

# Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Report of Deputy Chief Executive (People)

to  
Cabinet

on  
29<sup>th</sup> January 2018

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and Inclusion

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Agenda  
Item No.

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## School Admissions Arrangements for Community Schools and the Coordinated Admission Scheme for Academic year 2019/20

Executive Councillor: Councillor James Courtenay

### Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)

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#### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present an evaluation of the response to the Council's public consultation on Admission Arrangements Community Schools for the academic year 2019/20.
- 1.2 To determine the catchment areas within Admission Arrangements for Community Schools for the academic year 2019/20.
- 1.3 To determine the oversubscription criteria (including explanatory notes) and PAN (Published Admission Numbers) within Admission Arrangements for Community Schools for the academic year 2019/20.
- 1.4 To note that the Determined Coordinated Admission Scheme for the academic year 2019/20 was published on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017.

#### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **That no changes be made to the current 2018 catchment areas (with the exception of small changes to the catchment area of Fairways Primary School as per 3.78-85 below) and that the Council determines the Catchment Areas within the Admission Arrangements for Community Schools for the Academic Year 2019/20 as set out in Appendix 2.**
- 2.2 **That changes be made to the oversubscription criteria (including explanatory notes) and PAN (Published Admission Numbers) as per 3.86 to 3.94 below and that the Council determines these same matters within the Admission Arrangements for Community Schools for the Academic Year 2019/20 as set out in Appendix 2.**

- 2.3 To note that the Determined Coordinated Admission Scheme for the academic year 2019/20 was published on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017 (Appendix 3).

### 3 Background

#### Statutory Framework

- 3.1 The Council has the responsibility to determine the following in relation to school admissions:
- a) the Admission Arrangements for Community Schools (including catchment areas, oversubscription criteria and PANs); and
  - b) the Coordinated Admissions Scheme, which sets out the way in which admissions for all schools (including academies and other Own Admission Authority schools) will operate.
- 3.2 The local authority (as the admission authority for all Community Schools) **must** consult on the Admission Arrangements for Community Schools, if it proposes to make any changes to the existing arrangements or, at least every seven years, even if there are no changes.
- 3.3 Admission Arrangements for Community Schools in Southend must be determined by 28<sup>th</sup> February 2018 and included in a composite prospectus for all schools by 15<sup>th</sup> March 2018. These are statutory deadlines and must be adhered to by all admission authorities.
- 3.4 Own Admission Authorities, (academy, foundation and voluntary aided schools) have the responsibility to consult on and determine their own Admission Arrangements including catchment areas.
- 3.5 The current Admission Arrangements for Community Schools (including catchment areas) were last consulted on and approved by the Council for the admissions in the academic year 2013/14 (six years ago).
- 3.6 The Admissions Code 2014 provides that the official window for formal consultation on final proposed arrangements for admissions (including catchment areas) is between 1 October and 31 January and the consultation must last for a minimum of 6 weeks.

#### Catchment Areas

- 3.7 Section 1.14 of The School Admissions Code 2014 states:  
*“Catchment areas must be designed so that they are reasonable and clearly defined. Catchment areas do not prevent parents who live outside the catchment of a particular school from expressing a preference for the school.”*
- 3.8 Catchment areas for community primary schools, although reviewed annually, have remained the same for 8 years. The last consultation where proposals were made to changes to catchment was in relation to the 2009 arrangements

- 3.9 Own Admission Authorities in Southend have retained the Council's catchment areas and have continued to determine the same catchment area in their arrangements year on year. Any proposed change to current catchment areas requires the full collaboration of all schools in any area that has proposed changes to ensure that all Southend addresses are identified within a catchment area. For example, if a catchment area is reduced to better represent the community and provide a reasonable expectation for admission, neighbouring catchment areas must be increased and aligned to ensure there are no gaps and all children/addresses are accommodated within all areas. However, catchment areas can overlap and there can be shared catchment areas.

### Why consult on Changes to Catchment Areas?

- 3.10 For the majority of Southend primary schools, existing catchment areas have continued to be effective in allocating places for school admission where schools are oversubscribed. This in turn has provided an assurance for parents that if they identify their catchment school as one of their preferences there is a reasonable expectation that they will gain a place in catchment if a higher preference has not been successful.
- 3.11 From analysing primary national offer day data for Community Schools a pattern had emerged whereby a small number of Community Schools had not met catchment applications over the last 6 years. With the exception of the 2017 September reception intake, Leigh schools south of the London Road had seen a pattern of at least one of the three schools not meeting catchment applications on offer day as demonstrated in Chart 1 below:

Southend Community Schools - numbers of catchment pupils unsuccessful in gaining a catchment place						
School name/catchment Area	2017 Offer Day	2016 Offer Day	2015 Offer Day	2014 Offer Day	2013 Offer Day	2012 End of Coordination (offer Day was not captured this year)
Barons Court (shared catchment area with Milton Hall Primary)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chalkwell Hall Infants	0	0	3	14	0	0
Earls Hall Infants/Primary	0	0	0	0	0	0
Edwards Hall Primary	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fairways Primary	0	0	0	0	0	0
Heycroft Primary	0	0	0	0	0	0
Leigh Primary/Infants	0	0	0	4	14	12
Temple Sutton Primary	0	0	0	0	0	0
West Leigh Infants	0	27	2	15	0	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>17</b>

