

CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

18 August 2009

The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Cath Hill (Children's Services Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Adrienne Simcock, Director of Children's Services
Paul Briggs, Assistant Director - Resources & Support Services
Anne Smith, Head of Information, Planning and Support Services
Alan Kell, Asset Manager
Sarah Bird, Democratic Services Officer

18. Admissions to Schools 2011/12 and Co-ordinated Admissions to Primary and Secondary Schools 2011/12 – Head of Information, Planning and Support Services

Type of Decision

Non key

Purpose of Report

To seek approval of the Portfolio Holder to the draft Admission arrangements for 2011/12 as the basis for consultation during the Autumn term 2009.

Issues for Consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report detailed current and proposed admissions policy, the requirement to consult with other admission authorities and the requirement to develop co-ordinated admission schemes.

Local Authorities have a requirement to consult when determining admission arrangements for schools and a failure to do so would mean that statutory requirements were not met. The mandatory requirements surrounding the publication of admission arrangements were outlined in the report. The role of the Admissions Forums was also detailed. In accordance with statutory requirements, places will be offered to parents/carers of secondary

aged pupils on the national offer date of 1 March in the year in which the child will be admitted to the school. For primary aged pupils a local offer date of 15th April has been agreed.. Parents/carers were invited to express at least three preferences on a common application form (also available as an on line form). There is a duty to inform other Local Authorities should a child from their Authority apply for a place at a Hartlepool school and also if a place could be offered at a school in Hartlepool. By September 2010 applications are required to be co-ordinated by the Local Authority for both the normal admission round and in year applications. In accordance with the School Admissions Code, children and young people in care must be given top priority in any over subscription criteria. The policies relating to Children with Statements of Special Educational Needs and Excluded Pupils and those with Challenging Behaviour were also outlined, as was the policy of non discrimination.

During consultations relating to the Building Schools for the Future programme, the concept of moving away from geographical admissions zones for the secondary sector was agreed in favour of a partner primary model. However, at the next Admission Forum meeting, discussions will take place as to whether the criterion relating to sibling links should be moved up the priority order above the partner primary criterion.

The proposed admissions policy for 2011/12 was then outlined. From September 2009 there would not be any community or voluntary controlled schools and therefore the Local Authority's admissions policy would only apply to primary schools. There is a choice advisor service to assist parents with their applications and any subsequent appeals procedure. The choice advisor has a role in trying to ensure all parents complete a preference form.

The timetable for consultation was outlined.

The basic framework for admission based on residence in an admission zone as the top criterion is well established, however the School Admission Code stipulates that Admission Authority must give the highest priority to children in the care of the local authority. Additionally, children with special educational needs where the school is named in the statement must not be part of an admission authority's oversubscription criteria. Criterion 4 – the Authority's oversubscription criteria provides for the Authority to give priority to those children who are deemed to have exceptional circumstances whether medical or on other grounds who would suffer significant hardship if they were unable to attend the school of their choice. The final criterion is distance and is measured using the local authority's computerised measuring system.

The proposed admission limits would be part of the consultation process and a copy of the proposed admission limits was attached

as an appendix to the report. Copies of the co-ordinated admission scheme for 2011/12 for both primary and secondary schools was also attached to the report.

The Portfolio Holder asked why parents/carers would apply for places with neighbouring authorities and was informed that some pupils who lived close to borders with other authorities were most likely to do this.

The definition of sibling was discussed and details of the definition is contained in the information to parents booklet. Further discussions took place relating to the proposals from secondary schools to moving sibling criteria above the partner primary criteria and the potential impact this could have on oversubscription. However, if there are more applications for a particular school than there are places, parents/carers are given the right of appeal if they are unsuccessful in securing a place.

The BSF programme aims to ensure that all schools within Hartlepool provide excellent facilities and as a consequence improve public perception.

The Assistant Director highlighted that the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) monitored surplus capacity in schools and that there should be no more than 10% capacity across the authority. If any particular school had more than 25% surplus capacity then the Authority would take appropriate action necessary to reduce the surplus capacity.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder agreed to consultation on 2011/12 admission arrangements (with an end date of December 2009) on the basis of seeking views on:-

- The proposed oversubscription criteria for community and voluntary controlled primary schools
- Continuing with single stage entry at reception
- Continuing with the partner primary model as stated
- The proposed admission limits
- The primary and secondary co-ordinated admissions scheme

19. Revised Costings Relating to the 2009/10 Schools Capital Works Programme – Asset Manager

Type of Decision

Non key

Purpose of Report

To seek approval to the revised costings relating to the 2009/10 Schools Capital Works Programme and to confirm with the Portfolio Holder the late inclusion of a number of additional schemes to the programme.

Issues for Consideration

The report detailed an update to the 2009/10 Schools Capital Works Programme (detailed in Appendix 1 of the report) and reflected revised costings and the inclusion of a small number of additional projects.

The Asset Manager reiterated that schools were asked to provide a minimum of 10% for all works

There were also a small number of initiatives included in the report which were not in the original programme, two at Golden Flatts School and one at the Fens School. A further item was outlined to the Portfolio Holder relating to a low cost scheme to remodel a teaching area to create a nurture group room at Golden Flatts School.

The Portfolio Holder declared a personal interest in the items being put forward regarding Golden Flatts School as she was Chair of the Board of Governors for that school.

The Portfolio Holder was informed that schools were being encouraged to provide a contribution towards all works even for repairs. The premise was that the Local Authority would hold a contingency fund for necessary works rather than individual schools.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder approved the revised costings for the Schools Capital Works Programme as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

The meeting concluded at 10.45 am.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 21 August 2009