

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

17 MARCH 2015

Subject: School Admissions 2016/17

Cabinet member: Councillor Laura Mayes

Key Decision: No

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 2016/17 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).

The schemes and arrangements were approved by the School Admissions Forum on 26 February 2015 following a period of consultation with schools, parents, neighbouring authorities and Senior Officers at Wiltshire Council.

Following the approval by the School Admissions Forum, Cabinet are now required to approve the four documents which are appended to this report which then will become the determined admission policy for Wiltshire for 2016/17.

The admissions process for the intakes in September 2016 begins in September 2015.

Proposal

Following approval by the School Admissions Forum, Cabinet approves and determines:

- a) the proposed scheme for the co-ordination of admission to secondary schools for 2016/17.

- b) the proposed scheme for the co-ordination of admissions to primary schools for 2016/17.
- c) the proposed admission arrangements for Voluntary Controlled & Community secondary schools for 2016/17.
- d) the proposed admission arrangements for Voluntary Controlled & Community primary schools for 2016/17.

Reason for Proposal

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to have a determined admission policy for 2016/17 in place on or before 15 April 2015.

Carolyn Godfrey
Corporate Director, Children's Services

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Subject: School Admissions 2016/17

Cabinet member: Councillor Laura Mayes

Key Decision: No

Purpose of Report

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 requirement to have in place schemes for the co-ordination of admissions 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 subject to approval from The School Admissions Forum have 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 new 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 (C and VC) schools in the county. The governing bodies 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 the school's admission number allows) 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 to all maintained schools and other neighbouring admission authorities for consultation. They have also been placed on the Wiltshire Council website. The documents were sent out in December 2014 and invited comments to be received up until 20 February 2015.
6. From consultation responses received, 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 timetable for the primary and secondary co-ordinated schemes are based on that 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 have to adhere.
 - Secondary Deadline 31 October 2015
 - Primary Deadline 15 January 2016
 - Secondary Notification Date 2 March 2016
 - Primary Notification Date 16 April 2016
9. The co-ordinated schemes include the provision to co-ordinate all admissions to all schools for the main years of entry. From September 2015 and in line with the School Admissions Code, there is no longer the requirement for In Year applications to be co-ordinated cross border. It is proposed however in the attached schemes that all In Year applications continue to be made directly to Wiltshire Council for places at Wiltshire schools so that we can monitor which children are potentially out of the school system for safeguarding purposes.
10. The co-ordinated scheme for main round applications (i.e. reception and year 7 intake) for places at primary schools mirrors that which operates for secondary schools. 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. From consultations responses, it is also clear that there is widespread agreement with the proposed admission arrangements for VC and C 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 from the school.

The Local Authority has also kept in the proposed arrangements for 2016/17 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.

We are also in continued discussions with all Voluntary Aided, Foundation and Academies in the special planning area to see if they are willing to introduce the same criterion to their oversubscription criteria for the coming years.

13. All returns from the consultation period were presented to the Admission Forum on 26 February 2015. The Forum made a recommendation that the criterion for the special planning area be updated to read and give priority to '**Children eligible for service premium relocating to Salisbury Plain**'. This is on the basis that the school admissions code 2014 now allows all state funded schools to give priority in their admission arrangements for children eligible for service premium funding. The attached schemes have been updated to reflect the recommendation.
14. After full consideration to all responses received, the Admissions Forum recommends that these schemes and admission arrangements be agreed.
15. The proposed co-ordinated schemes and admission arrangements are in accordance with the requirements of the new School Admissions Code which came in to force on 19 December 2014.
16. The admission arrangements for VC and C 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 2015 when the process of admitting children to the intake year in 2016 starts.

Safeguarding

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.

Environmental Impact of the Proposal

19. 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.

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%.

Equality Impact of the Proposal

20. 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.

21. The online system for applications to be made has developed since it was introduced in 2006. Over 50% of applications for September 2015 intakes were received electronically.

22. Paper copies of the application forms are also still available for parents/carers who do not have online access.

Risk Assessment

23. Were the Local Authority not to determine co-ordinated schemes for its maintained schools, the Secretary of State would impose a scheme on us.

24. The Office of the Schools Adjudicator has a monitoring role to play in regard to admission arrangements. It is the statutory responsibility of admission authorities to ensure that these are in place by 15 April 2015.

25. Effective consultation and responding to concerns raised recognises the overall support for the scheme and reduces the risk of challenge.

Financial Implications

26. Academies receive funding from the Government to enable them to be part of the co-ordinated arrangements and therefore appropriate charging mechanisms have been put in to place.

27. The budget to support admission arrangements is funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) received by the Council. Under the new arrangements for school funding, following the implementation of the government's school funding reform proposals, many budgets previously held centrally by the local authority must now be delegated to schools. The budget for the Admissions Service has been confirmed as a budget which can continue to be centrally retained but no new commitments or increases in expenditure are allowable from 2014-15. This means that ongoing costs of the admissions process will need to be met from within the current level of resources.

Procurement Implications

28. There are no procurement implications.

Legal Implications

29. 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 19th December 2014.

Options Considered

30. It is a legal requirement to have these policies in place and therefore no alternative has been considered.

31. 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

32. Following agreement by the School Admissions Forum, Cabinet is asked to approve the appended schemes which will become the determined admission policy for Wiltshire for 2016/17.

Carolyn Godfrey
Corporate Director, Children's Services

Report Author
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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 2016/17
- b) Proposed Scheme for the Co-Ordination of Primary Admissions 2016/17
- c) Proposed Admission Arrangements for VC&C Secondary Schools 2016/17
- d) Proposed Admission Arrangements for VC&C Primary Schools 2016/17
- e) Map of Schools within the Special Planning Area.