

MEMBERS POLICY SEMINAR PROGRAMME

SUMMARY

This report provides Council with an overview of content from the Members Policy Seminar in November 2014 that included a presentation on the statutory process and local arrangements regarding school organisation and admissions to schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Council are recommended to:

1. Receive this report and note its contents.

BACKGROUND

1. Members Policy Seminars are an important vehicle for both informing and consulting with Members on a variety of topics from Policy and Legislative changes, contributions to Government consultations, and providing an update on local service provision from partner organisations. They have been in place since January 2009 and are particularly useful for those issues which are of importance to the Council or partners but are in the early stages of development, or those which will be of interest to Members, out with the usual reporting arrangements.
2. A programme of seminars is set annually with events planned on a monthly basis. Topics are reviewed monthly by the Corporate Management Team to ensure issues are current and discussions and information provision is timely. Special, additional seminars are arranged as required.

SUMMARY OF THE TOPIC COVERED IN NOVEMBER 2014

3. The Head of Service for Education, Early Years and Complex Needs, supported by the Admissions, Placement and Commissioning Manager presented the current position with respect to school organisation and the admissions system. The presentation included an understanding of the School Organisation Plan, our responsibilities in supporting and delivering sufficient places across the borough, an explanation of the schools admissions system, over subscription criteria and the arrangements for Special Educational Needs. The second element of the presentation set out the work of the Children and Young Peoples Select Committee review and proposals following phase 1 of their review of School Organisation.
4. Part One of the presentation detailed the following:
 - What is a School Organization Plan, how often it is produced
 - What the plan includes with respect to data, trends, current "stock"

- How it informs Capital Programme proposals
- Information on admissions zones, feeder schools, open market situation
- Covers 12 secondary and 59 primary schools.
- A detailed understanding of the Schools Admission System
- The administrative arrangements surrounding the School Admissions System
- The role of the Local Authority in School Admissions
- The complexities and issues surrounding the process
- The Admissions Guidance booklet
- In year transfers and subsequent implications of this level of movement.
- The arrangements in place for Special Educational Needs with respect to School Admissions including new regulations around SEN
- Our local offer with respect to access to educational services, transport etc
- An understanding of the Over Subscriptions Criteria, common perceptions/ issues/ support in place, surrounding the school admissions process.

5. The presentation provided an understanding of the current work and remit of the Children and Young People select committee which is undertaking a borough wide review beginning in 2015/6 and concluding in 2016/17. Preliminary work has considered aspects that require a more immediate review for implementation in 2014, to allow impact on September 2016 admissions. These include:

- Demand for primary places in Stockton – North and Central primary planning areas
- Rationalising primary planning zones in Ingleby Barwick
- Review secondary zones in planning areas of Ingleby Barwick, Eaglescliffe and Yarm
- Ash Trees Special School
- Consideration of “ In Year applications and Transfers”
- Current process for school admissions.

6. This review is based on a set of key principles as detailed below:

- Parental choice
- Traffic issues and impact of changes to zone boundaries
- Logic of zones with respect to community boundaries
- Impact of approved housing
- Existing sibling link arrangements
- Faith Zones
- Projected pupil numbers

7. The presentation provided details of existing arrangements, discussions to date and options identified for change. The final slide included the timetable for the consultation and approval process.

8. All slides and materials used in the presentations are available on the Members section of the Intranet. A regular update report on members seminar events held, will be provided to Council at each meeting going forward.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial

9. There are no financial implications arising as a direct result of this report.

Legal

10. There are no legal implications arising as a direct result from this report.

RISK ASSESSMENT

11. This report is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

12. This report is not subject to Equality Impact Assessment as it makes no proposals for service development or policy change.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

13. Members Policy Seminars help the Council achieve all its objectives as outlined in the Sustainable Community Strategy.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

14. No external consultation has taken place on this report.

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Background Papers

Slides/ Presentation from the member seminar programmes.

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Members Policy Seminars affect all wards in the Borough.

Property

This report has no implications for the Council's Capital Programme and Asset Management Plan.