Chart 1

- 3.12 After national offer day, there are some further changes which occur between April and the starting school date in September. The above Leigh schools

continued to be unable to offer all catchment places at the end of this process, as shown in Chart 2 below:

School name	2017 End of Co-ordination	2016 End of Co-ordination	2015 End of Co-ordination	2014 End of Co-ordination	2013 End of Co-ordination	2012 End of Co-ordination
Chalkwell Hall Infants	0	0	2	14	0	0
Leigh Infants	0	0	0	3	6	12
West Leigh Infants	0	25	0	9	0	5
<b>Total Leigh schools</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>17</b>

Chart 2

- 3.13 For one school in particular – West Leigh Infants – the consequences of not gaining a place in a catchment school can be significant. Disappointed applicants, are usually those resident in either the north westerly or south westerly section of the catchment area due to being the furthest from the school. These residents are also situated on the border of the Borough and as such the next nearest Southend school with availability is usually much further away and over the statutory walking distance from their home.
- 3.14 The majority of schools within the Leigh area are Community Schools and as such the Council is responsible for consulting on any proposed changes for these schools including catchment areas.
- 3.15 Forecasting was carried out by the Council based upon a DfE model, “School Capacity (SCAP) survey 2014, Guide to forecasting pupil numbers in school place planning and guidance for all local authorities”. Using this model and available data provides indications of future admission applications for each cluster area. Forecasting uses the following sources:
- Registered births provided by Southend Registry Office
  - Historical and current numbers on school roll (January school census DfE)
  - Housing developments (confirmed planning applications)
  - Local trends (admissions preference data)
  - Local knowledge, school reorganisations and Ofsted outcomes
  - Early Years data (based upon 2, 3 & 4 year old funding places)

Forecasts are completed by geographically grouping individual schools into groups known as ‘clusters’. The Leigh Cluster is demonstrated in Chart 3 below. The forecast figure is the Cluster total (row 15). Schools are then forecast an admission number of how many children they are likely to admit on national offer day, by distributing the cluster total across all the schools. (Southend’s Forecasting methodology was published as part of the consultation Frequently Asked Questions document, and can be found in **Appendix 4**).

- 3.16 From 2019 onwards, the forecast data for Southend admissions predicted that there were specific risk areas where meeting catchment preferences may become more difficult in coming years due to births being higher than PAN:

	A	B	C	D	F	G	I	J	L	M
1	<b>Figures Based on September 2017 ASC</b>									
2	<b>BIRTH YEAR</b>	<b>PAN</b>	<b>BIRTHS IN</b>	<b>Forecast</b>	<b>BIRTHS IN</b>	<b>Forecast</b>	<b>BIRTHS IN</b>	<b>Forecast</b>	<b>BIRTHS IN</b>	<b>Forecast</b>
3	<b>ADMISSIONS</b>		<b>2012/13</b>	<b>Pupil</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>Pupil</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>Pupil</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>Pupil</b>
4				<b>Numbers</b>		<b>Numbers</b>		<b>Numbers</b>		<b>Numbers</b>
				2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21
5	Blenheim	90	96	80	63	80	94	90	75	60
6	Chalkwell Hall	120	131	108	157	120	157	120	134	120
7	Darlinghurst	120	58	90	56	90	53	90	51	90
8	Eastwood	60	31	60	42	52	31	50	38	60
9	Fairways	60	53	60	66	60	60	60	67	60
10	Leigh	90	97	90	100	90	109	90	93	90
11	Our Lady of Lourdes	60	0	60	0	60	0	60	0	60
12	West Leigh	120	113	120	118	120	127	120	125	120
13	<b>LEIGH GROUP TOTAL</b>	<b>720</b>	<b>579</b>	<b>668</b>	<b>602</b>	<b>672</b>	<b>631</b>	<b>680</b>	<b>583</b>	<b>660</b>
14										
15	<b>Cluster Factor</b>		<b>1.15</b>	<b>668</b>	<b>1.12</b>	<b>672</b>	<b>1.08</b>	<b>680</b>	<b>1.13</b>	<b>660</b>
16										

