

# Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda  
Item No.

Report of Corporate Director of People  
to  
**Cabinet**  
on  
20<sup>th</sup> June 2017

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Access and Inclusion

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**School Admissions Arrangements for Community Schools and  
the Coordinated Admission Scheme for Academic year 2018/19**  
**Executive Councillor: Councillor James Courtenay**  
**People Scrutiny Committee**  
**A Part 1 (Public) Agenda Item**

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## 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek the views of members on the proposed pre-consultation and engagement of parents and relevant others for admission arrangements (including catchment areas), for community schools for the academic year 2019/20.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet considers the proposals for Admission Arrangements for community schools for the academic year 2019/20 and agrees to undertake a two level consultation with relevant people:
- 2.1.1 That Cabinet approves a pre-consultation and engagement phase, from July 2017 through to September 2017.
- 2.1.2 That Cabinet approves a formal consultation in line with the Admissions Code 2014 from October to January 2018.
- 2.2 That Cabinet agrees that consultation with governing bodies of community schools takes place on the published admission numbers for community infant, junior and primary schools for September 2018. This might be earlier than usual in order to support the full consultation process due October to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2018.

## 3. Background

- 3.1 The Council has the responsibilities to determine in relation to school admissions. The Admission Arrangements for Community Schools (admission numbers, admission criteria and catchment areas); and
- 3.2 The School Admissions Code states:

*“Admission authorities **must** set (‘determine’) admission arrangements annually. Where changes are proposed to admission arrangements, the admission authority **must** first publicly consult on those arrangements. If no changes are made to*

*admission arrangements, they **must** be consulted on at least every 7 years. Consultation must be for a minimum of 6 weeks and **must** take place between 1 October and 31<sup>st</sup> March of the year before those arrangements are to apply.”*

*“Catchment areas must be designed so that they are reasonable and clearly defined.”*

- 3.3 For community schools, the local authority (as the admission authority) **must** consult on the admission arrangements every 7 years if there have not been any changes. There were no changes proposed for 2018 and therefore the next time we have a duty to consult will be for the arrangements of 2019/20.
- 3.4 The arrangements for 2019/20 will be at least 6 years since the last consultation. Although there is no requirement to consult this year the LA has determined that a change is required to the admission arrangements including some catchment areas.
- 3.5 Own Admission Authorities have absorbed the Council’s catchment areas and therefore to consult on catchments provides an added level of complexity to the catchment area discussions as the local authority will require the full collaboration of all schools in any area that has proposed changes.
- 3.6 For community schools, the local authority (as the admission authority) **must** consult the governing body of the school where it proposes either to increase or keep the same PAN.
- 3.7 The Admissions Code 2014 determines that the official window for formal consultation on final proposed arrangements for admissions (including catchment areas) is between 1 October and 31 January in the determination year and the consultation must last for a minimum of 6 weeks.

#### **4. Admission Arrangement for 2019/20**

##### 4.1 Catchment Areas

- 4.1.1 From analysing primary offer day data there has been a pattern with a small number of schools not meeting catchment applications year on year. The majority of these schools are situated within Leigh, south of the London Road and less commonly within Shoeburyness (**Appendix 1**).
- 4.1.2 Births for the 2017 intake year were particularly low and as such no specific changes requiring consultation were identified for these arrangements. From 2019 onwards, forecast data for Southend, taken from births and trends in admission, predict that there are specific risk areas where meeting catchment preferences are likely to worsen over the coming years, Leigh causing the greatest immediate concern.
- 4.1.3 Of the 24 primary school catchment areas 7 have pupil admission numbers (PANs) below their birth rates and as such, if all applied a preference for their catchment school, not all would receive a place. Due to the close geographical nature of the primary schools, parental preference is a high deciding factor of where school children attend. This closeness also means that forecasting works better when distinct geographically linked schools are "clustered" together. This allows for cross catchment migration and removing over provision when a neighbouring school has places. Forecasting is primarily based upon historical trends and published birth data

(correlation between birth numbers and those actually entering school is currently 95.5%) as well as a pupil product percentage for new housing developments, however it cannot take full account of parental preference and changes in popularity between schools.

