right to raise it – these came in in 2007 – were they perfect? No. The geography of the city is not helpful. Open admissions is looking to address this in some ways for some.

In person meeting Hangleton and Knoll (community meeting) – 25th January 2025 lunchtime workshop

The opening presentation was made by Carolyn Bristow

This meeting was a lunchtime workshop where the attendees had a discussion with council officers, a school representative and with councillors.

Questions and Comments made:

- For priority 2 - would the LA contact the Primary School to ask about the child and take this information into consideration? No there is no mechanism for this in the admissions process.
- What about refugees/asylum seekers and those with EAL – is there an exception for these families? There could be a case for a Priority 2 scenario, but bear in mind that families move around the city, so this wouldn't be a guarantee and it would be likely that they would be allocated a space at a secondary school near to where they live, which could mean children/young people in the same family going to different schools.
- What can be done for those families that are not eligible for FSM? There is not the ability to use family income, other than entitlement for FSM in school admissions arrangements. This is why the Open Admission Priority has been brought in. FSM is capped at 30% but entirely possible that schools may have a higher % of FSM children/young people, and schools could face challenges of, say, 17% to 30%. Any children/young people from Priority 1-5 could be in receipt of FSM, and they will be included in this cap, the only ones outside of this will be those in receipt of an EHCP.
- What is the statistical reality of people in Hove not getting Hove School? Not reducing the PAN at PACA, just Blatchington Mill. Some people in the Whitehawk area have indicated that they would not want their child/young person to go to Varndean or Dorothy Stringer because they are happy with Longhill and their child/young person also has access to a free bus pass, although it was agreed that there are around 50% of children/young people who could go to Longhill and choose not to.
- What is the purpose of Priority 6? To give those on the outskirts of the city more choice of school (those with 1 school in their catchment).
- The system cannot be left as it is as the birth rate is lower.
- Need to look at this from a whole city-wide viewpoint
- Need to reach communities and families and listen to messages and the whole picture regarding transport.
- Families are too busy surviving to engage, which is why it is often a struggle to get people to events and online consultations as their everyday challenges are so difficult.
- Nothing has been sent out via the school, events and “noise” around the consultation has been picked up via parent WhatsApp groups and social media.
- Trust for Developing Communities are going into schools and speaking to children/young people.

- Everything that can be done is being done (such as organising meetings like this), but still not reaching all communities.
- It is a lot to understand and digest.
- Will involve secondaries creating new relationships with primaries
- Lots of correlations between attendance/travelling and attainment etc.
- Choice for who? For those that can afford it.
- Don't have concrete plans around the bus routes as yet, as they will need to know the final plan so that they can make arrangements.
- Will the Council review this if it is implemented and is a disaster or will they just continue? Yes, absolutely, there will be an opportunity to review this every year.
- Lots of people on WhatsApp Groups are being vocal, but then not attending meetings.
- What is going to persuade Cllrs? Cllrs are aware of those with "loud voices" and that some groups are more vocal than others, they will take a judgement on how they will represent the voices across the whole City.
- Inputting into Your Voice is important.
- PACA previously would have been a "lower" option, but now looking more favourable in terms of not having long travelling journeys for child/young person.
- Fall in pupil numbers thought that this would mean that there would be more choice not less choice.
- It is a shame that other schools have not improved to perform better. There are enough places for everyone in the city if all schools were liked then there wouldn't be this problem.
- Always put your 1st choice down, as there is always a chance that you will get it.
- 20% quite a big amount, moving with peer group is important to children/young people.
- Parent Support Group has an interpretation of the numbers and the Council don't recognise this level of risk. There are complicated internal discussions about what can/cannot be said. The Council don't want people to be concerned and worrying, and people are. If we can update on the numbers then we will.
- There is often some "shuffling" after allocations are made (ie Appeals and children/young people no longer wishing to take up places).
- Why reduce PANs at the same time as not having the results of the FSM? There is too much to see the impact. Cllr Taylor doesn't want to give it more years and it is an issue for the City to solve.
- More people will home school, or move to private schooling. The Council is hearing this but at the moment there is no basis for how this will unfold.
- Home schooling could be forced, not through choice but through a feeling that the school is not able to meet the needs. For some families this isn't an option as they have to work, children/young people can become quite vulnerable through home schooling and parents/carers don't want children/young people to miss out on friendship groups and social interactions. This will also affect schools as they wouldn't then get the funding for that child/young person.
- Lack of detail is perpetuating worries. There are only certain things that schools/Council can divulge.
- Like to see a stronger voice on this side of the city. Those families who are eligible for FSM need to understand this proposal and apply under this category.

- Is there anything that Brighton & Hove will do with those nearer to the West Sussex Border? No suggestion of anything, but parents/carers are encouraged to apply to schools in West Sussex but there is no guarantee for a placement.
- What's the point of the 4th Preference? To give families opportunity.

In person meeting at Bevendean Primary School – 27th January 2025 9:00am – 11am

The opening presentation was made by Richard Barker

Questions and Comments:

Attendee: Regarding open admissions – is this for all schools in the city?

Council response: Only those where we are the admission authority – so not the academies or faith schools.

Attendee: Why isn't the boundary changing for Bevendean?

Council response: Some communities have raised issues and the engagement exercise didn't support widescale support for wider catchment area changes. We were looking at making a change to catchment areas, not a wholesale change. It's the open admission criteria that is looking to support families living in a single school area.

Attendee: Why were the catchment areas bought in?

