

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 79

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	School Admission Arrangements for 2012/13		
Date of Meeting:	28th March 2011		
Report of:	Strategic Director, People		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Steve Healey	Tel: 293444
	E-mail:	steve.healey@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Key Decision:	Yes	Forward Plan No: CYP20044	
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 2012/13 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 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 2011, 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 2012/13 by 15th April 2011 in order to conform to the requirements of the School Admissions Code.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the proposed school admission numbers set out in the consultation documents be adopted for the admissions year 2012/13, with the exception of Dorothy Stringer School which should increase to 330.
- 2.2 That the admission priorities for Community Schools set out in the Consultation documents are adopted for all age groups.

- 2.3 A blanket priority for children who have been adopted away from their birth families will be added in priority 2 for both primary and secondary Community Schools.
- 2.4 That the Council should review the final version of the Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic Secondary School admission arrangements (as amended in light of the Diocesan response and parental and school responses) to decide whether it should comment further.
- 2.5 That the co-ordinated schemes of admission be approved.
- 2.6 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 2011/12, with the exception of 90 additional places at the Connaught Centre and a Reception intake of 60 at Benfield Primary School, formerly Benfield Junior School.
- 3.2 The admission number for Dorothy Stringer School currently stands at 311, the bottom of its capacity range based on accommodation. The top of that range is 344. The Governing Body has requested that the admission number should be amended to 330 to better reflect the school's capacity. Given that current primary school census data indicates an upward trend with an additional 110 pupils in the transfer cohort for September 2012 and more in the future, this proposed increase in capacity in the City Centre is accepted by the Council.
- 3.3 The Balfour Infant and Junior Schools will become an all through primary school with effect from September 2011. This change has already been through all the necessary consultation processes and has been approved.
- 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. The Brighton Aldridge Community Academy will retain the same admission priorities as Community Secondary Schools for the admissions year 2012/13, although it acts as its own admission authority.
- 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 10th December 2010. The parental consultation was a headline item on the website and was available via a link to the Council's consultation portal.
- 3.6 It is proposed that within admission priority 2, automatic priority should be confirmed for all children already adopted away from their birth family. As adopted children they are not eligible for automatic priority as are children in care

in accordance with the School Admissions Code. This proposal to give them priority is in recognition of the fact that adopted children, including those adopted very young, still generally have worse educational outcomes than other children.

- 3.7 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.
- 3.8 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 2012/13. It had no direct objections to the proposed arrangements, but noted that the Roman Catholic Diocese had made a number of recommended changes to proposed arrangements for its own VA schools. 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. Not including those referring to Cardinal Newman RC VA School, four of the six received supported the proposed priority for adopted children.
- 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 been received from neighbouring local authorities or the Church of England or Roman Catholic Diocesan authorities. However, the Roman Catholic Diocesan Authority has made a number of suggestions to Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Schools for changes and improvements to their proposed arrangements (see 4.1 above and Appendix 6).

- 4.5 The Brighton and Hove Admissions Forum considered the proposed admissions arrangements at its meeting held on 28th February 2011. It supported the proposal to give automatic priority within Priority 2 for adopted children. It noted that a number of responses had been made by schools and parents about the proposed Cardinal Newman admission arrangements, and took the view that greater priority should be given to pupils living with the City. It resolved to write to the Governing Body to express that view.

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: 16/02/11

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: 17/02/11

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.

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.