

# CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

## AGENDA ITEM

## REPORT TO CABINET

7 MARCH 2012

## REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

### CABINET DECISION

Children and Young People – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Ann McCoy

#### PROCEDURE FOR ADMISSION OF PUPILS TO PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SEPTEMBER 2013

1. Summary

This report outlines the admission arrangements the Local Authority (LA) is proposing for primary and secondary schools in September 2013. In order to comply with legislation for admissions in 2013, the report includes the full Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements and Admission numbers for Primary and Secondary Schools for that year.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to agree:

1. the Admission Policy for September 2013 amending the published information for oversubscribed schools with in zone applications and updating changes to looked after children to comply with the new School Admissions Code; (item 4);
2. the Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for Primary, Secondary, Voluntary Aided (VA) schools and Academies (item 5) - Appendix 1;
3. admission numbers for September 2013 (Item 6) - Appendix 2.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

Legislation requires the LA to publish information to be available for parents when they apply for a place at primary and secondary school. The information has to comply with the recently published School Admissions Code derived from the Education & Inspections Bill 2006. The LA is required to set admission arrangements accordingly and lodge a copy of the Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements with the Secretary of State by the 15 April 2012.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (**paragraph 8**) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;
- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

and must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (**paragraph 12 of the Code**).

**Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.**

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**DETAIL**

**1.0 ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2013/14**

1.1 The new School Admissions Code (SAC) came into force on the 1 February 2012, replacing the previous code published in February 2009. It outlines the overall principles behind setting admission arrangements. The SAC, page 6 para 14 states 'Admission Authorities **must** ensure that the practices and the criteria used to decide the allocation of school places are fair, clear and objective. Parents should be able to look at a set of arrangements and understand easily how places for that school will be allocated.'

**2.0 KEY CHANGES WITHIN THE NEW SCHOOL ADMISSIONS AND APPEALS CODES  
WHICH WERE PUBLISHED IN FEBRUARY 2012**

2.1 The changes to the School Admissions Code (SAC) referred to below apply with immediate effect, unless otherwise stated within the Code. It will apply to admission arrangements determined in 2012 for admission in school year 2013/14. In order to comply with the new SAC the following amendments are proposed:

- (i) The LA will ensure that adopted children, who were previously in care, are given the same highest priority for places as looked-after children (Ref Policy 3.2);

- (ii) A 'national offer day' for primary places (16 April) will be introduced, mirroring that for secondary offers (1 March) 2013 Admission Arrangement dates have been scheduled to reflect this requirement (Appendix 1);
- (iii) Schools have been given greater freedom to increase the number of places they are able to offer parents if they feel it would be manageable without any additional resources. The LA will liaise with Schools, Diocesan Authorities, Academies and governing bodies of voluntary aided schools to consider how any implementation of these proposals can be managed successfully in line with current admissions protocols and zones. Any proposed increase would have to be resourced and managed by the school.
- (iv) Schools will be able to prioritise the children of staff employed there for two or more years, or newly employed staff who will meet a skills shortage in the school. The LA does not propose to amend the policy for Community Schools to this effect. The LA does recognise that, in the event of a skills shortage, schools may wish to consider individual circumstances and if felt appropriate the LA could agree to allocate places on exceptional grounds .
- (v) Infant classes will be able to exceed the statutory limit where the 31<sup>st</sup> child is a twin or from multiple births, or of armed forces personnel. The 'excepted pupil' will be allowed for throughout Key Stage 1 or until the class numbers fall back to current class size limit. The LA welcomes the change to the proposed Code in relation to 'excepted' children admitted above 30. This will help schools in the management of these extra children without causing further disruption within Key Stage 1 classes.
- (vi) Academies will be able to prioritise disadvantaged children who are eligible for the pupil Premium. This will be a decision of individual Academies, should they be over-subscribed;
- (vii) The statutory requirement to co-ordinate in-year admissions will be removed although schools will be required to inform the LA of numbers on roll. The LA currently co-ordinates in-year admissions and schools regard this as an improvement on previous practice. Stockton schools have indicated that they would wish to retain the current co-ordinated system, in that it reduces the burden on individual schools and ensures that parents receive a consistent message about applying for school places in-year Consequently the LA proposes to continue to co-ordinate in-year transfers. Some VA admission authorities have opted out of the scheme but the LA will liaise with these schools as there are still certain processes they must do under the SAC.
- (viii) School representatives are not allowed to support individual appeals at Admission Appeal hearings or by providing letters of support for appellants. The LA will convey this information to schools.
- (ix) A timetable must be set for the organisation of appeal hearings and must be displayed on the LA website by the 28 February each year. The LA will prepare a timetable to take account of the statutory timescales set out in the School Admissions Appeals Code (SAAC) and publish on website.