Chart 3

- 3.17 However, there are obvious limitations to this process of forecasting. The 'Forecast pupils numbers' in Chart 3 is not the actual number of expected applications for a school, but an indication of whether all the places for each school (the PAN) are likely to be filled. The actual number of admission applications in any one year is based on parental preferences and as such are always open to change dependent upon those preferences. These are often influenced by Ofsted ratings, changes in school leadership and local media and public conception regarding a school's popularity. As well as these factors, inward migration into popular areas and numbers of children born to families of specific faiths also influence preferences, numbers of applications and choices for each school. These factors are particularly relevant due to three schools in the Leigh area currently rated as 'Requiring Improvement' by Ofsted. These Ofsted ratings include academy, faith and independent schools, and for some are fairly recent, which increases uncertainty when looking at trends for previous patterns of admission.
- 3.18 The reliance on the number of births does not always prove to be accurate in practice. This has been particularly evident for schools in the Leigh area, as years of catchment oversubscription have not necessarily followed the years of higher births and years of higher births have not necessarily resulted in schools being unable to meet catchment preferences.
- 3.19 Due to site capacity restrictions at West Leigh, Leigh North Street and Chalkwell Hall, making additional places available to meet forecast pupil population increases is not possible. Chalkwell Hall has had a small PAN increase from 108 to 120 for September 2017 intake but this increase was possible due to a school reorganisation as opposed to building expansion. Instead additional places were added at Darlinghurst Primary School in 2011 to meet the Leigh area demand. Darlinghurst has been admitting over 50% of their pupils from outside of their catchment area since this expansion.

- 3.20 As well as catchment oversubscription risks, a review across all Southend primary schools identified a small number of schools where numbers of births resulted in significant year on year under subscription. This threatens the financial viability of these schools and also provided reasonable justification to propose changes to catchment areas.
- 3.21 Schools identified with consistent under-subscription according to births within the area were predominantly Darlington Academy and Eastwood Primary. Darlington Academy's births are on average less than 50% of the schools PAN. Over the last 5 years the average admission for reception places on national offer day for Darlington is 106 raising no concerns for financial viability. However over 50% of these offers were for children living out of catchment and many being alternate offers for those being unsuccessful in gaining a catchment place in their local school. Similarly, Eastwood Primary also has low numbers of births, although their average admission for reception places for the same period is much lower with only 44 children. Eastwood Primary's intake also includes patterns of admitting higher numbers of out of catchment applications through parental preference, most of whom are from the Blenheim catchment area. Being a far smaller school, only admitting around 73% of PAN can have financial challenges, particularly when the number from births is often under 50%

### **Formal Consultation on Admission Arrangements for Community Schools for the academic year 2019/20**

- 3.22 The consultation during the statutory timeframe was run by Southend Borough Council, from 6th November to the 15th December 2017. (At the same time a number of Own Admission Authorities consulted on their 2019 Admission Arrangements). A full evaluation of the formal consultation, including the changes proposed and the reasons for and against change, can be found in **Appendix 1** identified under each individual school.
- 3.23 The full list of schools that consulted on their 2019 Admission Arrangements is as follows:  
Barons Court Primary School and Nursery, Blenheim Primary School & Nursery, Bournes Green Junior School, Chalkwell Hall Infant School, Chalkwell Hall Junior School, Darlington Academy, Earls Hall Primary School, Eastwood Primary School, Edwards Hall Primary School, Fairways Primary school, Friars Primary School, Hamstel Infant School, Hamstel Junior School, Heycroft primary School, Leigh North Street Primary School, Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary, Porters Grange Primary School, Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, St George's Catholic Primary School, St Helen's Catholic Primary School, Temple Sutton Primary School, The Federation of Thorpe Greenways Schools, West Leigh Infant School, West Leigh Junior School, Belfairs Academy, Cecil Jones Academy, St Bernard's High School and St Thomas More High School
- 3.24 During the formal consultation period, a total of 291 people responded to the consultation. The responses represent 0.49% of the area's adult population (aged 24-64). In addition to this, feedback was also received from emails, telephone enquiries and two public events.

- 3.25 The consultation was publicised at all the schools consulting, throughout the consultation period. Along with the schools, posters and leaflets were distributed to local community areas (libraries, community centres, children centres, etc.) as well as large GP surgeries and religious centres. On top of this, all early years providers and all schools in Southend were informed of the consultation and asked to share the consultation with their parents. A full list of all bodies informed of, and publicity used for, the consultation can be found in an annex to **Appendix 1**.
- 3.26 With the exception of the libraries, the Council has no control on whether centres publicised the posters and information, however media attention was widespread within local newspapers and social media, as well as school and Southend Borough Council websites
- 3.27 All residents affected by a proposed catchment change were issued with a letter via leaflet drop from a local newspaper distributor. Due to it later becoming apparent that not all addresses had received this letter, all affected addresses were sent another letter to ensure that people were given the opportunity to be aware and respond to the consultation if they wanted.
- 3.28 Notwithstanding the widespread publicity, very small numbers (in comparison to school pupil numbers) of parents of children aged 0-4 and ward populations generally responded to the consultation. The responses represented only 0.49% of the area's population. The highest response was to West Leigh Infants, receiving 125 surveys and 50 emails and the lowest was 0 in relation to Edwards Hall Primary.
- 3.29 In relation to those schools with proposed changes to catchment areas the majority found them unreasonable, West Leigh being the lowest at 63% and Chalkwell Hall Juniors being the highest at 90%.
- 3.30 Over 60% of responses in relation to Leigh North Street, Chalkwell Hall Juniors and Earls Hall Primary stated that the proposed admission criteria were unreasonable.
- 3.31 Over 60% of respondents were not in agreement with the proposed admission arrangements for Leigh North Street, Chalkwell Hall Juniors and Fairways Primary.
- 3.32 The majority of responses across all schools found arrangements easy to understand and clear.

