

**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL  
5 OCTOBER 2011**

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**SCHOOL PLACES AND THE SCHOOL ADMISSIONS PROCESS  
Chief Officer: Strategy, Resources & Early Intervention**

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform the panel of the process for applying for and allocating school places as well as information on the latest placement figures.

**2 RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 **To note the allocation process and the current position in respect of placement figures.**

**3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 The panel has requested an information report.

**4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 No alternative option was considered

**5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

Presentation

- 5.1 A presentation will also be given to the meeting, and a copy of the slides is attached as APPENDIX A.

Applying for and Allocating School Places

- 5.2 The LA is the statutory Admissions Authority (AA) for the maintained schools in the Borough and has a duty to administer a co-ordinated admissions process for the application and allocation of school places for all AAs in the Borough. The process that AAs must follow is set out in the DFE School Admissions Code.
- 5.3 The Code requires the LA to publish its Admissions Arrangements annually, which are subject to statutory consultation with schools and stakeholders during the Spring Term, prior to approval by the Executive Member for Education in May of each year.
- 5.4 The Admission Arrangements set out the Planned Admission Number (PAN) for the intake year of each school and the selection criteria that will be applied in the allocation of places. The Arrangements also provide this information in respect of the Voluntary Aided (VA) and Academy schools in the Borough who are their own AAs.
- 5.5 Selection criteria for the allocation of places include:
- Designated Area – All properties within Bracknell Forest are in a designated area for a primary and a secondary school
  - Sibling – Having a sibling still in the school when the child will start

- Feeder – all primary schools are feeders for a secondary school
- Church attendance for VC and VA schools
- Social/Medical – particular needs mean that only one school can cater for that child

5.6 The annual admissions arrangements are approved in advance for the following academic year. These arrangements are reviewed by CYP&L DMT followed by the School Admissions Forum before going out to public consultation as stated in the School Admissions Code. The consultation runs for 8 weeks. Comments are noted and the admissions arrangements are revised and reviewed again by DMT and the School Admissions Forum before they are signed off by the Executive Member for Education. The Executive Member will approve the Admissions Arrangements for the 2013/14 academic year in May 2012.

5.7 The LA manages an annual admissions process, including:

- Publication of the Admissions Arrangements in the form of booklets and on-line
- Presentation sessions for secondary applicants and this year for the first time for parents of children starting school
- Advance registration for primary applications from May of each year
- Issuing of application forms and booklets to applicants
- Applicants can also apply for school places on-line
- Sending application data to other AAs for them to allocate places
- Applying the selection criteria fairly and consistently
- Offering and acceptance of places
- Preparing and presenting appeals
- A separate process for in year admissions e.g. people moving into the Borough

5.8 Applicants can apply for places at up to 3 schools, and our Admissions Arrangements are determined on an equal preference basis, i.e. the selection criteria are applied across all 3 schools rather than one at a time to determine which place is offered. This increases the ability of the LA to offer places at preferred schools, and for September 2011, 98% of Bracknell Forest applicants were offered one of their stated preferences for secondary school and 95% for primary schools.

5.9 Bracknell Forest residents applying for places in VA schools, Academies and other LA schools also apply through Bracknell Forest Admissions Team, and there is an additional process of information sharing with other AAs to process these applications.

5.10 The Code also makes provision for applicants to appeal the offer of a place. The LA's Democratic Services independently facilitates this process, and there were 65 admissions appeals held last year – 14 secondary and 51 primary.

#### Latest Placement Figures

5.11 The LA also has a statutory duty to provide sufficient pupil places, and there has been a significant programme of capital construction works over the last three years to create additional school places to keep pace with rising school rolls. Pressure has been most acute in North Bracknell.

5.12 There are only 36 primary and 159 secondary places available across the Borough for the September 2011 intake year. This is 2.5% and 12.5% respectively of the total places available.

5.13 Members approach has been local schools for local people, and additional school places have been created as close as possible to the demand, subject to site area restrictions which limit the ability to expand some schools. Proximity is essential to minimise the LAs liability for Home to School transport costs, which are payable where travel distances to school exceed 2 miles for primary and three miles for secondary.

5.14 The current trend of rising school rolls is forecast to continue, driven by new housing build as the most significant factor. If the proposed new housing development in the LA's existing Core Strategy and Site Allocations Development Plan Document (SADPD) goes ahead, then this could result in the construction of up to seven new schools over the next 15 years, plus potential expansion of up to four more existing schools. The total estimated construction cost for this is would be in excess of £100m.

## **6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

### Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.1 The risk of pupil place forecasts being inaccurate is assessed as MEDIUM because they are based on housing developments which are outside of the Council's control. Experience has shown that in the recession progress with new housing developments may be slower than originally assumed.
- 6.2 The risk of the LA not having sufficient pupil places for September 2012 is assessed as LOW because the education capital programme already includes provision for creating the additional capacity required.
- 6.3 The risk of funding not being available beyond 2012 to support the significant school building programme over the next 15 years is assessed as MEDIUM because the SADPD and details of the proposed new Community Infrastructure Levy have not yet been adopted by the Council.
- 6.4 The risk of a serious breach of the Admissions Arrangements resulting in prosecution is assessed as LOW because the admissions process is subject to significant consultation and is challenged every year by applicants through the appeals process.

### Background Information

APPENDIX A                      Slides from the presentation given at the meeting

## **7 CONTACTS**

### Contacts for further information

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