

Subject:	School Admission Arrangements 2021-22		
Date of Meeting:	13 January 2020		
Report of:	Executive Director for Families, Children & Learning		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Richard Barker,	Tel: 01273 290732,
	Email:	richard.barker@brighton-hove.gov.uk,	
Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

The special circumstances for non-compliance with Council Procedure Rule 3, Access to Information Procedure Rule 5 and Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), (items not considered unless the agenda is open to inspection at least five days in advance of the meeting) were that the consultation on proposals to reduce the Published Admission Number of four schools did not conclude until Monday 6 January.

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 This report details the proposed school admission arrangements for the city's schools, for which the Council is the admission authority, for the academic year 2021-22.
- 1.2 The report provides an update on the outcome of the consultation on the proposed changes to the Published Admission Number of four schools, including the three public meetings held in the areas that could be affected.
- 1.3 The committee will be asked to approve to the recommendations in this report and determine the admission arrangements, including the scheme for co-ordinated admissions and the "relevant area" for the academic year 2021-22.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the committee agree to make no changes to the council's school admission arrangements or school catchment areas, except for the changes listed in subparagraphs 2.2- 2.4 below, which will result in a reduction in the total of school places in the city by 120 places.
- 2.2 The committee agree to a change to the Published Admission Number (PAN) for West Hove Infant School (Connaught Road site) from 90 pupils to 60 pupils.
- 2.3 That the committee agree to a change to the PAN for Hove Junior School (Holland Road site) from 128 pupils to 90 pupils.
- 2.4 That the Committee agree to a change of PAN for Mile Oak Primary School from 90 pupils to 60 pupils.

- 2.5 That the Committee agree to a change of PAN for Hangleton Primary School from 90 pupils to 60 pupils.
- 2.6 That the Committee agree to make no change to the “relevant area”.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 The School Admission Code determines the procedure by which the Published Admission Number of schools is set and amended. The council is required to abide by these regulations to ensure the correct procedures are followed. Therefore it is not possible to manage the situation more flexibly without following the process outlined in the School Admission Code requiring the involvement of the Schools Adjudicator.

3.2 The Code also outlines who must be consulted in relation to school admission arrangements. This includes parents of children between the ages of two and eighteen; other persons in the relevant area who in the opinion of the admission authority have an interest in the proposed admissions; all other admission authorities within the relevant area and any adjoining neighbouring local authority areas, where the admission authority is the local authority.

3.3 On 4 November 2019, all schools were advised via a Schools Bulletin article, of the proposals being put to the CYP&S committee on 11 November 2019 to seek approval to undertake a consultation on the proposed reduction of PAN at four schools. Headteachers were also informed that the council would welcome any further suggestions of possible reductions in PAN at other schools.

3.4 On 18 November 2019, all schools were notified of the consultation and requested to draw parents’ attention to the consultation. All documentations were supplied with the bulletin and a description of the council’s own action to issue a press release and direct parents to the consultation via the council’s website was also detailed.

3.5 The consultation started on 15 November 2019 and closed on 6 January 2020. It remained open during the pre-election period and over the school holidays. It was open for 7 complete weeks and a total of 52 days.

3.6 On 25 November the Council published a news story confirming details of the proposed changes and the confirmed details of the three public meetings that were to be held at:

West Hove Infant School, Connaught Road, on Thursday 28 November from 5.30pm

Mile Oak Primary School, Mile Oak Road, on Tuesday 3 December from 5.45pm

Hangleton Primary School, Dale View, Tuesday 10 December, 6pm

3.7 The council has been able to update its projection of future pupil numbers with information provided about the number of GP registrations in the city. In total the council anticipates that the following number of places are required:

September 2020 - 2,561

September 2021 - 2,488

September 2022 - 2,293

September 2023 - 2,191

- 3.8 There are currently 2910 spaces in the reception year across the city. This means that there are will be the following number of surplus places:

