

Cabinet/People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Dorset County Council



Date of Meeting	People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 10 January 2018 Cabinet - 17 January 2018
Officer	Director for Children’s Services
Subject of Report	Admissions Arrangements 2019-2020 & Transport Policy 2018-2019
Executive Summary	<p>As a result of successive Acts and associated Regulations admission authorities are required to consult on proposed admissions arrangements prior to determination. Consultation has to be carried out by the 31st January 2017, the outcomes determined by the 1 March 2017, published by the 15 March 2018 for admissions into schools in September 2018.</p> <p>December 2014 Admissions Code requires admission authorities to consult for a minimum period of 6 weeks between 1 October and 31 January and to include relevant parents and other groups in that consultation.</p> <p>The current Admissions code has removed the need to consult on the increase in the Published Admission Number (PAN), but still requires a consultation when an Admissions Authority intends to lower their PAN.</p> <p>Consultation on changes to Dorset’s admissions arrangements was completed on 4 December 2017. This report summarises the consultations that have taken place and invites members to approve the changes as a result of those consultations in order to meet the Local Authority’s statutory duties.</p>

	<p>In addition The Home to School Transport and the Post 16 Transport Support Policy that will come into effect for September 2018 have also been consulted upon.</p> <p>Elected members are also recommended to approve the outcome of a consultation on the decrease in the Pupil Admission Numbers at Charmouth Primary School</p>
<p>Impact Assessment:</p>	<p>Equalities Impact Assessment:</p> <p>This process is bound by the 2014 School Admissions Code and the statutory guidance on Home to School Transport including support access to Post 16 education and training.</p> <p>An EQIA has been carried out for the Home to School Transport and the Post 16 Transport Support Policy for September 2018.</p> <hr/> <p>Use of Evidence:</p> <p>Previous pre-Consultation and Full Consultation responses have directly fed into the admissions consultation process.</p> <p>The latest guidance from the Department of Education with regards to Admissions Law has been used for both mainstream and SEND transport</p> <p>There has been a review of the legislation as it pertains to Post 16 and Post 18 transport responsibility.</p> <hr/> <p>Budget:</p> <p>There are no significant budget risks.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The implementation of Section 7 for cost recovery for SEN Post 16 transport is projected to reduce the SEN transport allocation by approximately £40,000. 2. A change from 5 miles eligibility criteria in Post 16 to 3 miles criteria for eligibility in Post 16 will have a potential increase in budget of £70,000. 3. The more focused approach to SEN transport, specifically those attending mainstream provision, will also generate greater efficiencies for transport delivery. <hr/> <p>Risk Assessment:</p> <p>Having considered the risks associated with this decision using the County Council's approved risk management methodology, the level of risk has been identified as:</p> <p>Current Risk: LOW Residual Risk LOW</p>

	<p>Other Implications:</p> <p>None</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>That the People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend the Cabinet to formally agree to the adoption of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Dorset County Council Admissions Arrangements including the Co-Ordinated Scheme, the Admissions Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools in Dorset 2019-2019, the Admission of Armed Forces Community Children Policy and the Guidance on the Placement of a Pupil Outside His or Her Normal Age Group, the 6th Form Admissions Policy and the Nursery Admissions Policy. (b) The Home to School Transport Assistance Eligibility Policy for Children and Young People attending School 2018-2019 and the Dorset Post 16 Transport Support Policy for 2018-2019 which includes a rise in the surplus seat price from £640 to £770. Cabinet is also advised that a cost of £795 will be used for consultation in April 2018 for September 2019 surplus seat/cost recovery charge. (c) Approval of the identification of a transport catchment area for The Swanage School. (d) Approval of either the 3 or 5 mile criteria for the reduction of 50% for contribution towards Post 16 transport. (e) Changes to the Pupil Admission Number for Charmouth Primary School, reducing from 25 to 15.
<p>Reason for Recommendation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To determine admissions arrangements in accordance with statutory requirements including the Schools Admissions Code December 2014. • To ensure compliance with the latest legislation and subsequent regulation/statutory guidance.
<p>Appendices</p>	<p>Appendix 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Co-Ordinated Scheme Timetable 2019-2020 - Local Authority Admissions Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools in Dorset 2019-2020 - Dorset Admission of Armed Forces Community Children Policy - Guidance on the Placement of a Pupil Outside His or Her Normal Age Group - 6th Form Admissions Policy - Nursery Admissions Policy <p>Appendix 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Home to School Transport Assistance Eligibility Policy for Children and Young People attending School 2018-2019 - Dorset Post 16 Transport Support Policy 2018-2019 <p>Appendix 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communications from consultees in relation to the Consultation.

