

Meeting: Cabinet
Date: 11 January 2024
Classification: Part 1
Key Decision: Yes
Title of Report: **School Admissions Arrangements for Community Schools 2025/26; the Coordinated Admission Scheme for Academic year 2025/26; and Review of the relevant area**

Executive Director: Michael Marks
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Executive Councillor: Councillor Helen Boyd

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The admission arrangements for (LA maintained) community schools must be agreed annually. The admission arrangements requesting agreement by council are for the academic year 2025/26. This includes the published admission number (PAN) for each of the schools and the catchment areas.
- 1.2. As agreed by Cabinet on the 18 September 2023, the LA undertook a statutory consultation for all community schools with school Governors on the proposed admission arrangements and PAN. All schools agreed and as such no further changes are proposed.
- 1.3. As agreed by Cabinet on the 18 September 2023, the local authority ran a public consultation on reducing PAN for Chalkwell Hall Junior School from 120 to 90. This is to bring in line with the reduced number at Chalkwell Hall Infant School. No Objections were received.
- 1.4. As agreed by Cabinet on the 18 September 2023, the LA consulted schools on the Coordinated Admissions Scheme for 2025/26 schools agreed proposed amendments and no further changes were identified.
- 1.5. As agreed by Cabinet on the 18 September 2023, the Scheme was ratified by the Executive Director for Children and Public Health in December 2023 and was published on the 31 December 2023.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

2.1. **Determine the Admissions Arrangements for Community Schools for the academic year 2025/26 as set out in Appendix 1**

2.2. **Determine the Coordinated Admissions Scheme for 2025/26, as set out in Appendix 2**

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 school admissions for all schools will operate (including academies and other own admission authority schools).
- 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 2024 and included in a composite prospectus for all schools by 15th March 2024. 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 2021 for the admissions relating to academic year 2022/23.
- 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 It should be noted that Heycroft Primary School converted to academy status on the 1 January 2024 and therefore no longer falls under the local authorities jurisdiction for determining admission arrangements.
- 3.9 The proposed admission arrangements published admission numbers and catchment areas includes all seven local authority (maintained) community schools. This includes Barons Court Primary School & Nursery who are in the process of converting to academy status joining the Learning in Harmany academy trust. The legal status for this school remains as a LA community school until they

convert to academy. The LA will therefore continue to determine admission arrangements which will transfer at the point of academization.

- 3.10 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.
- 3.11 The recommendation is to keep the same PAN for all community schools except Chalkwell Hall Junior School where a reduction in PAN from 120 to 90 for the year 2025 admission is proposed to bring in line with Chalkwell Hall Junior School.
- 3.12 Chalkwell Hall Infant school's PAN was reduced from 120 to 90 for admission into reception 2022/23. This reduced admission number will reach Chalkwell Hall Junior school in September 2025 when the year group reaches year 3.
- 3.13 There are currently no proposed changes to the Admission Limits from 2025/26 for the remaining community schools. The governing body of each of the community schools was consulted on their proposed PAN and proposed arrangements and all agreed.
- 3.14 The proposed admission limits for all community primary schools for September 2025/26 are shown on **Page 3** of the Admission Arrangements for Community Schools at **Appendix 1**.
- 3.15 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 2024. Consultation on the scheme is mandatory every seven years or where substantial changes are being made.
- 3.16 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 2025/26

Admission/oversubscription Criteria

- 3.17 There are no proposed changes from the previously consulted 2022/23 oversubscription criteria and definitions. The admission criteria for community primary schools are shown in **Appendix 1**

Published Admission Number (PAN)

- 3.18 There are currently no proposed changes to the Admission Limits from 2024/25 for community schools with the exception of Chalkwell Hall Junior School (ref. 3.21).

- 3.19 The consultation with the current six unaffected community schools did not raise any objections to the proposal that the PANs remain unchanged.

Catchment Areas

- 3.20 The proposed catchment areas for primary schools for September 2024 are identified within the Admission Arrangements in **Appendix 1**. No changes were proposed, and no objections have been received.

Formal Consultation of the Admission Arrangements and Proposed Changes to the Published Admission Number for Chalkwell hall Junior School

- 3.21 The consultation for the Admission Arrangements for Chalkwell Hall Junor School was held widely in the period 1 October to 14 November 2023.
- 3.22 The consultation was run via the 'Your Say Southend' portal and in total there were 109 site visits to the consultation pages, with 26 active participants. Of those that completed the survey, all agreed with the proposed admission number citing they were clear, fair, and reasonable.
- 3.23 In addition, 2 emails were received, 1 was from a teaching union seeking further clarity and assurances on any impacts to existing staff and 1 email from a Councillor seeking further information on the order of admission criteria.

