

CABINET MEETING – 12 MARCH 2014

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I

Title of Report:
School Admissions Arrangements from September 2015

Author(s):
Executive Director of People Services

Purpose of Report:
To seek approval for the proposed school admission arrangements for the academic year September 2015/16 and to describe proposed amendments to published admission numbers (PANs) for the academic year 2014/15 where it is necessary to provide additional places.

Description of Decision:
Cabinet is recommended to approve the following in relation to the 2015/16 academic year:

1. The admissions policy and procedures associated with the coordinated scheme of admissions. This includes a proposed change to the scheme as described in 5.5 – 5.7 of this report;
2. The criteria that will be applied where oversubscription occurs;
3. The published admission numbers (PANS)

Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework? *Yes/

If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework

Suggested reason(s) for Decision:

Cabinet approval of the city's admission arrangements is required prior to submission to the Department for Education (DFE) and publication for parents making applications for primary and secondary school admissions for the September 2015 academic year..

Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected:

Given the requirements described above there are no alternative recommendations to consider.

Impacts analysed:

Equality Privacy Sustainability Crime and Disorder

Is this a "Key Decision" as defined in the Constitution? Yes

Is it included in the 28 day Notice of Decisions? Yes

Scrutiny Committee:

SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE 2015/16 ACADEMIC YEAR**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE SERVICES****1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To seek approval for the proposed school admission arrangements for the academic year September 2015/16 and to describe proposed amendments to published admission numbers (PANs) for the academic year 2014/15 where it is necessary to provide additional places.

2. Description of the Decision

Cabinet is recommended to approve the following in relation to the 2015/16 academic year:

1. the admission policy and procedures associated with the co-ordinated scheme of admissions. This includes a proposed change to the scheme as described in 5.5 -5.7 of this report ;
2. details of the oversubscription criteria;
3. published admission numbers (PANs)

3. Background

- 3.1 The School Standards and Framework Act (1998), implementing Regulations and the associated statutory Schools Admissions Code) has established a framework for consultation on admission arrangements.
- 3.2 The Act requires the local authority (for Community and Voluntary Controlled (VC) schools) to determine, before the commencement of a school year, the admission arrangements that will apply in that year.
- 3.3 The local authority is responsible for co-ordinating admissions across its area (known as the co-ordinated scheme) and is required to consult all schools (Including VA schools and Academies), Church of England (CE) and Roman Catholic (RC) Dioceses and neighbouring local authorities by 1st March 2014 in order to establish the admission arrangements for September 2015. 'Own admission authorities' i.e. free schools, academies and voluntary aided schools, must also consult on their proposed admission arrangements through the co-ordinated scheme.
- 3.4 While applications for primary and secondary school places continue to be made both through paper and online methods, the 2013/14 admissions was the first to employ a new local authority developed On-Line Application system. The online application system has been made available across the local authority's customer service centres, as well as other public locations. The benefits of online application have been promoted to parents with the outcome being an increase to 80% in online applications for local secondary school places with a similar preference for online applications projected at primary level.

4. Current Position (2014/15)

- 4.1 The Published Admission Numbers (PANs) consulted upon (when appropriate) and published by the local authority and academies are set based on projected demand for primary and secondary places in the city. In line with regional and national trends, Sunderland is observing an increase in its birth rate after a sustained period of decline. This is consistent with the trend of recent years which has led to the local authority increasing capacity in Washington, West Sunderland and the Coalfields.
- 4.2 Despite a capacity increase in the Washington area in 2013/14 to meet increased demand for primary school places, projections for the 2014/15 academic year continue to identify a shortfall in local reception places. The local authority, working with Washington's primary schools and academies, has identified a further capacity increase to mitigate projected over demand for primary places in the area. In the first instance it is proposed that this is achieved through a temporary increase in the PAN at Lambton Primary School from 30 reception places to 60 reception places for the 2014/15 academic year, with further discussions to take place with the school to secure a further permanent increase in the local area capacity from 2015/16 onwards if required.
- 4.3 Following oversubscription in the Roman Catholic (RC) primary school sector in Washington and the Coalfields in 2013/14, the RC diocese increased the number of catholic primary places in the local area. In the first instance this was achieved through a temporary increase in the PAN of Our Lady Queen of Peace RC VA Primary School's reception class from 30 to 45. This has been subsequently been confirmed as a permanent increase from 2014/15, creating an additional 105 places in the school. The Local Authority and RC Diocese are in the process of finalising a capital proposal to support the school's increased capacity.
- 4.4 While no further capacity increases are proposed at this time the local authority continues to monitor demand for primary places across the city for 2014/15, with focus on demand in the Washington area and the Pallion/ Millfield area. Any further changes to local PANs for maintained schools will be reported to Cabinet as appropriate once the outcome of the primary admissions round for September 2014 is fully known.
- 4.6 At this time no primary PAN increases have been proposed for the 2015/16 academic year. Proposed PANs are attached at Appendix 1 of the report.
- 4.5 In the secondary sector there are only a small number of schools which are oversubscribed for September 2014 with significant falling rolls and surplus places in a number of schools, The local authority is working with schools to understand the financial and organisational impact of surplus places on individual schools and to bring forward proposals to address this issue. However, it is anticipated that 2014/15's Year 7 cohort will be greater than that of 2013/14 with secondary recruitment anticipated to continue to increase in coming years.