### **Factors Considered in Making Final Recommendations**

#### **Consultation Feedback:**

- 3.33 The majority of those responding to the consultation were against some or all of the proposals, with changes in catchment areas being the most controversial aspect of the consultation in particular for West Leigh and Leigh

North Street. See **Appendix 1** for a full evaluation and breakdown of responses.

- 3.34 Many people in their responses, particularly those responding to Chalkwell Hall and Leigh North Street, recognised the risk factors identified with catchment oversubscription. However they generally favoured remaining in existing catchment areas acknowledging the risks and preferring to take a chance, rather than change the catchment areas.
- 3.35 From West Leigh residents, there was a strong perception that residents living in Area 1 were being penalised for having properties of greater value and treated unfairly. In contrast, there was also a smaller number of responses expressing their gratitude and in favour of the changes. These were predominately people living on the roads bordering Hadleigh and furthest from the school, or people living in the roads directly surrounding the school.
- 3.36 A number of residents, in their consultation responses and meetings with the portfolio holder and officers raised the perceived issue of 'gaming the system' and fraudulent applications. While the Council has no evidence to suggest systematic gaming or fraud, and has frequently called upon residents to provide information where possible, it has agreed to look further into this perceived problem and to review whether it is possible to strengthen the message and/or policy regarding the concern. Officers anticipate being able to feedback to Members on the outcome of this review by 31st March 2018. For more information regarding fraudulent and misleading applications, refer to page 103 of Annex 1 Consultation Evaluation in **Appendix 1**.
- 3.37 Other common themes relating directly to the changes in catchment areas were in relation to perceived risks associated with children crossing the A13/London Road, child road safety and increased traffic as a consequence of change. Concerns regarding performance and Ofsted ratings for alternative schools in the area and depreciation of house prices as a consequence of change were also themes from the majority of schools in south Leigh.
- 3.38 In contrast to the above, the proposed changes to Fairways catchment area identified far fewer responses and challenge. Only 11 parents responded to the survey, with 3 only completing the first identifying question. Of the 11, only 5 responses were fully completed, 3 of which were parents and 2 grandparents. 4 considered the proposed catchment area unreasonable and one thought it reasonable.

#### **Birth Data:**

- 3.39 Within the Leigh Cluster there is a total of 720 school places available according to school PANs (see Chart 3 above). Although there remain sufficient school places within the cluster, from 2019 four schools have births higher than their PAN and three of these schools have a history of oversubscription. This relates to West Leigh, Leigh North Street and Chalkwell Hall. This concern of births exceeding PAN for all three oversubscribed schools was one of the primary factors for consulting on changing catchment areas.

3.40 Available information in relation to births in the Leigh area at the time of the consultation was limited to admission year 2020/21, due to the previous academic year (births in 2016/17) not yet being readily available for analysis. The full year's births for the following year 2021/22 became available during the consultation period and identified that the previously increased numbers of births for 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 for West Leigh Infants had not been maintained and in fact had reduced considerably to well under PAN (106), (see Chart 4 below). This factor significantly reduces the risks of catchment oversubscription for West Leigh Infants for the 2021 admission year.

	A	B	O	P
1	<b>Figures Based on September 2017 ASC</b>			
2	<b>BIRTH YEAR</b>	<b>PAN</b>	<b>BIRTHS IN 2016/17</b>	<b>Forecast Pupil Numbers</b>
3	<b>ADMISSIONS</b>			2021/22
4				
5	Blenheim	90	76	60
6	Chalkwell Hall	120	164	120
7	Darlinghurst	120	68	90
8	Eastwood	60	42	60
9	Fairways	60	48	60
10	Leigh	90	84	90
11	Our Lady of Lourdes	60	0	60
12	West Leigh	120	106	120
13	<b>LEIGH GROUP TOTAL</b>	<b>720</b>	<b>588</b>	660
14				
15	<b>Cluster Factor</b>		<b>1.12</b>	660

Chart 4

3.41 Similarly, births for Leigh North Street Primary have also reduced to below PAN (84), again considerably reducing risks for catchment oversubscription. However, births for Chalkwell Hall Infants have increased by 25% from 2017 to 164, exceeding the PAN by 44 (37%) and so increasing the risk of oversubscription.

3.42 This new information considerably reduces the previous concerns about longer term needs for West Leigh Infants and Leigh North Street. However it still indicates some challenges for Chalkwell Hall. This changeable pattern mirrors that of previous years where catchment oversubscription occurs mostly with one rather than all the schools at any one time. However, as noted above, there is often no correlation in practice between number of births and oversubscription.