- 4.1.4 (Leigh) The overall births for the cluster are usually in the region of 550 to 600 with 660 places currently available. However births and forecasting data from 2019 onwards have now overtaken catchment places in West Leigh, Leigh North Street and Chalkwell Hall. The majority of schools within the Leigh area are community schools and as such the LA is responsible for consulting on any proposed changes for these schools including catchment areas.
- 4.1.5 (Shoeburyness) This area as a whole matches its births to PANs, however Friars and Hinguar births are increasingly becoming over the PANs for the school. Historically, Bournes Green, Thorpedene and St Georges meet the shortfall through preferences for the area. Friars births historically have been far higher than PAN but these to date have not materialised in preferences exceeding catchment places. Hinguar in the past has not always met catchment demand and birth data suggests that this may become an increasing need and potential for future consultation regarding catchment and/or place planning depending upon the cluster numbers for Shoeburyness as a whole. All the Shoeburyness schools have either become or are set to become an academy by September 2017 and as such either are or will be their own admission authority for the formal consultation period for 2019/20 arrangements.
- 4.1.6 The Local Authority has no jurisdiction to consult on admission arrangements and catchment areas for own admission authorities other than community schools. The details of the Shoeburyness school catchment risks will be shared with Admission Forum on the 25<sup>th</sup> May 2017 and the two Academy Trusts from the area. To date they have not expressed a wish to propose any changes to their catchment areas, however the LA is willing to extend their initial consultation to include Shoeburyness should their position change from the Admission Forum meeting.
- 4.1.7 Whilst there are other schools where births exceed PAN (Porters Grange, Bournemouth Park, Barons Court, Milton Hall and Westborough) this has been the case for some years and yet is not represented in preferences or forecasting exceeding catchment places. This is mostly due to increasing places at neighbouring schools and the close location of a number of faith schools which do not have a designated catchment area. No other area has been forecast unable to meet catchment preferences in the coming years.
- 4.1.8 It is proposed that only the catchment areas for the Leigh schools require changing due to the significant risk of catchment being greater than PAN. There is no current proposal to consult on any other community school catchment area.
- 4.1.9 Due to site capacity restrictions at West Leigh, Leigh North Street and Chalkwell Hall, additional places to meet forecast pupil population increases was not possible. Instead additional places were added at Darlinghurst Primary School to meet the Leigh area demand. Darlinghurst however remains undersubscribed. The LA has held early stakeholder discussions with Leigh schools (and Eastwood Primary) to consider the need for a catchment review for the Leigh area.