5. The Co-ordinated Scheme 2015/16

- 5.1 As in previous years, the local authority proposes to offer a co-ordinated scheme with VA schools, Academies and neighboring local authorities. Academies in Sunderland operate within the same admissions policy as other community schools. The consultation period for the 2015 Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme ended 1 March, 2014.
- 5.2 Appendix 2 sets out the admission arrangements for 2015. Appendix 3 sets the oversubscription criteria.
- 5.3 On February 2012 a new School Admissions Code came into effect. The changes in this code applied from the start of the 2013/14 academic year. The key changes include:
- giving adopted children who were previously in care the same, highest priority for places as looked-after children;
 - introducing a 'national offer day' for primary places, mirroring that for secondary offers;
 - allowing schools to prioritise the children of staff employed there for two or more years, or those staff who will meet a skills shortage within the school;
 - allowing infant classes to exceed the statutory limit where the 31st child is a twin or from multiple births, or of armed forces personnel;
 - allowing academies to prioritise disadvantaged children who are eligible for the Pupil Premium; and
 - allowing schools to take direct applications from parents to help reduce delays in finding a school place once term starts.
- 5.4 In addition to this the 2012 School Admissions Code identifies the following:
- Own Admissions Authorities such as free schools, academies and voluntary aided schools are not required to consult when they propose to either increase or keep the same PAN (consultation is required if it proposed that a PAN should be decreased). However they must notify the local authority of their intention to increase the school's PAN and this information must be published on the Admission Authority's website or in a suitable alternative location.
 - Own Admissions Authorities may admit above their PAN in year. Any admissions above the PAN will not constitute an increase to the PAN
 - Local authorities must as a minimum consult with a maintained school's Governing Body where an increase in PAN is proposed.
 - There is no requirement for local authorities to co-ordinate in-year applications in the offer year 2013/14 and all subsequent years, but they must provide in the composite prospectus how in-year applications can be made and will be dealt with. However, Sunderland Council will continue for the foreseeable future to co-ordinate in year applications given that this is in the best interests of children and young people securing places in schools.
 - Local authorities must, on request, provide information to a parent about the places still available in schools (and own admission authority schools must, on receipt of an in-year application notify the local authority of both the application and its outcome in order to allow the local authority to keep up to date figures on the availability of places in the area).

- Local authorities must, upon request, provide a suitable application form for parents to complete when applying for a place for their child at any school for which they are not the admission authority.

5.5 One local change to the 2014/15 coordinated scheme has been consulted on for the 2015/16 academic year. The proposed change allows parents applying for a place in an infant school to apply the sibling link criteria if they have another child in the junior school for which their chosen infant school is the named feeder.

5.6 The local authority would only apply this measure to schools for which it is the admissions authority. However, Fulwell Infants Academy has already chosen to implement this measure.

5.7 To date the local authority has received 127 letters from parents of children attending Hill View Infant and Junior supporting this change. Local maintained infant and junior schools have also been supportive of the proposed change.

6. Reason for the Decision

6.1 Cabinet approval of the admissions arrangements across the city is required prior to submission to the DfE and publication for parents making choices on preferred primary and secondary school places for their children for the September 2015/16 school year.

7. Alternative Options

7.1 Given the requirements described above there are no alternative recommendations to consider.

8. Sustainability

8.1 The recommendations outlined above will ensure that there is sufficient educational provision across in areas of the city where excess demand is projected and will contribute to the sustainability of provision in areas where there are surplus places.

9. Legal Implications

9.1 In line with the School Admissions Code 2012, Local Authorities must determine, consult on and publish its admission arrangements.

10. Relevant Consultation

- 10.1 Consultation has taken place with Headteachers and Chairs of Governing Bodies of Community, Voluntary Controlled, Voluntary Aided and Free Schools and Academies; Church of England and Roman Catholic Dioceses and neighbouring Local Authorities.

