



## RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The following is a record of the decisions taken at the meeting of **CABINET** held on **Wednesday 10 February 2016**.

The decisions will come into force and may be implemented from **Monday 22 February, 2016** unless the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or its Committees object to any such decision and call it in.

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### **School Admission Arrangements Academic Year 2017/2018** **Key Decision: CAS/02/15**

#### **Summary**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director, Children and Adults Services which outlined the proposed admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the 2017/18 academic year.

The School Admissions Code states that all schools must have admission arrangements that clearly set out how children will be admitted which must include oversubscription criteria. Admission arrangements are determined by admission authorities. The Local Authority (LA) is the admission authority for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools, while the Governing Body is the admission authority for Voluntary Aided and Foundation Schools and the relevant Trust for an Academy or Free School. All admission authorities must agree admission arrangements annually. Where changes are proposed to admission arrangements the admission authority must first consult on those arrangements. There are no changes proposed to the current admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools that required public consultation, other than it is proposed that some schools have a reduction in the admission number for the purposes of efficient and effective curriculum delivery. The proposed admission number for each Community and Voluntary Controlled School was detailed in Appendix 2 of the report and the admission numbers for Voluntary Aided, Foundation schools, Academies and free schools were included in the report for information.

All Governing Bodies/Trusts have considered and agreed to the co-ordinated admission schemes that will govern the administrative processes for the 2017/18 academic year (detailed in Appendix 3). These are unchanged from the previous year except that since a new School Admissions Code was published in December 2014 all admission authorities in Durham have followed advice issued by the Department for Education (DfE) in relation to the admission of summer born children outside of the normal year of entry.

In September 2015, Schools Minister Nick Gibb MP announced the government's intention to give "summer-born" children (those children born between 1 April to 31 August for admissions purposes) the right to start in the Reception Class at a primary school at age 5 (the start of compulsory school age). Children usually start school in the September after they turn age 4 but parents of "summer-born" children can ask to delay entry to Reception for a year. It is up to the relevant admission authority to decide whether to agree the request. To date, there has been no public consultation on the admission of "summer-born" children. When this does start, the Council will respond to the consultation and if proposed changes to the School Admissions Code are agreed by Parliament, then the Council will reflect these in its own admissions policy.

It is a statutory requirement of all admission authorities that admission arrangements for 2017/2018 are determined by 28 February 2016 and these must be published on their website not later than 15 March 2016. The Local Authority must publish online, with hard copies available a composite prospectus for parents by 12 September 2016, which contains the admission arrangements for each of the state-funded schools in the Local Authority area to which parents can apply. The Local Authority will be in breach of its statutory duty if admission arrangements are not determined by 28 February 2016 and published on the Council's website by 15 March 2016.

## **Decision**

The Cabinet agreed the following recommendations in respect of Community and Voluntary Controlled schools, when determining the admission arrangements for 2017/18:

- a. That the admission numbers as recommended in Appendix 2 of the report be approved
- b. That the admission arrangements, at Appendix 3 of the report be approved.

## **North East Combined Authority: Devolution Deal**

### **Summary**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive which provided Cabinet with a progress report on the North East Combined Authority poll and outlined the decision making process for this Authority.

The North East Combined Authority (NECA) was established in April 2014 as a new body bringing together the seven Councils which serve County Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside and Sunderland. It has responsibility for strategic transport for all seven local authorities. Members of this Council have been appointed to various key roles within the combined authority.

Following the 2015 General Election, the Government launched its 'Northern PowerHouse' Programme and the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the availability of devolved powers including potential funding devolution to combined authorities.

For several months, the NECA Leadership Board were in intensive negotiations to achieve the best possible deal for the region and have signed a proposed agreement, subject to final agreement, subject to final agreement being conditional upon:

- The outcome of the Spending Review on 25 November 2015
- The legislative process
- Further public consultation
- Formal endorsement by the Leadership Board and Ministers early in 2016/17.

The devolution offer for NECA and its development going forward was acknowledged as a significant issue for County Durham because of boundary issues, some of which are unique to Durham compared to the other NECA constituent authorities. An issue which was controversial for all the constituent authorities was the Chancellor's stated condition that any deal must involve an Elected Mayor for the Combined Authority with effect from May 2017.

At a Council meeting held on 9 December 2015, Council recommended that there should be a poll of the residents of County Durham subject to Council agreeing to the funding of a poll from the Council's Revenue Contingency Budget. During week commencing 11 January, the Electoral Reform Society (ERS) began sending polling packs to residents. The deadline for responses was 8 February and the results are currently being analysed by ERS in readiness for a report on the results to Council at its meeting on 24 February 2016.

Extensive consultation has taken place at various stages. In terms of the legislative process, the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill has progressed through the parliamentary processes and is due to receive the Royal Assent imminently. This legislation provides for the creation of Mayoral Combined Authorities, and the move to such an authority by the NECA is an integral element of the proposed Agreement.

The legislation provides for the creation of a Mayoral Combined Authority if at least two Constituent Authorities as well as the Combined Authority affected, consent. Should any Constituent Authorities not consent to the creation of the Mayoral Combined Authority and provided the Combined Authority still wishes to proceed, the non-consenting Constituent Authorities will be removed from the Combined Authority through the Parliamentary process that provides for a new Mayor. Subject to the necessary consents being provided during February and March it is expected that the requisite legislation will commence Parliamentary processes in May/June 2016 and provide for mayoral elections in May 2017.

The NECA Leadership Board is planning to make its decision on the Devolution agreement by 24 March 2016 and an essential component of that decision making are the views of the constituent authorities.

The final decision on whether to agree to the deal is an executive decision and Cabinet should therefore decide this issue at its meeting of 16 March. The Leader of the Council expressed his intention to report on the results of the poll to Council on 24 February 2016 so that Council's view on the devolution deal can be taken having regard to the outcome of the poll.

Cabinet can take these views into account when deciding whether to agree to the Devolution Deal at its meeting on the 16 March 2016.

## **Decision**

The Cabinet agreed to the presentation of a report on NECA and an analysis of the poll to Council on 24 February 2016 so that Council can provide its views on the issue taking into account the outcome of the poll before Cabinet makes its final decision at its meeting on the 16 March 2016.

## **Decision made in Part B of the meeting – report containing exempt or confidential information**

### **Forrest Park Newton Aycliffe**

#### **Summary**

The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development and the Corporate Director, Resources which outlined the current position at Forrest Park Newton Aycliffe.

#### **Decision**

The Cabinet approved the recommendations contained in the report subject to an amendment at paragraph 35/36.

Colette Longbottom  
Head of Legal and Democratic Services  
12 February 2016