- 4.1.10 The code states catchment areas must be reasonable. The reasoning behind a catchment consultation for this area is to increase the future likelihood of a parent having a reasonable expectation for admission to their catchment school in the south Leigh area, which from 2019 will be slim for those living furthest from the school.
- 4.1.11 Due to catchment areas being a highly sensitive and emotive subject area, officers are seeking Executive Board views to undertake pre-consultation and engagement workshops with the public focussed upon the Leigh area on two possible solutions:
- Model A** Review and propose possible solutions for the catchment areas for West Leigh, Leigh North Street, Chalkwell Hall, Darlington, Blenheim, Fairways and Eastwood primary, (**Appendix 2** – arrangements and maps exemplifying a possible solution)
- Model B** Remove catchment areas from admission arrangements for West Leigh, Leigh North Street, Chalkwell Hall and Darlington, (**Appendix 4** – arrangements and maps exemplifying this option)
- 4.1.12 Schools affected by the proposed changes are both Community and Own Admission Authority and therefore would require consent of all parties to implement any change. Some community schools are likely to have converted to academy status once the consulted arrangements come into existence, however schools converting will simply adopt the changes as they will have already been determined. All schools identified in Model A have agreed to consult on their arrangements and for the LA to include their schools in a pre-consultation exercise and engagement workshops.
- 4.1.13 Schools initially identified were: West Leigh Infants and Junior, Leigh North Street Primary, Chalkwell Infants and Junior and Darlington Primary. Early discussions with these schools identified additional solutions which officers considered and as a consequence extended the area for consultation to incorporate all Leigh schools and Eastwood Primary School.
- 4.1.14 The proposed changes identified in Model A evidence shrinking the catchment areas of West Leigh, Leigh North Street and Chalkwell Hall, increasing the catchment area of Darlington Primary and Eastwood Primary and moving the borders of Blenheim and Fairways. The areas have been determined by calculating existing pupil numbers to ensure the movement will provide adequate places for future needs (**Appendix 3**). The lines have also been aligned to existing roads to ensure where possible, catchments are aligned to postcode rather than street number.
- 4.1.15 Model B has less support from school leaders but still provides a solution to ensuring school places are distributed fairly and reasonably and will not require further changes to catchment if population numbers significantly change again. Nationally, removing catchment areas has become more common as schools convert to academy status and with the introduction of a number of new free schools. This is currently reflected more so within secondary schools than primary but is becoming an increasing trend in some authorities as schools review their arrangements once converted to academy status.
- 4.1.16 A further Model C ‘no change’ was considered. The code states catchment areas must be reasonable. A parent having a reasonable expectation for admission to their catchment school in the south Leigh area is considerably reduced from 2019 onwards and therefore doing nothing would not be an option as it places a number of catchment families at an unfair disadvantage to others. If after public consultation, it

is evident that the public do not wish to make any changes to arrangements, members can either agree to stay the same but on the understanding that they may be in breach of the admissions code and thus open to direction by the Office of the Schools Adjudicator or agree to go against public opinion in the best interest of being reasonable and fair.

4.1.16 As well as catchment these early discussions will also test public feedback on possible oversubscription criteria's and distance measuring tools (see below). It should be noted that these are merely examples and the final proposed arrangements for community schools in the official consultation will be determined by council from stakeholder and public feedback.

4.1.17 The proposal is to begin the consultation in July before the end of the school summer term. This allows schools to distribute communications to all existing families attending the schools as well as distributing information via pre-schools, nurseries and children centres, allowing for a wide spread of information sharing and engagement with as little disruption to schools as possible.

4.1.18 The consultation would run throughout the summer holiday, ending on the 22nd September allowing for 4-5 weeks within term time but 10-11 weeks in total. The consultation would identify the current catchment areas and oversubscription criteria's, and model two alternative solutions with questions regarding the preferred measuring tools and criteria's for oversubscription criteria etc. It is proposed that workshop events are held in community areas within Leigh allowing those that wish to discuss solutions in person and collate feedback, as well as an online questionnaire targeted to all families of school aged and early year's children within the Leigh area would also be available online and in paper form.

4.1.19 Results of the consultation will be reported to cabinet for final decision on any proposed change prior to the official consultation period in the autumn term. In order to allow enough time for pre-consultative work and being bound by the official consultation period, final decision by members would need to be held out of the usual meeting cycle in October to agree the final proposed arrangements, being signed off by People scrutiny on 10/10/17.

4.1.20 The official consultation period as determined by the admissions code is the 1st October to 31st January. The consultation must be a minimum of 6 weeks long (not including school holidays). Outcome of the final consultation and subsequent determined arrangements will require further cabinet agreement. Arrangements must be determined and published by the 28th February.

## **4.2 Admission and Oversubscription Criteria**

4.2.1 Current criteria for community schools will support the model in 4.1.11 (a). Consultation with community schools has requested that the pre-consultation and engagement workshops also seek public feedback on potential additions of: 'children of staff', priority for all siblings and children eligible for pupil premium. The inclusion of these criteria is from demand from community schools with a variation of where within the criteria each school would prefer. The additions have been highlighted to support recruitment and retention within Southend community schools and provide added guarantees for those children eligible for pupil premium (often the most vulnerable).

