

**Brighton & Hove City Council**

**For general release**

**Meeting:** Children, Families and Schools Sub-Committee

**Date:** Monday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2005

**Report of:** The Director, Children, Families and Schools

**Subject:** School Admission Arrangements for 2006/7

**1. Purpose of the report**

- 1.1 To set out the proposed admission arrangements for community schools for 2006/7 and proposed admission numbers for all maintained schools in the City.
- 1.2 To set out the revised schemes for co-ordinated admissions, including key dates, and also the arrangements for consultation with Voluntary Aided schools.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the proposed admission arrangements and school admission limits set out in the consultation documents should be adopted for the admissions year 2006/7.
- 2.2 That the co-ordinated schemes be approved subject to one date change to the secondary scheme, as described at 4.3 below.
- 2.3 That the City boundary should be retained as the relevant area for consultation for school admissions.

**3. Background**

- 3.1 Each year local education authorities must consult upon school admission arrangements and school admission limits with community schools and voluntary aided schools and neighbouring LEAs. This consultation takes place approximately 18 months in advance of the school year in which pupils will be admitted under the proposed arrangements. The consultation papers for the 2006/7 admission year for Brighton & Hove are attached as Annex 1.

- 3.2 The admission numbers in the consultation reflect those published for 2005/6 with the exception of Dorothy Stringer School. It has been agreed that the intake, which has been set at 330 for 2004/5 and 2005/6, should reduce to 308 in 2006/7. This was in line with a re-calculation of school capacity that would follow changes in room use.
- 3.3 The admission arrangements proposed for 2006/7 are the same as those published for 2005/6. Members will recall that these were changed from over subscription criteria applied previously (in 2004/5) in the following respects.
- In infant, junior and primary schools a limit of two miles from the child's home to the school was set on the application of the sibling priority rule.
  - Instead of the a third admission priority utilising a priority area drawn by the school admission team, the third priority was changed to the distance from the child's home to the school by walking route.

The first year's operation (2005/6) of these revised priorities will be reported to the Sub-Committee in the autumn of 2005, once the admissions exercise is concluded. Any decision to change them or revert to the previous system on the basis of that report could not be implemented until the 2007/8 admission year, as regulations prescribe the date by which a decision must be made as 15<sup>th</sup> April in the year before the change. This would be April 15<sup>th</sup> 2005 for a change applying to the September 2006 admission cohort.

- 3.4 The co-ordinated schemes of admission for primary and secondary schools have been revised to change the relevant dates for each part of the school admission exercise. They are now included as part of the main admission consultation process. The overall purpose of co-ordination is to ensure that each pupil receives one offer of a school place, so that different admission authorities are not holding open places for pupils that will not be taken up. This used to result from multiple applications by parents/carers, which should not now be possible under the schemes.

## **4 Consultation**

- 4.1 Consultation on the LEA's proposed admission arrangements and admission numbers has been undertaken with all schools in the city and with neighbouring LEAs in accordance with the requirements of the Education Act 2002, and also with the Church of England and the Roman

Catholic Diocesan Authorities. The closing date for the consultation was 7<sup>th</sup> February 2005.

- 4.2 By the closing date responses to the LEA's proposed admission arrangements and the schemes of co-ordination were received from 2 secondary schools and 9 primary schools. No objections were made about the admission arrangements, the proposed admission limits for schools, or the schemes of co-ordination.
- 4.3 A helpful reply was received from East Sussex with regard to the secondary co-ordinated scheme. This suggested that the date set at paragraph 4, 25<sup>th</sup> November 2005, should be brought forward. It is the date when information about preferences would be exchanged between the LEA and its neighbours, and with Cardinal Newman School. The proposal would bring the Scheme in line with the School Admissions Code of Practice, and it is therefore agreed that the date be brought forward to 14<sup>th</sup> November 2005.

