

SUBJECT: SCHOOL ADMISSIONS POLICY 2020/21 INCLUDING REVIEW OF SCHOOL CATCHMENT AREAS

MEETING: CABINET

DATE: 5TH DECEMBER 2018

1. PURPOSE:

The School Admissions Code Wales (July 2013) places a requirement on Local Authorities to consult on its school admissions policy on an annual basis. The purpose of this report is to advise members of a desire to enter into a more extensive consultation that reviews the School Admissions policy as well as school catchment areas for the 2020/21 academic year.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 For Members agree to enter into a consultation that reviews the admission policy for September 2020/21, with a particular focus on the ordering of the criteria used to allocate school places in the event of oversubscription.
- 2.2 For Members to agree to commence a review of Secondary School catchment areas as part of an ongoing review of school catchment areas across the County.
- 2.3 To agree to undertake the initial stage of this review in line with the timeline proposed under appendix 1.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 The majority of school catchment areas within Monmouthshire have existed in their current form since the reorganisation of Local Government in 1996, and it is thought that they have been in place for many years prior to this.
- 3.2 School catchment areas were last reviewed in November 2014, where the local authority consulted on changes to secondary school catchment areas, as well as the formation of catchment areas for Welsh Medium provision within the County. Alongside this, a review of the school admissions policy, namely the criteria used to award school places, was undertaken. The proposed changes were for implementation during the 2016/17 academic year.
- 3.3 The findings of this consultation were presented to Cabinet in March 2015. At this meeting, Members elected to implement catchment areas for Welsh Medium Provision. However, concluded that the proposed changes to both the school admissions policy and catchment areas for the four secondary schools in the county would not be

implemented at that juncture. Instead, it was determined that a further consultation exercise should be completed. This has not yet taken place.

- 3.4 In addition to the above, the local authority's most recent corporate plan has been agreed, identifying 22 priorities to be completed by 2022. A review of the school admissions policy including catchment areas has been identified within the corporate plan as one of the priorities to be revisited.
- 3.5 A Member panel to include cross party representation has been established to consider the feasibilities of taking forward the identified anomalies that require consideration under this review.
- 3.6 In line with the School Admissions Code of Practice (2013), parents must be provided with an opportunity to express a preference for a School for which they would like their child(ren) to attend. This preference can be for a school outside of the designated catchment area.
- 3.7 Whilst parents have the right to express a preference for a school place, it is not always possible to comply with that preference. This can be the case in the event that the number of applications received exceeds the number of available places. In this event, the agreed oversubscription criteria is applied to determine who is to be awarded places.
- 3.8 The oversubscription criteria in its current form has been in place for many years. Over more recent years, the ordering of the oversubscription criteria has been challenged, particularly in relation to its prioritisation of sibling links over those children residing within the catchment area for the preferred school. A criterion for Secondary School admissions that prioritises children in attendance at a feeder primary school has also been suggested. An extensive consultation on the oversubscription criteria in its current form is felt to address these matters.
- 3.9 In terms of school catchment areas, this report seeks permission from members to commence a rolling programme from now until 2022 of reviewing catchment areas within the county. At this stage of the review, it is suggested that focus is place Secondary School catchment areas.
- 3.10 Secondary School catchment areas in their current form present many challenges that require review:
 - Secondary School catchment areas do not in some cases align with those that are in place for the feeder primary schools. As a result, there are instances whereby a Primary School catchment area can feed more than one secondary school
 - There are areas within Monmouthshire that do not fall within the catchment area for any of the four Secondary Schools within the County.
 - There are instances whereby the designated Secondary catchment school is not the nearest suitable school. This presents with a situation where families qualify for free home to school transport to more than one secondary school, in line with the requirements of the current passenger transport policies.

3.11 A full consultation on the matters identified would allow us to explore the feasibility of implementing changes that rectify some if not all of the above.

4. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

The agreed member panel, to include cross party representation, will undertake the options appraisal prior to launching the consultation.

5. REASONS:

The review of the School Admissions Policy and designated catchment areas is a requirement of the adopted Corporate plan.

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

A review of resources implications will be undertaken on each proposal taken forward to the consultation stage.

It is acknowledged that changes to School Catchment areas could impact significantly on school transport costs. The Passenger Transport Unit will therefore be fully engaged throughout the consultation process to identify and remove the risk of any proposals bringing forward a significant cost to the Authority.

7. WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS (INCORPORATING EQUALITIES, SUSTAINABILITY, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

Please see appendix 2

8. CONSULTEES:

CYP DMT
Cabinet Member for Education

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Welsh Government School Admission Code 2013

10. AUTHOR:

Matt Jones, Access Unit Manager

11. CONTACT DETAILS:

Tel: 01633 644585

E-mail: matthewdjones@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Appendix 1

Timeline for Review

Consultation stage	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consultation must be completed by 1st March 2019• Parents of pupils likely to be affected by the change to be consulted	
Task	Proposed date
Consultation commences	14 th January 2019
CYP Select	24 th January 2019
Consultation ends (6 weeks)	25 th February 2019
Implementation Stage	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consultees must be made aware of determined admission arrangements by 28/04/2019	
Task	Proposed Date
Results of consultation taken to Cabinet	5 th April 2019
Admission Arrangements determined	15 th April 2019