September 2020 - 349

September 2021 - 422

September 2022 - 617

September 2023 - 719

- 3.9 Whilst the projection of pupil numbers fluctuates each year there is a clear trend of increasing surplus places. For the purpose of planning school places the city's primary schools are split into eight planning areas and the numbers of children requiring places within those areas is shown in Appendix 7.
- 3.10 In the Portslade area there are due to be in the region of 100 surplus places in the coming four years. In the Central Hove area surplus places are due to grow to over 100 in 2023. In the West Blatchington and North Hangleton area there are expected to be over 60 surplus places each year between 2021 and 2023.
- 3.11 The School Admission Code details that once admission arrangements have been determined for a particular school year, they cannot be revised by the admission authority unless the admission authority consider such changes to be necessary in view of a "major change in circumstances" Such proposals must be referred to the Schools Adjudicator for approval.
- 3.12 A variation to increase a school's PAN is not required to be referred to the Schools Adjudicator.
- 3.13 In seeking committee approval at this stage to the reduction in the PAN at these schools the Council is aiming to avoid the uncertainty of a later application to the Schools Adjudicator, seeking a variation to admission arrangements that have been previously determined. Any such application would carry a risk that the Schools Adjudicator might not consider a low level of applications for a school to be a "major change in circumstances" when pupil projections are already indicating a rising number of surplus places across the city. A school could then be left with small class sizes which may present a financial pressure to the school.
- 3.14 The Council's concern about the involvement of the Schools Adjudicator does not relate to the ability of community and voluntary controlled schools to object to the Schools Adjudicator if the PAN set for them is lower than they would wish.
- 3.15 If any subsequent increase to the PAN of a particular school is required, should the number of applications mean an additional class is required to ensure children have a place at a local school, the Council will be able to agree the increase without reference to the Schools Adjudicator.

Consultation

- 3.16 The consultation events raised various concerns including the timing of the consultation, the prediction of future numbers of children in each area, the permanence of the proposals, the impact on parental preference, potential staff redundancies and the impact on each school's school improvement journey.
- 3.17 At the meeting at Mile Oak Primary School considerable discussion took place in relation to the housing development in close proximity to the school and a concern that the calculation of pupils requiring places at the school, linked to this development, was incorrect.
- 3.18 Neither Hangleton Primary School or Mile Oak Primary School support the proposals and considered they were mis-represented about their level of acceptance to the proposals being consulted upon in the first instance.
- 3.19 Both schools have made their own representation to the Chair of the CYP&S Committee articulating their concerns and views.
- 3.20 In total there were 82 responses to the proposals published on the council's consultation portal. A significant majority of responses were not in support of the proposals. Whilst many comments were similar to those received at the public meetings others highlighted the standing and impact each school has within the community, the reduction on parental preference and the potential increase in car journeys to school further away.
- 3.21 Support was provided to maintaining temporary changes of PAN as pupil numbers fluctuated.
- 3.22 Concerns were also expressed about the timing of the consultation and the notice provided to families about the proposals being consulted upon. It was suggested that more consideration should be given to the pupils who may live in the neighbouring local authority area and may attend a school in Brighton & Hove.
- 3.23 70 respondents (85%) stated that they tend to disagree or strongly disagree to the proposals to reduce the PAN of three primary schools and one junior school. 12 respondents (15%) stated that they strongly agree or tend to agree to the proposals.
- 3.24 Those supporting the proposals were able to identify the logic of the proposals and some responses additionally noted the need for a city wide solution and the need to ensure local demand could be met.

3.25 A table of all consultation respondents is provided below.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Brighton & Hove resident	11	13.4	13.6
	Parent or guradian of a child(ren) directly affected by the proposed changes	35	42.7	43.2
	Parent or guardian of a child(ren) not directly affected by the proposed changes	20	24.4	24.7
	Teacher in one one of Brighton & Hove schools	8	9.8	9.9
	Governor at one of Brighton & Hove schools,	4	4.9	4.9
	Other	3	3.7	3.7
	Total	81	98.8	100.0
Missing	No response	1	1.2	
Total		82	100.0	

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

4.1 The Council only consulted upon the proposal to reduce the PAN of four schools. Any additional changes would not have been considered as part of a public consultation and therefore the views of the community on those alterations would not be known. Under the School Admission Code this must be undertaken following a consultation with the governing body. All admission authorities must consult where they propose a decrease to the PAN. Community schools have the right to object to the Schools Adjudicator if the PAN set for them is lower than they would wish. There is a strong presumption in favour of an increase to the PAN to which the Schools Adjudicator must have regard when considering any such objection.

4.2 The Council could seek to make no change to the PAN of any primary school. Whilst this may ensure the council can meet a high level of parental preferences it places more schools at risk of financial difficulty.

4.3 It is possible for the Council to again seek agreement from the Schools Adjudicator for a variation to the PAN of schools with effect from September 2021 after notifying all other admission authorities within the relevant area.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

5.1 The Council scrutinised the Voluntary Aided (VA) Schools and Free Schools' proposed admission arrangements for 2020/21. VA schools are required to consult their religious authority (in this case the Diocesan Authority) before consulting others. The Council will review the final document published by the Governing Bodies before deciding whether it should comment or act further.