**Priority areas:**

3.43 The proposed method of minimising dissatisfaction and risk was to introduce priority areas, which appeared to provide a positive solution to reducing catchment oversubscription in years of higher applications and allowed for minimal change in years of lower catchment applications.

3.44 The majority of consultation responses in respect of south Leigh schools wanted no change to catchment areas and found the proposals for change to be unreasonable. However there were a number who expressed the view that if change needed to happen, it would be fairer, if the area being removed from

catchment, was identified within the oversubscription criteria as a priority area after catchment children. In years of lower catchment applications this area would be the next priority for a place at the school. In the same vein, there was also feedback regarding criteria for siblings. Rather than all siblings being admitted before catchment children, many expressed the view that only catchment children and those living within the priority areas identified within criteria should gain priority over non-sibling catchment children and siblings living out of catchment should not have a higher criteria than catchment children.

- 3.45 Legra Academy Trust who were opposed to including this method of priority areas for Leigh North Street and Chalkwell Hall were asked to reconsider this option. Although the Trust identified that they were keen to support the Local Authority in their need to change the catchment areas, they stated that they were only in agreement for recognising Areas 2 and 3 for the recognition of siblings for a period of two years and did not agree to these areas being identified in community school arrangements.
- 3.46 The reasoning given was the same as previously; they wanted assurances regarding the size of the areas being moved to Darlington School (average pupil product) and raised concerns regarding the lack of clear break away from the current catchment model.
- 3.47 It should be noted that catchment areas do not provide assurance of actual pupil numbers as this relies solely upon parental preference. Catchments merely provide a guide to parents when making their decisions.
- 3.48 Serious consideration was therefore given to creating priority areas within arrangements, without the consent of Legra. In years of lower births, offering Areas 1, 2 and 3 as priority areas after catchment was deemed the most fair and reasonable alternative to no change and as such the best solution if other information had not been made available to weaken the argument for change.

#### **2018 Admission Preferences:**

- 3.49 Due to the 2018 admission round closing on the 15<sup>th</sup> January, it is too early to have a comprehensive breakdown of admission preferences for individual schools. Ranking against oversubscription criteria for each school takes place over the next two months, with Council officers ranking community school applications and Own Admission Authorities ranking applications for their own schools. The procedure involves exchanges with other local authorities, identification of first criteria Looked After Children, previously looked after children and children with Education, Health and Care plans naming individual schools, changes in home address before March as well as the verification process that applications go through as part of processing and accepting applications.
- 3.50 Although the full process still needs to be undertaken, officers are able to give an indication of the catchment preferences. Indicative data has not been provided in this report for two reasons. Firstly, releasing information of this nature prior to national offer day could provide either false hope or unnecessary anxiety for families. Secondly the Admission Code 2014 is clear

that Admission Authorities must not provide any guarantees to applicants of the outcome of their application prior to national offer day. Sharing early data on catchment applications could identify for some whether they have been successful in gaining a place at their preferred school.

- 3.51 The previous patterns for West Leigh applications (with the exception of the 2017 admission year) identified that there were typically more catchment applications than those born into the area suggesting a strong correlation with families migrating to the West Leigh area after the birth of their child/ren and accounting for the previous catchment oversubscription. The percentage increase for numbers of catchment births compared to numbers of all catchment applications was on average 25% from 2014 – 2017.
- 3.52 However, the early 2018 admission data suggests that for the second year running this trend of increases from births to applications has not continued and applications for this year remain on par with births. While this data is unverified and so definitive conclusions cannot be made, nevertheless there is a clear indication of a clear break in trends and admission patterns for this school and as such should be duly considered when making decisions for change.
- 3.53 Similarly there has also been a reduction in catchment applications for both Leigh North Street and Chalkwell Hall in comparison with similar birth years. However it is more difficult to draw conclusions about these schools as previous years have not shown the same similarities and trends as West Leigh applications. Nevertheless early data does suggest that applications are not currently indicating any significant catchment oversubscription concern for 2018.
- 3.54 The school with the most significant risk of known oversubscription based on 2019/20 and 2020/21 births and previous inward migration admission trends was West Leigh Infants. However this two year break in trends, showing little or no increase from births to applications, does reduce the concern of significant oversubscription. As Chart 1 above shows, in the 2016 reception admission round 27 catchment children were unsuccessful in gaining a catchment place on national offer day. In 2016 148 catchment applications were received for West Leigh compared to 113 corresponding births. This was an increase of 10 (6% increase) applications when measuring against the number of births from the previous year where 125 catchment applications were received for West Leigh compared to 100 corresponding births, demonstrating inward migration was rising. However if future admission years continue to go against this trend with admission applications comparable to births, the concerns previously identified for 2019 and 2020 are considerably reduced to far smaller numbers being unsuccessful. If applications continue to be on par with births, numbers of oversubscription for catchment children are likely to be under 10 (less than 6% of the schools PAN) at the most.
- 3.55 In summary therefore, whilst there may well be some children who are unsuccessful in obtaining a catchment area place at the three schools in question, it seems that the numbers will be far lower than originally anticipated. Consequently, there does not appear to be a sufficiently strong case for changing the catchment areas in Leigh south of London Road.

