

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## CABINET

8<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2011

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND THE COORDINATED ADMISSION SCHEMES FOR 2013-2014</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>ACTING DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:</b>	<b>CLLR ANN MCLACHLAN</b>
<b>KEY DECISION?</b>	<b>YES</b>

### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The Local Authority (LA) is required to determine admission arrangements for community secondary schools and for community and voluntary controlled primary schools. The New School Admissions (England) Regulations (2003) also require the Authority to have in place a coordinated scheme for admissions to all primary and secondary schools in 2013-14. Both schemes have been updated to reflect changes in national guidance. No major changes are proposed to those arrangements currently in place for primary school admissions, however a change is proposed to the co-ordinated scheme for secondary schools in relation to testing arrangements for selective grammar schools from 2013-14. The secondary scheme has also been updated to reflect the change in status of some schools. The LA is required to consult on its admission arrangements and to determine those arrangements by April of the preceding year. This report recommends that a consultation is held regarding the proposed changes.

### 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That a public consultation is held on the proposed admission arrangements and coordinated schemes for primary and secondary schools for 2013-2014 as required by guidance.
- 2.2 That this consultation should include the proposal to amend the timing of the grammar school selection process as recommended by the Wirral Eleven Plus Working Group.

### 3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 3.1 The LA is required to consult on its admission arrangements and to determine those arrangements by April of the preceding year. Regulations also require the Authority to have in place a coordinated scheme for admissions to all primary and secondary schools.
- 3.2 The Department for Education (DfE) published a draft Admissions Code of Practice in May 2011 and held a consultation in the summer 2011. This draft Code includes proposed changes to grammar school selection testing process whereby parents must receive their child's selection test results prior to completing their preference form. This enhanced emphasis has been retained in

the draft revised version of the Admissions Code published on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2011. As a significant change to current practice in Wirral, this will require consultation with parents, schools and the wider community.

- 3.3 The consensus view of the 11 Plus Working Group view is that Wirral should change the timing of selective testing to ensure test results are provided before preferences are submitted whether or not the final published Admission Code retains this directive.
- 3.4 Both the primary and secondary co-ordinated schemes have been updated to reflect the guidance in the November 2011 draft revised Admissions Code. These amendments form part of the consultation as required by regulations.

#### **4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES**

- 4.1 The Authority is required to consult on its admission arrangements and to determine those arrangements by April of the preceding year. Regulations also require the Authority to have in place a coordinated scheme for admissions to all primary and secondary schools. A copy of the proposed primary and secondary schemes is attached (Appendices 1 and 2). Appendix 3 details the proposed admission numbers.
- 4.2 On 27<sup>th</sup> May 2011, the Secretary of State announced a 12 week consultation on a Draft School Admissions Code. A consultation response was sent to the DfE within the deadline, approved by the Schools Forum.
- 4.3 Following consultation, a new revised Draft School Admissions code was published on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2011, subject to parliamentary scrutiny and Royal Assent of the Education Bill 2010-11, after which it will become the new School Admissions Code, impacting on admissions to schools from September 2013 onwards.
- 4.4 An outline of the key changes in the draft revised Code is provided in Appendix 4

#### **Changes to Eleven Plus testing procedures**

- 4.5 The Draft Admissions Code includes proposals regarding Eleven Plus testing. These changes were not included in the consultation document, however as they have been adopted in the new Code they will impact on arrangements in Wirral. Specifically, the requirement introduced in the 2007 Code for parents to have their child's test results before completing the preference forms has been retained and escalated to MUST rather than SHOULD. Paragraph 1.32 of the revised Draft Code says that Authorities must:

*"inform parents of the outcome of selection tests before parents make applications for other schools – while making clear that this does not equate to a guarantee of a selective place."*

- 4.6 As in Wirral, in the majority of LAs where grammar schools still exist, testing takes place in November or December, after the deadline for expressing secondary school preferences has passed.
- 4.7 In order to meet the national secondary allocation day of 1<sup>st</sup> March, all preference forms must be returned by 31<sup>st</sup> October each year.

- 4.8 Under the current scheme, parents are asked at the beginning of September to complete a grammar assessment request form by the third week of September. This enables familiarisation packs to be sent out in October, ahead of practice tests in mid-November, with the real tests taking place in late November and early December. Parents receive their child's selective test results along with the letter allocating a place for their child at the beginning of March.
- 4.9 Following the introduction of "test results before preferences" into the Admissions Code in 2007, a working party considered whether 11 plus testing should be carried out earlier, including reducing the number of practice tests from two to one, but at that time the agreed solution was to continue with the current system of testing and increase the number of preferences available to parents from three to five which resolved the issue effectively due to the equal preference system.
- 4.10 The equal preference scheme means that an application for a grammar school that is unsuccessful is not a wasted preference, providing there are a sufficient number of preferences to allow grammar and non-grammar preferences to be chosen. In Wirral's case, the maximum number of grammar schools any parent can apply to is three. Five preferences allow two non-grammar preferences to be selected. Under equal preference, no-one is disadvantaged by expressing a first preference for a grammar school as the place offered will be for the highest available.
- 4.11 With no official route to respond to the change from "should" to "must", a letter regarding the impact of the proposed change was sent to the Secretary of State for Education during the consultation period.
- 4.12 As the change has been confirmed in the November 2011 revised Draft Code the arrangements for testing will require change for admissions in 2013-2014. This requires consultation in spring 2012 on possible arrangements. The Acting Director of Children's Services with the support of The Schools Forum requested that a working group be convened in the autumn term to consider the options for Eleven Plus Testing in Wirral.