### **3.0 PROPOSED CHANGES TO CRITERION 6 OF THE CURRENT ADMISSION POLICY**

- 3.1 The LA created a priority within the Admission Policy in 2010 for children attending a school nursery who apply for a place in that school for reception. This gave these children priority above those who live outside of the admission zone but possibly closer to the school. This was so that the policy complied with the School Admissions Code.

Para 2.67 of the new School Admissions Code states:

'Admission authorities that propose to give priority to children who attend the nursery or the co-located children's centre for nursery provision should ensure that families that live nearer the school, those who choose to take up other nursery options or the

free entitlement at alternative local provider, or those who have recently moved to the area, are not unfairly disadvantaged compared to other families.'

3.2 Our current published arrangements states that when a school is oversubscribed with in zone applications we will use the priorities within our policy to allocate places, giving priority to Criteria 5 and 6 and then on distance. Under these arrangements it is possible that families that lived nearer to the school may be unsuccessful because their child(ren) did not attend the school nursery.

3.3 To comply with the new SOC we are proposing to remove criterion 6 and amend our published information to state:

'When a school is oversubscribed with in zone applications we will allocate places to children within Criterion 5 and then on distance from the school'.

#### **4.0 ADMISSION POLICY FOR SEPTEMBER 2013/14 – Primary and Secondary Schools.**

The proposed Admission Policy will give priority to applications for admission to a school if that school is oversubscribed, in the following order:

1. pupils who are in the care of the Local Authority or a child who was previously looked after but immediately after being looked after became subject to an adoption, residence, or special guardianship order;
2. pupils with complex needs who have been discussed at the Moderating or Statements Panel and been identified as needing a 'named' primary or secondary mainstream school;
3. pupils who have a brother or sister living at the same address and are still at the school when the pupil begins;
4. pupils resident within the admission zone\* who have returned a Common Application Form by the due date;
5. pupils who have social or medical reasons for being admitted to the school which would, should the child not be admitted, cause him or her to be seriously disadvantaged or put personal safety at risk. In all cases corroboration will be sought from independent sources such as a medical specialist who has had continuing involvement over a period of time, social worker, or other professional. It should be noted that places would not be allocated on the basis of aptitude or ability.
6. Pupils who attend the nursery of the school they wish to attend on a full time basis.
7. Pupils who live closest to the particular school measured 'as the crow flies'.

\*When a school is oversubscribed with in zone applications we will allocate places to children within Criterion 5 and then on distance from the school (whether in the nursery or not).

NB Definitions of the criteria are explained in more detail within the published information for parents which is available in schools, libraries, council reception areas and on the Stockton on Tees website.

## **5.0 CO-ORDINATED ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2013/14**

The LA is responsible for administering a co-ordinated scheme for the area in relation to all maintained community, voluntary controlled, voluntary aided schools and Academies. The purpose of the co-ordinated admission scheme is to ensure that, as far as is reasonably practicable, every parent of a child living in the LA area who has applied for a school place in the normal admission round receives an offer of one school place on the same day.

- 5.1 The LA will act as a clearing house for the allocation of places by the relevant admission authorities in response to the Common Application Forms. The LA will only make a decision with respect to the offer or refusal of a place in response to any preference expressed on the Common Application Form where
- it is acting in its separate capacity as an admission authority; or
  - an applicant is eligible for a place at more than one school, or
  - an applicant is not eligible for a place at any school that the parent has nominated.

Attached is a copy of the Stockton on Tees Co-ordinated Admission Scheme for admissions in 2013/14 which includes the timetable. **(Appendix 1)**

## **6.0 ADMISSION NUMBERS**

- 6.1 The LA receive pupil projections from the Tees Valley Unit each year and it is showing a rising number of pupils within the primary sector, as set out in the School Organisation Plan presented to Cabinet in October 2011. This is resulting in pressure for places in areas of the Borough, particularly in lower primary (Reception, Key Stage 1)
- 6.2 These pressures were reflected in the School Capital Strategy Report, approved by Cabinet in October 2011. Work is underway to identify those schools where capacity can be increased through no, or limited, expenditure, as well as identifying schemes that require more significant investment. As a result of this we have been able to agree with a number of schools increased admission numbers. All proposed changes have been agreed with individual schools and governing bodies.
- 6.3 Appendix 2 gives the proposed Admission Numbers for September 2013 in Community, VA and Academies and shows the proposed increase in primary school admission numbers across the Borough.

