

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 85

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	School Admission Arrangements in Brighton & Hove for 2010/11		
Date of Meeting:	2 March 2009		
Report of:	Director of Children's Services		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Steve Healey	Tel: 293444
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Key Decision:	Yes	Forward Plan No. CYP8230	
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 limits with community schools and voluntary aided schools and neighbouring LEAs. For the first time this year there has also been a requirement to consult with parents living in the City. 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 2010/11 admission year for Brighton & Hove are attached as Annex 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 must also establish the area (the "relevant area") within which the admission consultation should take place.
- 1.3 In the period up to December 2008 a public and school consultation took place at the request of the Schools Adjudicator to determine whether the Patcham High School catchment area should be extended to include the Westdene/Brangwyn area. This followed concerns from parents that the Patcham catchment area was not large enough to draw sufficient pupils to sustain the school financially. The conclusion, confirmed at the Cabinet Member meeting on January 19th 2009 was that the Patcham area should be extended to include the Westdene/Brangwyn area. This change will not therefore be included in the recommendations for this report other than to note, having already followed a formal consultation process.
- 1.4 The time scale set out in the Education and Skills Act 2008 changed the schedule for consultation on admission arrangements. As a result the consultation process must have been concluded by 1st March 2009, with a minimum of 8 weeks consultation time. The Regulations setting out the consultation timescale were not published until shortly before Christmas 2008, so the consultation process could not officially start until shortly before Christmas. However, the City Council must have reached its decisions and confirmed its admission arrangements for 2010/11 by 15th April 2009 in order to conform to the requirements of the Admissions Code. The meetings schedule for the City

Council does not include another meeting at which the arrangements can be approved before 15th April 2009. This means that there is a gap of only a day between the end of the consultation and the only available meeting to determine the City Council's admission arrangements. It will therefore be necessary to table an addendum to this report setting out any significant issues arising from the consultation.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the proposed admission arrangements and school admission numbers set out in the consultation documents should be adopted for the admissions year 2010/11, noting the change in the Patcham High School catchment area previously approved at the Cabinet Member Meeting of 19 January 2009.
- 2.2 That the proposed Voluntary Aided School admission arrangements are noted as conforming to the requirements of the Admissions Code.
- 2.2 That the co-ordinated schemes of admission should be approved.
- 2.3 That the City boundary should 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 2009/10. However the continuation of the admission number of 120 for Davigdor Infants will be subject to the separate consultation process on enlarging the school. If the school is not enlarged then the admission number will reduce to 90 for 2010/11 as the school would not have the capacity to take the extra pupils.
- 3.2 A separate consultation process is also taking place on increasing the size and intake of Balfour Junior School to accommodate the numbers wanting to transfer from the Infant School. If the increase goes ahead then the school will admit 128 pupils each year from 2010/11 rather than 96.
- 3.3 Another consultation taking place on the possible reconfiguration of St Luke's Infant and Junior Schools, which share the same building, into an all through primary school. If this goes ahead the admission number for the primary school would be 90 rather than the published infant school admission number of 85.
- 3.4 The proposed admission arrangements and priorities for community primary and secondary schools are set out in detail in the attached Annexe 1, the consultation document sent to schools, neighbouring local authorities and the diocesan authorities. As mentioned at 1.3 the catchment area for Patcham High School has been extended for the admission year 2010/11.
- 3.5 For the first time this year parents have been invited to comment on the proposed admission arrangements. This arises from changes set out in the Education and Skills Act 2008. The regulations came into force just before Christmas 2008 and the Council has met its new legal responsibility to publish notices in the local press to inform parents of their right to be consulted. It has

also published a separate consultation document for them. (Annexe 2) The new Regulations also set a revised consultation timetable, requiring an 8 week consultation concluding by 1st March.

- 3.6 The co-ordinated schemes of admission for primary and secondary schools (Annexes 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.
- 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 2010/11. It had no objections to the proposed arrangements, and took the view that the arrangements for all 16 VA schools conformed to the requirements of the Admissions Code. It has recommended one amendment to a form that parents complete at one school to provide information to school governors on religious affiliation. It has also had some discussion with the schools and the diocesan authorities about adopting a common format to assist in the publication of the admission arrangements in the school admission booklet. Any comments from consultation responses received from VA schools will be set out in the tabled addendum to this report, as will comments from schools or parents about VA admission arrangements.
- 4.2 Any parental responses to the consultation will be set out in the tabled addendum to this report.
- 4.3 School responses to the consultation will be set out in the tabled addendum to this report.
- 4.4 Responses from neighbouring local authorities and the Church of England and Roman Catholic diocesan authorities will be set out in the tabled addendum to this report.

FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 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: Name: Sue Coleman

Date: 06/02/2009

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 Section 89 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and subsequent legislation including the Education and Skills Act 2008 require 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: 06/02/2009

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 Planning and consultation for school admissions procedures and school places and the operation of the process are 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 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 following the Education and Skills Act 2008 this will change 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 will be set out in the tabled addendum 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.
2. Parental consultation document.
3. Coordinated scheme of admissions – secondary.
4. Coordinated scheme of admissions – primary.

Documents In Members' Rooms

1. None

Background Documents

1. None