

CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

6 September 2011

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

Present:

Councillor Cath Hill (Children's Services Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Sally Robinson, Assistant Director, Prevention, Safeguarding and Specialist Services
Peter McIntosh, Head of Planning and Development
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

9. Admissions to Community Primary Schools 2013/14; Coordinated Admissions Schemes for Primary, Secondary Schools and in Year Admissions 2013/14 *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Key decision, test (ii) applies. Reference CAS98/11

Purpose of report

To seek approval of the Portfolio Holder to the draft Admission arrangements for 2013/14 as the basis for consultation during the Autumn term 2011.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Head of Planning and Development outlined the background to the requirement for an Admissions Authority to determine admission arrangements and consult upon them.

The Local Authority (LA) is the Admissions Authority in respect of community and voluntary controlled schools, while the governing body is the Admissions Authority in respect of voluntary aided, foundation schools and academies. All Admission Authorities must publish admission arrangements including:

- the number of pupils to be admitted in each year group;
- the criteria to be used in the event of over-subscription;
- the application process including forms, timetables, co-ordinated arrangements and waiting lists;

- admission arrangements for pupils with disabilities, special educational needs or challenging behaviour;
- admission arrangements for children in the care of the local authority (LAC).

LAs were required to consult on the admission arrangements for their schools. The consultation must give full details of admission arrangements that would operate in the area in the year in question. Details of the consultation process, stakeholders involved and the proposed timetable were set out in the report.

Parents/carers are invited to express preferences for up to 3 primary schools in priority order and give reasons for their preferences

The Local Authority is proposing to change the oversubscription criteria for admission to a community or voluntary controlled primary schools in September 2013. This would lift the criteria relating to siblings above the criteria relating to the admission zone. This change was being suggested in response to a number of complaints and issues that had arisen over recent years. The admissions criteria would, therefore, be as follows:

- In the first instance, places will be awarded to those pupils with a statement of special educational needs where the school is named in the statement.
- The remaining places will be awarded in the following priority order:
 - (1) those children who are in the care of the local authority;
 - (2) those children who have older brothers or sisters who will be attending the school in September 2013;
 - (3) those children who live in the school's admission zone;
 - (4) those children who are distinguished from the great majority of other applicants whether on medical grounds or by other exceptional circumstances and who would suffer significant hardship if they were unable to attend the school;
 - (5) those children who live closest to the school as determined by the shortest suitable walking distance.

No places can be allocated at an oversubscribed school to parents/carers who have not stated their preference in writing for that school. In considering requests for admission to a particular school, all preferences will be considered on an equal basis.

If an application was unsuccessful, a child's name may be placed on a waiting list. The position on the waiting list would be determined in accordance with the published priority criteria. If a place subsequently becomes available, the place will be offered to the next child on the waiting list.

The report set out the timetable for consultation which indicated that the final scheme needed to be submitted to the Secretary of State by no later than 15 April 2012.

The report also referred to the consideration of the Admission Policy for 2013/14. Most admission policies include a criterion relating to distance from school as the final criterion or 'tie breaker'. Distance would be measured using the shortest safest walking route from the (ordnance survey) address point of the child's home address to the main entrance of the school, using the Local Authority's computerised measuring system, with those living closer to the school receiving higher priority.

During last year's consultation the Local Authority suggested changing the way we measure our tie breaker by using a straight line from the (ordnance survey) address point of the child's home address to (ordnance survey) address point of the school, using the Local Authority's computerised measuring system, with those living closer to the school receiving higher priority. Following the consultation it was decided not to change to this method. However, Hartlepool is one of very few authorities measuring the distance criteria this way as the majority used the straight line 'as the crow flies' method. There have been some disputes in the recent past over the safest shortest working route and this new method of measurement had been discussed by the Admissions Forum. However, there was an even division in the forum on this matter and it is appropriate to reconsider the detail again which should form part of the consultation.

Appendices to the report set out the Proposed Admissions Limits for all schools in the town for 2013/14; the co-ordinated admissions scheme for secondary schools for 2013/14 and a similar scheme for primary schools; and an in year co-ordination scheme for in year applications co-ordinated through the Local Authority in the same way that normal entry to school applies. It was highlighted that in relation to the proposed admissions limits, the number for English Martyrs School had been reduced from 260 to 240. This change had been agreed with the school as it had been an intention under the Building Schools for the Future programme.

The Portfolio Holder supported the proposals for consultation as she considered them to be as open and transparent as they could be made.

Decision

That consultation on 2013/14 admission arrangements (with an end date of December 2011) take place on the basis of seeking views on:

- (i) The proposed oversubscription criteria for community and voluntary controlled primary schools which proposes to promote the sibling criteria above school admission zone criteria.
- (ii) The proposed admission limits.
- (iii) The Primary and Secondary and In Year Transfers co-ordinated admissions scheme.
- (iv) The method that distances are calculated within the distance criteria or

as a tiebreaker.

10. Short Breaks Services Statement (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to present the final Short Breaks Services Statement and seek approval for the implementation and publication of the Statement.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Assistant Director, Prevention, Safeguarding and Specialist Services reported that the Children Act 1989 required local authorities to provide a short break service designed to assist individuals who provide care for disabled children. This duty and the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2010 came into force on 1st April 2011. The regulations require each local authority to produce a Short Breaks Services Statement so that families know what services are available, the eligibility criteria for those services and how the range of short breaks are designed to meet the needs of local families with disabled children. There was a requirement for the Short Breaks Services Statement to be published on the Council's website by 1st October 2011. A copy of the draft statement was submitted with the report.

The draft Statement had been prepared in collaboration with parents of '1 Hart 1 Mind 1 Future' and officers within the Local Authority Child and Adult Services Department. The draft Statement had been subject to wider consultation between 22nd July and 5th August 2011 and was made available for viewing and comments on both the council's website and the website of 1 Hart 1 Mind 1 Future. It was also circulated in paper format for those parents who don't have access to the internet, highlighted via the free texting service, circulated to staff in the local authority and distributed to members of appropriate task groups and boards that may have a stake in the delivery of short breaks.

The Portfolio Holder sought assurance that the statement would give the indication that how long and often the breaks should be would be discussed with the families concerned and would not be 'presumed' by the authority. The Assistant Director indicated that the published document would include that statement.

Decision

That the Short Breaks Services Statement as submitted be approved, subject to the Portfolio Holder's comments and that the Statement be published on or before 1st October 2011.

11. Safeguarding Children in Hartlepool (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

To present information on the workload of children's social work teams in providing service to children in need in Hartlepool including those in need of protection and children looked after.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Assistant Director, Prevention, Safeguarding and Specialist Services reported on the workload of children's social work teams and the current demands on the service. The information provided was an analysis of the activity during the first quarter of 2011/12. The report set out details of the numbers of children referred for and receiving services, workload and workforce information and details of complaints, comments and compliments received by the service during the quarter.

The Portfolio Holder commented that there was a lot to be positive about in the information reported and that all the staff in the department should be congratulated on their performance.

Decision

That the report be noted and that staff be congratulated on the excellent performance outlined within the report.

The meeting concluded at 10.30 a.m.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 12th September 2011