The proposal is outlined in **appendix 2** for the purpose of the pre-consultation engagement discussions and remains open to possible solutions and feedback from the community.

4.2.2 The existing criteria for 4.1.12 (b) however, does not support current or proposed arrangements in model A, as families living on all borough boundary areas (Chalkwell, Leigh and West Leigh) would be at risk of not gaining a place. This model (**appendix 4**) proposes arrangements that offer all siblings, pupils of staff and then distance (with pupil Premium children gaining priority within distance). This model may have a Geographical point for each school that distance is measured from rather than the actual school or measure farthest to nearest to ensure that fairness across the area is evident.

4.2.3 The means for how distance is calculated will form part of the pre-consultation work for both models. Feedback on the pre-consultation, engagement workshops and questionnaires for catchment areas and associated arrangements will shape the development of the final proposed arrangements for agreement by members prior to the formal consultation.

#### 4.3 Published Admission Numbers

4.3.1 No indications have yet been received regarding requests to increase/decrease PANs. We will inform schools of due process on the 30th June and consult governing bodies on this area as usual.

### 5. Reason for recommendation

5.1 The code states catchment areas must be reasonable. The reasoning behind an early catchment consultation for this area is to gain public feedback on arrangements and areas that are both fair and reasonable as well as increase the future likelihood of a parent having a reasonable expectation for admission to their catchment school.

5.2 By leaving the consultation to the period dictated by the admissions code there would be no opportunity to test public opinion and amend proposed arrangements accordingly. The formal consultation can only be on one model and the public are likely to feel less engaged in the process as they are unable to influence the final arrangements by suggesting alternative methods. This is due to any further significant changes requiring further consultation and there would be no opportunity within the formal timeframe to consult again.

5.3 When reviewing admission arrangements, admission authorities must ensure that the practices and the criteria used to decide the allocation of school places are fair, clear and objective. By not consulting and making no change, would place a number of catchment families at an unfair disadvantage to others and therefore would not be compliant with the code.

### 6. Corporate Implications

#### 6.1 Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities

These arrangements will assist pupils within the Borough to access quality learning opportunities to achieve the best possible outcomes for all children.

'Ensure residents have access to high quality education to enable them to be lifelong learners and have fulfilling employment.'

## 6.2 Financial Implications

Consultation both pre and formal requires an identified budget to meet costs for additional materials, workshop venues and staff time which is in addition to the normal practice of the admissions team.

## 6.3 Legal Implications

The determination of admission arrangements for community schools and the provision of a coordinated admissions scheme is a statutory requirement.

## 6.4 People Implications

None

## 6.5 Property Implications

None

## 6.6 Consultation

The Local Authority is required to consult on admission arrangements for community schools, which includes catchment areas, at least every 7 years. It is 6 years since the last consultation.

## 6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

A coordinated admissions scheme and clear oversubscription criteria are necessary to ensure fair access to school places.

## 6.8 Risk Assessment

If the Council does not agreed a scheme, one will be imposed by the DfE, and the Council's reputation will suffer.

## 6.9 Value for Money

No direct implications.

## 6.10 Community Safety Implications

None envisaged.

## 6.11 Environmental Impact

None envisaged

## 7. Background Papers

### 7.1 School Admissions Code 2014 —

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-admissions-code--2>

and School Admission Appeals Code 2012 -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-admissions-appeals-code>

## 8. Appendices

**Appendix 1** - Schools unable to meet catchment demand 2013-2017

**Appendix 2** - Model A Proposed Community Arrangements 2019-20

**Appendix 3 - Calculation of pupil distribution under Map A**  
**Appendix 4 - Model B Proposed Community Arrangements 2019-20**