No objections were received from parents, school staff, school governors, local authority officers or other members of the community.

Other Consultations

- 3.24 The consultation with Chair of Governors for the community school admission limits (PAN) was held 9 October to 31 October 2023 and no objections were received.
- 3.25 The consultation on the Coordinated Admissions Scheme was held 1 November – 1 December 2023 was held, and no objections were received.

4. Reasons for Decisions

- 4.1. Chalkwell Hall Junior school mainly admit pupils from the Infant school.
- 4.2. A phased reduction in the admission limit has been in operation since 2022. The reduced pupil admission number of 90 will move from the infant school to year 3 at Chalkwell Hall Junior school in 2025.
- 4.3. There have been no objections received to the consultation to reduce the PAN from 120 to 90 for admission to year 3 in 2025.
- 4.4. An admission limit higher than the feed from the infant school would negatively impact schools in Leigh, as the pupils would generally move from neighbouring schools in the leigh area.
- 4.5. There would be a higher surplus of places in the City resulting in a negative impact for some schools.

- 4.6. No objections have been received from schools and governors in relation to the unchanged admission arrangements for the other six remaining community schools. Neither have there been any objections to the Admission Scheme 2025/26 or the relevant area.

5. Other Options

- 5.1. The council could decide to leave the admission limit at 120 for Chalkwell Hall Junior school. This would increase the current number of places available in the city by 30 places.
- 5.2. The impacts of this could result in objections from other primary schools to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator on the grounds that there is an oversupply of places, resulting in children moving from other local schools in year 3 to Chalkwell Hall Junior school.
- 5.3. Should the council decide to determine the admission limit at 120 for Chalkwell Hall Junior school, this would result in more in-year movement (leavers and admissions) resulting in children changing schools unnecessarily and impacting local schools and children with potential disruption to their education as they move into year 3.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. There would be a financial implication for Chalkwell Hall Junior school as they would have 30 children less for year 3 and then rolling forward year on year from 2025/26.
- 6.2. The school has known of the planned reduction in the admission number since 2018 and are aware that the Infant school has been on a phased year group reduction in the admission number since 2022.
- 6.3. Chalkwell Hall Junior School has had significant lead up to the reduction in the admission limit, allowing for forward planning in their school organisation.
- 6.4. Were we not to consult, the financial implication would rest with other schools in the area who would likely lose pupils from taking up new places at Chalkwell Hall Juniors.

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 and reduced PAN for Chalkwell Hall Junior School was subject to pre-cabinet scrutiny in September 2023. Due to the statutory timeframe for consultation, which must be a minimum of six weeks in term time, it has not been possible to allow for pre-cabinet scrutiny prior to the final cabinet decision on the 11 January 2024. The timeline for submitting papers for pre-

cabinet scrutiny did not allow time for analysis, evaluation, and due consideration of the public responses to the consultation (see paragraph 11.1 below), A review of the scrutiny process will begin in January 2024 which will consider the impact of the timetable on the ability of scrutiny to exercise its function in relation to matters like this.

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. Not reducing the admission limit for Chalkwell Hall Junior School, would result in children potentially applying to move for year 3, and this would generally be children living out of the catchment area, or further away from the school would cold increase the use of cars to get to school.

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 based on 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 statutory timeframes for consultation for admission arrangements are legislated as a minimum of 6 weeks in term time from 1 Oct 23 to 31 January 24. Arrangements then must be determined by Council by the 28 February 24.
- 11.2 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). Due to proposed changes for Chalkwell Hall Junior School the LA held a public consultation for the proposed PAN reduction for 2025/26 for this school only. The public consultation was held on the [Your Say Southend](#) platform.
- 11.3 As no changes are proposed for the other six community schools, there was no requirement to hold a public consultation however the governing bodies for all seven schools will be consulted.
- 11.4 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 2024. 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 1 November to 7 December 2023.

12. Appendices

- 12.1. **Appendix 1**: Admission Arrangements for community schools 2025/26 (including admission oversubscription criteria, pupil admission numbers and catchment areas)
- 12.2. **Appendix 2**: Determined Coordinated Admission Scheme 2025/26

13. Report Authorisation

This report has been approved for publication by:		
	Name:	Date:
S151 Officer	Joe Chesterton	29/11/23
Monitoring Officer	Kim Sawyer	1/12/23
Executive Director(s)	Michael Marks	21/12/23
Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Cllr Helen Boyd	

