

COUNCIL

14 June 2012



Report of: Chair of Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee

Subject: REFERRAL FROM SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING
COMMITTEE – ‘CALL-IN OF DECISION:
PROPOSED SCHOOL ADMISSIONS
ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2013-14

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Council of the referral by the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee relating to the ‘Call-In of Decision: Proposed School Admissions Arrangements for 2013-14.
- 1.2 To advise Council of the timetable for consideration of the referral.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 At the meeting of the Children’s Services Portfolio, held on 27 March 2012, a report was considered in relation to the admissions policy for community and voluntary controlled primary schools in Hartlepool for the school year 2013/14 and the co-ordinated admissions procedures to primary and secondary schools for 2013/14. The formal deadline for submission of admission arrangements to the Secretary of State being the 15 April 2012.
- 2.2 Following the decision of the Children’s Services Portfolio Holder, a Call-In Notice was issued by 3 Members of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on the 5 April 2012. This notice was accepted by the Deputy Monitoring Officer on the 5 April 2012.
- 2.3 The Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee, at its meeting on the 13 April 2012 accepted the Call-In and commenced consideration of the issues / concerns raised. The basis of the Call-in being that the decision contravened the principles of decision making in relation to proportionality and reasonableness. The signatories being of the view that they ‘do not believe it to be proportionate or reasonable to put children with siblings already in a school ahead of the majority of children who live within the schools admissions zone’.

2.4 During the course of discussions, Members were informed that the Portfolio Holder and Department had received a number of emails from parents with positive comments on the decision taken and that the Portfolio Holder was not aware of any adverse comments being received. Members were, however, concerned that:

- A potential situation could arise where children living within an admission zone would be unable to attend their local community school, as places within that school had been taken by siblings of children already attending the school who live outside the admission zone;
- Children who may live opposite a school could be unable to attend the school due to children who live outside the admission zone taking places at that school. This could result in two families travelling outside their admission zone to enable their children to attend school; and
- The full consequences of this decision had not been made clear at the governors' meetings, and parents of children hoping for their child to attend the school within their admission zone would be disappointed with the decision once the full implications of the decision were known.

2.5 Attention was drawn to the importance of local community schools being accessible to the families living within that local community and the Committee decided that the matter should be referred to Council to enable a town-wide elected Member debate to be undertaken. These views will then be considered by the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee in completion of the Call-in process and formulation of a report back to the Children's and Community Services Portfolio Holder.

2.6 To assist, copies of the report considered by the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on the 13 April 2012, and the full minute, are attached at **Appendices 1 and 2** respectively for Council consideration. In additional report is also provided at item 3(b), giving further information in relation to the decision to assist during the course of discussions.

3. Next Steps

3.1 Details of timescales for response to Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee and onwards are as follows:-

- Council on the 14 June 2012;
- Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on the 22 June 2012; and
- Children's and Community Services Portfolio Holder (TBC).

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 That Council debates the issues raised as part of the Call-in, as detailed in Sections 2.3 and 2.4 above, and formulates a response / views for consideration by the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee at its meeting on the 22 June 2012.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background paper was used in the preparation of this report:-

- (i) Reports and Minutes – Children's Services Portfolio - 27 March 2012
- (ii) Call-in Notice – 5 April 2012
- (iii) Reports and Minutes – Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee – 13 April 2012