

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE MEETING

Agenda Item 9

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Review of the Secondary Admission Process for 2014/15		
Date of Meeting:	11 June 2012		
Report of:	Strategic Director, People		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Gil Sweetenham	Tel: 293433
	E-mail:	gil.sweetenham@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Key Decision:	Yes	Forward Plan No:	
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The present Secondary School Admissions system was agreed at the full Council Meeting held on 27 February 2007.
- 1.2 At that meeting that the following recommendations were agreed:
 - (4) That it be agreed that the new schools admission system be kept under review so that if necessary the catchment area boundaries could be adjusted after the first year of operation, in light of the pattern of preference and allocations in that year; and
 - (5) That as recommended by the Working Group, a review of the whole secondary schools admissions system in 2012 be approved.
- 1.4 Since 2011, we have had a cross party working group looking at school places. This has proved a useful vehicle for seeking consensus in an area which can be very difficult for parents/carers and their children.
- 1.5 This report details the criteria for this review, its timescales and the expectation that any proposed changes to the existing process that are agreed will be adopted for September 2014/2015.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Committee agree that a Review of the Secondary Admissions process is carried out as detailed in this paper.
- 2.2 That the Review of the Secondary Admissions Process will be concluded by the end of 2012 and any recommendation will be presented to Committee in February 2013 for potential implementation in September 2014/15

- 2.3 That the cross party group meets monthly with the Strategic Commissioner, Planning and Contracts, to oversee progress with this review.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The Secondary Admissions Process agreed in 2007 is a catchment system using random allocation as a tie break in the event of oversubscription. The Catchment areas were designed to 'catch' ensuring that residents within each catchment area could be allocated a place at their local secondary school or schools. The allocations in the last four years are as follows:

Year	1 st preferences	2 nd preferences	3 rd preferences	directed
2012/13	1850	291	67	83
2011/12	1771	276	59	84
2010/11	1902	255	84	98
2009/10	1942	259	86	77

- 3.2 The guidance related to the Secondary Admissions process encourages parents/carers to express preferences for their local school or schools to ensure that a local place can be allocated to them.
- 3.3 The method of expressing preferences is the 'equal preference' system, only using the rank order of expressed preferences if it is possible to allocate a place at more than one secondary school. We predict the number of places from post code data but this cannot determine how parents will express their preferences. It is the combination of preferences and the ability for parents to take short term 6 month lets that adds unpredictability to future forecasting.
- 3.4 Parents/carers not expressing preferences for their local school or schools may not be allocated any of their preferences. Should this arise they will be directed by the Local Authority to the nearest vacant secondary school place.
- 3.5 Since the introduction of this system there have been three modifications to the original catchments designed to ensure that catchment areas continue to 'catch'. In 2010 the catchment area for Patcham was increased to include the Westdene area. For September 2013 the Dorothy Stringer/Varndean catchment area will be increased to include the area between Dyke Road and the Railway line and the Portslade catchment area will be enlarged taking in the area south of the railway line to the coast. A map of the catchment areas with these changes is attached as Appendix 1.
- 3.6 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.

- 3.7 The review carried out in 2012 identified concerns regarding the Patcham, Portslade and BACA catchment areas and this led to the changes for 2013 identified in 3.6 regarding Portslade and Dorothy Stringer/Varndean catchment areas being proposed and agreed.
- 3.8 Additionally an independent review of the Secondary Admissions process was commissioned by the Council through Cognisant Research. A number of issues were raised at focus groups meetings in local primary schools and at public meetings. The findings of Cognisant Research require further detailed consideration as part of the proposed review of the Secondary Admissions process.
- 3.9 Concern was also raised during the Annual review regarding communication with the community, although focus groups took place in 10 primary schools, schools were provided with wording for their newsletters, a notice was published in the local press, and two public drop-in meetings took place at the Jubilee Library and at Sainsbury's in Hove.
- 3.10 As the City continues to expand we have added an extra 13.5 forms of primary entry in the last 6 years by expanding successful and popular schools.
- 3.11 Secondary school number projections identify the need for up to another 500 places by 2018/19. These may be provided through increasing existing schools or by providing entirely new schools. If a new school is to be provided this has to be as a free-school or academy. It will be necessary in the review proposed to consider where these schools are likely to be established and the potential impact of this on existing catchment areas.
- 3.12 The admissions arrangements for free schools are determined by the free school itself in line with the requirements of the Admissions Code. Free schools must include 50% community places.
- 3.13 The admissions arrangements for faith schools prioritise the admission of children from that particular faith. Faith schools can identify a proportion of places for children from the community but in practice this is limited to 20% or below.
- 3.14 In order to address these issues and requirements the Review of the Secondary Admissions process must do the following:
- Analyse the number projections for each catchment area between 2013/18
 - Identify possible new secondary school provision in the City
 - Model possible changes to catchment areas including potential new schools and identify those that ensure that catchment areas 'catch'
 - Consider the issues raised by the work of Cognisant research
 - Establish monthly meetings of the cross party working group to consider progress with the Review
 - Agree with the cross party working group consultation processes to ensure that the community, members and schools are fully informed regarding any proposed changes
 - Ensure that the implications of potential changes are fully detailed in the School Organisation Plan which is published annually

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 This consultation carried out in 2012 included a number of new proposals. The determination of these proposals was agreed at full Council in April 2012 apart from the decision regarding the Dorothy Stringer/Varndean catchment area which was determined in May 2012
- 4.3 The proposed Review of Secondary School Admissions for 2014/15 will include consultation that will be developed and agreed with the cross party working group.

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:

5.2 Legal Implications:

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 arrangements must conform to the Admissions Code which sets out acceptable and unacceptable admission arrangements and priorities. Admission authorities, diocesan authorities, the Admission Forum and parents may refer any admission arrangements that they believe to be contrary to the provisions of the Admissions Code to the Schools Adjudicator. Admission Authorities must determine their admission arrangements following that consultation by 15th April.

Lawyer Consulted: Serena Kynaston

Date:

5.3 Equalities Implications:

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.

5.4 Sustainability Implications:

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.

5.5 Crime & Disorder Implications:

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

5.6 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

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.

5.7 Corporate / Citywide Implications:

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 following the Education and Skills Act 2008 this changed to once every three years if no changes are made. 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.

6.2 This paper proposes a specific Review of Secondary Admissions arrangements for 2014/15 which is in addition to the annual review described above.

6.3 The alternative to this proposal would be to continue with the existing process without review or change for 2014/15

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 The present Secondary School Admissions system was agreed at the Full Council Meeting held on 27 February 2007. At that meeting it was agreed that as

recommended by the Working Group, **a review of the whole secondary schools admissions system in 2012** be approved.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Map of Catchment Areas for 2013/14.

Documents in Members' Rooms

- 1.

Background Documents

- 1.