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To: Education Cabinet Committee – 19 March 2013

Subject: Decision number: 01/02002 - Proposed Co-Ordinated Schemes For Primary And Secondary Schools In Kent And Admission Arrangements For Primary And Secondary Community And Voluntary Controlled Schools 2014 /15

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: To report on the outcome of the consultation on the proposed admission arrangements and scheme for transfer to Primary and Secondary schools in September 2014 and the proposed process for non-coordinated In-Year Admissions. ECC is asked to endorse or make recommendations on the proposed arrangements, due for determination by KCC Cabinet in April, for the 'In-Year' Admission process, the admission arrangements for the 2014/15 school year and the co-ordinated schemes for Primary & Secondary Admissions in Kent.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Local Authority (LA), as the admissions authority for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools, is required to consult on its proposed admission arrangements for these schools, and to determine its admission arrangements by 15 April each year.

1.2 The Education Act 2002 introduced a duty on each LA, to formulate a scheme to co-ordinate admission arrangements for all maintained schools in its area and to take action to secure the agreement to the scheme by all admission authorities. The School Admissions Code 2012 removes the requirement for each LA to co-ordinate In-Year Admissions. As the LA and many individual admissions authorities expressed a number of reservations when this requirement was introduced, In-Year co-ordination was removed from the Primary and Secondary schemes for the 2013 intake year. In place of a co-ordinated In-Year scheme, the LA consulted on a formal In-Year process to ensure schools fulfil the legal obligations expressed in the School Admissions Code 2012. Education Cabinet Committee is requested to comment and inform the forthcoming Cabinet's decision to agree the Co-ordinated scheme for Admissions to Primary and Secondary schools in Kent for 2014 and determine the proposed admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools.

1.3 All admission arrangements identified in this document are outside the arrangements for pupils with statements of special education need which take place in accordance with the SEN Code of Practice (2001) Paragraph 5.72.

1.4 KCC has consulted the Headteachers and chairmen of governors of all Kent Primary and Secondary schools; neighbouring LAs; diocesan bodies; independent schools (which have pupils transferring to secondary schools); parents and parental groups on its proposals to co-ordinate admissions to all Kent Primary and Secondary schools in September 2014.

2. Consultation and Outcome

2.1 The LA consultation ran from the 15 November 2012 to 15 January 2013 and considered the following aspects:

- a) The Primary Co-ordinated Admission Scheme including a revised In Year admissions process for 2014/15;
- b) The Secondary Co-ordinated Admission Scheme including a revised In Year admissions process for 2014/15;
- c) Over-subscription criteria for Community and Voluntary Controlled Primary, Infant and Junior schools 2014/15;
- d) Over-subscription criteria for Community and Voluntary Controlled Secondary schools 2014/15;
- e) Published admission numbers for Community and Voluntary Controlled Primary, Infant and Junior Schools 2014/15;
- f) Published admission numbers for Community and Voluntary Controlled Secondary Schools 2014/15;
- g) The relevant statutory consultation areas for Primary and Secondary schools 2014/15;

2.2 Following discussions between the LA as admissions authority of Thurnham Infants School (including representatives from the school) and the adjacent Roseacre Junior School, an agreement to consult on a 'priority' link in the admissions criteria between the two schools was reached. As a Foundation school, Roseacre Junior School is holding its own consultation. Agreement for the proposed link was not reached until after the LA's main admissions arrangement consultation had started. In light of this amendment, the deadline for responses to the Kent County Council consultation was extended to 1st February 2013 for this school.

3. The Co-ordinated Primary Admissions Scheme 2014/15 incorporating the revised In Year admissions process

3.1 All Admissions Authorities within Kent agreed to the proposed Co-ordinated Primary Admissions Scheme for 2014/15. No Infant, Junior or Primary schools have refused to accept the scheme. The scheme dates are set out in a similar way to last year following broadly similar scheme dates. Primary National offer day is now active following its introduction in the School Admissions Code 2012. The LA will cease to co-ordinate In-Year admissions from September 2013, in line with the removal of the duty in the School Admissions Code 2012. The scheme still specifies a process for schools to follow when making offers and includes a requirement to inform the LA of all applications and offers made to enable continued monitoring of pupil movement to maintain essential safeguarding duties.

