



EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS DECISION RECORD

The following decisions were taken on Tuesday, 9th February, 2021 by Cabinet.

Date notified to all Members: Thursday, 11th February, 2021

End of the call-in period is 5.00 p.m. on Monday 22nd February, 2021. These decisions will not be implemented until after this date and time.

Present:

Chair - Mayor Ros Jones (Mayor of Doncaster with responsibility for Budget and Policy Framework)
Vice-Chair - Councillor Glyn Jones (Deputy Mayor, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Equalities.)

Cabinet Member for:

Councillor Nigel Ball	Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Leisure and Culture
Councillor Joe Blackham	Portfolio Holder for Highways, Street Scene and Trading Services
Councillor Chris McGuinness	Portfolio Holder for Communities, Voluntary Sector and the Environment.
Councillor Jane Nightingale	Portfolio Holder for Customer and Corporate Services.

Apologies:-

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rachael Blake, Nuala Fennelly and Bill Mordue

PUBLIC MEETING – SCHEDULE OF DECISIONS

Public Questions and Statements

No public questions or statements were made at the meeting.

Decision Records dated 26th January 2021, be noted.

DECISION 1.

1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE

6. Education and Skills 2030 Strategy.

2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet:-

- (1) approved the draft Education and Skills Strategy; and
- (2) approved that a strategy communication and launch plan be developed including graphics and design of a publication version of the strategy.

3. REASON FOR DECISION

In the absence of Councillor Nuala Fennelly, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools, Mayor Ros Jones introduced the Education and Skills 2030 Strategy to Cabinet stating that significant improvements have been made to education and learning since the Independent Commission reported back on the One Doncaster recommendations in October 2018. 99% of Early Years settings are rated as being 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted (compared to 94% national average) and GCSE attainment levels, including English and Maths continue to improve.

Mayor Jones stated that this strategy will build on those foundations, as well as help tackle some of the long-standing issues, such as bridging the literacy and numeracy gap for disadvantaged pupils, increasing the proportion of 19 year olds that achieve Level 3 qualifications and developing excellent teachers and leaders. The 5 priorities and supporting aims set out in the strategy reflect the Council's ambitions to achieve transformational change in the borough.

The Mayor commented that it was important to understand the importance of this strategy in terms of transforming the way people learn at all ages and stages of their lives, and as a catalyst for future economic prosperity and resilience for Doncaster's residents. It's about life-long-learning to develop skills and qualifications that support more fulfilling careers and bridge skills gaps across many of our well established and emerging employment sectors (i.e. the health & medical sector and the fast expanding green jobs sector).

Cabinet noted that these are strange and challenging times for the working population and for young people looking to enter further or higher education or the labour market for the first time. This strategy proposes changes that embrace these challenges and recognises the opportunities that can come from future technological and lifestyle changes, changes that can benefit everyone, regardless of their background, locality or whether they are disadvantaged.

She reported that a core theme running through this strategy is the need to make improvement and change through partnership collaboration, in particular, working more closely with business and employers to co-design curriculum, increase apprenticeships and vocational learning and expand work experience for schools.

It was therefore encouraging to see that the government published a 'Skills for Jobs' White paper at the end of January, which supports this approach.

She went on to say that, Doncaster will benefit from this new learning ecosystem as the Council have always recognised the importance of skills development and vocational learning, alongside academic testing. The strategy will provide more choice and styles of learning pathways to support different careers through the traditional school and tertiary route, or for adults who need to reskill to kick-start new employment, or bring about a change in career. It was also noted that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development have been working closely with Doncaster to develop this strategy and ensure it reflects international best practice.

Mayor Jones fully endorsed the strategy and looked forward to hearing about how we plan to implement it, in collaboration with key partners, parents and young people across the borough.

Councillor Nigel Ball commented that this Strategy was needed more than ever as the borough faces the impact of Covid and he was pleased that the strategy is positively focussed on high quality skilled and well-paid jobs. He also stated that the strategy also seems to have a strong alignment with all age provision, from young people to adults, which sends a message that there is a strong emphasis on adult learning, which shows that a person is never too late to change their occupation or trade. He welcomed the report and strategy stating that it was very positive for Doncaster moving forward.

