

Subject:	School Admission Arrangements for 2013/14		
Date of Meeting:	15 March 2012 - Cabinet 22 March 2012		
Report of:	Strategic Director; People		
Lead Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Children & Young People		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Gil Sweetenham	Tel: 293433
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Key Decision:	Yes	Forward Plan No: 28152	
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 Each year local authorities must consult upon school admission arrangements and school admission numbers with community schools and voluntary aided schools, neighbouring Local Authorities and with parents living in the City. This process includes the proposed admission priorities for community schools and those proposed by the governing bodies of voluntary aided schools and academies. 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 2013/14 admission year for Brighton & Hove are attached as Appendix 1.
- 1.2 Local authorities must also set out schemes for co-ordinated admissions, including key dates in the admission process, and also the arrangements for consultation with Voluntary Aided schools in the City and with other local authorities. They also establish the area (the "relevant area") within which the admission consultation should take place.
- 1.3 The consultation process must have been concluded by 1st March 2012, with a minimum of 8 weeks consultation time. This requirement has been fulfilled. The City Council must have reached its decisions and confirmed its admission arrangements for 2013/14 by 15th April 2012 in order to conform to the requirements of the School Admissions Code.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That cabinet recommends the following to full Council for approval:

- 2.1 That the proposed school admission numbers set out in the consultation documents be adopted for the admissions year 2013/14, with the exception of Portslade Infant School which it is proposed will become a primary school with an admission number of 60, and St Nicolas' CE Junior School which it is proposed will admit 60 reception children in addition to the 64 year 3 children proposed.

Both of these proposed changes are currently going through the statutory processes in order to take effect in September 2013.

- 2.2 That the admission priorities for Community Schools set out in the Consultation documents be adopted for all age groups, with the amendments set out below.
- 2.3 That priority 1 (Children in the Care of a local authority) should be extended to include 'children who were looked after, but ceased to be so because they were adopted (or became subject to a residence order or special guardianship order)'. This is a new legal requirement included in the 2012 School Admissions Code. Children who have been adopted away from their birth family will therefore no longer need to be included in priority 2 as they will fall into priority 1. This change applies to all age groups.
- 2.4 That the proposal to alter the boundary between the catchment areas for Portslade Aldridge Community Academy (PACA) and Blatchington Mill/Hove Park be adopted so that the shaded area on Map 4 of the consultation documents be included in the catchment area for PACA and not the catchment area for Blatchington Mill/Hove Park.
- 2.5 That the proposal to amend the sibling link so that it only applies within catchment area be adopted, but that the protection for those living in areas which have changed catchment area be adopted as described in the consultation document

That Cabinet approves the following:

- 2.6 That the proposal to change the method of measuring distance for Infant, Junior and Primary Schools to 'as the crow flies' not be adopted, but that the existing method of measuring by the shortest available route be retained.
- 2.7 That the proposal to alter the boundary between the catchment areas for Dorothy Stringer/Varndean and Blatchington Mill/Hove Park not be adopted for 2013/14, but be postponed until 2014/15 to allow for a wider consultation to take place, and that the existing boundary be retained for 2013/14.
- 2.8 That the Council should review the final version of the Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic Secondary School admission arrangements for 2013-2014 (as amended in light of the Diocesan response and parental and school responses) to decide whether it should comment further.
- 2.9 That the co-ordinated schemes of admission be approved.
- 2.10 That the City boundary be retained as the relevant area for consultation for school admissions.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The admission numbers in the consultation reflect those previously agreed for 2012/13.

