

<b>DECISION-MAKER:</b>	CABINET		
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS 2015/16		
<b>DATE OF DECISION:</b>	15 APRIL 2014		
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND CHANGE		
<b><u>CONTACT DETAILS</u></b>			
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#### **STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

None

#### **BRIEF SUMMARY**

The Council is required by statute to approve its admission policies for the academic year starting September 2015 (including Published Admission Numbers –PANs)) by 15 April 2014 to meet the statutory requirement. This allows for the admissions process to begin for all schools in September 2014. This report seeks approval for the 2015 admission policy

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- (i) To note the responses from the admissions consultation with Southampton Admissions Forum, schools, other relevant admission authorities, and the Church of England and Roman Catholic dioceses.
- (ii) To approve the admissions policies and the published admission numbers (PANs) for community and voluntary controlled schools, including Bitterne Park selection by aptitude and 6<sup>th</sup> form arrangements; the schemes for co-ordinating primary and secondary admissions for the academic year 2015-16 as set out in Appendices 1- 6;
- (iii) To authorise the People Director to take any action necessary to give effect to the admissions policy and to make any changes necessary to the Admissions Policies where required to give effect to any Acts, Regulations or revised Admissions or Admissions Appeals Codes or binding Schools Adjudicator. Court or Ombudsman decisions whensoever arising

#### **REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The Local Authority has a statutory duty to determine the admission criteria on an annual basis and ensure all rising 5's have an allocated education place.

2. The proposed policy is at A.1. This has been consulted on and the responses are available at A. 2.
3. Implementation of the policy is dependent on these schemes:
  - admissions policy for Infant, Junior, Primary, Secondary and Sixth Form pupils to community and voluntary controlled schools, see **appendix 1**;
  - the outcomes of the annual consultation with school governing bodies and the relevant Church of England and Roman Catholic dioceses, see **appendix 2**;
  - published admission numbers (PANS) for community and voluntary controlled schools, see **appendix 3**;
  - the co-ordinated scheme for year R entry to infant/primary schools see **appendix 4**;
  - the co-ordinated schemes for entry to junior school, see **appendix 5**;
  - the co-ordinated scheme for primary to secondary transfer, see **appendix 6**;

### **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

1. The only alternative option considered was not to determine local admission arrangements. This has been rejected on the basis that it would result in the imposition of admissions arrangements upon local schools by the Secretary of State for Education

### **DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)**

2. It is a statutory requirement that school admissions authorities determine the admission policy each year to approve the allocation of school places to Southampton pupils and to pupils applying for a place in a Southampton school from outside the city. The city council is the admissions authority for all community and voluntary controlled schools within Southampton and is therefore responsible for determining the admission arrangements for these schools. Regulations require all admissions authorities, i.e. Local Authorities, governing bodies of voluntary aided and foundation schools, to determine their admission arrangements for the school year 2015-16 by 15 April 2014 and to have notified the fact to other admission authorities within 14 days of this date at the latest.
3. The principles of Southampton's admissions policies are well established. They seek to fulfil the requirement that they be 'fair, clear and objective' (School Admissions Code, 2012). The proposed policies seek to make this process as transparent as possible. In particular, they enable the local authority, schools, and parents:
  - (a) to protect the rights of vulnerable children;
  - (b) to meet significant medical and psychological needs of individual children;
  - (c) to develop, strengthen and support immediate family ties;
  - (d) to develop and strengthen links between designated feeder school(s); and
  - (e) to have access to clear, objective, and fair criteria that avoid ambiguity in the interpretation of the policy.