## **7.0 NORTH SHORE HEALTH ACADEMY – CHANGE OF SITE**

North Shore Health Academy is planning to relocate to new premises to be built on the site of the former Stockton Sports Centre off Norton Road. It is expected that the building will be ready during the Spring of 2013. The Academy has no proposals to change the current admission arrangements/admission zones when it moves to the new site.

## **8.0 ALL SAINTS CHURCH OF ENGLAND (CE) VOLUNTARY AIDED (VA) SCHOOL – CHANGE TO ACADEMY STATUS**

All Saints CE VA School is expected to become an Academy before the end of this academic year. There are no proposals to change the current admission arrangements/admission zones when the status of the school changes. Any future proposals to change admission arrangements in the future would be subject to consultation.

## 9.0 CONSULTATION

The LA has consulted all school governing bodies, Diocesan Authorities, other neighbouring Local Authorities, Admission Forum, colleagues within the LA who cascade to special needs groups on the proposals for admissions in September 2013. The consultation was publicised in the Herald and Post and on the Stockton Council website and documents were available for viewing on the Stockton on Tees website and in Customer Services which is situated in the main Library

The LA did not receive any negative comments about the proposals. One governing body queried the priorities with the Admission Policy for out of zone siblings and medical-social criteria. As the closing date for the consultation is 24 February 2012, an update of feedback will be presented at the Cabinet Meeting.

## 10. CONCLUSION

The new Admissions Code underpins the Governments aim to create a schools system shaped by parents which delivers excellence and equity, developing the talents and potential of every child, regardless of their background; a system where all parents feel they have the same opportunities to apply for the school they want.

Within Stockton on Tees we aim to ensure that the admission arrangements are in line with the principle of fair access to educational opportunity. The LAs current policies, procedures and the additional information published in the Primary and Secondary Education Booklet 2012 for parents, will support this.

### APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 – Co-ordinated Admission arrangements for 2012/13
- Appendix 2 - Admission Numbers for Primary, Secondary Schools and Academies for September 2012

### FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9. The cost of the admissions arrangements have been included in the Council's Medium Financial Plan.

The framework for admissions was introduced in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 but a number of important changes were implemented through the Education Act 2002 and the Education and Inspections Bill 2006. The new School Admission Code published in February 2012 takes account of those changes, and of associated regulations. The consultation and information within this report complies with the relevant legal requirements.

### RISK ASSESSMENT

10. A risk assessment has been carried out and this proposal is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

### COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

#### Economic Regeneration and transport

11. Sustainable School Travel Strategy is now in place and is a statutory duty. This has been developed closely with Road Safety Team and Travel Plan Co-ordinator, to provide added information for parents when applying for schools. An executive summary is now available.

#### Children and Young People

12. Admission Arrangements are in accordance with School Admissions Code, Admission Authorities have a duty to comply with the Code to ensure that the admission arrangements are fair and equitable. This is a statutory requirement and is essential information for parents to assist them in their decision making regarding their preferred school. It is also essential to the organisation and planning for entry to reception, the smooth transition from primary to secondary school along with the development of in year requests for schools.

### **EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

13. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and the score is 71, no negative impacts have been identified. A copy of the Equality Impact Assessment can be viewed on the Stockton on Tees website [www.stockton.gov.uk](http://www.stockton.gov.uk)

### **CORPORATE PARENTING**

14. It is a statutory duty for all Admission Authorities (Community and Voluntary Aided admission authorities) to prioritise Looked After Children and those recently looked after within their oversubscription criteria as set out within the School Admission Code. All admission authorities within this borough comply with that duty.

### **CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS**

15. Results of consultation included within the report, all Councillors consulted with.

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<u>Environmental Implications</u>	None
<u>Community Safety Implications</u>	None
<u>Background Papers</u>	None
<u>Education Related Item?</u>	Yes
<u>Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:</u>	Not Ward specific
<u>Property Implications</u>	None