- 3.2 The decision was taken at Cabinet on 19 January 2012 to carry out a formal consultation on the proposals to make St Peter's Community Infant School into a one-form entry primary school, and to make Portslade Infant School and St Nicolas' CE Junior School into two two form entry primary schools, to resolve the disparity in junior school provision in South Portslade. If approved these changes would take effect from September 2013.
- 3.3 It is proposed to reduce the admission number at West Blatchington Primary School from 90 to 60 as there is now sufficient provision in other parts of Hove and the temporary accommodation needed to maintain the limit of 90 will be needed elsewhere.
- 3.4 The proposed admission arrangements and priorities for community primary and secondary schools are set out in detail in the attached Appendix 1, the consultation document sent to schools, neighbouring local authorities and the diocesan authorities. Maps 1-4 show the areas involved. Map 5 shows the full city including all proposed changes. The Brighton Aldridge Community Academy and Portslade Aldridge Community Academy will retain the same admission priorities as Community Secondary Schools for the admissions year 2013/14, although they act as their own admission authorities.
- 3.5 In the course of the school and governor consultation process the Council asked schools to use their newsletters and other forms of regular parental communications to inform parents of the parental consultation process via the Council website (and hard copy if required). The Council also fulfilled its legal responsibility to publish a newspaper notice about the consultation via a public notice in the Argus on 12 December 2011. The parental consultation was published on the website and was available via a link to the Council's consultation portal. This is attached as Appendix 2.
- 3.6 The co-ordinated schemes of admission for primary and secondary schools (Appendices 3,4 and 5) set out the admission arrangements and relevant dates for each part of the school admission exercise and the arrangements for coordination between admission authorities. 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. It also ensures that the admission process takes place in a timely fashion. The in-year arrangements are not subject to set time scales, so the same document can be used from year to year, although annual consultation will still take place.
- 3.7 Periodically the LA 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 LA area, less or more than that, or may include part of neighbouring LA areas. The whole of the LA must be included in one or more relevant areas. Some larger LAs sub-divide into smaller areas for consultation purposes. 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. The proposal in this year's consultation is to retain a relevant area co-terminus with the city boundary.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The Council scrutinised the Voluntary Aided (VA) Schools proposed admission arrangements for 2013/14. VA schools are required to consult their religious authority (in this case the Diocesan Authority) before consulting others. However it was noted that the proposed changes to admission arrangements for Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic VA Secondary School have also resulted in a number of comments from other schools and parents. These issues are addressed in Appendix 6. The Council will review the final document published by the Governing Body before deciding whether it should comment or act further.
- 4.2 Parental responses to the consultation are set out in Appendix 6.
- 4.3 School responses to the consultation are set out in Appendix 6.
- 4.4 No responses to the Councils proposed arrangements for Community Schools have yet been received from neighbouring local authorities or the Church of England or Roman Catholic Diocesan authorities.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 Financial Implications:

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

Finance Officer Consulted: Louise Hoten

Date: 06/03/2012

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 Section 88C of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 as amended by the Education and Skills Act 2008 requires admission authorities to determine before the beginning of the school year, the admission arrangements which are to apply for that year. The determination must be preceded by consultation with the Governing Bodies of Schools within the area of the LA for which the LA is the admission authority, with parents and with neighbouring admission authorities. Consultation must be completed by 1st March in the year preceding the admission round, and should be for a period of no less than 8 weeks. Admission Authorities must determine their admission arrangements following that consultation by 15th April. Admission arrangements must conform to the Admissions Code which sets out acceptable and unacceptable admission arrangements and priorities. The new School Admissions Code 2012 came into force on 1 February 2012 and applies to admission arrangements for the 2013-2014 academic year. The new Code now provides that any person or body who considers that any maintained school admission arrangements are unlawful, or not in compliance with the Code relevant law relating to admissions can make an objection to the Schools Adjudicator.

Lawyer Consulted: Serena Kynaston

Date: 27/02/2012

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 Planning and consultation for school admissions procedures and school places and the operation of the admission process are conducted in such a way as to avoid potentially discriminatory admissions priorities or planning processes. The city council and voluntary aided school and academy governing bodies must be mindful of bad practice with regard to equalities issues as described in the School Admissions Code of Practice.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 School admission arrangements are intended so far as it is possible to provide pupils with local places where they have asked for them. The planning of school places for the City takes into account the changing population pattern and resultant demand for places. The current pattern of parental preference is reflected in different schools operating both over and under capacity. In planning for school places the Council will have regard to sustainability priorities and seek to provide local places and places which are accessible by safe walking and where possible cycling routes and public transport wherever this is possible.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 Balanced school communities with firm parental support contribute to orderly and harmonious communities.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 Any change to school attendance patterns and pupil numbers will impact directly on resource allocation both revenue and capital, and on the Council's ability to meet parental expectations on school places. Pupil data and broader population data is used to identify the numbers of school places required and where they should be located. This feeds into the capital programme so that resources are allocated where they will have the most beneficial effect.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 The allocation of school places affects all families in all parts of the City and can influence where people choose to live. Failure to obtain the desired choice of school can create a strong sense of grievance. The process of expressing a preference and if disappointed, entering an appeal can create intense anxiety for many families in the City. Admission arrangements together with school place planning are framed in such a way as to be mindful of supporting the needs of communities.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 The City Council is required in law to review its school admission arrangements every year, although the new School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) Regulations 2012 now provide that if

an admissions authority does not propose any change to admission arrangements the duty to consult on arrangements has been increased from every three to every seven years. The consultation is intended to identify alternative proposals for admission arrangements. Issues raised by schools and parents will be set out in the appendices to this report.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The City Council must conform to legislative requirements on the publication of admission arrangements which reflect the requirements of the Admissions Code. The recommendations ensure the City Council's compliance, and reflect the body of debate and consultation which has taken place around admission arrangements in Brighton & Hove this year and in previous years.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Admission consultation document for schools including proposed admission numbers.
2. Parental consultation document.
3. Coordinated scheme of admissions – secondary.
4. Coordinated scheme of admissions – primary.
5. Coordinated scheme of admissions – in year
6. Summary of school and parental responses to the consultation (to be circulated separately).

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. Consultation responses from schools and parents.

Background Documents

1. Consultation documents from schools and parents.