## **5 Relevant Area for Consultation**

- 5.1 Periodically the LEA must determine what is known as the "relevant area for consultation". This area will include the schools and other admission authorities (such as voluntary aided schools) that should be consulted on admission arrangements. A relevant area may be either the LEA area, less or more than that, or may include part of neighbouring LEA areas. The whole of the LEA must be included in one or more relevant areas. Some larger LEAs sub-divide into smaller areas for consultation purposes.
- 5.2 In Brighton & Hove the relevant area has been set as the city boundary. Whilst there is some cross-border movement of pupils, it has not been seen as significant enough to warrant a cross-border relevant area. There has also been a good exchange of information with East and West Sussex, so extending the area has not been necessary. The proposal in this year's consultation is to retain a relevant area co-terminus with the city boundary.

## **6 Voluntary Aided School Consultation**

- 6.1 Voluntary Aided school governing bodies act as their own admission authorities, and are required to consult with all schools in the relevant area about their admission arrangements. Whilst they may consult by post or by using electronic information exchange, this can be a time consuming task for the schools. The Voluntary Aided schools in the city have this year been offered a means of cutting down on this work by sending an electronic copy of their proposed arrangements to the LEA. They are then posted on a part of the Council's Education Online website, which other schools can access. Any wishing to comment on another's

admission arrangements can then contact that school direct. A bulletin went to all schools informing them of this process.

- 6.2 A number of schools have already made use of this facility. It is hoped that others will follow. Some are yet to have their governors meeting to determine their 2006/7 arrangements, and will use the Education Online board once they have done so. If schools decide not to use it they must consult directly with all other schools in the relevant area. Any school failing to do so may have their admission priorities challenged by parents or other interested parties. In theory this could prevent them applying their over subscription criteria, resulting in their having to admit all applicants. Voluntary Aided schools must have completed their consultation by 1<sup>st</sup> March 2005, and have until 15<sup>th</sup> April for the governing body to finalise the admission arrangements, taking into account any comments received.
- 6.3 Of the proposed Voluntary Aided School admission arrangements for 2006/7 received by to date, none have given cause for comment by the LEA, as they conform to the School Admissions Code of Practice. Should any give cause for concern or comment, a response would be sent to the school governing body.

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**Financial implications**

It is not possible to quantify in detail the financial implications of these recommendations. However any changes to admission arrangements may impact on the numbers of pupils at individual schools and therefore the budget allocations that are largely driven by pupil numbers.

*Finance Officer consulted. Susan Coleman Date.10/02/05*

**Legal implications**

The LEA must conform to the requirements on school admissions contained in the Education Act 2002 and subsequent Regulations and Codes of Practice. It must also be mindful of the need to co-ordinate school admission arrangements with all schools in the LEA and with neighbouring LEAs. As to human rights implications, the Council, when exercising its education functions, must take into account that no person shall be denied the right to education. The Council must also respect the right of parent to ensure such education and teaching as are in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions, but only so far as is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable expenditure.

*Lawyer consulted. Date.*

**Corporate/Citywide implications**

All schools in the city should be operating on the basis of admission limits and admission priorities which have been the subject of broad consultation. The effective co-

**Risk assessment**

There are no risk issues in terms of risk to city council resources or risk to children and their parents/carers.

<p>ordination of admissions arrangements should lead to a single offer of a school place for each child seeking a place in a maintained school in the city.</p>	
<p><b>Sustainability implications</b> School admission arrangements are intended so far as it is possible to provide pupils with local places where they have asked for them. This is subject to limitations in school capacity, and the priority order for school preferences given by parents/carers.</p>	<p><b>Equalities implications</b> Planning and provision for school admissions procedures and school places is conducted in such a way as to avoid potentially discriminatory admissions priorities or planning processes. The city council and voluntary aided school governing bodies must be mindful of bad practice as described in the School Admissions Code of Practice.</p>
<p><b>Implications for the prevention of crime and disorder</b> There are no implications for the prevention of crime and disorder.</p>	

<p><b>Background papers</b> None</p>
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