

CABINET MEETING – 13 March 2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I

Title of Report:

School Admissions Arrangements – September 2014

Author(s):

Executive Director of Children's Services

Purpose of Report:

To seek approval for the proposed school admission arrangements for September 2014 and for Cabinet to note further changes to the 2013/14 Schools Admissions Code

Description of Decision:

Cabinet is recommended to approve:

1. The admissions policy and procedures;
2. 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 admission in the 2014 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/No

Is it included in the 28 day Notice of Decisions? Yes/No

Scrutiny Committee:

School Admission Arrangements – September 2014 Report

Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To seek approval for the school admissions arrangements for September 2014.

2. Description of the Decision

Cabinet is recommended to approve:

1. the admission policy and procedures;
2. details of the oversubscription criteria;
3. published admission numbers (PANs)

3. Background

- 3.1 The School Standards and Framework Act (1998) (as amended by the Education and Inspections Act (2006), 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 Aided (VA)) 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), CE and RC Dioceses and neighbouring local authorities by 1st March 2013 in order to establish the admission arrangements for September 2014. '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.

4. Current Position

- 4.3 The 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. While it is anticipated that the increase in demand for primary places, demonstrated in September 2012, will not be as pronounced in September 2013, projections show that a further increase in the number of primary age pupils is expected in September 2014.

- 4.4 Projections have identified 'hot spot' areas where over subscription is likely to occur in 2014. As with September 2012 increased demand for primary school places in Washington is anticipated but in addition to this the need for additional primary places is also projected in Hetton and the in the west of Sunderland. Oversubscription is also anticipated in the city's faith primary schools.
- 4.5 In order to respond to the projected increase in demand the local authority is in discussions with the following local schools to agree further PAN increases from September 2013. This will not only resolve over subscription issues this year but will moderate excess demand in September 2014:
- Biddick Primary School – Increase PAN to 45 to reflect oversubscription for 2013 and to respond to future projected increased demand in Washington
 - Easington Lane Primary School – Increase PAN to 45 to respond to previous over subscription and future projected shortfall in capacity
 - St Joseph's RC Primary School (Sunderland) – Increase PAN to 45 following discussions with the RC Diocese. This responds to current oversubscription and projected future demand.
- 4.6 The local authority will soon be meeting with headteachers in the affected wards, notably those in Washington, to continue to explore solutions to address the projected shortfall of places in 2014 and 2015. While we anticipate the increase of capacity at Biddick Primary School will reduce the long-term demand issues it will be necessary to determine a permanent increase in the capacity of at least one additional school in Washington South with a further temporary increase of capacity in Washington Central. Further proposals will be reported to cabinet in the coming months.
- 4.7 The following academies have informed the local authority of their decision to increase their PANs for the 2013/ 14 academic year. These include
- Bexhill Academy – PAN 45 to PAN 60
 - Benedict Biscop CE School – PAN 30 to PAN 35
 - Holley Park Primary – PAN 30 to PAN 35
- 4.8 It should be noted that objections to the PAN increase at Bexhill have been noted from schools in the north of Sunderland during the current consultation process for the Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme. The local authority has noted these concerns and is to present to the Area Heads forum on this issue among others in May 2013.
- 4.9 There will be an overall reduction of surplus places in Sunderland North in September 2013 as a consequence of the discontinuation of places at Bishop Harland CE VA Primary School and Hylton Red House and the establishment of a new CE VA Primary School on the

Hylton Red House Primary school site. The combined discontinued PAN was 30 with the new school PAN proposed at 75. The 15 places removed from the combined PAN have been identified as surplus.

- 4.10 In addition to this Monkwearmouth Secondary School will be operating with a PAN of 180 from September 2014. This is a reduction from 210.
- 4.11 In the secondary sector there are only a small number of schools which are oversubscribed for September 2013 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 this on individual schools and to bring forward proposals to address this issue.

5. The Co-ordinated Scheme 2014/15

- 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 2014 Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme ended 1st March, 2013. To date five responses to the consultation have been received.
- 5.2 Appendix 1 sets out the admission arrangements for 2014. Appendix 2 sets the oversubscription criteria.
- 5.3 On February 2012 a new School Admissions Code came into effect. The changes in this code will apply 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 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 their 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.

- 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.
- 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 The changes identified in the 2012 School Admissions Code have been reflected in the admissions arrangements set out in Appendix 1. The co-ordinated oversubscription criteria is set out in Appendix 2.

5.6 Two local changes to the 2013 Co-ordinated Admissions scheme were consulted on for 2014 . The proposed key change to the scheme was a change to the distance to school 'tie-breaker' currently used as part of the admissions criteria. It was proposed that for 2014 the distance tie-breaker was amended from the shortest walking distance method currently used to a straight line measurement from home to school.

5.7 The local authority also consulted on the removal of an applicant's nursery place's proximity to local childcare as part of the assessment criteria for nursery places from 2014.

5.8 However, there was insufficient support for the above proposals during the consultation period. Consequently in 2014 the Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme will mirror the 2013 scheme, as submitted to Cabinet 14th March 2012.

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 2014/15 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 Trust Schools and Academies; Church of England and Roman Catholic Dioceses and neighbouring Local Authorities.