Background Papers	<p>Minutes of Cabinet – 11 February 2016 – Item 27a pp.2– Recommendations from the Children’s Services Overview Committee (18 January 2016).</p> <p>DFE Schools Admissions Code - <i>December 2014</i> https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-admissions-code--2</p> <p>DFE Guidance on Summer Born Children - <i>December 2014</i> https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/summer-born-children-school-admission</p> <p>DFE Guidance on Post 16 Transport – <i>February 2014</i> https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-transport-to-education-and-training</p> <p>DFE Guidance on Admissions and The Armed Forces Covenant – <i>April 2013</i> https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/admissions-to-schools-in-england-and-the-armed-forces-covenant</p>
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1. Co-Ordinated Schemes

- 1.1 The new timetable for the Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme Timetable meets with the requirements of the Schools Admissions Code of Practice and is attached in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The scheme co-ordinates with neighbouring local authorities and the national offer dates as set out in the code of practice. There have been no responses to this consultation

Elected Members are asked to support the adoption of the co-ordinated scheme in order to meet statutory requirements.

2. Admissions Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools in Dorset 2019-2020 including The Sixth Form Admissions Policy and the Nursery Admissions Policy.

- 2.1 Admissions arrangements for all maintained schools are bound by the Schools Admissions Code, which was revised and updated in December 2014.
- 2.2 Local Authorities are required under the School Admissions Code to have a Fair Access Protocol. This process ensures that the most vulnerable children are placed quickly. These children often have challenging circumstances and may experience difficulty being placed using normal in-year application processes.
- 2.2 DCC has made no changes to the oversubscription criteria for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools.
- 2.3 DCC has made no changes to the Sixth Form Admissions Policy, The Nursery Admissions Policy.
- 2.4 There were no responses to this consultation.

Elected Members are asked to adopt the Admissions Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools in Dorset 2019-2020 and note that Local Authority Sixth Form Admissions Policy and Local Authority Nursery Admissions Policy are unchanged.

3. Dorset Admissions of Armed Forces Community Children Policy

- 3.1 This policy applies to all schools where Dorset is the admissions authority (community and voluntary controlled schools) – it is also promoted for adoption with Dorset Schools which are their own admissions authorities (academies, foundation, voluntary aided, studio and fee schools). A copy of the policy is found in Appendix 1.
- 3.2 This policy recognises the Armed Forces Covenant and reflects the DFE Guidance issued in April 2013.
- 3.3 The Guidance from the DFE and DCC's policy is designed to ensure that admissions arrangements do not disadvantage service families, and the policy provides the admissions authority flexibility in how they may process applications from service families.
- 3.4 The policy ensures that an admission authority has flexibility in determining main residence when managing place allocations using base and future addresses where a family is subject to a new posting/rotation.

- 3.5 There is flexibility in the application of the Infant Class Size (ICS) legislation, which allows admissions authorities to place over number as an 'exception', though it is still incumbent on the admissions authority to respect the philosophy of ICS and not to necessarily make an 'exception' of every service family.
- 3.6 The policy also allows and requires an admission authority to act flexibly when an allocated school place through a future service or base address is then not appropriate to the residential address that the service family has once they are finally settled.
- 3.7 There have been no responses to the consultation including the Ministry of Defence who were consulted.

