

Subject:	Review of Secondary Schools Admissions Procedures		
Date of Meeting:	21 July 2014		
Report of:	Executive Director of Children's Services		
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

Note: The special circumstances for non-compliance with Council Procedure Rule 3, Access to Information Procedure Rule 5 and Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), (items not considered unless the agenda is open to inspection at least five days in advance of the meeting) were that this report was commissioned by the Cross Party School Organisation Working Group at its meeting on 1 July 2014 and there was insufficient time to complete the report prior to the agenda being published..

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider and agree the timescale for the review of secondary schools admissions procedures which was requested by the Committee at its meeting on 10 March 2014.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Committee agrees that, in order to secure sufficient time to explore all options, consult widely and develop a consensus around sustainable procedures, the timescale set out in paragraph 3.10 should be adopted.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The purpose of the review of secondary schools admissions procedures is to consider options for admissions arrangements which sustain a high level of confidence through being fair, clear and objective and which provide the greatest possible level of certainty and predictability. These arrangements must have the flexibility to respond to the increasing numbers of secondary age students and must promote the most efficient use of all the school places available across the city.
- 3.2 A proposed methodology and timescales for the review have been considered by the Cross Party School Organisation Working Group (CPWG) and by the Secondary Places Planning Group consisting of secondary head teachers, college principals and representatives of the two universities. Officers have reviewed forecasts of secondary school numbers within each of the catchment areas and undertaken initial modelling of the effect of possible changes to catchment areas. A proposal for a research project into stakeholders'

perceptions of the existing admissions procedures has been agreed with the University of Brighton.

3.3 Key drivers for this review include

- Growth in secondary school student numbers which will continue throughout this decade and beyond
- The fact that some catchment areas already have or soon will have insufficient school places for the number of children living within them who are likely to want a school place
- The fact that even with this growth some catchment areas have too few children living within them, with the result that there are too many empty places in some schools

In order to secure sufficient places for the growing number of secondary age children in the city it will be necessary both to provide new places and fill the places that are already available. The admissions procedures are an important factor in achieving the objective of securing sufficient places

3.4 Aspects of the admissions arrangements that the review may consider include

- Whether catchment areas should continue or whether allocations should be determined by distance from home to school
- If catchment areas are retained, whether they should be changed and what would be the effect
- If catchment areas are retained, whether any over subscription should be resolved by random allocation as now or by home to school distance

3.5 The School Admissions Code contains statutory deadlines that in large part determine the timescale of any review. Formal consultation must take place within a minimum eight week period between 1 November and 1 March and arrangements must be formally approved by 15 April each year. At the end of the consultation the Council must decide whether to adopt the changes consulted upon or make no changes. It may not substitute different changes without further consultation, which would then cause the exercise to slip to the next annual cycle.

3.6 As the admissions arrangements for 2015 are already set, the earliest date for which new arrangements could be introduced is September 2016. As this would be a strategic change, it would be for the full Council to approve any new arrangements. Therefore any change in the arrangements for 2016 would need to be consulted upon between 1 November 2014 and 1 March 2015 and approved at or before the Council's meeting on 26 March 2015.

3.7 If it is not possible to achieve this deadline, any new arrangements could only be introduced for September 2017.

3.8 The last full review of the secondary admissions arrangements took two years to complete, with the Council finally approving the present arrangements based on catchment areas and random allocation in February 2007, for admissions in September 2008. It could be argued that this extensive experience, which has been further developed through the work on smaller scale reviews since 2007

such as the one in 2011/12 and the analysis of updated student number forecasts referred to in paragraph 3.2, provides sufficient information to develop a set of proposals for catchment area change for formal consultation in the 1 November 2014 to 1 March 2015 period. On the other hand, it could be argued that this timescale provides little time for informal consultation before proposals are published. The shorter timescale would not allow for a more detailed consideration of the current admissions processes, for example the use of catchment areas and random allocation rather than distance measurement.

