

**CABINET – 9 MARCH 2017****LEICESTERSHIRE'S POLICY ON ADMISSIONS TO MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS: DETERMINATION OF ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES****PART A****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the Cabinet's approval of the Leicestershire School Admissions Policy for entry from autumn 2019 (attached as Appendix A to this report) along with the associated oversubscription criteria and three co-ordinated schemes for the normal round of transfers (set out in Appendix B).
2. The Cabinet is also asked to approve the merger of catchment areas in Hinckley, and is being notified of the outcome of the significant enlargement consultation of three primary schools (as detailed in Appendix C to this report).

**Recommendations**

3. It is recommended that:
  - (a) The Leicestershire School Admissions Policy for entry from September 2019 as set out in Appendix A to this report be approved;
  - (b) Leicestershire's oversubscription criteria and the three co-ordinated admission schemes as set out in Appendix B to this report be approved;
  - (c) The catchment mergers in Hinckley as detailed in Appendix C to this report be approved;
  - (d) It be noted that the statutory notices will now be launched following the significant enlargement consultation of three primary schools as detailed in Appendix C.

**Reasons for Recommendations**

4. The Council is required to determine the admission arrangements for schools in Leicestershire by 28 February 2018.

5. A variation to the School Admissions Policy is to be made to ensure compliance with the National School Admissions Code.
6. The mergers of catchments in the Hinckley area will better align schools to the communities they serve and help improve choice for parents. The primary school expansions will address a forecast shortfall in school places.

### **Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)**

7. The Admissions Policy must be determined by 28 February 2018 and be made available on the Council's website no later than 15 March 2018. A summary of the Admissions Policy will appear in the annual publication "Your Guide" for parents and carers, which is made available early in September of each year.

### **Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

8. The School Admissions Policy relates to admission to schools. The Policy must contain clear criteria for parents' requests for school places and all applications must be treated equally, regardless of whether or not the parents live in Leicestershire. To this end, the County Council must have regard to the Department for Education (DfE) School Admissions Code (released in December 2014) and School Admission Appeals Codes (released February 2012). The County Council also has a statutory duty under the Education Act 1996 to ensure sufficient school places.
9. Leicestershire's Schools Admissions Policy (for entry from September 2018), its oversubscription criteria and three co-ordinated schemes for the normal round of transfers, were approved by the Cabinet on 10 February 2017.

### **Resource Implications**

10. There are no resource implications arising from this report. The cost of administering the admission arrangements is borne from within existing budgets. Capital funding for the schools' expansions is being met from the Authority's basic need government allocations for 2017/18 and 2018/19.
11. Local authorities are required to provide growth funding to cover the revenue costs of expanding schools not reflected within the school funding formula. The DfE is considering its policy and the local authority role in funding such costs for 2019/20. Schools are beginning to challenge the policy for funding school growth in respect of annual costs as schools expand. It is important to balance affordability with a schools ability to incur additional and unfunded costs as they expand. Funding for school growth is contained within the Schools Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.
12. The Director of Corporate Resources and Director of Law and Governance have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

**Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

13. A copy of this report will be sent to members in the areas affected by the Hinckley schools catchment merger and school enlargements - Ms. A. Wright CC (Burbage), Ms. D. Taylor CC (Bradgate) and Mr. P. Bedford CC (Markfield, Desford and Thornton).
14. Members will be advised, via the Members' News in Brief service, when the Policy is published on the County Council's website.

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## **PART B**

### **Background**

15. Leicestershire's existing Admissions Policy was agreed by the Cabinet in February 2017. At the time, minor changes as recommended by the Office of the Schools Adjudicator were adopted. No changes were proposed to Leicestershire's oversubscription criteria or three co-ordinated admission schemes.
16. In February 2017 the Cabinet was advised that the DfE was considering significant changes to the School Admissions Code, but it has since confirmed that no changes are expected until Brexit is complete. Nevertheless there now appears some potential for a change to come into effect in late summer 2018 to make it a right to allow parents of summer-born children to delay their child's school start by one year. If this happens Leicestershire's Admissions Policy will be amended as directed by the DfE.

### **Proposals for Change**

17. There are three key proposals for changes to the current Admissions Policy as set out below.

### **Variation to the School Admissions Policy**

18. Leicestershire's School Admissions Policy currently guarantees all catchment children a place at their catchment school, assuming that parents apply within the appropriate admissions period. To ensure a place is allocated the Authority may therefore overfill schools. This aspect of the Policy has been challenged at an appeal to the Independent Appeal Panel, who confirmed that Leicestershire's policy contradicted the National School Admissions Code which prohibits the guaranteeing of school places.
19. It is therefore proposed that to ensure legal compliance and to avoid the Authority being reported for operating an unlawful Policy, that Leicestershire's School Admissions Policy is amended immediately as shown in Appendix A.

### **Proposed Primary School Expansion**

20. It is proposed that the three primary schools indicated in the table below should be expanded. This is to ensure that there are sufficient places in the future to meet demands arising from increased births in the catchment area and new housing.