- 3.56 One way of reducing this disappointment, is to ensure families most at risk (those living on the north and south westerly points of the catchment) are aware of these risks and use all their preferences when making applications, being aware of surrounding schools both in Southend and Essex.

### **Recommendations in relation to school catchment areas**

#### **West Leigh Infant School**

- 3.57 West Leigh typically saw more catchment applications than those born into the area due to an inward migration of on average 25% increase. It is this factor that saw some children not receiving their catchment preference for the reception intake on national offer day in 4 of the 6 years demonstrated in Chart 1.
- 3.58 The risks identified for 2019 and 2020 admission years are related to births being higher than PAN and, if patterns of inward migration continued, oversubscription for this school seemed likely to be higher than in 2016 where 27 children were unsuccessful in gaining a catchment place.
- 3.59 As identified in section 3.57 inward migration trends for 2017 and 2018 are no longer evident and in fact early data suggests that catchment applications are on par with births. Although for 2019 and 2020 it is likely that catchment oversubscription will continue, without inward migration, these numbers remain low.
- 3.60 New birth data for 2022 admission years provides evidence that births for West Leigh have dropped again to below PAN.
- 3.61 The consultation also identified that the majority of residents were not in favour of the change.
- 3.62 The risks for this school are therefore significantly reduced with only two years showing a small number of children living in catchment that are at risk of not gaining their catchment school.
- 3.63 On the basis of the above, the recommendation for West Leigh Infants School is to retain the current 2018 catchment area. Children living within the catchment area and eligible for Pupil Premium are prioritised above catchment pupils to ensure the most disadvantaged are able to gain a place at the school.

#### **Leigh North Street Primary School**

- 3.64 As demonstrated in Chart 1, in 3 of the last 6 years some Leigh North Street catchment children have not received their catchment preference for the reception intake on national offer day. This was most evident in 2013 where 14 catchment children, representing 15.5% of the school's PAN, did not gain a place.
- 3.65 The risks identified for this school were births being higher than PAN in 2019 and 2020 admission years, along with inward migration concerns due to

increases in identified approved planning applications for more houses and flats in the area.

- 3.66 Risks in relation to housing development remains a concern but this factor does not appear to have resulted in any increased applications to date.
- 3.67 Births in this catchment area are mostly above PAN, with 2019 reception entry evidencing 19 more births than places in the area. The recent trends for Leigh North Street however do not demonstrate clear correlations between birth numbers and application numbers, with some years identifying more applicants than births and others less. Equally, higher birth years did not necessarily result in years of catchment oversubscription. It is therefore particularly challenging to predict future patterns of admission for this school.
- 3.68 The catchment area was also at significant risk due to the proposals in the consultation to increase the catchment area to the west to alleviate the risks originally identified for West Leigh's catchment area.
- 3.69 To mitigate these risks, identifying Area 2 within the oversubscription criteria addressed the uncertainties for high and low birth years. However Legra Trust were not in agreement to these proposals.
- 3.70 Factors that have changed to reduce risks:
- Births in 2021 have reduced to below PAN (Chart 4)
  - Catchment area is no longer increasing to the west due to the risks being reduced for West Leigh
  - No evidence of increased applications for 2017 and 2018 as a result of current housing development
- 3.71 On the basis of the above, the recommendation is to retain the current 2018 catchment area for Leigh North Street Primary.

### **Chalkwell Hall Infant and Junior School**

- 3.72 As with the two schools referred to above, Chart 1 also identified previous oversubscription for Chalkwell catchment children, although to a lesser degree than West Leigh and Leigh North Street. Chalkwell has also increased its PAN from 108 to 120 from September 2017, which could mitigate any need to change the catchment area.
- 3.73 Births as evidenced in Charts 3 and 4 remain considerably above PAN. However, Chalkwell's catchment preferences have previously seen on average 9% of applicants placing a higher preference for a local faith school and a smaller percentage choosing a local independent school which explains the above behaviour patterns. This in part mitigated the risk of oversubscription, however due to these schools both Requiring Improvement (Ofsted rating), there was uncertainty that these patterns of admission would continue.
- 3.74 Another risk factor is the increased housing development in the catchment area, particularly along the London Road. The number of approved planning applications in October 2017 for the area was 12 houses and a further 84 flats.

- 3.75 To mitigate these risks, identifying Area 3 within the oversubscription criteria addressed the uncertainties for high and low birth years, however Legra Trust were not in agreement with these proposals.
- 3.76 Factors that have changed to reduce risks:
- The schools PAN has increased from 108 to 120
  - No evidence of increased applications for 2017 and 2018 as a result of current housing development
  - No current change in application patterns evidencing a reduction in parents applying for the local faith school
- 3.77 On the basis of the above, the recommendation is to retain the current 2018 catchment area for Chalkwell Hall Infant and Junior schools.

