

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Cabinet Member for Children and Family Services

Date of Meeting:	4 th April 2011
Report of:	Barbara Dale, School Organisation, Admissions and Appeals Manager
Subject/Title:	Determination of Local Authority Coordinated Scheme and Admission Arrangements
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Hilda Gaddum

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 This paper reports on the outcome of the consultations held during the Spring Term 2011 on proposed changes to the Council's coordinated scheme and admission arrangements for the area of Cheshire East Council, in order that arrangements can be determined by 15 April 2011, in accordance with statutory requirements.
- 1.2 The Coordinated Scheme, once determined, will apply to applications for places in maintained schools, Free Schools and Academies received for the relevant age group i.e. at the normal point of entry into reception at 4+ and secondary transfer at 11+ for the school year 2012-13 and to applications received 'in year' (i.e. those received after the first day of the school year into the relevant age group or into any other year group) with effect from September 2011. This scheme will apply to subsequent years, subject to any review,
- 1.3 The proposed admission arrangements for Cheshire East community and controlled schools will apply with effect from September 2012, subject to any review.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Family Services approve
 - (1) the proposed admission arrangements (Appendix 1) for community and controlled schools, which are the overall procedure, practices, criteria and supplementary information to be used in deciding on the allocation of school places;
 - (2) the proposed coordinated admission scheme (Appendix 2), which all local authorities are required by section 88M of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and the Co-ordination Regulations to have in place; and
 - (3) notification of the determined arrangements to all consultees within 14 days of determination.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The recommendation will enable the Local Authority to meet its statutory duty to determine by 15 April 2011 a coordinated scheme and admission arrangements, as stated in paragraph 1 above, and to notify all consultees of the decision, in accordance with legal requirements.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 Once determined,
- the coordinated scheme will apply to all Cheshire East maintained primary and secondary schools, Free Schools and Academies;
 - the determined admission arrangements will apply to all Cheshire East community and voluntary controlled schools.

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 see 4.1 above.

6.0 Policy Implications including - Climate change - Health

- 6.1 Policy once determined will apply for three admissions years, unless further changes are proposed, which will be subject to further consultation. The changes proposed to the admission arrangements and particularly the oversubscription criteria, have no implications for the current school transport policy, which provides for assisted home to school transport for pupils attending the local school; defined as the school in which catchment area the pupil lives, or closest available school and the distance by the shortest available walking route exceeds two miles (primary school) or three miles (secondary school).

7.0 Financial Implications (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)

- 7.1 Members should note that the costs of School Admissions are charged to the Dedicated Schools Grant within the element for central expenditure.

8.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

- 8.1 The Authority has a duty to comply with the mandatory requirements imposed by all relevant legislation including the School Admissions Code (or by statutory provisions). The Code is made under section 84 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 as amended by section 40 of the Education and Inspection Act 2006. This Code also reflects changes to the law made by the Education and Skills Act (ESA) 2008 and Regulations. The Regulations that apply for the purpose of this report are:

- **The School Admissions (Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2008**, which

requires that all local authorities formulate and determine a scheme for coordinating admission arrangements for maintained schools within their area by 15 April.

- **The School Admissions (Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2008**, in relation to consultation on admission arrangements, which must also be determined by 15 April.

9.0 Risk Management

- 9.1 As changes are proposed, if the Local Authority does not determine its admission arrangements and coordinated scheme before 15 April 2011, it will be in breach of its statutory duty to comply with the provisions of the School Admissions Code.

10.0 Background and Options

- 10.1 **Admission Arrangements:** Requests have been received from some governing bodies for changes to published admission numbers for September 2012 and beyond and these are subject to consultation. (Attached as Appendix 3). It is not proposed that any other changes are made, with the exception of very minor changes to dates to accommodate weekends and holiday periods.

- 10.2 **Coordinated Scheme:** Following requests received from some schools, a minor review of the agreed scheme has been carried out in order to address the concerns raised:

- *Timing of admission* - some schools feel that if there is a vacancy in the year group at the time of application the Local Authority should arrange immediate admission with the school and not delay admission until the beginning of term/half term as stated in the agreed scheme. The scheme has therefore been revised to show that admission will take place within 10 school days from the date of offer for primary admissions and within 20 school days for secondary schools.
- *Informing the current school* - some schools feel that the current school of attendance should receive notification from the LA if a parent is applying to transfer schools for reasons other than a house move. The LA currently notifies parents in writing that they should inform the current school confirming that the LA will do this at the time of offer. The scheme has therefore been revised to state that, 'parents and carers offered Cheshire East school places for reasons other than a house move will be informed at the offer stage that the current school will be notified that a place has been allocated at an alternative school'.