<b>School</b>	<b>Significant Admission Number Increase</b>
Burbage Sketchley Hill	Increase from 420 to 630 ( 90 pupils / year group)
The Latimer Primary School, Anstey	Increase from 315 to 420 ( 60 pupils / year group)

Desford Primary School	Increase from 315 to 420 ( 60 pupils / year group)
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21. The expansions are expected to be completed and will be ready for the start of the 2018 academic year. The new intakes will be on a phased basis and will work their way through each school year starting from Reception class.

### **Proposed Merger of Catchment Areas in Hinckley**

22. It is proposed that the three catchment areas for Westfield Infants School, Westfield Junior School and Sketchley Hill Primary School in Hinckley be merged into one single catchment area for entry from September 2019. The catchment boundary will also be adjusted so that this no longer covers areas of Warwickshire and stops at the Leicestershire border. The merger will improve choice for parents whilst helping to relieve future school pressures. Once confirmed, parents in the joint catchment will have three catchment schools to choose from, and will still be able to rank their preferred school(s). A copy of the new catchment map is provided at Appendix C.

### **Summary of Consultations**

#### **School Admission Consultation**

23. The School Admission consultation process is defined by the National School Admissions Code. Leicestershire's consultation was launched on 6 December 2017 and extended for six weeks, closing on 21 January 2018. The process requires that the following individuals and groups are consulted:
- a) Parents of children between the ages of two and eighteen;
  - b) Other persons in the relevant area who in the opinion of the admission authority have an interest in the proposed admissions;
  - c) All other admission authorities within the relevant area (except that primary schools need not consult secondary schools);
  - d) Whichever of the governing body and the local authority who are not the admission authority;
  - e) Any adjoining neighbouring local authorities where the admission authority is the local authority; and
24. All schools in Leicestershire, all Early Years' providers, neighbouring authorities and the Church of England and Catholic Dioceses were consulted. In addition, both District and Parish councils were also contacted to invite their views.
25. By the close of the consultation, the Council had received a total of 52 responses. Although the response rate was relatively low, in all likelihood because the variations to the Policy, (i.e. expansions of the schools and catchment merger) were not considered as significant, the responses received were nevertheless largely positive:

<b>Variation to the Admissions Policy</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>No View</b>
Comment in response to the variation and catchment change.	16 (30.8%)	5 (9.6%)	1(59.6%)

<b>Proposed catchment merger of:</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>No View</b>
Westfield Infants School, Westfield Junior School and Sketchley Hill Primary School.	33 (63.5%)	7 (13.5%)	12 (23%)

### Significant Enlargement Consultation

26. The Significant Enlargement consultation is defined in the DfE document, Making 'prescribed alterations' to maintained schools April 2016, and adheres to The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013. Leicestershire's consultation began on 6 December 2017 for six weeks, closing on 21 January 2018. The positive outcome of the consultation will allow the Authority to launch statutory notices.

<b>Views on School Expansions</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>No View</b>
Sketchley Hill PS (increase from 420 to 630 places)	41 (78.9%)	2 (3.8%)	9 (17.3%)
The Latimer PS (increase from 315 to 420 places)	24 (49%)	2 (4%)	23 (47%)
Desford PS (increase from 315 to 420 places)	23 (44.3%)	1 (1.9%)	28 (53.8%)

### Conclusion

27. There is increasing demand for school places at both first time admission and secondary transfer. There is also a significant increase in the number of mid-term applications being received by the Authority. In order to manage the applications for places, it is important that admissions policies are applied fairly and consistently, and appropriately reflect the legal obligations placed on the Authority. Making the proposed changes set out above and detailed within the attached appendices will help ensure that the Authority's Policy is compliant with the National School Admissions Code, and offers best choice and access to Leicestershire schools for children and young people.

### Equality and Human Rights Implications

28. An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) questionnaire was completed to ensure the variation applied equally to all children, that no local children would be disadvantaged by expanding three primary schools and that the catchment mergers would only be benefitting the local communities. A copy of the Assessment is attached as Appendix D to this report.

## **Background Papers**

National School Admissions Code December 2014

<http://ow.ly/Waxbl>

Report to the Cabinet – 10 February 2017 - Leicestershire's Policy on Admission to Mainstream Schools: Determination of Admission Arrangements

<http://ow.ly/iMj1308bCyc>

## **Appendices**

- Appendix A - Variation to Leicestershire School Admissions Policy and the School Admissions Policy for entry from September 2019
- Appendix B - School Admissions Oversubscription Criteria for entry from September 2019 - Co-ordinated Admission Schemes:
- First Time Admissions Infant to Junior transfers
  - Secondary School transfers
  - Mid-Term transfers during the 2019-20 Academic Year
- Appendix C - Details of schools that are proposed to be significantly enlarged and proposed catchment area changes
- Appendix D - Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment

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