Councillor Joe Blackham praised the document and the obvious improvements which have occurred. He stressed the importance of continuous improvement over the next 10 years. He commented that the importance of education particularly for young people cannot be over emphasised and it is imperative that they get the best education that can be provided, and the Council should make every effort and strive to give them that opportunity.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Option 1 – Continue delivery of existing actions and projects to meet the One Doncaster Report and Revisit recommendations.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no declarations.

6. IF EXEMPT, REASON FOR EXEMPTION

Not Exempt

7. DIRECTOR RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Riana Nelson, Director of Learning, Opportunities & Skills

DECISION 2.

1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE

7. School Admission Arrangements for 2022/23 Academic Year.

2. DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet approved the following admission arrangements for the 2022/2023 school year:-

- Community School Admission Arrangements (paragraphs 13 to 14).
- Community School Nursery Admission Arrangements (paragraphs 13 to 14).
- Primary Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements (paragraphs 15 to 17).
- Secondary Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements (paragraphs 15 to 17).
- Notification of parents of the arrangements for admission including those to the Doncaster University Technology College (paragraphs 18).
- Determine the geographical area covered by Doncaster Borough Council as the Relevant Area for consultation on school admission arrangements (paragraph 26 and 27).

3. REASON FOR DECISION

In the absence of Cllr Fennelly, Mayor Ros Jones introduced the School Admission Arrangements for 2022/23 Academic Year to Cabinet.

Mayor Jones stated that the report outlined the Council's duty to determine the arrangements for the admission of children to schools and nurseries across the Borough each year.

She reported that the Council has an important role to ensure that parents are given every opportunity to apply for a place at their preferred school and this is best achieved through the Council coordinating and monitoring the process.

The co-ordinated arrangements apply to all types of schools in the Borough including academies and free schools.

Cabinet noted that in September 2013 the Government withdrew the requirement to co-ordinate in year applications. This raised concerns within the Authority regarding the safeguarding of children. Since March 2012, each year Cabinet has reaffirmed its commitment to co-ordinate in year admissions.

Mayor Jones reported that co-ordinating year of entry admissions is a statutory function of the council and it achieves this through an online application and paper based system. 98% of applications are received online.

It was noted that outcomes for applicants in Doncaster are very positive. For Secondary admissions in 2020, over 86% of children were offered their first preference and this was even higher at 96% in primary schools. This improves further when we look at children receiving a place at one of their preferred schools to over 96% in secondary and 98% in primary.

She pointed out that separate to the Council co-ordinating the overall process, each admission authority in the Borough must set its own admission arrangements, which include the order in which places are offered when a school is full.

The Council is responsible for setting these for around a quarter (24%) of the schools in Doncaster, the remainder are the responsibility of church schools and academies.

The Council's arrangements reflect the requirements to give first priority to children in care followed by catchment area children. In recognising the importance of keeping families together, the Council then prioritise children with siblings attending the same school.

Cabinet noted that these arrangements are reviewed annually and updated as necessary, to take into account relevant legislation, guidance and local changes.

Mayor Jones stressed that it is crucial to offer support for parents throughout the admission process to minimise any disruption to a child's time in education. This includes having dedicated support staff for each phase of education, allowing for the processing of applications in a timely manner and offering support to parents.

Cabinet welcomed the report and Councillor Glyn Jones wished to state that looking at the percentage of on-line applications, this was definitely something that was coming to the fore, compared with 9 years ago when the Council were receiving 13-14% of on-line applications to 98% present day. He felt that this was a wonderful accolade for the Council to achieve. However, it was important to recognise the other 2% that are not engaging on-line and how the Council were going to manage those in the future because it was imperative that nobody be left behind.

In conclusion, Mayor Jones reported that it was important to ensure that everyone is aware of the arrangements as their child is nearing education and the Council give them all the support it can. She echoed the comments made by Cllr Jones in respect of the numbers now registering on-line and expressed thanks to staff who provide that support to parents, making this a smooth process to follow. However, she also recognised the need to not forget that some people do not have on-line facilities and are required to follow the paper application process.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Options considered were identified in paragraphs 20 to 27 of the report.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no declarations.

6. IF EXEMPT, REASON FOR EXEMPTION

Not Exempt

7. DIRECTOR RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Riana Nelson, Director of Learning, Opportunities & Skills

Signed.....Chair/Decision Maker