

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	16 September 2024
Classification:	Part 1
Key Decision:	Yes
Title of Report:	School Admissions Arrangements for Community Schools 2026/27; the Coordinated Admission Scheme for Academic year 2026/27; and Review of the relevant area
Executive Director:	Michael Marks, Executive Director, Children & Public Health
Report Author:	Chrissy Papas, School Place Planning and Admission Manager
Executive Councillor:	Councillor Laurie Burton, Cabinet Member for Children, Young people and SEND

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The admission arrangements for (LA maintained) community schools must be agreed annually. The admission arrangements requesting agreement by council for the academic year 2026/27. This includes the published admission number (PAN) for each of the schools and the catchment areas.
- 1.2. The LA is required to undertake a statutory consultation for all community schools with school Governors on the proposed admission arrangements and PAN.
- 1.3. The LA must also consult schools on the Coordinated Admissions Scheme for 2026/27 and publish by the 1 January 2025. There are no significant changes proposed.
- 1.4. The relevant area requires agreement by Council. This is the area that would be most impacted by Southend admission arrangements and scheme and is used for any formal consultation. The relevant area for agreement covers the entirety of Southend-on-Sea plus the bordering areas of Castle Point and Rochford.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. **To approve the proposed Admissions Arrangements for Community Schools for the academic year 2026/27 as set out in Appendix 1 and agree requirement for public consultation on changes proposed.**
- 2.2. **To approve the consultation with governing bodies of community schools takes place on the published admission number (PAN) for community infant, junior and primary schools for September 2026 as set out in the Admission Arrangements.**

- 2.3. **To approve the proposed Coordinated Admissions Scheme for 2026/27, as set out in Appendix 2 to agree the final version be ratified by the Executive Director for Children and Public Health in December for publication as required by law, 1 January 2025.**
- 2.4. **To approve the relevant area for schools is reviewed and agreed as follows: Southend, Castle Point and Rochford for the years 2026 and 2027.**

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 2021 determines that the official window for formal consultation which must be 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 and included in a composite prospectus for all schools by 15th March 2025. 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 in January 2025 for the admissions relating to academic year 2026/27.
- 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 proposed admission arrangements, published admission numbers and catchment areas includes all eight local authority (maintained) community schools.
- 3.9 The proposed admission arrangements have been adopted from the previous year, 2025/26 which were ratified by Cabinet. No changes are proposed for 2026/27.

- 3.10 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 2025, submission to the DfE must be submitted by 1 January 2025. Consultation on the scheme is mandatory every seven years or where substantial changes are being made. Southend-on-Sea City Council will consult admission authorities in the City to ensure cohesion of the coordinated admissions round. Consultation will run from 4-29 November 2024.
- 3.11 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 2026/27

Admission/oversubscription Criteria

- 3.12 There are no proposed changes from the previously consulted 2025/26 oversubscription criteria and definitions. The admission criteria for community primary schools are shown in **Appendix 1**

Published Admission Number (PAN)

- 3.13 The Admissions Code 2021 determines that admission authorities must consult the public if it proposes to decrease the PAN for a school.
- 3.14 There are currently no proposed changes to the Admission Limits for the 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 2026/27 are shown on Page 2 of the Admission Arrangements for Community Schools at Appendix 1.

Catchment Areas

- 3.15 The proposed catchment areas for primary schools for September 2026 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 2026

- 3.16 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. Minor administrative practice changes are proposed for the coordinated scheme for 2026.
- 3.17 The coordinated admission scheme has not changed significantly from the version adopted for 2025, schools in the city will be consulted and feedback will be sought.

- 3.18 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 2025.

Background information on the relevant area

- 3.19 The “relevant area” for Southend, must include all of the city 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.
- 3.20 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 City of Southend-on-Sea.

4. Reasons for Decisions

- 4.1 The reason not to consult on the admission arrangements has been made as there are no changes proposed.
- 4.2 Consultation on the PAN for the community schools is an annual statutory requirement.
- 4.3 Consultation on the Coordinated Admission Scheme is an annual statutory requirement.

5. Other Options

- 5.1. The Council could decide to consult on the full set of admission arrangements for all community schools in the City. However this is not required as no changes are proposed.
- 5.2. Not undertaking a public consultation does not change the requirement that the Council must consult admission authorities on the proposed Coordinated Admission Scheme 2026 to ensure the delivery of school places, as required by law.
- 5.3. Not undertaking a public consultation does not change the requirement that the Council must consult Governors of community schools on their PAN and inform schools of the minor changes to the coordinated scheme.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 Should the Council consult when it is not required, it would incur unnecessary costs.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 The determination of admission arrangements for Community Schools and the provision of a coordinated admissions scheme is a statutory requirement. The determination for the Coordinated Admissions Scheme is a statutory requirement. The determination of a relevant area is also a statutory requirement.

7.2 In accordance with the Council's overview and procedural rules, the proposed admission arrangements for all community schools has been subject to pre-cabinet scrutiny. Due to the statutory timeframe for consultation which must be a minimum of six weeks in term time and planned to finish on the 1 December, it will not be possible to provide pre-cabinet scrutiny prior to the final cabinet paper for the January 2025 meeting to determine arrangements. This is due to the timeline for submitting papers for pre-cabinet scrutiny not allowing time for analysis, evaluation and due considerations of the public responses to identify the final arrangements for cabinet determination in January.

8. Policy Context

8.1 The School Admissions Code 2021 prescribes the details of the statutory process in following the process for making changes to admission arrangements.

8.2 The School Admissions Code 2021 prescribes the details for determining the Coordinated Admission Scheme. Not having one in place would result in the Secretary of State imposing a scheme for Southend.

9. Carbon Impact

9.1. Ensuring due process is followed and that the Council has a set of admission arrangements and an effective Coordinated Admissions Scheme, facilitates children obtaining local school places.

9.2. There are no carbon impact matters that are associated with this report.

10. Equalities

10.1 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 2021. 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.

10.2 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.

10.3 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.

10.4 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.

11. Consultation

- 11.1 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). Consultation is run directly with the respective governing bodies.
- 11.2 Schemes for co-ordinating 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 2025, submission to the DfE must be submitted by 1 January 2025. Consultation on the scheme is mandatory every seven years or where substantial changes are being made. Southend-on-Sea City Council will consult admission authorities in the Borough to ensure cohesion of the coordinated admissions round. Consultation will run from 4-29 November 2024.

12. Appendices

- 12.1. **Appendix 1**: Proposed Admission Arrangements for community schools 2026/27
- 12.2. **Appendix 2**: Proposed Coordinated Admission Scheme 2026/27

13. Report Authorisation

This report has been approved for publication by:		
	Name:	Date:
S151 Officer	Joe Chesterton	5 th August 24
Monitoring Officer	Susan Zeiss	09 08 24
Executive Director(s)	Michael Marks	2 nd August 24
Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Cllr Laurie Burton	5 th August 24