

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda
Item No.

Report of Executive Director (Children and Public Health)

to
Cabinet

on

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Report prepared by:

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School Admissions Arrangements for Community Schools 2022/23; the Coordinated Admission Scheme for Academic year 2022/23; and Review of the relevant area

People Scrutiny Committee
Executive Councillor: Councillor Anne Jones
Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To confirm the admission arrangements for community schools for the academic year 2022/23.
- 1.2. To confirm the Coordinated Admissions Scheme for 2022/23.
- 1.3. To review and agree to the relevant area

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. **To approve the proposed Admissions Arrangements for Community Schools for the academic year 2022/23 as set out in Appendix 1 and agree requirement for public consultation on changes proposed.**
- 2.2. **That consultation with governing bodies of community schools takes place on the published admission number (PAN) for community infant, junior and primary schools for September 2022 as set out in the Admission Arrangements in Appendix 1**
- 2.3. **To approve the proposed Coordinated Admissions Scheme for 2022/23 onwards, as set out in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3.**
- 2.4. **That the relevant area for schools is reviewed and agreed as follows: Southend, Castle Point and Rochford for the years 2022 and 2023(item 6 below).**

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 (admission numbers, admission criteria and catchment areas); 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 Own Admission Authorities, (academy, foundation and voluntary aided schools) have the responsibility to consult on and determine their own admission arrangements including catchment areas.
- 3.4 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 and the consultation must last for a minimum of 6 weeks.
- 3.5 Admission arrangements for Community Schools in Southend 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.
- 3.6 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 2019/20.
- 3.7 The local authority (as the admission authority for community schools) must consult the governing body of each community school where it proposes either to increase or keep the same published admission number (PAN).
- 3.8 The Council must balance the duty to ensure sufficient school places alongside its duty to make efficient use of resources. The DfE recommends Councils have a surplus of around 5% within each planning cluster. Where surplus becomes too low or too high consideration is needed to either increase or reduce the number of available places in the town. This results in changes to some school PANs. **The proposal is to keep the same PAN for all schools except Chalkwell Hall Infant School, for which a reduction in PAN from 120 to 90 for the year 2022 is proposed.**
- 3.9 Schemes for coordinating all admission applications to schools must be formulated and submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) by 1 January in the determination year. For the school year commencing September 2022, submission to the DfE must be submitted by 1 January 2021. Consultation on the scheme is mandatory every seven years or where substantial changes are being made. **Southend-on-Sea Borough Council will consult admission authorities in the borough to ensure cohesion of the coordinated admissions round. Consultation will run from 1 November to 7 December 2020.**
- 3.10 The School Admissions guidance requires Local Authorities to determine every two years a “relevant area” for the purposes of admissions. This defines the area in which admission authorities consult on admission arrangements. The area of Southend, Castle Point and Rochford has been in place for many years and is most appropriate for consultation given that a significant number of pupils access provision in schools in those areas.

Admission Arrangements for 2022/23

Admission/oversubscription Criteria

3.11 There are no proposed changes from the previously consulted 2019/20 admission arrangements. There is therefore no requirement to consult for 2022/23. The admission criteria for community primary schools for September 2022/23 are shown in **Appendix 1**

Published Admission Number (PAN)

3.12 The Admissions Code 2014 determines that admission authorities must consult the public if it proposes to decrease the PAN for a school. Admission authorities do not need to consult if they are increasing PAN.

3.13 Discussions were had earlier in the year with school leaders regarding the need to reduce the PAN's of some primary schools in the borough over the coming four years due to the significant decline in births. This decline has created a growing surplus in the town which if left without action, would have a considerably negative impact on some schools in the area.

3.14 Following the engagement session held with Southend Primary Headteachers on the 25th February 2020, and follow up consultation response sent via email, a set of values and principles on how to prioritise which schools should be approached first for reductions for reducing their PAN's. The considerations for identifying which schools to lower was:

- 1. Discount 1 and 2 FE schools in line with DfE guidance
- 2. Largest PANs (4/5 FE) to be considered first
- 3. Schools previously expanded to be considered next
- 4. Schools that have already lowered PAN to be considered after all other considerations
- 5. Schools with PANs higher than recommended site capacity
- 6. Schools with a history of spaces in reception
- 7. Avoid schools positioned on the borough boundary with unreasonable distance to next school
- 8. Faith schools where arrangements are linked to secondary expansions (Catholic) or where reductions may limit parent choice (C/E)
- 9. Ofsted grade
- 10. Catchment births higher than PAN in year of change and trend suggests school will be unable to meet catchment demand

3.15 Although we have a mix of LA and academy maintained schools in the Borough, the Council retains the responsibility for ensuring the sufficiency of school places, which includes the number of surplus places. This information is reported annually to the Department of Education (DfE).

