

## **Wiltshire Council**

### **Cabinet**

### **Date of Meeting**

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**Subject: SCHOOL ADMISSIONS 2017/18**

**Cabinet member: Councillor Laura Mayes – Children’s Services**

**Key Decision: No**

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#### **Executive Summary**

This report has been produced as part of the statutory process for the determination of admission arrangements to maintained schools.

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to formulate and operate schemes to co-ordinate the admissions to all maintained schools and Academies within its area. We are proposing two co-ordinated schemes; one covers primary schools (including infants and juniors) and the other is for secondary schools. The co-ordination of admissions has been successful in past years and the schemes proposed for 2017/18 are substantially the same as those operating for the current academic year.

The Local Authority is also the statutory admission authority for the Voluntary Controlled and Community Schools in its area. As such it is required to formulate admission arrangements which outline how it will admit children to those schools. There are two proposed schemes one for secondary and one for primary (including infant and junior schools).

Following a period of consultation with pre-schools/nurseries, schools, parents, neighbouring authorities and Senior Officers at Wiltshire Council, all responses have been reviewed. Cabinet is now required to approve the four documents which are appended to this report which then will become the determined admission policies for Wiltshire for 2017/18.

The admissions process for the intakes in September 2017 begins in September 2016.

#### **Proposal(s)**

Cabinet approves and determines:

- a) the proposed scheme for the co-ordination of admission to secondary schools for 2017/18.
- b) the proposed scheme for the co-ordination of admissions to primary schools for 2017/18.

c) the proposed admission arrangements for Voluntary Controlled & Community secondary schools for 2017/18.

d) the proposed admission arrangements for Voluntary Controlled & Community primary schools for 2017/18.

**Reason for Proposal**

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to have a determined admission policy for 2017/18 in place on or before 28 February 2016.

**Carolyn Godfrey**  
**Director Children's Services**

## **Wiltshire Council**

### **Cabinet**

**Date of meeting** 9 February 2016

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**Subject:** SCHOOL ADMISSIONS 2017/18

**Cabinet member:** Councillor Laura Mayes – Children’s Services

**Key Decision:** No

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### **Purpose of Report**

1. The Local Authority has a statutory duty to act in accordance with the School Admissions Code and has a statutory duty to formulate and operate schemes to co-ordinate the admissions to all maintained schools and Academies within its area. We are proposing two co-ordinated schemes; one covers primary schools (including infants and juniors) and the other is for secondary schools.

There is a legal requirement to have in place schemes for the co-ordination of admission to the schools within Wiltshire.

The Local Authority is also the statutory admission authority for Voluntary Controlled and Community Schools in its area. As such, it is required to formulate admission arrangements which outline how it will admit children to those schools. There are two proposed schemes one for secondary and one for primary (including infant and junior schools).

The report presents the four elements of the admissions policy which, following consultation, require to be determined by Cabinet.

### **Background**

1. The purpose of co-ordinated arrangements is to make the application process simpler for parents by ensuring that each child gets one offer for one school place. This requires the School Admissions team to work with colleagues in Academies, Foundation and Aided schools in Wiltshire and other local authorities.
2. The co-ordinated process is accepted by schools and the scheme does not need substantial revision at this time. The proposed schemes are substantially the same as those currently being used. All four schemes have been drafted in line with The School Admissions Code which came into force on 19 December 2014.
3. The LA is the admissions authority for all Community and Voluntary Controlled schools in the county. The governing bodies or Trusts of Academies, Voluntary Aided and Foundation schools are their own admissions authority.

4. Each admission authority has to determine the arrangements which are used when allocating school places. These proposed arrangements will be used solely for admissions to Community and Voluntary Controlled schools. They incorporate the criteria used to prioritise applications in situations when a school is oversubscribed (i.e. when more applications are received than places available) as well as showing how all admissions will be processed.

### **Main considerations for the Council**

5. The proposed co-ordinated schemes and admission arrangements have been sent out for consultation to all pre-schools / nurseries, schools, they have also been placed on the website for parents to view as well as being sent to neighbouring authorities. They have also been placed on the Wiltshire Council website. The documents were published in November 2015 and comments are invited to be received up until 23 December 2015.
6. The Local Authority has received one comment to date and therefore it is clear that the general issue of co-ordinating arrangements is not questioned. There is confidence that with suitable communication systems being in place, the co-operation between the admissions team and the Foundation, Voluntary Aided schools and Academies which is essential for the smooth operation of a co-ordinated scheme, will be forthcoming.
7. The proposed timetables for the primary and secondary co-ordinated schemes are based on those used in previous years and so they are familiar to schools and the admissions team at Wiltshire Council.
8. The statutory regulations give clear deadlines to which the co-ordinated admissions schemes must adhere.
  - Secondary Deadline            31 October 2016
  - Primary Deadline                15 January 2017
  - Secondary Notification Date   1 March 2017
  - Primary Notification Date      17 April 2017
9. The co-ordinated schemes include the provision to co-ordinate all admissions to all schools for the main years of entry. In line with the School Admissions Code, there is no longer the requirement for In Year applications to be co-ordinated cross border. In the attached schemes however, it is proposed that all In Year applications continue to be made directly to Wiltshire Council for places at Wiltshire schools. This is so that we can monitor which children are potentially out of the school system for the purpose of safeguarding.
10. The co-ordinated scheme for main round applications for places at primary schools (Reception intake) mirrors that which operates for secondary schools (Year 7 intake). Wiltshire residents may apply for an out of county school on a Wiltshire form. Out of county residents can apply for a Wiltshire school through their own local authority.

