

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CABINET  
MONDAY, 20 FEBRUARY 2017 AT 2.00PM**

**COUNTY COUNCIL  
TUESDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 2017 AT 10.00AM**

**SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2018/19**

<u>Cabinet Agenda Item No.</u>  <b>9</b>
<u>County Council Agenda Item No.</u>  <b>5D</b>

Report of the Director of Children's Services

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Executive Member:- David Williams, Enterprise, Education and Skills

Local Members: Richard Thake, Knebworth and Codicote  
Mark Mills-Bishop, Hatfield Rural

**1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1 To enable Cabinet and County Council to consider whether to agree that all Published Admissions Numbers (PAN) are retained, with the exception of:
- St Paul's Walden Primary, where it is proposed that the PAN should be reduced from 17 to 15; and
  - Ponsbourne St Mary's where it is proposed that the PAN should be increased from 12 to 13.

**2. Summary**

- 2.1 The County Council must determine on an annual basis the admission arrangements and published admission numbers for all community and voluntary schools in Hertfordshire; and the coordinated schemes of admission to all maintained schools and academies in the County.
- 2.2 A minimum of 6 weeks formal consultation is required, between 1 October 2016 and 31 January 2017 to amend admission arrangements for 2018/19. Cabinet agreed on 9 November 2016 to retain existing admission arrangements and public consultation, therefore was not required for 2018/19.

- 2.3 Public consultation was undertaken with all relevant consultees, as specified in the School Admissions Code, between 14 November 2016 and 23 December 2016 to reduce the PAN at St Paul's Walden Primary School from 17 to 15.
- 2.4 Local Authorities must also consult all community and voluntary controlled schools where it is proposed that PAN's are maintained or increased. This consultation was also undertaken between 14 November 2016 and 23 December 2016 and, as a result, it is proposed that the PAN at Ponsbourne St Mary's Primary School is increased in line with a request from the school's governing body.

### **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1 The Enterprise, Education and Skills Cabinet Panel considered a report on this item of business at its meeting on 25 January 2017. The Panel noted and commented upon the report and recommended to Cabinet that Cabinet recommends to Council that
- (i) Admission arrangements for primary and secondary schools, attached at Appendix A to the report, be agreed;
  - (ii) the published admission number at St. Paul's Walden Primary School is decreased to 15; and that
  - (iii) the published admission number at Ponsbourne St Mary's Primary School is increased to 13.
- 3.2 Cabinet's recommendation/s to Council will be reported to Council in the Council Order of Business sheet.

### **4. Background**

- 4.1 The School Admissions Code requires all admission authorities to consult on their admission arrangements (if there have been no changes) every 7 years. On 7 November 2016, Cabinet agreed that the County Council's existing admission arrangements and schemes of coordination for 2017/18 for statutory school age pupils are retained for 2018/19 and nursery oversubscription criteria are removed from the County Council's determined admission arrangements.
- 4.2 The County Council is the admission authority for 281 primary, infant and first schools and 9 secondary schools. When any of these schools are oversubscribed the Council Council's published admission arrangements are used to determine which children should be offered places.
- 4.3 The County Council's existing admission arrangements work well with nearly 95% of Hertfordshire children allocated a ranked primary or secondary school in 2016. Maintaining existing arrangements will minimise parental anxiety which is particularly high in the primary sector given the current pressure on places and maximise the benefits

of existing knowledge of the allocation process. Minor amendments have been made where necessary to improve clarity and transparency in certain areas. Admission arrangements for primary and secondary schools are attached at Appendix A to the report.