3.16 Prior to this discussion, the Council already undertook conversations with 5 academy and voluntary aided schools regarding reducing their PAN (three 5FE and two 4FE). This resulted in five forms of entry (FE) being reduced across the town over the last two years. These discussions have all been finalised and agreed through formal consultation and have been included when calculating the continuing need for further reductions as demonstrated in the table below:

Cluster	FE reduction needed for 2022/23
North West	0
Leigh	1
West Central	1
East Central	1
Shoeburyness	1

Cluster	FE reduction needed for 2022/23
Total	4 FE

- 3.17 Due to the depreciating birth numbers, the requirement for less primary school places is set to continue for at least the next 3 years. Numbers will be monitored on an annual basis and changes made accordingly to further decrease or increase as trends in births change.
- 3.18 From the four clusters each requiring one school to reduce by 1FE, only the Leigh Cluster identified a Local Authority maintained school (community school) where the LA is the admission authority. All other schools were either academy or foundation.
- 3.19 Chalkwell Hall Infant School, within the Leigh Cluster was identified for further discussion and consultation to reduce the schools PAN by one form of entry (FE) from September 2022. This was taking into consideration one other school in the cluster already reducing PAN from 4FE to 2FE; Chalkwell's direct catchment area has seen a 22% reduction in births; was a school that had expanded during the time of increased need; and is situated on a very small site.
- 3.20 The Governing Body for Chalkwell Hall Infant School and the Head Teacher have confirmed they agree to lower the PAN for the school from 120 to 90 from 2022 onwards. This is with the understanding that if the LA is short of places the school will be consulted to admit further pupils.
- 3.21 There are currently no proposed changes to the Admission Limits from 2022/23 for the remaining community schools. However, Governing Bodies of community schools will have the opportunity to inform the local authority if they wish to comment on the proposal of no change. The proposed admission limits for all community primary schools for September 2022/23 are shown on **Page 2** of the Admission Arrangements for Community Schools at **Appendix 1**.

Catchment Areas

- 3.22 The proposed catchment areas for primary schools for September 2022 are identified within the Admission Arrangements in **Appendix 1**. **There are no proposed changes from the last full public consultation for 2019/20.**

Primary and Secondary Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme 2022

- 3.23 Consultation rules for coordinated arrangements require the local authority to consult with other admission authorities in the area and other local authorities if there are changes from the previous year's scheme. Changes are proposed for the coordinated scheme for 2022 as provided in summary in **Appendix 3**.
- 3.24 The coordinated admission scheme has not changed significantly from the version adopted for 2020, schools in the borough and the CSSE will be consulted and feedback will be sought.
- 3.25 It is not anticipated that there will be significant comments for changes to the coordinated admission scheme from schools and therefore it is requested that the final version is ratified by the Executive Director for Children and Public Health in December for publication as required by law, 1 January 2021.

Background information on the relevant area

- 3.26 The "relevant area" for Southend, must include all of the Borough of Southend but may include parts of Essex. An area could be included in more than one "relevant area", which would be the case if any part of Essex were included.

3.27 In view of the considerable cross border movement it is recommended that the “relevant area” for Southend includes the areas of Castle Point and Rochford in addition to the Borough of Southend-on-Sea.

4 **Other Options**

4.1 The Council could decide not to consider reducing the PAN of one community school and thus not publicly consult on 2022/23 Admission Arrangements for Community Schools and Coordinated Admissions Scheme. This would add undue pressure on a small number of local schools for 2022, where a significant surplus of places is forecast, creating financial and organisational challenges.

4.2 Not undertaking a public consultation does not change the requirement that Southend-on-Sea Borough Council must consult admission authorities and the CSSE on the proposed Coordinated Admission Scheme 2022 to ensure the delivery of school places, as required by law.