3.9 The table below sets out an indicative timetable for introducing new arrangements for September 2016.

Complete data analysis and development of options for change	August 2014
Informal consultation with schools	September 2014
Committee reports and formal consultation papers prepared	September – October 2014
CYPC approves proposals for consultation	13 October 2014
Consultation commences	3 November 2014
Consultation ends	9 or 16 January 2015
Analysis and report writing	January – February 2015
CYPC: considers responses to proposals and whether to recommend to full Council for approval	9 March 2015
Council: final approval	26 March 2015

3.10 The table below sets out an alternative timetable for completion in time to implement for admissions in 2017.

Working Group set up: data analysis and informal consultation	March – December 2014
Research project to inform review	September 2014 – June 2015
Interim report to CYPC prepared	November - December 2014
CYPC considers interim report and makes recommendations for further work	January 2015
Working Group completes task through further data analysis and informal consultation and prepares final report	January- July 2015
Committee reports and formal consultation papers prepared	August – September 2015
CYPC approves proposals for consultation	October 2015
Consultation commences	1 November 2015
Consultation ends	Mid-January 2016

Analysis and report writing	January – February 2016
CYPC: considers responses to proposals and whether to recommend to full Council for approval	March 2016
Council: final approval	March 2016

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 The Committee at its meeting on 10 March 2014 commissioned a review of the secondary schools admissions procedures and this report concerns the implementation of that commission. The review is an essential element in the strategy for securing sufficient secondary school places as student numbers continue to grow over the next eight to ten years.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The proposals for the review have been developed through discussion with the Cross Party School Organisation Working Group and with the Secondary Places Planning Group which includes the heads of all ten secondary schools, the three college principals and representatives of the two universities.
- 5.2 Implementation of the review will include informal and formal consultation in accordance with the statutory School Admissions Code.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Council must plan ahead to secure sufficient secondary school places as student numbers continue to grow over the next eight to ten years. The review of secondary school admissions procedures is an essential element in that plan, in particular so that parents and children can have more certainty about the options available to them and so that efficient use is made of all the places available.
- 6.2 The timescale for this review must relate to the framework in the School Admissions Code. A decision needs to be made, in the light of the information in this report, on whether the review outcomes are to be implemented for admissions in September 2016 or September 2017.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 As Secondary school pupil numbers rise these will be reflected in the DSG revenue funding of the following financial year i.e. October 15 pupil numbers will be funded in 2016/17.
- 7.2 As far as any capital spending this will depend upon where additional places are needed and will be met from identified pupil place funding and timings and funding implications will be dependent upon the choice of location.

Finance Officer Consulted: Andy Moore

Date: 10/07/14

Legal Implications:

- 7.3 Section 88C of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and the School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-Ordination of Admission Arrangements) Regulations 2012 require admission authorities to determine their admission arrangements annually. Arrangements must be determined 18 months in advance of the academic year to which they apply.
- 7.4 Following the review the CYPC will need to agree the proposed admission arrangements prior to the statutory consultation period. The Regulations provide that the statutory consultation must last for a minimum period of 8 weeks and must take place between 1 November and 1 March. Arrangements must thereafter be determined by the Council by 15 April.
- 7.5 School admission arrangements for the academic year 2016/17 must therefore be determined by 15 April 2015, and for the academic year 2017/18 by 15 April 2016.

Lawyer Consulted:

Serena Kynaston

Date: 11/07/14

Equalities Implications:

- 7.6 All school admissions arrangements must be in accordance with the statutory School Admissions Code, which requires arrangements to be fair, clear and objective. An Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the review.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.7 The current arrangements among other things ensure that most students do not have unreasonably long journeys to school and that many can walk or cycle to school if they wish. Any changes to these arrangements would need to take into account the impact upon home to school journeys and whether this would make it more or less difficult for students to walk or cycle to school.

Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.8 The admissions procedures are integral to fulfilling the Council's duty to secure sufficient school places for all children of compulsory school age who want one. The Council needs to ensure that the admissions procedures support the most efficient use of all the places available.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. None

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. None

Background Documents

1. None