3.2 The LA is required to assist parents where they have difficulty securing a school place. Schools and academies must keep the LA informed about the vacancies in each year group as they arise in order for the LA to carry out its statutory duty to ensure every eligible child has a school place.

3.3 The details of the scheme for determination are located in Appendix A

4. The Co-ordinated Secondary Admissions Scheme 2014/15 incorporating the In Year Admissions Process

4.1 The Secondary Co-ordinated Scheme was agreed by all Kent Admissions Authorities. No Secondary schools or Academies refused to accept the proposed scheme. The scheme dates are set out in a similar way to last year following broadly similar scheme dates. The LA will cease to co-ordinate In-Year admissions from September 2013, in line with the removal of the requirement in the School Admissions Code 2012. The scheme still specifies a process for schools to follow when making offers and includes a requirement to inform the LA of all applications and offers to allow continued monitoring and maintain safeguarding practices.

4.2 The details of the proposed scheme for determination are located in Appendix B

5. The Over-subscription Criteria for Community and Voluntary Controlled Infant, Junior and Primary Schools in Kent 2014/15

5.1 The over-subscription criteria for Community and Voluntary Controlled Infant, Junior and Primary Schools are the same as those used in 2013.

5.2 Details of the over-subscription criteria for Community and Voluntary Controlled Infant, Junior and Primary Schools are located in appendix C (1).

5.3 Feedback to this part of the consultation can be summarised as follows:

(i) One school requested that priority be given in its over-subscription criteria to parents that live closer to the school than any other school in the area, above their distance criteria. *(Parents will undoubtedly be frustrated when they have to travel past a school they would prefer, to an alternative school. This is a situation that can arise as a result of coordination and will happen where there is a desire to promote choice for parents. Consequently the LA takes the view that parents should not be penalised because they happen to also live near another school and it is recommended the existing wording is retained.)*

(ii) Two parents raised concerns that straight line distancing does not take into account the actual route travelled by parents to take their children to school and families that live closer via walking/driving routes are disadvantaged. *(Kent historically used walking route distancing for Admissions purposes, but it was deemed to be too inconsistent and open to interpretation resulting in regular complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman. Straight line distancing was introduced on the advice of the Local Government Ombudsman because it offered a consistent approach. Officers consider it should retain the existing distancing*

method for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools as it is clearly defined for all parents).

(iii) One parent objected to siblings being given priority, suggesting distance be the main prioritising factor. *(Sibling prioritisation is included to aid parents in reducing the burden of having to take children to different schools at the same time and to increase a child's chance of being able to experience school with the support of a brother or sister. This is a common practice throughout England. Officers would recommend the existing arrangements be retained).*

(iv) One parent agreed with the arrangements, but raised a concern about parents that temporarily rent properties to gain priority for a popular school, only to move back to their main residence once the child has started school. *(This is fortunately not a significant problem in Kent, although it remains a cause for concern. Officers will rigorously investigate fraudulent applications, but the LA is limited in being able to proactively identify such fraud. If parents are resident at the time of application the LA is required to accept that address).*

6. Thurnham Infants School

6.1 A significantly large proportion of responses were received in relation to the proposal to link Thurnham Infants School and Roseacre Junior School. 68 parents responded to the consultation

6.2 Feedback to this part of the consultation can be summarised as follows:

(i) 37 respondents commented on the element of the proposal to link the two schools and all were in favour of the suggestion. *(In light of this overwhelming support it is suggested that the sibling link includes Roseacre as a linked school in the determined arrangements. Officers will also write to the governing body of Roseacre as the admission authority for the school in the hope that they will be persuaded to determine arrangements which include a links with the Infant school.)*

(ii) 54 responses that were submitted commented on a proposed priority area. Six were in favour of the proposal and were from parents of children that live inside the priority area. The remaining responses strongly opposed the priority area. Two respondents lived inside the area, but the rest were from parents who lived outside it. The majority of the complaints were in relation to areas of Thurnham being excluded from the priority area and that people that live further away from the school would gain priority over those more local to the school. Some respondents suggested that the area should be expanded, but the majority called for it to be removed altogether. A number of responses felt that the reason put forward in the proposal did not adequately explain why the area was needed. Respondents did not understand why this should be included in Thurnham's arrangements and preferred instead to simply include a sibling arrangement which also links to Roseacre School.