5.2 The Council has previously requested that Headteachers and Chairs of Governors inform it if a future reduction in PAN was a proposal that they would wish to undertake. No other schools have indicated a willingness to undertake such a reduction.

5.3 Three public meetings were held at:

- West Hove Infant School, Connaught Road
- Mile Oak Primary School
- Hangleton Primary School

5.4 The consultation started on 15 November 2019 and closed on 6 January 2020. It was available on the council's consultation portal at:

<https://consultations.brighton-hove.gov.uk/children-and-learning/admission-arrangements-for-brighton-hove-schools-2/>

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 The projected number of children requiring a school place in Brighton & Hove is falling in the coming years, which is leading to an increase in surplus school places across the city. If a school's PAN is significantly higher than the number of places allocated then it could generate a financial pressure on the school. This would lead to staffing changes and a need to review the diversity and opportunities of curriculum delivery together with less funding to maintain the school's accommodation.

6.2 After admission arrangements are determined a variation can only be revised by detailing the "major change in circumstances" to the Schools Adjudicator and obtaining their approval.

6.3 After consultation on proposals to reduce the Published Admission Number it is recommended that the committee agree to a change to the Published Admission Number (PAN) for four schools:

- West Hove Infant School (Connaught Road site)
- Hove Junior School (Holland Road site)
- Mile Oak Primary School
- Hangleton Primary School

6.4 With it being recognised by the DfE that between 5-10% surplus places is appropriate, the projections demonstrate a need to address the continuing fall in pupil numbers with more proposed changes in PANs.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

7.1 The main driver of a school's budget is pupil numbers, therefore as there are no proposed changes in admission arrangements or catchment areas, most schools will not be effected.

7.2 For the four schools Hangleton Primary, Mile Oak, West Hove Infant and Hove Junior schools, they will need to plan their budgets over the period of the change in PAN to reflect the expected reduction in pupils and budget accordingly.

Finance Officer Consulted: Andy Moore

Date: 07/01/2020

Legal Implications:

- 7.3 Section 88C of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and the School Admissions (Admissions Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) Regulations 2012 require admission authorities to determine their admission arrangements annually. Arrangements must be determined 18 months in advance of the academic year to which they apply.
- 7.4 Where changes such as a decrease in the PAN are proposed to admission arrangements the admission authority must first publicly consult on those proposed arrangements. The School Admissions Code 2014 states that consultation must be for a minimum of six weeks and must take place between 1 October and 31 January of the school year before those arrangements are to apply. The admission arrangements must be determined by 28 February 2020.
- 7.5 Community schools have the right to object to the Schools Adjudicator if the PAN set for them is lower than they would wish.
- 7.6 The 1998 Act also requires local authorities to establish a relevant area in which admission authorities must consult regarding their admission arrangements. The Education (Relevant Areas for Consultation on Admission Arrangements) Regulations 1999 requires local authorities to consult on these proposals every two years.

Lawyer Consulted:

Serena Kynaston

Date: 07.01.2020

Equalities Implications:

- 7.7 An equality Impact Assessment has not been carried out. There are no proposed changes to the council's admission arrangements and it is not expected that the proposed change to PANs will result in a significant impact for those with protected characteristics.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.8 There are no sustainability implications as a result of the proposals in this report.

Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.9 None

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Various implications
2. Published Admission Numbers for Primary and Secondary schools.
3. Admission arrangements and priorities for community primary and secondary schools
4. Coordinated scheme of admissions – primary.
5. Coordinated scheme of admissions – secondary.
6. Coordinated scheme of admissions – in year arrangements
7. Primary Planning Areas

Documents in Members' Rooms

Consultation responses

Background Documents

None

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 1.1 None

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 1.2 Any change to school attendance patterns and pupil numbers will impact directly on resource allocation both revenue and capital, and on the Council's ability to meet parental expectations on school places. Pupil data and broader population data is used to identify the numbers of school places required and where they should be located. This feeds into the capital programme so that resources are allocated where they will have the most beneficial effect.

Public Health Implications:

- 1.3 None

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 1.4 The allocation of school places affects all families in all parts of the city and can influence where people choose to live. Failure to obtain the desired choice of school can create a strong sense of grievance. The process of expressing a preference and if disappointed, entering an appeal can create intense anxiety for many families in the city. Admission arrangements together with school place planning are framed in such a way as to be mindful of supporting the needs of communities.

