

Medway Council
Meeting of School Transport and Curriculum Appeals
Committee

Thursday, 14 January 2021

10.00am to 2.15pm

Record of the meeting

Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next meeting of this committee

Present: Councillors: Carr, Cooper, Sylvia Griffin, Mrs Josie Iles (Chairman) and Johnson (not for case ST803)

In Attendance: Paul Clarke, Head of School Services
Laura Phillips, School Admissions and Transport Deputy Manager - Transport
Teri Reynolds, Democratic Services Officer
Selena Saroy, Lawyer (Education)

608 Apologies for absence

There were none.

609 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 7 December 2020 was agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct.

610 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

611 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

Councillor Josie Iles declared an Other Significant Interest in item 6 (officer advice in response to a recommended policy change) as she was Portfolio Holder for Children's Services and a Member of the Cabinet, which would need to consider and determine any recommendations made. She therefore withdrew from the meeting for the consideration and decision of this item.

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Other interests

There were none.

612 School Transport and Curriculum Appeals Committee - Terms of reference

The Committee noted the report.

613 Officer advice in response to a recommended policy change

Discussion:

The Head of School Services introduced the report which provided some officer advice in relation to a recommendation made by the Committee previously, in relation to the Education Travel Assistance Policy (ETAP). The Committee, at its meeting on 27 August 2020, had recommended that Cabinet be asked to review the ETAP and consider whether pupils who secure a place at a Medway Grammar School on appeal should also be classed as grammar ability under the policy. He explained that this scenario largely related to one school and that by making the change it could result in a potentially unfair process for pupil who pass the Medway test more pupils could be disadvantaged than benefit from the proposed change.

Members considered that there was a system issue in that undersubscribed grammar schools were able to increase their intake through the admission appeal process and that this should be tackled in partnership with Headteachers and academy trusts.

Members also acknowledged that individual families presenting at a transport appeal, whose child had been successful in gaining a grammar school place via an admission appeal, would consider their child to be of grammar ability and it was very difficult as a local authority and as a Committee to disregard that view.

It was also considered that the report should have gone straight to Cabinet for consideration, with the officer advice and it was felt important that Cabinet should consider the report and be highlighted of this system issue.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report and reiterated its recommendation to Cabinet to review the ETAP and consider whether pupils who secure a place at a Medway Grammar School on appeal should also be classed as grammar ability under the policy.

614 Exclusion of the press and public

The Committee agreed that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the exempt material relating to agenda item 8

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because consideration of these matters in public would disclose information falling within one or more categories of exempt information contained in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as specified in agenda item 7 and, in all the circumstances of the case, the Committee considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

615 Home to school transport appeals - matters for decision

Discussion:

The Committee considered three appeals in respect of the provision of home to school transport.

Decision:

- (a) That case number ST803, as set out in the exempt annex to the agenda, was upheld.
- (b) That case number ST805, as set out in the exempt annex to the agenda, was upheld.
- (c) That case number ST802, as set out in the exempt annex to the agenda, was not upheld.

Chairman

Date:

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