### **Fairways Primary School**

- 3.78 It remains likely that Fairways will continue to offer places outside of the catchment area, identifying little change for residents in the area.
- 3.79 The proposal for catchment area changes for Fairways Primary School (removing four roads south east of the catchment area), is not linked to concerns of oversubscription but a reorganisation of 3 school catchment areas to reflect current admission patterns and proposed changes to two neighbouring own admission authority schools.
- 3.80 The changes support the current year on year under subscription of Eastwood Primary due to the very low birth numbers in their area by increasing their catchment area to the South and reducing Blenheim Primary to the North. Blenheim Primary's catchment area has then been increased to the west and Fairways reduced.
- 3.81 These specific areas chosen for the realignment of the catchment areas reflect the trends in previous years admission preferences for Eastwood, Blenheim and Fairways, i.e. a proportion of residents living in these areas already chose a higher preference for the school where we are proposing changes (not their catchment school).
- 3.82 Birth numbers appear fairly contained at Fairways Primary and although range between slightly above or below PAN there are not current concerns with oversubscription due to historic patterns of parents applying to neighbouring schools such as Blenheim Primary.
- 3.83 The proposed catchment area for Fairways Primary is estimated to continue to offer out of catchment area children and it is expected that parents in the area will apply using their preferred school as they do currently, with little change to current patterns of admission. It is not expected that these changes will impact negatively on residents and that children will continue to access schools in very close proximity to their homes.

- 3.84 Consultation feedback for this school was particularly low, indicating that the majority of parents were either happy with the changes or indifferent.
- 3.85 The recommendation is to accept all proposed changes as stated in the formal consultation. Based on previous patterns of admission it is very likely that parents within a reasonable distance to the school i.e. catchment and bordering roads within the Blenheim catchment will be able to gain a place in average birth years as current through applying parental preferences.

### **Recommendations in relation to oversubscription criteria, Published Admission Numbers (PAN) and explanatory notes**

- 3.86 The proposed changes below are based on all material considerations, including recent determinations from the Office of the School Adjudicator, consultations with governing bodies, Headteachers and Own Admission Authorities, and from evaluating the formal consultation responses. The Admission Arrangements proposed for Determination are set out in **Appendix 2**.
- 3.87 The proposals incorporate significant change from the current arrangements (2018/19) including changes to oversubscription criteria, PANs, explanatory notes and catchment areas.
- 3.88 **Published Admission Numbers (PAN):** As part of the determination of Admission Arrangements, for Community Schools, the local authority (as the admission authority) must also consult the governing body of each school where it proposes either to increase or keep the same PAN.
- 3.89 The proposed admission limits for all community primary schools for September 2019 are shown on Page 3 of the Admission Arrangements for Community Schools at **Appendix 2**.
- 3.90 **Oversubscription Criteria:** This section of the arrangements has been completely changed. In 2018, with the exception of Leigh North Street, all Community Schools had the same criteria. It is no longer viable for the remaining ten Community Schools to have the same criteria and this is mainly driven by market demands, as with the catchment area review.
- 3.91 The main changes recommended to the oversubscription criteria:
- a) As required by law, the requirement for priority to children who have an Education, Health and Care plan has been made explicit. The 2019 oversubscription notes that: 'If at the closing date for applications, there are not enough places for all those who have expressed a wish to have their child admitted to a community school; places will be allocated using the admission criteria as below. This will not apply to children with a statement of special educational needs (SEN) or Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans as the plan/statement names the school and therefore the child must be admitted to the named school. The admission criteria are listed below by school with explanatory notes following'

- b) All schools have introduced the criteria ‘pupils of staff at the School’ with the definition notes in the explanatory notes.
- 3.92 Other than the above changes the following schools have not changed their arrangements further: Barons Court; Chalkwell Hall Infant School; Earls Hall; Edwards Hall Heycroft and Leigh North Street
- 3.93 The following schools in addition to changes stated above have further changed their oversubscription criteria:
- a) Chalkwell Hall Junior School: The admission criteria, which include the catchment area, have been changed completely from the model in 2018. The 2019 criteria provide priority to year 2 children in the Infant school. The Schools Adjudicator found the provision or ‘automatic’ priority to children in the infant school as non-compliant and therefore the criterion has been amended to ensure compliance.
  - b) Fairways Primary School: The admission criteria, which include the catchment area, have been changed completely from the model in 2018. The 2019 criteria propose a new catchment area with priority to all siblings. Reasoning for catchment changes can be found above in sections 3.78-3.85 . The criteria has been changed to identify all siblings to ensure families living in the area being moved out of catchment still have the same priority for siblings attending the school as with current arrangements. This avoids the need for siblings being required to attend different primary schools.
  - c) Temple Sutton Primary School: The admission criteria have been changed completely from the model in 2018. The 2019 criteria propose a lower down priority for children at the nursery. Temple Sutton is not an oversubscribed school and always admits pupils out of the catchment area. This additional criterion does not disadvantage any child living in catchment or any sibling both in and out of catchment. It does however allow those children of the school, attending the nursery during the year before reception admission to gain priority over any other out of catchment child.
  - d) West Leigh Infant School: The admission criteria, has been changed completely from the model in 2018. The 2019 criteria provide priority to children in the catchment area that are in receipt or eligible for pupil premium. This addition to the criterion was added to ensure that in any year of catchment oversubscription, the most disadvantaged pupils within the catchment area were allocated a place before general catchment pupils (criteria 4)
- 3.94 **Explanatory Notes:** The explanatory notes have been re-written to ensure compliance with the School Admission Code. The revised explanatory notes in **Appendix 2** provide clarification for all admission criteria.

