

Council 31 October 2017

Agenda Item 14.4 – Administration amendment in the name of Cllr Reuben Thompstone

Opposition motion in the name of Cllr Pauline Coakley Webb – Planning school places in Barnet

Delete all and replace with (changes in bold):

Council notes the revolution in school organisation which began with the introduction of academies through the Learning and Skills Act 2000 and continued with the enabling of free schools through the Academies Act 2010 has moved the education sector from a centralised command economy to a system which offers parents real choice on how they wish to have their children educated.

Council believes the benefits of this shift are obvious in the increased academic attainment of Barnet pupils; not least in the percentage of those on free school meals going to university, which has increased from 27% in 2006/07 to 44% eight years later. Furthermore, according to a Department for Education report published in September 2016, 83% of free schools opened since 2013 did so in areas which required extra school places.

Nonetheless, Council believes a dialogue between local government, central government, and those wishing to open free schools and academies, is an important element of good government. Council also notes that at the most recent Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee members were advised that:

"The free school programme is a central government programme administered by the Department for Education. The council has no role in assessing or approving free school applications. In more recent years, the Department for Education has invited the council to provide a view of the local need for school places."

Council therefore makes known its disappointment that the Labour Group has so often opposed the creation of new secondary school places — whether through expansion of an existing school or the introduction of a new school — despite knowing these are much-needed due to the fast approaching primary school 'bulge'.

Council resolves to continue to work with various levels of government as it already does; successfully planning school places, identifying new sites, and undertaking widespread consultation without creating extra and wasteful bureaucracy.