

#### 4. PETITIONS

A petition from the Harris Into Beckenham campaign was submitted to the Council on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2010. The three heads of petition were as follows:

Petition Aim 1 – To ensure Bromley Council review and amend the terms of their Academy sponsor specification to allow Independent Academies to apply to convert Kelsey Park Sports College into a co-educational Academy

Petition Aim 2 – To ensure Bromley Council holds a public consultation with regard to the possible conversion of Kelsey Park Sports College by the Harris Federation – to convert it into the co-educational ‘Harris Academy Beckenham’

Petition Aim 3 – To give full support to the Harris Federation to investigate the possibility of converting an existing building into a co-educational Harris Free School. Harris Federation is a Department for Education Accredited Schools Group and works closely with the Free Schools Network. This option would involve a Beckenham Harris working closely with local Harries Academies including the ‘Outstanding’ Harris City Academy Crystal Palace and ‘Outstanding’ Harris Academy South Norwood. The Free School would start with a Year 7 year group.

In line with the Council’s Petitions Scheme, Councillor Ernest Noad, the Executive Member with the Children and Young People portfolio, responded to the petitioners on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2010 – a copy is attached as Appendix 1. This response was sent to the head petitioners and also published on the Council website.

As the petitioners have declared themselves dissatisfied with the response they received, and have exceeded the threshold required, they have requested that the petition is referred to full Council for consideration. The head petitioner or their nominee has 5 minutes to put their case to councillors.

Once the Council has considered what is brought before them, they can choose to make recommendations for action. If there are any recommendations requiring action by councillors or officers then a report back to the next scheduled meeting of Council is required, which should set out what has been done in response, or if nothing, then the reasons for this.

1 October 2010

Dear Mrs Fiona Murphy and Mrs Carrie Bateman

**Re: Harris Federation of Schools into Beckenham Petition**

I write with reference to the petition from the “Harris into Beckenham” campaign group which was submitted to the LB Bromley on the afternoon of Thursday 23 September 2010. As Executive Member for the Children & Young People Portfolio, the matter has been referred to me for a formal response within 10 working days. I note the 3 main “aims” of your petition and will respond to each point accordingly.

**Petition Aim 1 – To ensure Bromley Council review and amend the terms of their Academy sponsor specification to allow Independent Academies to apply to convert Kelsey Park Sports College into a co-educational Academy**

During 2009/10 the Local Authority has undertaken exploratory work to assess options through which to secure academy sponsorship to support a potential transition for Kelsey Park Sports College as part of its next stage of development. This work was undertaken in partnership with the Head Teacher and Governors of Kelsey Park and also with the former Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Office of the Schools' Commissioner (OSC). As part of these processes a sponsor specification was prepared which identified specific criteria under which an academy sponsorship model would be progressed. This work has now been wholly superseded through the introduction of the Academies Act 2010 by the new Government and Secretary of State for Education; therefore the previous criteria to secure sponsoring partners no longer apply and the specification would have to be reviewed as part of any future application by the Governors for Academy

status. Under the new Academy policy and given the status of Kelsey Park as a Foundation School, the criteria will be developed in accordance within the new Academy framework. In developing criteria for any potential future academy conversion, it will be necessary for the Governors of Kelsey Park Sports College to inform their planning by full consultation with parents and all interested parties.

**Petition Aim 2 – To ensure Bromley Council holds a public consultation with regard to the possible conversion of Kelsey Park Sports College by the Harris Federation – to convert it into the co-educational ‘Harris Academy Beckenham’**

Kelsey Park Sports College has Foundation Status. Under the new Academies Act 2010, it is for the Governing Body to determine whether or not to progress consultation for any future change of character or status. The

Governors, supported by the Local Authority, have formally taken the position on 30 September 2010 to implement a full and comprehensive public consultation on this issue. The aim of consultation will be to consider all viable options for the next stage of the development of the School to sustain their improved performance and become the school of choice for local parents.

The principles on which the Governors will be consulting include: the future character of the school in relation to co-educational or single sex provision; the admissions arrangements within the context of the statutory School Admissions Code in relation to the possibility of introducing pupil banding; the potential of a sponsoring partner or partners to support school standards and performance; and the potential of conversion to Academy status for September 2011 (under the terms of the Academies Act 2010).

The Governors' Consultation will involve all appropriate parties, including current and prospective parents, relevant primary and secondary schools and their Governing Bodies, local Ward Members, relevant neighbouring Local Authorities and, in due course, the Local Admissions Forum (in respect of any potential changes to Admissions criteria).

I hope that you will agree that implementing a consultation which focuses on merely one option of conversion to a Harris Academy would place major limitations on the Governors of the School. It would not allow parents and other interested parties the opportunity to consider the full range of options available for the next stage of development of this school.

**Petition Aim 3 – To give full support to the Harris Federation to investigate the possibility of converting an existing building into a co-educational Harris Free School. Harris Federation is a Department for Education Accredited Schools Group and works closely with the Free Schools Network. This option would involve a Beckenham Harris working closely with local Harries Academies including the 'Outstanding' Harris City Academy Crystal Palace and 'Outstanding' Harris Academy South Norwood. The Free School would start with a Year 7 year group.**

On the question of investigating the possibility of establishing a Co-educational Harris Free School through the conversion of an existing building within the Borough, the London Borough of Bromley would consider its response to any such proposal if and when any further proposal is made. My understanding of the new policy framework for the establishment of Free Schools is based on the information currently available on the Department for Education website. I am given to understand that the New Schools Network, has been established as an independent charity to provide advice and guidance to those parents and agencies who may be researching information on the establishment of Free Schools.

In conclusion, as part of my formal response to the petitioners, I am proposing to make arrangements for a meeting on Monday 11th October 2010 5.00 -

6.00 pm at the Civic Centre to which I would like to invite a delegation group of a maximum of 6 people drawn from the “Harris into Beckenham” campaign group. This would take the form of a “question and answer” session, chaired by myself and supported by other appropriate Councillors, the Director and senior officers of the London Borough of Bromley.

I will also be inviting the Head Teacher and Governor representatives from Kelsey Park Sports College to that session. Hopefully this meeting will allow us to engage in a more free flowing discussion regarding the points you have raised without the time restrictions placed on us by the specific Public Question arrangements which govern the agenda framework for the Policy, Development and Scrutiny Committee. I would appreciate it if you could let me know whether you, together with a delegation group, are able to attend the proposed meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> October. Once I have received this, I will confirm the detailed arrangements with you.

It is my view that the commitment given by the Governing Body of Kelsey Park Sports College to undertake a full consultation with parents and key agencies will fully address the concerns and queries that have been raised by your campaign group. If, however, you are dissatisfied with this response you have the right to ask for the matter to be referred to full Council at which time the petitioners will have the opportunity to present their case to Councillors.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Ernest Noad  
Executive Member  
Children & Young People Portfolio