11. It is clear that there is widespread agreement with the proposed admission arrangements for Voluntary Controlled and Community schools which are considered to be fair and objective as required by the School Admissions Code.
12. Currently children living within a school's designated area are given priority over children from outside that area. The tie break used if a school is oversubscribed within any criterion is that of distance (straight line) from the school.
13. The Local Authority has also kept in the proposed arrangements for 2017/18 the criterion for the special planning area. This has been put in place to ensure that Wiltshire Council is providing as much support as possible to military families relocating to Wiltshire.
14. There are ongoing discussions with all Voluntary Aided, Foundation and Academies in the special planning area to encourage them to introduce the same criterion to their oversubscription criteria for the coming years.
15. The proposed co-ordinated schemes and admission arrangements are in accordance with the requirements of the School Admissions Code which came in to force on 19 December 2014.
16. The admission arrangements for Voluntary Controlled and Community schools will be operated within the appropriate co-ordinated scheme for admissions within Wiltshire and are compatible with the timetables laid down by the co-ordinated schemes.
17. Once determined by Cabinet, the schemes and admission arrangements will be circulated to all schools in Wiltshire and to our nine neighbouring local authorities. They will be implemented from September 2016 when the process of admitting children to the intake year in 2017 starts.

### **Safeguarding Implications**

18. In the interest of safeguarding, the Local Authority co-ordinates all applications for all children to Wiltshire schools this ensures that the School Admissions Team can monitor which children are potentially out of the school system. If a parent is unable to secure a place at their preferred school, the School Admissions Team will ensure that a place is allocated at a reasonable alternative.

### **Public Health Implications**

20. There are no public health issues arising directly from this report.

## **Corporate Procurement Implications**

21. There are no procurement implications directly arising from this report.

## **Equalities Impact of the Proposal**

22. Although not part of the proposed co-ordinated schemes or admission arrangements, it should be noted that all application forms can be and are produced in different languages on request.
23. The online system for applications to be made has developed since it was introduced in 2006. Over 60% of applications for September 2015 intakes were received electronically.
24. Paper copies of the application forms are also still available for parents/carers who do not have online access.

## **Environmental and Climate Change Considerations**

25. The admission policy of the local authority is to give local children priority when applying for their local school. This policy of 'local schools for local children' has been maintained for many years and is a way of encouraging parents to consider the environmental impact of long journeys to school.
26. Should the Admissions Team not be able to offer a place at a child's designated school and the child lives further than the statutory safe walking distance for the child's age, then free transport would be provided to the next nearest school with available places. The percentage of children this currently applies to in Wiltshire is 0.8%.

## **Risk Assessment**

27. Were the Local Authority not to determine co-ordinated schemes for its maintained schools, the Secretary of State would impose a scheme on us.
28. The Office of the Schools Adjudicator has a monitoring role to play in regards to admission arrangements. It is the statutory responsibility of admission authorities to ensure that these are in place by 28 February 2016.

## **Financial Implications**

29. The budget to support admission arrangements is funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) received by the Local Authority. In line with latest school funding arrangements, some DSG funds formally held centrally by the LA to cover services provided, have now been delegated to schools so that they can choose whether or not to buy back those services from the LA.
30. Academies receive funding direct from the Education Funding Agency (EFA) to cover the cost of being included in the admissions coordinated scheme administered by the LA. The LA has set appropriate charges to cover the

administrative costs of including non-community schools in the coordinated scheme.

31. The Admissions Team budget covers the staffing and support costs of the team and the cost of managing and administering appeals for school places. This includes the costs of the Independent Appeals Panel and that of Democratic Services who service the appeals panel. Every parent has the right of appeal for a school place and therefore these costs are demand led. The LA however covers some of the costs by providing an appeals writing, presentation and administration service for academies and voluntary aided schools as resources allow, for which a fee is charged.
32. Whilst the percentage of applications for a school place made on-line is increasing, the volume of applications and appeals being requested are also increasing. Any increases in workload will be met through increased efficiencies and there are no plans currently to increase the Admissions budget.

### **Legal Implications**

33. The School Admissions Code, issued under Section 84 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, imposes mandatory requirements in relation to the discharge of functions relating to admissions to maintained schools. The Local Authority has a statutory duty to act in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Code. This includes a statutory duty to determine schemes for the co-ordination of admissions and admission arrangements for Voluntary Controlled and Community schools. Should the Local Authority fail to do so the Secretary of State may impose schemes. The proposed schemes and scheme changes have been drafted to comply with the requirements of the Schools Admissions Code which came into force on the 19<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

### **Options Considered**

34. It is a legal requirement to have these policies in place and therefore no alternative has been considered.
35. The schemes and arrangements as presented have been sent out to all schools for consultation and no alternative suggestions have been received to date.

### **Conclusion**

36. Cabinet is asked to approve the appended schemes which will become the determined admission policy for Wiltshire for 2017/18.

**Carolyn Godfrey**  
**Director Children's Services**

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## **Background Papers**

The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report: None

## **Appendices**

- a) Proposed Scheme for the Co-Ordination of Secondary Admissions 2017/18
- b) Proposed Scheme for the Co-Ordination of Primary Admissions 2017/18
- c) Proposed Admission Arrangements for Voluntary Controlled & Community Secondary Schools 2017/18
- d) Proposed Admission Arrangements for Voluntary Controlled & Community Primary Schools 2017/18