4. If the Local authority wants to make changes, consultation must take place. Consultation must be with schools, other admissions authorities, the local dioceses, the admissions forum and the public. This year, the local authority proposes to make no changes to the oversubscription criteria nor to the coordinated schemes for phase transfers.
5. Changes are proposed to the Published Admission Numbers (PANs) of four schools as follows:
  - Thornhill Primary School – increase from 45 to 60
  - Bitterne Park Primary School – increase from 90 to 120
  - Mansbridge Primary School – increased from 30 to 60
  - Bitterne Manor Primary School – increase from 30 to 60
6. The rationale for these changes is to accommodate a predicted “bulge” in the number of children requiring a reception class place in September 2015. The data on the number of children in the city indicates that Year R numbers will be higher in 2015/16 than in previous or subsequent years. As such, the proposal is that the schools listed above will increase their PAN for 1 year only in 2015/16 and then it would drop back down to its previous level in 2016/17.
7. PAN Increases  
 For the 2015/16 academic year, the Local Authority predicts that there will be approximately 3,240 children that will require a Year R place at a City school. In 2016/17 we forecast that there will be around 3,100 Year R pupils and, to date, we have plans in place to provide 3,135 Year R places. As pupil numbers are forecast to peak in 2015 and drop in subsequent years, the Local Authority are putting forward proposals to increase the Published Admission Number of several schools for one year only.
8. We are proposing that the following schools increase their PAN in 2015/16 only:
  - Bitterne Park Primary – PAN increase from 90 to 120 (it is proposed that the extra classroom will be achieved by the reorganisation of existing space within the school)
  - Bitterne Manor Primary – PAN increase from 30 to 60 (it is proposed that the music room will be converted into a staff room, the staff room into a pre-school and the pre-school into a classroom)
  - Mansbridge Primary – PAN increase from 30 to 60 (it is proposed that the library will be converted into a classroom)
  - Thornhill Primary – PAN increase from 45 to 60 (the school has historically accommodated up to 420 pupils so the school has enough classrooms to admit up to 60 pupils in one year group. It is also planned that they will admit up to 60 Year R pupils in 2014/15)
9. We are also in discussions with Portswood Primary School to increase their PAN from 60 to 90. As an academy, and their own admissions authority, the decision on this increase lies with the governing body of the school.
10. As demand is forecast to drop in 2016/17, these schools will revert to their current PAN for that academic year. This approach, as opposed to permanently increasing the size of these schools, avoids the prospect of having a significant amount of surplus places across the school estate,

something which would not be financially viable for schools or the Local Authority. As none of these increases would see any school expand by more than 30 pupils and by 25% or 200 pupils (whichever is the lesser) there is no requirement to conduct full statutory consultation, as we have done for other expansions projects.

11. However, we have written to the affected schools (headteachers and Chair of Governors) informing them of the proposals and inviting them to comment). Bitterne Manor Primary requested some further information on the proposal and to this end we have met with senior leadership staff & governors, written to parents and local community groups, held a consultation meeting for parents and produced a question and answer document for staff/parents/governors at the school.
12. The issues and questions raised, along with the Local Authority's response to these, can be found in appendix 1. The Local Authority received a petition from parents at Bitterne Manor Primary School entitled, "Petition opposing the proposed closure of the music room at Bitterne Manor Primary School, currently autumn 2015. The closure is to increase the capacity of the school by 30 pupils with no new parking". The petition is 20 pages long and has 256 signatures. The front page of the petition can be found in appendix 1.
13. Two of the main issues that have been raised by parents and governors affiliated to Bitterne Manor Primary were with regards to the loss of extra curricular space (e.g. music room) within the school and dangers associated with increased levels of traffic that may arise if a greater number of pupils attend the school.
14. In relation to the former, the majority of schools in the City do not have a dedicated music room. Similarly, several schools have a greater number of pupils and less ancillary space than Bitterne Manor. As such, we do not believe that the loss of the music room will have a detrimental impact on school pupils, staff or standards.
15. In terms of traffic, we would not deny that there may be an increase in traffic levels and, based on previous traffic survey data, we estimate an additional 6-7 sets of parent/pupils might travel to the school by car. There is no dedicated risk assessment pertaining to the expansion of a school in respect of offsite vehicular movements. To mitigate traffic/safety issues and encourage active travel, we would recommend that schools sign up to SCC's school travel plan programme. We would hope that parents would be willing to travel by more sustainable means or park away from the school and walk to the school gate. This would limit traffic congestion associated with the increase in pupil numbers. Please see appendix 2 for full details of the issues raised in relation to Bitterne Manor and the Local Authority's response to these.
16. If an admission authority wants to make changes to an existing scheme consultation must take place with schools, other admission authorities, the local dioceses, the admission forum and the public.
17. This year the local authority, as admission authority, is seeking to change its admission arrangements for transfer from infant to junior school by amending the order of criteria for admission to community and VC Junior schools to give higher priority to children attending the linked infant school.

18. Consultations with schools and other admission authorities (Catholic and Church of England Dioceses, Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council, and schools that are Foundation, Voluntary Aided, and Academies) started on 2 January 2014 and ended on 28 February 2014. The proposed policies for 2015/16 were discussed at the School Admissions Forum meeting in February 2014.

