



DERBY CITY COUNCIL
Education Service

Response for Scrutiny Management Commission Primary School Places Topic Review

- The Education Commission made 17 recommendations for consideration in formulating the school place planning strategy. Council Cabinet resolved:

‘To receive the report and refer it to the Director of Education, to contribute to the preparation of a school place planning strategy’.

- Discussion on the content and direction of a strategy for responding to surplus primary places in Derby has continued, using the Commission’s recommendations as a framework for consideration of possibilities. Partners inside and outside the city are being engaged in this process. Two issues have affected the timing, as noted below.
- The DfES is currently working on new guidance on dealing with surplus places, to be issued to Local Authorities. This is scheduled to go on the DfES website in January 2005. Indications are that the new guidance will outline major changes in dealing with surplus places, in terms of recognising Children’s Centres, the extended schools agenda and resulting need for capacity. The new guidance is likely to move away from formula approaches to surplus places. It is important for the School Place Planning Strategy to incorporate this new DfES guidance.
- In view of the work on health & safety in schools, officer time has been diverted from developing the principles and priorities that will underpin the School Place Planning strategy.
- Education Management Team will now be considering initial principles in early November, anticipating what will be in the new DfES guidance. These will be discussed with the Cabinet Member for Lifelong Learning.
- It is therefore unlikely that a report could be taken to Cabinet before February 2005. Although this causes a delay, the Commission’s recommendations remain relevant. There is also no overall timing issue, and it is important for the strategy to respond to changed national guidelines and expectations.

- There is also a funding issue, with implications for managing expectations with any strategic review. Capital funding will not necessarily be available to effect recommendations from any area review. The review is likely therefore to be developed as a blueprint, subject to capital funding.
- One source of funding, DfES Targeted Capital, was not available for 2005/06 and it is unclear whether bids will be considered for 2006/07.
- Although this topic review's focus was on primary places, there will be also be issues with secondary places – on which the Education Commission also recently completed their review - and popular schools. The government's five year strategy proposes have the possible expansion of popular schools, irrespective of the surplus places created elsewhere.
- In relation to Building Schools for the future, the DfES continue to change dates to confirm where Derby City Council is likely to be on the fifteen-year programme to replace secondary schools. Latest indications are announcements will be made in late November. As well as being vital to addressing the outcomes of the commission's latest topic review, this information is important for school place planning in primary schools, as it will affect the extent to which formula based capital funding needs to be directed to modernisation issues in secondary schools.