



COUNCIL CABINET 5 April 2005

Report of the Education Commission

Education Commission School Place Planning reviews – adoption of the Commission's Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council Cabinet adopt and implement those of the Commission's recommendations on School Place Planning that the Assistant Director of Education has identified in his report as being capable of taken forward before the new guidance and advice on school place planning is issued.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

- 2.1 At its meeting on 21 February 2005, the Education Commission received a report from Simon Longley the Assistant Director of Education on the response of the Education Service to recommendations made by the Commission as a consequence its reviews of School Place Planning. In his report, the Assistant Director identified which of the Commission's recommendations the Education Service had responded to and the form that the response had taken.
- 2.2 The Assistant Director explained that new guidance on school place planning was expected imminently from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Audit Commission. He also said it was hoped that new guidance and a formal decision on Derby's position in the Building Schools for the Future programme would be available by Easter 2005. He explained these were the reasons for the delay in formally adopting recommendations arising from the Education Commission's reviews of Primary and Secondary School Place Planning. The Assistant Director said that it was the intention of the Education Service to take formal proposals to Council Cabinet as soon as the new guidance became available.

Issue(s)

- 2.3 Councillor Latham expressed her concern about the lack of any real response to the Commission's recommendations. She felt that Council Cabinet should decide on a policy for school place planning so that the Council could respond quickly as soon as money and resources became available. Co-opted member David Wilkinson supported the approach

taken by the Council and said he thought it was a good policy which would ensure that scarce local authority resources were not diverted to other issues. He said that there was a need to make sure that existing buildings were made safe for the foreseeable future.

2.4 Councillor Wynn expressed sympathy with the views of Councillor Latham. He suggested that it should be possible to consider a number of different areas and do baseline work, which would not be affected by any change in the guidance. Councillor Wynn said he that he supported the Commission's Recommendation 15 of the Primary Sector review which was that new schools should not be built with split forms of entry. He said the ideal would be two forms of entry. In respect of Recommendation 15 he said that there was a need for regular reviews because the situation was always changing. Councillor Latham then asked why it was necessary to take into account the effect of schools on the local housing market.

2.5 In response to the comments made by Commission members, the Assistant Director said that the size of a primary school was a matter of policy that had already been agreed through the Schools Organisation Plan. Referring to the number of forms of entry he said that within the PFI some primary schools were being built with two forms of entry but he pointed out that at some primary schools, there were just insufficient pupils to fill two entry forms. The Assistant Director also said that reviews were driven by the situation that existed and were only needed when circumstances changed. He said that schools did have an impact on the Housing Market and he told the Commission that it was not particularly helpful if parents selected an infant, junior or primary school with a view to getting their child into a particular secondary school.

Conclusions of the Commission

2.6 Having considered the Assistant Director's report the Commission were of the view that Council Cabinet should as soon as possible formally adopt and implement those of Commission's recommendations on school place planning that were not likely to be affected the forthcoming new guidance.

Recommendations of the Commission

2.7 That Council Cabinet adopt and implement those of the Commission's recommendations on School Place Planning that the Assistant Director of Education has identified in his report as being capable of taken forward before the new guidance and advice on school place planning is issued.

Reasons for Commission's Recommendations

2.8 As set out in 2.2 to 2.5 above.

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Background papers:	Background Papers - None
List of appendices:	Appendix 1 – Implications

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

1. None arising from this report.

Legal

2. None arising from this report.

Personnel

3. None arising from this report.

Equalities impact

4. An effective School Place Planning Policy will be of benefit to all Derby people.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

5. This report has the potential to link to the following corporate objectives and priorities for change:

Corporate Objectives: Education

Priorities for Change: Responding to people's needs appropriately.