## **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Capital/Revenue**

19. There will be some capital costs arising from the need to expand the four schools for one year. Approval for the addition of the capital projects to the Education Capital Programme will be requested at the June Council meeting. It is anticipated that the costs of these projects will be funded from Department for Education Basic Need capital grant, subject to the relevant authorisations being given by full Council.
20. School revenue budgets are funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant and there are therefore no additional revenue costs to the general fund arising directly from the approval of the admissions policies for the academic year 2015-16.

### **Property/Other**

21. None.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

### **Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:**

22. Admissions Authorities are legally required to undertake a consultation on admissions policies for 2015-16 in order to determine their admission arrangements, including PANs, under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 as amended by the Education Act 2002 and the Education and Inspections Act 2006 if there are changes from the previous years arrangements. They need only consult every 7 years thereafter unless they propose changes be made to them.
23. In accordance with the above, the deadline for determining admission arrangements is 15 April 2014. Following determination (the date of the relevant Cabinet meeting) the local authority has 14 days to notify all schools in writing of the outcome of its decision. Schools' governing bodies then have six weeks to object to their respective PANs (but no other aspect of the admissions policy).
24. Notice of the change must be published in a local newspaper setting out appeal arrangements.

### **Other Legal Implications:**

25. The Education Acts, Regulations made pursuant to them and the School Admissions Code (February 2012) require local authorities to formulate co-ordinated admissions schemes for dealing with applications to infant, primary, junior and secondary schools at the relevant age of transfer. Such schemes should also include admissions to schools where the local authority is not the admission authority e.g. voluntary aided schools, Foundation School and Academies. The schemes must ensure that every parent receives an offer of

one, and only one, school place on the same day. A national offer date of 1 March has been set for secondary admissions and local authorities are required to implement a single offer date for primary sector admissions as well. The Regulations specify closing dates for applications for entry into Year R and for entry into secondary school. These dates are 15 January in the offer year for applications for year R and 31 October in the offer year for applications for secondary school

26. In drawing up co-ordinated admissions schemes, the City Council must consult with other relevant admission authorities, i.e. the governing bodies of voluntary aided schools, trust and foundation school, Academies, and Hampshire County Council. Other legally binding requirements upon the Council in coordinating an admissions scheme are set out in the National School Admissions Code (2012)
27. In practice, this means that schools cannot refuse admission to any applicant up to the limit of its PAN (again, subject to a number of very limited legal exceptions). It also means that when the number of applications a school receives is greater than the number of places available there has to be a mechanism in place to enable the school to prioritise those applications. This, essentially, is the function of the admissions policy.
28. It is a statutory requirement that the local authority must have consulted on its proposed admission arrangements, and have made a determination on them, by 1 March and 15 April respectively in the year prior to the new admission arrangements coming into effect. Other admission authorities in Southampton's area, i.e. the governors of voluntary aided schools, foundation schools, trust schools and Academies must also have consulted on, and determined, their admission arrangements by the same dates.
29. It is also a statutory requirement that, within 14 days of the admission arrangements being determined, admission authorities notify consultees (i.e. other admission authorities and all community/controlled schools) of their determined admission arrangements

#### **POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS**

30. The recommended admissions arrangements proposed in the report are consistent with the Children's and Young People's Plan.

**KEY DECISION?** Yes

<b>WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:</b>	All Wards
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**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

**Appendices**

1.	Admission policy for Infant, Junior, Primary, Secondary and Sixth Form pupils to community and voluntary controlled schools 2015-16
2.	The outcomes of the annual consultation with school governing bodies and the relevant Church of England and Roman Catholic dioceses and with the public
3.	Proposed published admissions numbers for all community and voluntary controlled schools 2015-16
4.	Co-ordinated scheme for year R entry to infant/primary schools 2015-16
5.	Co-ordinated admissions scheme for entry to Junior Schools 2015-16
6.	Co-ordinated admissions scheme for entry to Secondary Schools 2015-16
7.	Bitterne Manor Primary – consultations results

**Documents In Members' Rooms**

1.	None
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**Equality Impact Assessment**

Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) to be carried out.	No
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**Other Background Documents**

**Equality Impact Assessment and Other Background documents available for inspection at:**

Title of Background Paper(s)

Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)

1.	None	
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