



Delegated decision report

DECISION UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

DECISION MUST BE TAKEN BEFORE 13 FEBRUARY 2018

Title

PRIMARY ADMISSIONS CONSULTATION 2019/20

Report to

REPORT TO THE CABINET MEMBER CHILDREN'S SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of this paper is to seek approval from the cabinet member to make the changes following the consultation carried out regarding the admission arrangements for the main admissions round for September 2019.
2. The admission arrangements allow all families to make applications for school places within a system that complies with legal requirements and so is clear, fair and objective.

BACKGROUND

3. The existing School Admissions Code (SAC) came into force on 19 December 2014 and the School Admissions Appeal Code came into force on 1 February 2012.
4. The council is the admission authority for all community and voluntary controlled school on the Isle of Wight and is therefore responsible for determining the admission arrangements for these schools. The Isle of Wight Council provides a co-ordinated and centralised main round admissions process. For in-year admissions school and the authority support parents in making an application. Regulations require all admission authorities (i.e. local authorities and the governing bodies of academies and voluntary aided and foundation schools, referred to in this report as "own admission authority" (OAA) schools) to determine their school admission arrangements for 2019/20 by 28 February 2018.
5. The term "admission arrangements" means the overall procedure, practices and oversubscription criteria used in deciding on the allocation of school places including any device or means used to determine whether a school place is to be offered (normally a supplementary information form is used by OAA schools where priority for admission cannot be determined from the information on the local authority's form).

6. Admissions authorities must consult by 31 January in the determination year on their admission arrangements, unless there are no changes proposed. Consultation with schools' governing bodies, Church of England and Catholic Diocesan Boards of Education and parents on the councils 2019 admissions policies and Published Admission Numbers has been carried out.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

7. The admissions policy, with fair admission procedures, supports the corporate aim of keeping children safe and improving their education as detailed in the corporate plan 2017.

CONSULTATION

8. Consultation, in keeping with the statutory requirements for establishing the admission arrangements, began on 18 December 2017 and ended on 22 January 2018. The consultation was accessed from the Isle of Wight Councils website and was specifically brought to the attention of schools as well as publicised to the public from the website.
9. There is one proposed change to the policy that was used in 2018. A new definition of church has been provided by the Diocesan Board of Education for the Winchester and Portsmouth Church of England Diocese. That can be seen on page 5 of the policy in the oversubscription criteria. Also, in response to a consultation response the Council has amended the wording in oversubscription criterion 6 to ensure it is clear for all parents.
10. Recently there have been questions as to whether the straight line distance measurement to the nearest school might disadvantage families living in East or West Cowes where it is possible that the nearest school requires crossing the River Medina. Analysis has shown this is not the case and so the distance tiebreak remains unchanged.

FINANCIAL / BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

11. There are no financial implications arising from the recommended changes to the policy. The local authority and schools currently provide this service and a policy change does not impact on costs.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

12. The local authority must determine the admission arrangements and to effect a change suitable consultation must be undertaken. This has been provided by the process followed. The recommended updated policy will be compliant with the requirements of the School Admission Code 2014.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

13. The council as a public body is required to meet its statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equal opportunities between people from different groups and to foster good

relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The equality impact assessment identifies no adverse impact from the changes to policy.

OPTIONS

14. The local authority has consulted on possible change to the school admissions policy. The options are:
- Option 1 – Retain the current policy un-amended
 - Option 2 – Approve the 2019/20 policy with the amended definition of church in the oversubscription criteria and the new wording for oversubscription criterion 6.

RISK MANAGEMENT

15. The school admissions policy is used when a school is oversubscribed to prioritise one applicant over another. Changing the definition of church will impact on very few applications but will mean that the local authority has provided parent/guardians with clear and concise information provided by the diocese therefore making the application process easier to understand. The risk of leaving the policy unchanged is that parent/guardians could challenge the local authority because they do not understand the current definition.

EVALUATION

16. It is recommended that the local authority proceed with Option 2 and the definition of church is changed in order to comply with that supplied by the diocese and to make the process easier to understand for parent/guardians. Continuing with Option 1 could leave the local authority at risk of challenge.

RECOMMENDATION

17. Option 2 – Approve the 2019/20 policy with the amended definition of church in the oversubscription criteria and the new wording for oversubscription criterion 6

APPENDICES ATTACHED

18. [Appendix](#) - The proposed 2019/20 Admissions Policy

BACKGROUND PAPERS

19. School Admissions Code December 2014
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/389388/School_Admissions_Code_2014_-_19_Dec.pdf

Contact Point:
Martin Goff - Head of Information, Transport and Admissions,
☎ 01962 846461 e-mail martin.goff@hants.gov.uk

STEVE CROCKER
Director of Children's Services

COUNCILLOR PAUL BRADING
Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Decision

Signed

Date
