

# Children and Young People Select Committee

## Review of School Organisation and Admission Arrangements (Phase 1)

### Outline Scope

<b>Scrutiny Chair (Project Director):</b> Councillor Carol Clark
<b>Scrutiny Officer (Project Manager):</b> Judy Trainer
<b>Departmental Link Officer:</b> Lynda Brown (Jane Wright, Darren Coulton)
<b>Finance Link Officer:</b> Garry Cummings
<b>Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?</b>  Council Plan Objective – Children and Young People - No Child Left Behind - Ensuring that all young people are in receipt of education, employment and training
<b>What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?</b>  <b>School Organisation</b>  The Council's responsibility for planning school places is for all schools including academies and free schools. In addition, the allocation and planning for places in special schools currently takes place outside the School Organisation Planning Framework, although the Special Schools and Academies are referred to in the current School Organisation Plan.  The statutory requirement to publish an annual School Organisation Plan was abolished in 2004. However, the Council has continued to publish such a plan to inform the strategic decision making on matters relating to school capacity.  <b>Capacity issues</b>  A challenge for Stockton is to plan for increasing numbers of children – and this is a trend that is reflected in the earlier years in primary schools rolls and in live birth data. The trend of lower numbers in the system is working through upper primary and secondary schools. So, although there is surplus capacity in primary schools (ref. 2013 Census) of 7.4%, most of this surplus is in years 5 and 6 (9-11 year olds). The growth in demand is for places in lower school. In September 2013, 2,362 four year-olds entered school in comparison with 2,100 in 2008.  The 2013 census reported 15.9% surplus capacity in secondary schools, which is disproportionately concentrated in a small number of schools with a number of high performing schools being full to capacity with waiting lists. The increasing number of children leaving year 6 in primary schools to take up places in secondary schools continues this pattern and

therefore, exacerbates the position of some under-subscribed improving schools and academies alongside over-subscribed popular schools, although the overall capacity in terms of secondary places is adequate. 'Travel to learn' patterns for secondary education, in Stockton as elsewhere, are more diverse and cover greater distances than those for primary.

### **Admission Arrangements**

As the Admissions Authority for maintained schools the Council **must** set/determine admission arrangements annually. Where changes are proposed the Council **must** publicly consult. If no changes are made, admission arrangements must be consulted on at least every 7 years. In Stockton-on-Tees the last significant consultation took place in 2010, with regular updates taking place annually.

It is essential to note that a formal consultation process must take place for a minimum of 8 weeks between 1 November and 1 March in the determination year, prior to any changes being finalised. The Admission Arrangements must be finalised by 15 April and published by 1 May on the Council website.

For 2014 admissions in both primary and secondary schools we have seen an increasing number of parents being unable to secure the school of their choice. Although these numbers are still comparatively low, affect a limited number of schools and include situations that have arisen because parents have failed to follow the advice given, nonetheless we can anticipate an increasing number of unsuccessful applications and, therefore appeals, in future years. This is typical in areas where the population is increasing – the less surplus there is in the system, the less options there are available.

### **Overall Aim of Review**

The overall aim of the review is to ensure that the process and criteria for identifying **priorities** for 2014/15 has been transparent and robust and then to be involved in ensuring that the public consultation December 2014 – March 2015 is carried out appropriately and that the outcomes and report to Cabinet on recommendations in March 2015 have been subject to Scrutiny, prior to lodging with Secretary of State in April 2015.

### **The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:**

- To understand school organisation, the different approaches that can be undertaken and the zone system which currently operate in Stockton.
- To understand national guidance in relation to this and the expectation that there should be a review and public consultation every 7 years on admissions arrangements (for Stockton this would be 2016/17) and therefore to consider an approach for a borough wide review of school place planning and admission arrangements beginning in the summer of 2015.
- To identify priorities that need to be consulted upon earlier i.e. in 2014 so that they can be included in the consultation on admissions arrangements for 2016 (to run December 2014 – March 2015 prior to lodging with Secretary of State)
- To reflect on the current school admissions process in relation to Statutory Guidelines to ensure that the practices used to decide the allocation of school places are fair, clear and objective and to comment on local communication of this.

**Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?**

N/A

**Expected duration of review and key milestones:**

**9 months:**

Agree Scope and Project Plan – 19 June 2014  
Obtaining Evidence – July – September 2014  
Draft Proposals – 19 November 2014  
Final Proposals – 18 February 2015  
Cabinet Consideration – 19 March 2015

**What information do we need?**

Existing information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.):

School Organisation Plan 2013-17  
Pupil data and projected numbers  
School Capacity (SCAP) 2013 Commentary return  
(as submitted to DfE)  
Summary of recent and planned capital investment in Schools

School Admissions Code 2012  
School Admissions Appeals Code 2012  
Primary and Secondary Admissions 2014 booklet  
Applying for a primary & secondary school place information sent to parents

Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet Member, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc.)

Lynda Brown  
Jane Wright  
Darren Coulton

Richard McGuckin  
Garry Cummings

What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?

Service Overview and feedback, Statutory Responsibilities, current Issues

Capital Programme

**How will this information be gathered? (eg. Financial baselining and analysis, benchmarking, site visits, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, survey)**

Desk Top survey, discussion at Committee Meetings

**How will key partners and the public be involved in the review?**

Key partners will be invited to contribute.

**How will the review help the Council meet the Public Sector Equality Duty?**

The review will seek where possible to ensure that children with protected characteristics are not disadvantaged by admission arrangements.

**How will the review contribute towards the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, or the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy?**

The review will contribute to the delivery of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy key priority: 'giving every child the best start in life' and other related objectives set out in the Strategy Delivery Plan.

**Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and/or transformation:**

The review may help inform service redesign / planning / commissioning to meet current / emerging need and potentially increase value for money.

## Review of School Organisation and Admission Arrangements

## Project Plan

<b>Chair (Project Director)</b> Councillor Carol Clark	<b>Scrutiny Officer (Project Manager)</b> Judy Trainer
<b>Departmental Link Officers</b> Lynda Brown (Jane Wright, Darren Coulton)	<b>Finance Link Officer</b> Garry Cummings

KEY TASK	DETAILS/ACTIVITIES	DATE	RESPONSIBILITY
<b>Scoping of Review</b>	Information gathering	May 2014	Scrutiny Officer Link Officer
<b>Tri-Partite Meeting</b>	Meeting to discuss aims and objectives of review	9 June 4.30pm	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Corporate Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
<b>Agree Project Plan</b>	Scope and Project Plan agreed by Committee	19 June	Select Committee
<b>Publicity of Review</b>	e.g. Press Briefing at start of review	N/A	Chair, Link Officer, Press Officer Scrutiny Officer
<b>Obtaining Evidence</b>		16 July 2014: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Background/ Context Setting</li> <li>• Admissions processes for 2015</li> <li>• School place planning and</li> </ul>	Select Committee

		<p>capacity for 2016 and beyond including identification of key priorities for development</p> <p>17 September 2014:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation of key priorities and proposals for consultation and further work</li> </ul>	
<b>Tri-Partite Meeting</b>	Meeting to discuss progress of review	7 October 2014 3pm	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Corporate Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
<b>Consideration of Recommendations</b>	Consideration of final recommendations and associated consultation and statutory processes	19 November 2014	Select Committee, Cabinet Member, Corporate Director
<b>Tri-Partite Meeting</b>	Meeting to discuss outcome of consultation and next steps	Early Feb 15 TBA	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Corporate Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
<b>Consideration of Final Proposals</b>	Outcome of consultation and scrutiny of proposals prior to presentation to Cabinet	18 February 2015	Select Committee
<b>Consideration of Report by Executive Scrutiny Committee</b>	Consideration of report	3 March 2015	Executive Scrutiny Committee
<b>Report to Cabinet</b>	Approval of final proposals prior to lodging them with the Secretary of State.	19 March 2015	Cabinet/ Approving Body