### **Consultation with the School Admission Forum**

- 3.95 The Southend Admission Forum met on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2018 to consider the proposed Admission Arrangements including catchment areas for effectiveness and how well they serve the interests of children and parents within the local area.. The Forum also had the opportunity to suggest other amendments.

- 3.96 The Forum recognised the factors that had been considered in making the final recommendations and made no additional recommendations or amendments. It was noted that the consultation had been thorough and evidenced that the community had been provided with ample opportunity to provide feedback and that the views had been fully considered in the final recommendations. There was also evidence that the final decision was based upon a number of factors and recognised the need for change was less compelling, however noted that some families may be dissatisfied by the outcome. The Forum recognised that pleasing all families would be impossible and that the proposals and the final recommendations appeared to represent the best way forward in the light of all of the information currently available.

#### **4 Other Options**

- 4.1 Proposed changes to the catchment areas for West Leigh, Leigh North Street and Chalkwell Hall were consulted upon. These changes were mostly unpopular with parents in those areas (see 3.33-3.38 and **Appendix 1**), with residents living within Areas 2 and 3 being moved completely out of all catchment arrangements.
- 4.2 Creating priority areas within all three south Leigh schools was also considered. This would have meant little or no change from current arrangements in normal years, whilst giving greater assurance of a place for those living in catchment in years of higher applications. It would also reduce the likelihood of children with alternate admission offers having to travel an unreasonable distance (over 2 miles) to get their children to the next nearest school with available places.

Although this option appeared to provide the best solution to the original problem, as set out above, subsequent information showed that the case for change was not so strong.

#### **5 Reasons for Recommendations – Admission Arrangements 2019/20**

- 5.1 The Council has the responsibility to determine the Catchment Areas within Admission Arrangements for Community Schools as set out in **Appendix 2**
- 5.2 The Council has the responsibility to determine the oversubscription criteria (including explanatory notes) and PAN (Published Admission Numbers) within Admission Arrangements for Community Schools as set out in **Appendix 2**
- 5.3 Admission Arrangements for Community Schools must be determined by 28th February 2018 and included in a composite prospectus for all schools by 15th March 2018. These are statutory deadlines and must be adhered to by all admission authorities.

#### **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

None

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

Risk of children not receiving a primary school place within their catchment school

6.5 Property Implications

No risks to Council property

6.6 Consultation

Requirement within the Admissions Code 2014 to formally consult on any changes to Admission Arrangements

6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

A full equality impact assessment was prepared in respect of the proposed catchment area changes in the consultation and modified thereafter, as described in section 3 of this report. This EIA is available to Members on request, but it did not identify any likely or measurable impact on persons or groups of persons with a protected characteristic. The changes now proposed are much more limited and there is no reason to think that a new EIA is necessary.

6.8 Risk Assessment

If the Council does not agree 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

Consideration should be given for travel planning around schools and safe routes to schools

6.11 Environmental Impact

None envisaged – parents have raised concerns of increase traffic from the proposed arrangements in the consultation, however a number of parents are already travelling to schools other than their catchment school. The proposed arrangements include catchment areas that have a reasonable walking distance to school. The arrangements do not suggest a need for parents to drive their children to school.

## 7 **Background Papers**

Special Meeting, Cabinet, Tuesday 10th October 2017 at 4pm  
<http://democracy.southend.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=130&MIId=2879>

Special meeting, People Scrutiny Committee, Tuesday 10th October at 6.30pm  
<http://democracy.southend.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=132&MIId=2597>

The Council, Thursday 19th October 2017 at 6.30pm  
<http://democracy.southend.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=131&MIId=2580>

Consultation pack  
[www.southend.gov.uk/schoolconsultation](http://www.southend.gov.uk/schoolconsultation)

### **Statutory references:**

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>  
School Standards and Framework Act 1998 -  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/31/contents>  
Education Act 2002 -  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents>

## 8 **Appendices**

**Appendix 1** — Evaluation of the response to the Council's public consultation on Admission Arrangements for Community Schools for academic year 2019/20

**Appendix 2** – Proposed Admissions Arrangements for Community Schools for Academic Year 2019/20 including Published Admission Numbers on Page 3.

**Appendix 3** – Coordinated Admission Scheme 2019/20

**Appendix 4** – Pupil Numbers Forecasting Methodology