

## Decision Record – Proposed School Admissions Arrangements

### Cabinet Portfolio Holder taking decision:

**Councillor Heather Timms, Portfolio Holder for Child Safeguarding, Early Intervention and Schools**

### Date of Decision: (NOT BEFORE 16 December 2011)

**16 December 2011**

### Decision taken

I, as Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Child Safeguarding, Early Intervention and Schools, approve consultation on the proposed School Admission Arrangements appended to this decision.

### Reasons for Decision

The County Council is required to consult annually on admission arrangements. In accordance with the School Admissions Code, consultation must take place for a minimum of eight weeks between 1 November and 1 March. Admission arrangements must then be determined (finalised) by 15 April. Consultation is therefore needed as soon as possible to ensure a decision on the final arrangements can be taken before the deadline of 15 April..

A new draft School Admissions Code was published in November 2011 with the aim to remove bureaucracy and to simplify the admissions process for parents. While the new Code is still subject to final approval, only minor changes are now expected. Therefore, some of the key changes have been included in Warwickshire's proposed admission arrangements for 2013/14.

### Background Information/ factors considered in arriving at these decisions -

#### Background

1.1 The new draft School Admissions Code is attached to the officer report. The aim of the new Code is to remove bureaucracy and to simplify the admissions process for parents. While the new Code is still subject to final approval, only minor changes are now expected. Some of the key changes included are as follows:

- 1.1.1 Adopted children who were previously in care, to be given the same, highest priority as Looked after Children.
- 1.1.2 National closing dates for primary and secondary school applications, and from 2014 a national offer date for primary school places.
- 1.1.3 Allowing infant classes to exceed the limit of thirty children per teacher in limited circumstances. This includes situations where the final place in an infant class is allocated to twins, and where a school place is

required for a child whose parents are employed in the armed forces.

- 1.1.4 No requirement for Local Authorities to coordinate in-year admissions from 2013 onwards.
- 1.2 Until the new Admissions Code receives final approval, the old Admissions Code remains in effect. However, as only minor changes to the new Code are now expected, some of the key changes have been included in Warwickshire's proposed admission arrangements for 2013/14 as appended. These are identified by underlined text or are otherwise clearly indicated.
- 1.3 The proposed admission arrangements are based around in-year admissions for 2013/14 remaining with the Local Authority. This will need to be reviewed once the new Admissions Code is confirmed and the consultation exercise is complete.
- 1.4 The In-Year Fair Access Protocol has also been revised and is based around in-year admissions remaining with the Local Authority. Should a decision be taken that from 2013 onwards in-year admissions be handled by schools, then the In-Year Fair Access Protocol would need to be revised further.
- 1.5 Some of the dates contained in the proposed admission arrangements are subject to change and will only be confirmed once discussions have taken place with neighbouring authorities.
- 1.6 Other minor changes to the proposed admission arrangements may be necessary prior to the start of the consultation exercise. If these are significant then members will be notified.

## **2.0 Options and Proposal**

- 2.1 Since last year's consultation a number of Warwickshire's Schools are now academies. The admission arrangements suggested only apply to schools under Warwickshire County Council's control. In an academy, the Academy Trust is the admission authority, and is therefore responsible for consulting on admission arrangements.
- 2.2 As well as those changes already highlighted, there are a number of other revisions. These include the following:
- 2.2.1 Changes to how places will be allocated when students within the same criterion live an identical distance from the school.
- 2.2.2 A number of other changes to the layout of the document and the definitions of certain terms used throughout.
- 2.3 It should also be noted that further changes are likely. These will be confirmed when the final version of the Code is published, and it is hoped, prior to approval of the arrangements by Cabinet.

**3.0 Timescales associated with the decision/Next steps**

3.1 Consultation will begin during w/c 19 December. This would then last for eight weeks and finish during w/c 06 February.

3.2 Warwickshire County Council's Cabinet will be asked to approve the proposed admission arrangements at their meeting due to be held on 15 March 2012.

Report Author: Craig Pratt

Head of Service: Mark Gore

Strategic Director: Wendy Fabbro

Portfolio Holder Cllr Heather Timms

**Checklist**

**Urgent matter: yes/no\***

No

**Confidential or Exempt (state category of exempt information)**

No

**Is the decision contrary to the budget and policy framework**

No

**List of Reports considered** [please attach or forward a copy]

Report to Portfolio Holder

**List of Background Papers** [please include directorate contact names and numbers for access to background papers]

Draft School Admissions Code

**Any members and officers consulted or informed and any comments given.**

**Consulted:**

Warwickshire Schools Admissions Forum

Cllr Heather Timms (decision maker)

Legal: Fay Ford, Victoria Gould, Naomi Bentley-Lawson, Barry Jukes

Finance: Chris Norton

For information:

O&S spokespersons: Cllr June Tandy, Cllr Balaam, Cllr Clive Rickhards, Cllr John Ross