(iii) One respondent requested that the sibling link rule is restricted to families living less than 2 miles from the school. *(A sibling prioritisation is included to aid parents in reducing the burden of taking children to different schools at the same time and to increase a child's chance of being able to experience school with the support of a brother or sister. This is a common practice throughout England and there currently exists a clause that breaks the sibling link if families move outside of the area. There does not therefore appear to be a need to amend this proposed criterion).*

(iv) Several complaints, including a strongly worded response by Thurnham Parish Council, were made about the way the consultation was displayed. Reference to the link was prominent in notices, but details of the priority area were only clear when parents read the full consultation. Some parents complained that the consultation was not advertised prominently enough.

(v) As Roseacre Junior School is its own Admissions Authority, it will be the governing body that will determine the admissions arrangements and it is hoped they will include the elements that relate to linking the schools. Kent has discussed this with the school in the hope that this is ultimately included in their determined arrangements.

7. The Over-subscription Criteria for Community and Voluntary Controlled Secondary schools in Kent 2014/15

7.1 The proposed wording for the over-subscription criteria for community and voluntary controlled Secondary Schools is the same as that used in 2013.

7.2 Details of the over-subscription criteria for Community and Voluntary Controlled Secondary Schools in Kent are located in appendix D (1)

7.3 Feedback to this part of the consultation can be summarised as follows:

(i) No consulted parties raised any objection to the proposed over-subscription criteria.

8. Published Admission Numbers 2014/15

8.1 The proposed Published Admission Numbers (PAN) for Community and Voluntary Controlled Primary, Infant and Junior schools are identified in Appendix C (2) and for Community and Voluntary Controlled Secondary schools are detailed in Appendix D (2). The LA can only determine the admission number for schools where it is the admissions authority and the schools listed fall into this category, at the time of going to print.

8.2 Feedback to this part of the consultation can be summarised as follows:

(i) Three representatives from Coxheath Primary School disagreed with the school's PAN being set at 60. The school's PAN was increased from 30 to 60 from the September 2011 intake. *(Because the consultation went out with a PAN of 60 it would be inappropriate to reduce this having not consulted on the reduced figure. It is therefore proposed that the PAN of 60 be determined at 60 with a commitment to review this PAN later in the year, ahead of consultation for entry in 2015)*

(ii) One parent objected to Bishops Down Primary School's PAN being set at 60 on the grounds that the site did not have sufficient capacity to support that number of children without negatively impacting on current pupils' education. *(Bishops Down's PAN increase is as a result of a direction from the Schools Adjudicator, and as such, Kent is obliged to comply in 2013 if it is safe for the site to accommodate the additional form of entry. This has yet to be tested through a planning application. The consultation has remained with a PAN of 30 and it is not proposed that this be increased for 2014 due to the limitations of the site.)*

9. Relevant Statutory Consultation Area 2014/15

9.1 Relevant statutory consultation areas have not changed from 2013/14. Details for the Primary arrangements are in appendix C (3) and Secondary arrangements in appendix D (3).

10. Recommendations

10.1 The Education Cabinet Committee is asked to comment and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education Learning and Skills on the decision to determine the following:

- a) The Coordinated Primary Admissions Scheme 2014/15 incorporating the In Year admissions process as detailed in Appendix A
- b) The Co-ordinated Secondary Admissions Scheme 2014/15 incorporating the In Year admissions process as detailed in Appendix B
- c) The oversubscription criteria relating to Community and Voluntary Controlled Infant, Junior and Primary schools in Kent 2014/15 as detailed in Appendix C (1)
- d) The oversubscription criteria relating to Community and Voluntary controlled Secondary schools in Kent 2014/15 as detailed in Appendix D (1)
- e) The Published Admissions Number for Community and Voluntary Controlled Infant, Junior and Primary Schools 2014/15 as set out in Appendix C (2)
- f) The Published Admissions Number for Community and Voluntary Controlled Secondary Schools 2014/15 as set out in Appendix D (2)
- g) The relevant statutory consultation areas for Kent Primary Schools 2014/15 as detailed in Appendix C (3) and the relevant statutory consultation areas for Kent Secondary Schools 2014/15 as set out in Appendix D (3)

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Background documents

School Admissions 2014-15 Consultation Document

<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/SchoolAdmissions/consultationHome>