4.3 Not undertaking a public consultation does not change the requirement that Southend-on-Sea Borough Council must consult Governors of community schools on their PAN and inform schools of the minor changes to the coordinated scheme.

5 **Reasons for Recommendations**

5.1 The Council is not proposing any changes for admission criteria or catchment areas for community schools but proposing a reduction in PAN for Chalkwell Hall Infant School and therefore there is a requirement for a public consultation.

5.2 The Council will consult individually the Governing Bodies of community schools as required for increased or unchanged PAN's.

5.3 The Council is required to publish the Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme 2022/23, by 1 January 2020. Cabinet is asked to approve the proposed scheme.

5.4 The relevant area will be adopted as proposed, no consultation required.

5.5 A report will be presented to the January Cabinet to formally approve the PAN's and to formally determine the admission arrangements.

6 **Corporate Implications**

6.1 Contribution to the Southend 2050 Road Map

These arrangements will assist pupils within the Borough to access quality learning opportunities to achieve the best possible outcomes for all children. It fits well into the ambition of opportunity and prosperity, in that it supports sharing our prosperity amongst all of our people. It further supports the ambition in that our children are school and life ready and our workforce is skilled and job ready.

6.2 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications for the Council. The administration of school admission, and core revenue funding for the running of a School is funded through the Dedicated Schools Grant.

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

The proposed changes to one schools PAN have been considered in line with the pupil product for the schools catchment area. Based upon historical admission trends and

numbers of births that have declined in the area, the changes are not expected to impact catchment residents negatively.

6.5 Property Implications
None

6.6 Consultation
The local authority (as the admission authority for community schools) must consult the governing body of each community school where it proposes either to increase or keep the same published admission number (PAN). **The proposal is to keep the same PAN for all schools except Chalkwell Hall Infant School, for which a reduction in PAN from 120 to 90 for the year 2022 is proposed. Consultation will be in line with the requirements within the Admission Code and run between 1 November and 14 December 2020.**

Schemes for coordinating all admission applications to schools must be formulated and submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) by 1 January in the determination year. For the school year commencing September 2022, submission to the DfE must be submitted by 1 January 2021. Consultation on the scheme is mandatory every seven years or where substantial changes are being made. **Southend-on-Sea Borough Council will consult admission authorities in the borough to ensure cohesion of the coordinated admissions round. Consultation will run from 1 November to 7 December 2020.**

6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications
A coordinated admissions scheme and clear oversubscription criteria are necessary to ensure fair access to school places. Admission Arrangements for Community Schools and the Coordinated Admission Scheme for Southend Schools have been written in line with mandatory requirements set by the Admissions Code 2014. The code determines that authorities must ensure that the practices and criteria used to decide the allocation of school places are fair, clear and objective and that parents should be able to easily understand how places are allocated.

In line with the Equality Act 2010, the arrangements and scheme are reviewed annually against an expanded list of protected characteristics as identified within the Admission Code: disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

The proposed Scheme, arrangements and decisions made through their administration are clear that there is no discrimination on the grounds of disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; or sexual orientation, against a parent who is applying for a school place or offered admission as a pupil.

There are limited exceptions to the prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion or belief and sex. Schools designated by the Secretary of State as having a religious character are exempt from some aspects of the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief and this means they can make a decision about whether or not to admit a child as a pupil on the basis of religion or belief. Single-sex schools are lawfully permitted to discriminate on the grounds of sex in their admission arrangements.

6.8 Risk Assessment
The need to reduce PANs in the Borough is based upon an assessment of forecast need inclusive of surplus places. The risks to a small number of schools becoming financially unviable to continue in the long run is great if nothing is done to reduce excessive surplus places. Discussions with other cluster schools to gain agreement to

consult on lowering PANs, has also been undertaken and Trust and Governing Bodies are considering consulting in the Autumn as well.

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
None envisaged.

6.11 Environmental Impact
None envisaged

7 Background Papers

7.1 [School Admissions Code 2014](#)
[School Admission Appeals Code 2012](#)

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1 - Proposed Admissions Arrangements for Community Schools for September 2022 including Published Admission Numbers on Page 2.

8.2 Appendix 2 - Proposed Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for September 2022 onwards.

8.3 Appendix 3 - Explanatory note to highlight changes