Elected Members are asked to adopt the attached policy in order to support military families and to meet the requirements of the Armed Forces Covenant.

4. Guidance on the Placement of a Pupil Outside His or Her Normal Age Group

- 4.1 This policy applies to all schools where Dorset is the admissions authority (community and voluntary controlled schools) – it is also promoted for adoption with Dorset Schools which are their own admissions authorities (academies, foundation, voluntary aided, studio and fee schools). A copy of the policy is found in Appendix 1.
- 4.2 Clarification has been provided about children needing to attend full time from the age of 5 regardless as to whether they have started in reception the term after their 5th birthday.
- 4.2 There have been no responses to the consultation

Elected Members are asked to adopt the policy that relates to the placement of children outside of their normal age group, thus ensuring that DCC is adhering to latest DFE statutory guidance.

5. Home to School Transport Entitlement Policy 2018-2019 and the Post 16 Transport Support Policy 2018-2019

- 5.1 The significant changes and clarification to the Home to School Transport Assistance Eligibility Policy are as follows:
- 5.2 The price of a surplus seat rises annually and it is proposed that the cost rises for the academic year starting September 2018 to £770, a rise from £640 in the previous year.

Elected Members are asked to note that the figure of £770 for September 2018 was agreed by Cabinet as a target figure for cost recovery on 11 February 2016. Members are also asked to note and approve that £785 will be used as a consultation figure for cost recovery/ surplus seat for September 2019 academic year.

- 5.3 Cost recovery for Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Post 16 is maintained. It should also be noted that many SEND families will also qualify for the 50% on a surplus seat cost where they comply with the terms and conditions of such a discount in Section 3 of the Post 16 Transport Support Policy.

- 5.4 There is greater clarity on aspects of the SEND transport, including: a) families whose children with an Education Health and Care Plan HCP and who are attending a mainstream school that is neither their catchment or nearest will not be eligible for transport, b) the criteria for securing a Passenger Assistant has been fully articulated, c) the eligibility for SEND transport for Post 16 has been fully articulated.
- 5.5 DCC continues to use 5 miles as the cut off for standard eligibility for a discount of 50% on the cost of OSOO (One School One Operator) seat to a mainstream 6th form or a 50% reduction in the contribution that is sought by the LA towards Post 16 SEND transport assistance if applicable.

Elected Members are asked to note that Department for Education guidance suggests that a 3 mile criterion would be acceptable and that were DCC to move to a 3 miles criterion, this would potentially incur an annual increase in cost of around £70,000.

- 5.6 The Swanage School Transport.
- 5.6.1 The Swanage School raised objections to the Transport Policy in 2016. Further work has been undertaken to look at the concerns they have raised. Though the substantive concerns around the continuation of the Swanage Town being catchment to the Purbeck School and that the LA has a financial liability to transport children to Purbeck even though there are places at The Swanage School are still being explored, the Local Authority have identified a change in policy that would bring The Swanage School in line with other Secondary Schools across Dorset that have a catchment area.
- 5.6.2 The previous transport policy and the draft policy that was published for consultation only allocated transport to the Swanage School as long as it was their nearest school and they were eligible under the 3 mile criteria. This was contrary to other schools where if a family was within the catchment area they would receive transport as long as they were over 3 miles.
- 5.6.3 The Swanage School did declare a catchment when they first set their admissions arrangements in 2013. This catchment covers a variety of parishes across the Purbeck area which includes the primary catchment areas of 5 schools. Those 5 schools have a total potential output of 120 pupils at Year 6. The Swanage School has an intake capacity of 84 per year group.
- 5.6.4 Though the Swanage School can set its catchment area for admissions purposes to any size, DCC has always ensured that secondary school catchments reflect the likely demand/output of the associated primary schools. To that end, and to ensure equity with other secondary schools who have a catchment, DCC for transport purposes, would identify the primary catchments of St. Mary's RC Primary, Swanage St. Marks' CE Primary, Swanage Primary and St. Georges Primary in Langton Matravers as the areas from within which families would be entitled to transport, subject to all other eligibility criteria being met.