- 10.3 On 3 November 2010 the Admissions Forum considered the proposed changes to published admission numbers and the Local Authority's coordinated scheme. It was recommended that consultation on admission arrangements be implemented in accordance with statutory requirements, and that consultation on the proposed changes to the coordinated scheme be undertaken with ECaph and CEASH, followed by wider consultation with Cheshire East schools.
- 10.4 Consultation on proposed changes to existing *admission arrangements* were notified as follows:
- Schools were advised in the Schools Bulletin of 13 December that consultation had started. A reminder was issued in the Bulletin on 14 February 2010.
 - E-mails were circulated to schools, which could potentially be affected by the proposals to revise published admission numbers, i.e. to nearby schools;
 - Information about the consultation was included as an agenda item in the Spring Term report to Governing Bodies, with full details being made available on Cheshire East Council's website.
 - Notification was sent out to all neighbouring and diocesan authorities at the end of December 2010.
 - Notices were published at the end of December 2010 in newspapers across Cheshire East to inform relevant parents and carers and local groups with an interest of the consultation on proposed admission arrangements and inviting feedback, in accordance with the mandatory provisions of the School Admissions Code.
- 10.5 The proposed changes to the Council's *coordinated scheme* were presented at the meeting of the Admissions Forum in November before presentation to ECaph on 13 January, CEASH on 20 January and circulation to all Cheshire East schools inviting feedback. The outcome of this consultation was then presented to the Admissions forum on 14 March.

Responses to Consultation

- 10.6 Consultation on the proposed changes to admission arrangements was completed on the statutory date of 1 March and a total of 6 responses have been received. This includes 3 submitted by schools, 1 from a parent and 2 unknown. Whilst this is a very small number of responses, this is not surprising as no major changes have been proposed this year. As a comparison, last year 34 responses were received providing feedback on the change proposed to the oversubscription criteria to give siblings a higher priority over local children for all community and voluntary controlled schools.

- 10.7 The responses that have been received in relation to the proposed changes to admission numbers include 2 confirming support, 3 against and 1 expressing no view. Of the three that have indicated opposition, one of these is an objection to the proposed increase from 50 to 55 for Mossley Primary school due to the potential impact on admissions to nearby Daven Primary School. The other two objections raise general concerns about falling pupil numbers and impact on nearby schools but have not objected specifically to one of the schools listed on the attached appendix 3.
- 10.8 Full details about the proposed changes and the feedback received during consultation were presented to the Admissions Forum on 14 March. Forum Members received a map showing nearby schools, information about the number of school places in the area and pupil forecasting data.
- 10.9 Discussion took place in particular about the proposed increase for Mossley Primary School from 50 to 55 with Forum Members exchanging views about popular schools being allowed to expand and the potential adverse effect of this on nearby schools with surplus places and in particular Daven Primary School, which was reduced from a two-form to a one-form of entry primary school under the Cheshire County Council review of school places.
- 10.10 After very careful consideration, the Forum resolved to recommend to the Council's Cabinet Member that approval be given to the proposed admission arrangements, including the proposed increase in the published admission number with effect from 2012 to Mossley Primary School. The Forum recommended to officers that further assessment of the provision of school places in the Congleton area should be undertaken, and particularly in light of any changes introduced by the Government in the revised School Admission Code (due out for consultation this summer), which will apply to arrangements for 2013 and subsequent years.
- 10.11 In relation to the proposed changes to the Local Authority's coordination scheme, it was reported to the Forum that no further feedback had been received. Consideration was given to the minor changes proposed.
- 10.12 The Forum resolved to recommend to the Cabinet Member that the proposed coordinated scheme be approved.
- 10.13 This paper, together with its appendices and an oral update, was presented to the Children and Families Midpoint Scrutiny Committee on 15 March. The report was accepted.

11.0 Overview of Year One and Term One Issues

- 11.1 The coordination scheme will be implemented with effect from September 2011 for all Cheshire East home residents making 'in year' applications for schools in Cheshire East and for schools maintained by other English authorities. Once determined, the Scheme will also apply to applications made for admission into primary and secondary schools from September 2012 i.e. at the normal point of entry. For future years, the Local Authority must consult the Admission Forum every year, and admission authorities for schools affected by the scheme and other local authorities every three years as a minimum. If the Admission Forum advises that the scheme has changed substantially since the previous year, the local authority must consult school governing bodies and other local authorities on it, even if that is less than three years since the last consultation.

12.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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