- 4.4 The County Council's schemes of coordination have been in place for a number of years and are well understood by both maintained schools and academies. The schemes have been updated to ensure that timescales are accurate and changes in legislation and guidance are taken into account. In line with legislation, they were published on 1 January 2017 and are attached at Appendix B to the report.
- 4.5 It is proposed that Published Admission Numbers are retained for all schools except for St Paul's Walden and Ponsbourne St Mary's Primary Schools. Published Admission Numbers for all schools are attached at Appendix C to the report.
- 4.6 Public consultation was undertaken on the proposal to reduce the PAN at St Paul's Walden Primary School from 17 to 15 from September 2018. A copy of the consultation letter is appended (see Appendix D). No objections were received to the proposal. One response in support of the proposal was received from the school's governing body (see Appendix E).
- 4.7 In response to the consultation with all community and voluntary schools to maintain published admission numbers, a request was received from Ponsbourne St Mary's Primary School to increase their PAN from 12 to 13. It is recommended that this increase is agreed because:
- it is an outstanding school and currently filled to capacity with predominantly local children;
  - there is likely to be increased pressure for primary places in the area due to proposed new housing growth in both Cuffley and Goffs Oak. An increase of 1 place per year group will have no effect on other local schools;
  - an increase of one place per year group can be accommodated in the existing site capacity and without any additional accommodation;
  - the school's class organisation will remain the same and there will be no additional staff costs.
  - an increase to (the more usual) 15 had been considered but there would be insufficient capacity in the existing building to accommodate 120 pupils (including nursery) with the lack of a hall and challenging classroom layouts being the main concerns;
  - the school's financial position will be strengthened.
- 4.8 Watton at Stone School responded to the consultation requesting a decrease in PANs from 34 to 30. The school has been advised that

PANs can only be reduced after full public consultation and the request will be considered for the 2019/20 consultation round.

- 4.9 Nursery admissions are not covered by the School Admissions Code but nursery oversubscription criteria have been traditionally determined by the County Council to ensure consistency of practice and equality across the County. This practice has caused difficulties for schools in recent years with the roll out of the early years funding provision for 2 and 3 year olds, which is frequently offered by schools but the same pupils have not been prioritised under the nursery admissions criteria and therefore it has not always been possible for schools to offer continuity in their early years provision. A move away from centrally determined nursery admission arrangements would allow the development of arrangements to meet local need, for example the prioritisation of pupils already at the setting when allocating places in the nursery class.
- 4.10 The County Council currently hosts an online application system for nursery schools and schools with nursery classes but schools allocate places themselves, again via the online system, in accordance with their published nursery admission criteria. The only places offered through this system are “standard” nursery places, equivalent to 15 hours a week for 38 weeks a year.
- 4.11 With the roll out from September 2017 of funding for 30 hours free early years provision (as opposed to the current 15 hours a week nursery provision), County wide oversubscription criteria for nursery places appear increasingly misplaced, as does the current County hosted online application system for nursery places at maintained schools. The existing online system is not flexible enough to accommodate the variety of patterns of early years’ provision that parents request; for example it is not possible to allocate hours to the private and independent nurseries or childminders.
- 4.12 Following discussions with, and feedback from, Primary Heads Forum it has been agreed that an alternative application system and best practice guidance for nursery admissions will be established for 2018/19. Parents will be informed of the new process through the distribution of leaflets mailed direct to households for the 2018/19 academic year.

## **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1 The reduction of PANs at St Paul’s Walden and increase in PANs at Ponsbourne St Mary’s will improve the future financial sustainability of the schools. There will be no impact on County Council funding as school budgets derive from the Schools Dedicated Grant.
- 5.2 The move away from a hosted nursery online system is unlikely to produce any significant savings but future system development would

be unnecessary which has previously cost £8-10k per annum.

## **6 Equalities Implications**

- 6.1 When considering proposals placed before Members it is important that they are fully aware of, and have themselves rigorously considered the Equality Implications of the decision that they are making.
- 6.2 Rigorous consideration will ensure that proper appreciation of any potential impact of that decision on the County Council's statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. As a minimum this requires decision makers to read and carefully consider the content of any Equalities Impact Assessment (EQiA) produced by officers.
- 6.3 The Equality Act 2010 requires the County Council when exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 6.4 Equality Impact Assessments have been conducted in relation to each of the proposals noted in this report and are attached at Appendix F to the report. The assessments do not identify any adverse consequences in relation to the proposals set out in this report..

### [Background Information](#)

[Report and Minutes Cabinet November 2016](#)

[Enterprise, Education & Skills Cabinet Panel Report 25 January 2017](#)

[Hertfordshire County Council Admission Arrangements](#)