Elected Members are recommended to agree that DCC should provide transport to families on a nearest or catchment basis in Purbeck based on the transport catchment area as proposed above in 5.6.4. DCC will continue to explore with all stakeholders the issue of families being offered transport to the Purbeck School from within the Swanage transport catchment area even when there are places at the Swanage School. A further consultation on any further changes to joint catchment eligibility will take place in the Spring of 2018 for implementation in September 2019.

5.7 Though the LA was not consulting on any changes to eligibility of transport for residents of Swanage to attend the Purbeck School, the consultation on Dorset's policies generated 6 responses urging the LA not to limit the eligibility for transport of Swanage families to the Purbeck School.

5.7.1 In addition to the 6 responses above, the following four responses were also received to the School Transport Policies consultation. (See Appendix C):

5.7.2 A concern was raised by one consultee that it would be unfair to not provide transport to the preferred school for a child with SEND.

LA Response: This element of the policy refers to those children attending a mainstream school, and where the parent has requested that the school on the EHCP is neither the catchment or nearest school. If a child, through the EHCP process, is deemed suitable for mainstream provision, subject to any assistance detailed in the EHCP, then the catchment or nearest school will be suitable. A family has the right to nominate a different school, under parental preference, but as with a child without an EHCP, this will be deemed parental preference and will not attract transport assistance. Where a particular form of provision, i.e. a resource base or a special school, is documented on the EHCP, as long as that provision is the most appropriate and the nearest, then the Local Authority will provide transport to that setting.

5.7.3 A concern was raised about the level of fees and the reliability of the service.

LA Response: The level of cost for a Surplus Seat is in line with other Local Authorities and the actual costs incurred for the provision of a mainstream seat. The comment about reliability has been forwarded to the Dorset Travel Team.

5.7.4 A concern was raised about the potential reduction of Passenger Assistants (PA).

LA Response: The policy is providing clarification on the role of PA's. They are there to support individuals based on that child or young persons' need. The PA's are deployed to ensure the safety and welfare of the individual named service user. Where children that are travelling on a LA commissioned transport are not allocated a PA, the families are responsible for that child getting on and off the bus and they are expected to conduct themselves as if they are in a school setting.

5.7.5 A concern was raised about the need for school transport between West Christchurch and Burton, the travel times for young children on this route and the potential effects of transporting children this distance.

LA Response: DCC works to ensure that there are sufficient places for local children at local schools. Occasionally it is necessary for the Local Authority to provide transport to another local school as a result of local demand for places. DCC adheres to the DFE guidance that a child of Primary age should ideally not have to travel for more than 45 minutes each way to go to school.

Elected Members are asked to adopt the transport policies and note the clarifications that have been made with regards to eligibility for SEND transport, eligibility for a 50% discount for mainstream and SEND Post 16 transport and the clarification on the deployment of Passenger Assistants. Members are also asked to note the additional exception to being provided school transport where a higher rate Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for Mobility has been issued for the benefit of the child for whom travel assistance is being requested.

6. Reduction in Admissions Number

- 6.1 Charmouth Primary School currently has a Pupil Admission Number (PAN) of 25. As a result of declining numbers in the area, they are unable to sustain the 7 classes that such a PAN requires and have asked the LA to consult on lowering the PAN to 15. The LA will still be able to raise the PAN should demand require.
- 6.2 The LA has not received any objections to the proposed reduction in Pupil Admission Number.

Elected members are asked to agree the reduction in the Admissions Number for Charmouth Primary School from 25 to 15 for September 2019 entry.

Nick Jarman
Interim Director for Children's Services
December 2017