

**Subject:** School Admission Arrangements for 2014/15  
**Date of Meeting:** 11 March 2013  
**Report of:** Interim Director, Children's Services  
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**Key Decision:** Yes  
**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 2014/15 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 1<sup>st</sup> March 2013, 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 2014/15 by 15<sup>th</sup> April 2013 in order to conform to the requirements of the School Admissions Code.
- 1.4 At the time of drafting the report, the consultation process has not been concluded and it must be assumed that further responses will be received. All recommendations should be read with this in mind.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That committee 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 2014/15, with the exception of Stanford Infant School which will remain at 90 rather than increasing to 120 as proposed.

- 2.2 That the admission priorities for Community Schools set out in the Consultation documents be adopted for all age groups.
- 2.3 That the Council should review the final version of the Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic Secondary School and King's Church of England Free School admission arrangements (as amended in light of the Diocesan response and parental and school responses) to decide whether it should comment further.
- 2.4 That the co-ordinated schemes of admission be approved.
- 2.5 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 2013/14.
- 3.2 The decision was taken at Cabinet on 15 January 2013 to increase the size of Aldrington CE Primary School from one form entry to two. This change will take effect from September 2013. At the same meeting it was decided *not* to increase the size of Stanford Infant School, which will remain three form entry.
- 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. The Brighton Aldridge Community Academy and Portslade Aldridge Community Academy will retain the same admission priorities as Community Secondary Schools for the admissions year 2014/15, 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 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 and 4) 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 (Appendix 5) 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 and Free Schools' proposed admission arrangements for 2014/15. VA schools are required to consult their religious authority (in this case the Diocesan Authority) before consulting others. The Council will review the final document published by the Governing Bodies before deciding whether it should comment or act further.
- 4.2 Parental responses to the consultation will be set out in Appendix 6.
- 4.3 School responses to the consultation will be 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: 25 February 2013*

##### **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 1<sup>st</sup> 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. Any person or body who considers that any maintained school or Academy's admission arrangements are unlawful, or not in compliance with the Code or relevant law relating to admissions can make an objection to the Schools Adjudicator.

Admission Authorities must determine their admission arrangements following consultation by 15<sup>th</sup> April.

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 the 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. 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

#### **Documents in Members' Rooms**

1. Consultation responses from schools and parents.

#### **Background Documents**

1. Consultation documents from schools and parents.