Council response: We have to have a system to allocate places and in 2007 we need to have a way of allowing a wider range of residents access to a range of schools.

Attendee: I don't think the catchment areas are working now – they are not fair

Council response: Noted – in the engagement exercise there wasn't much appetite to change them. We've heard from people about the unfairness of the current arrangements.

Attendee: I don't think it's fair to be able to buy a house in a nice area to gain a place

Attendee: What were the objections to the wider catchment area proposal in the engagement exercise?

Council response: There were significant concerns raised about travel.

Attendee: The catchment areas issue – if you'd gone to option B – it would have given much more choice. I know the engagement exercise didn't show support. Many families in our area wouldn't have known about it – we were not told. We are not heard.

Attendee: So option B has been taken off the table? Even though that would have levelled up.

Council response: You are right, it's taken off the table for now. We cannot go back to option B during this public consultation.

Attendee: Given the council wants to hear from a wide range of people across the city. Why is this the first meeting in this catchment area and we had to arrange?

Council response: We have other processes (ward Cllr representation / headteacher meetings) as well as a range of open meetings for all, but we understand the point you are raising and we note it for the consultation responses.

Attendee: I know, option B is not on the table, but surely the travel arrangements could have been modelled and predicted. Won't travel arrangements be harder for a smaller number of children – so we might have to pay them less but it's harder.

Council response: We do have some public bus routes and some school bus routes and once we know the arrangements we can get these arrangements set up with the bus company.

Attendee: Why are sibling links outside of the catchment area less important than those inside the area?

Council response: This is a matter that has come up over the consultation. The council will need to consider whether this is right.

Attendee: I'm trying to get my head around the proposed priorities. Do 5 and 6 cross over? Will I go into 6 if I don't get it on 5? I'm worried about the catastrophic data that is being shared by others and we are not sure if we can trust it.

Council response: Yes – if you do not gain a place under the FSM priority you can be considered under a relevant lower priority.

Attendee: On the previous slide, there wasn't a mention of children with EHCPs or SEND. Where do they get in? I thought that if a child had an EHCP they could go anywhere.

Council response: The EHCPs are allocated above all other places – and that of course then has an impact on the numbers of places available, whether they are FSMs, whether in or out of the catchment area.

Attendee: I don't understand why you are reducing Dorothy Stringer when people want to go there.

Council response: Because we are trying to solve a number of issues at the same time – it comes back to that urgency to get things moving. But we understand the question.

Attendee: How confident are the council that the proposals as they currently stand are going to go through?

Council response from a councillor: What I can say is that these issues are really important to the administration and the Labour Group are keen not to do nothing and not backslide and at least do something but we need to listen in the public consultation. More generally we want to look at levelling up. The pupil numbers is a slight distraction however it is important as the pupil numbers are not there and therefore schools cannot employ specialist teachers.

Attendee: What is the role of the preferences order – how is that considered? Are you considered for everyone in that algorithm?

Council response: Yes, your child's name goes into the pot for each school you apply for. At the same time, the lotteries are going on for every child in every priority at the same time. Then if we cannot offer a place we offer it to the nearest school with space available.

Attendee: For this area, introduces the option of choice – as it might help people choose to live here and stay here. It's affordable here – so families choose to leave coming up to the secondary transition – this might help families feel like staying here which would benefit the wider community a lot.

In person meeting at St Mark's Primary School – 28th January 2025 3:45pm – 4:30pm

The opening presentation was made by Richard Barker

Questions and Comments:

Attendee: For the open admission priority – how do you decide who gets the place?

Council response: Random allocation. We're hearing from people that they are not happy that we don't use distance as some people live much closer – but that is our proposed arrangement.

Attendee: Can I apply for any schools under open admissions criteria – even if they are far away?

Council response: Yes – as long as it's a council-run school. Not for BACA, PACA, Cardinal Newman, or Kings.

Attendee: You could do the open admissions at a higher % as it feels like a little limited.

Attendee: Can I apply for Hove Park if I live in the PACA area, even if there are spaces at PACA?

Council response: Yes – you can apply for anywhere where you want, and if you can be offered a place you will be – regardless of whether your local school has space³.

Attendee: It's all well and good to expand the Whitehawk area for getting in, what are the council going to do about the transport? I've just had to apply for year 6 – she doesn't want to be travelling through London Road to get on different buses. What will happen with funding for travel? I have to pay £135 a month for 3 children to get to school. What will be put on? Families have to make decisions about whether they can use these opportunities.

Council response: The council has a responsibility to provide transport if it's over 3 miles and if they are going to their catchment area schools⁴. The council do not currently have a definite plan – this is happening in Sept 2026 as we've not yet decided.

Attendee: Why can't the free travel extend to older children?

Council response: The council would have to pay for it and that is a difficult decision at the moment.

Attendee: Will my bus from Mile Oak to Hove Park keep going?

Council response: Some bus routes are fully supported by us, some we partly fund and some are just funded by the public/bus company as a normal service. This is where the council wants to sit down and think about how things need to work once arrangements are known.

Attendee: For the whole city we need to look at transport – it's not safe or fit for purpose. Great that the heart of Whitehawk is now being listened to about school allocation but until transport is sorted out families don't really have an option. My child chose Longhill and I had to pay for them to go there.

Attendee: I live right by St Marks and was in catchment area for DS/V but my children's friends were going to Longhill but now things may change.

Attendee: Is the PAN of 45 for all schools?

Council response: No – just Rudyard Kipling, the other PAN reductions are for secondary schools.