

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**EDUCATION, LIBRARIES AND LOCALISM CABINET PANEL
TUESDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2018 AT 10:00AM****DETERMINATION OF HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ADMISSION
ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2019/20***Report of the Director of Children's Services*

Author:- Jayne Abery, Strategy and Policy Manager,
Admissions & Transport, Tel No: 01992 588785
Pauline Davis, Head of School Planning

Executive Member:- Terry Douris, Education, Libraries & Localism

Local Member: Ken Crofton, Hertford Rural (in relation to the
Published Admission Number at Watton-at-Stone
Primary and Nursery School)

1. Purpose of report

1.1 Panel is asked to endorse to Cabinet that, following consultation, the County Council's admission arrangements for 2019/20 are amended.

2. Summary

2.1 The County Council must determine on an annual basis the admission arrangements and published admission number 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 2017 and 31 January 2018 consultation took place, following Cabinet agreement on 13 November 2017 to consult on amending the County Council's existing admission arrangements for 2019/20.

2.3 Public consultation was undertaken with all relevant consultees, as specified in the School Admissions Code, between 20 November 2017 and 5 January 2018. The consultation document is attached at Appendix F.

2.4 Local Authorities must also consult all community and voluntary controlled schools where it is proposed that Published Admission Number's (PAN's) are maintained or increased. This consultation was also undertaken between 20 November 2017 and 5 January 2018.

2.5 Admission arrangements for 2019/20 must be determined by 28 February 2018.

3. Recommendations

3.1 Panel is asked to note and comment upon the report and recommend to Cabinet that:-

- the definition of “nearest school” for use in rule 5 of the county council’s primary oversubscription criteria is amended;
- reference to the Shared Anti-Fraud Service is added to the definitions section in the cases of fraudulent address verification;
- the published admission number at Watton-at-Stone Primary and Nursery School is reduced to 30;
- the County Council’s admission arrangements and schemes of coordination are unchanged for 2019/20.

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 13 November 2017, Cabinet agreed that public consultation should be undertaken to amend the County Council’s admission arrangements for 2019/20 as outlined above. Cabinet also agreed that the schemes of coordination and remainder of the admission arrangements should remain the same. The Cabinet paper is available at <http://cmis.hertfordshire.gov.uk/hertfordshire/Calendarofcouncilmeetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/655/Committee/8/Default.aspx>

4.2 The County Council is the admission authority for 242 primary, infant and first schools and two secondary schools. When any of these schools are oversubscribed the Council Council’s published admission arrangements (Appendix Ai- Aiii) are used to determine which children should be offered places.

4.3 The County Council’s existing admission arrangements work well with, in 2017, nearly 95% of children allocated a ranked primary school and 94% a ranked secondary school. Maintaining existing arrangements, with minor amendments to definitions, will minimise parental anxiety around school places and maximise the benefits of existing knowledge of the allocation process.

4.4 There have been 74 responses to the consultation; 57 parents/carers and 11 schools. A full breakdown of consultation responses is attached at Appendix G.

The Definition of Nearest School

- 4.5 Consultation has been undertaken to amend the current definition of “nearest school” for primary schools. This is directly linked to the rapid increase in the number of own admission authority primary schools, especially academies, and aims to increase clarity and transparency for parents.
- 4.6 The current rule 5 states “*Children for whom it is their nearest community or voluntary controlled school or an own admitting school or academy using Hertfordshire county council’s admission rules*”. The rule goes on to clarify that “*A list of schools and academies included in the definition of “nearest” is available in the “definition” section below.*”
- 4.7 This definition requires parents/carers to understand the difference between the different statuses of various schools and also requires annual updating to take into account new academies. Many own admission primary schools in Hertfordshire (including most converter academies) have adopted the County Council’s admission arrangements, including oversubscription criteria and definitions, and therefore their arrangements also need annually updating.
- 4.8 The consultation proposed that the definition of “nearest school” (Appendix Ai) is amended to read “*Children for whom it is their nearest school or academy. All schools, except those schools which admit pupils on the basis of faith, are included.*” All 40 primary academies using the County Council’s admission criteria have also consulted on this change.
- 4.9 Modelling has been undertaken, replicating data from the 2017 primary application round, to assess the impact of this change. The modelling showed minimal impact upon allocation outcomes. Full information is attached at Appendix B
- 4.10 There were 47 responses in favour of this proposal, 16 against and 11 with no opinion. Comments received mainly reflected concerns about the lack of school places in particular areas and parental choice, rather than admission arrangements.

Fraudulent Address Notification

- 4.11 Every year the Admissions service investigates many cases of the use of possible fraudulent addresses on school applications. As both a future deterrent, and to increase the investigative focus in complex cases where address evidence is in dispute, consultation was undertaken on the proposal to make fraud referrals from the Admissions Team to the Shared Anti-Fraud Service and the County Council’s admission arrangements are amended accordingly (Appendix Aiii) to make this clear to parents and carers.

- 4.12 There were 57 responses in favour of this proposal, 0 against with 17 of no opinion.

Published Admission Numbers (PANs)

- 4.13 It is proposed that Published Admission Numbers are retained for all schools (Appendix C) except Watton-at-Stone Primary and Nursery School where a decrease has been consulted upon to ensure the future financial viability stability of the school.
- 4.14 The proposed PAN reduction is supported by the school and school place planning officers. A reduction in the PAN from 34 to 30 places (to 1fe) would allow class organisation in straight year groups, in line with Key Stage 1 legislation (which legally limits infant classes to no more than 30 pupils) which will positively impact on the school's finances, which in turn helps to support teaching and learning.
- 4.15 The current pupil forecast for the 'Watton District North' area, indicates that there will be sufficient places to meet local demand in September 2019 and beyond, and this would continue if the PAN at Watton-at-Stone Primary and Nursery School is reduced. However, the school does attract children from a wider area and the pattern of admissions and subsequent forecasts will adjust over time.
- 4.16 There were 18 responses in favour of this proposal, 3 against and 53 with no opinion (not in the relevant area). There was only one negative comment linked to this proposal that raised concerns about reducing a PAN given the pressure on primary school places. Other comments agreed with the proposal given the positive impact on class size, organisation and finance at the school.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 There is no budgetary impact to the County Council. The reduction in PAN at Watton-at Stone Primary School will improve the school's long term financial viability.

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 An EqlA has been undertaken (Appendix D) following the primary modelling and it is highly unlikely that the proposals will have an adverse impact upon any particular group with a protected characteristic. An EqlA outlining the potential impact of the decrease in PAN at Watton-at-Stone Primary and Nursery School is attached at Appendix E.

Background Information

Appendices A – G attached