### **Outcome of the Eleven Plus Working Group**

- 4.13 A group was convened in October 2011 comprising representatives from primary schools, the non-Catholic Wirral grammar schools and LA officers. A number of options that would potentially comply with the Draft Code were discussed.
- 4.14 The working group considered all the implications of making changes to the arrangements. This included their understanding of parental views, scheduling of school open evenings, implications for pupils of the timing of tests, logistics of testing arrangements for all schools and the LA Admissions Team.
- 4.15 The consensus view of the Working Group is to recommend that the timing of grammar school selection testing should be changed as follows:
- Parents complete a request for assessment form in the summer term of Year 5.
  - Two practice tests take place in the first week of September of Year 6.
  - Two real tests to take place in second week of September.
  - Tests are processed and outcomes reported to primary schools in the first week of October.
  - The Independent Assessment Board (IAB) meets to consider referrals in the second week of October.
  - Parents to receive their test results in mid-October of Year 6.

- 4.16 As the preference deadline is 31<sup>st</sup> October, parents would then have approximately two weeks to complete a paper or on-line preference form. Applications received after 31<sup>st</sup> October are treated as late.
- 4.17 The consensus view of the Working Group was that it would be beneficial to pupils and their families to know test results prior to submitting their preferences.
- 4.18 Wirral's two Catholic grammar schools (Upton Hall and St Anselm's) administer their own selection tests for entry to Year 7. Their test takes place in December each year and consequently these schools would also be affected by a change to the Admissions Code. Discussions with these two schools have been undertaken to ensure that their governing bodies are aware of the potential change and will make arrangements in their own admissions procedures to comply with the Code as finally published.

## **5.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 5.1 A draft Admissions Code has been consulted upon by the DfE in the summer of 2011. A revised Draft Admissions Code has now been published, which may be subject to minor changes in the final published version, subject to parliamentary scrutiny and Royal Assent of the Education Bill 2010-11, which are not accounted for in this report.
- 5.2 Under the current process, children who are unable to sit one or both of the real tests due to illness, or who move into Wirral after the real tests are carried out, are able to sit late tests. This would continue under the new process; however these parents would have to submit a preference form without knowledge of their child's results.

## **6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 6.1 The 11 Plus Working Group considered three options for change to the selection testing arrangements. All options would meet the proposed new requirement of the provision of test results to parents before completing preference forms:

### **Option 1: Test in September Year 6 (Recommended by the Group)**

- Parents complete a request for assessment form in the summer term of Year 5.
- Two practice tests take place in the first week of September of Year 6.
- Two real tests to take place in second week of September.
- Tests are processed and outcomes reported to primary schools in the first week of October.
- The Independent Assessment Board (IAB) meets to consider referrals in the second week of October.
- Parents to receive their test results in mid-October of Year 6.

### **Option 2: Test in the Summer term Year 5**

- Parents register a request for assessment at Easter Year 5
- Two practice tests in May
- Real tests in mid-June
- Test processing takes two weeks
- Results are returned to LA by end of June and posted to parents by middle of July.
- IAB in August/September.

### **Option 3: Test in the Spring term Year 5**

- Parents register a request for assessment in January Year 5.
- Two practice tests in February.
- Real tests in March.
- Results returned to the LA in April and posted to parents by end of April.
- IAB in May.

## **7.0 CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 The proposed admission numbers have been presented to the Wirral Admissions Forum.
- 7.2 Potential changes to the grammar school selection testing arrangements have been discussed with an Eleven Plus Working Group comprising primary and grammar school headteachers.
- 7.3 The proposed co-ordinated scheme will be circulated to all Wirral admission authorities.

## **8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

- 8.1 None.

## **9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS**

- 9.1 On average 40% of the total Year 6 cohort are tested by the Authority for entry to non-Catholic grammar schools each year. If the 11 plus selection testing process is changed for future years, this could lead to approximately 1500 applications compressed into the final two weeks of the preference period which would increase pressure on staff in the Mainstream Admissions team.

## **10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 None.

## **11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 None.

- 11.2 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)  
(a) Is an EIA required? No

## **12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 None.

## **13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATION**

- 13.1 None.

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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: SCHEME FOR THE CO-ORDINATION OF ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR MAINTAINED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE WIRRAL AREA FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2013-2014

APPENDIX 2: SCHEME FOR THE CO-ORDINATION OF ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR MAINTAINED SECONDARY SCHOOLS FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2013-2014

APPENDIX 3: PROPOSED ADMISSION NUMBERS

APPENDIX 4: KEY CHANGES IN THE DRAFT ADMISSIONS CODE MAY 2011

## REFERENCE MATERIAL

The School Admissions Code 2010

The draft revised School Admissions Code 2011

## SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
CABINET - ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND THE CO-ORDINATED ADMISSION SCHEME 2012/13	14 <sup>th</sup> April 2011
CABINET – ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED PRIMARY SCHOOLS 2012/13	14 <sup>th</sup> April 2011
CABINET - ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND THE COORDINATED ADMISSION SCHEME FOR 2012-13	9 <sup>th</sup> December 2010
CABINET - ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND COORDINATED SCHEME FOR 2012-2013	9 <sup>th</sup> December 2010
CABINET - ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND THE COORDINATED SCHEME 2011-2012	18 <sup>th</sup> March 2010
CABINET - ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED PRIMARY SCHOOLS 2011-2012	18 <sup>th</sup> March 2010
CABINET - ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY SECONDARY SCHOOLS 2010-11	9 <sup>th</sup> April 2009
CABINET - ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED PRIMARY SCHOOLS 2010-11	9 <sup>th</sup> April 2009
CABINET - ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY SECONDARY SCHOOLS 2010-2011	10 <sup>th</sup> December 2008
CABINET - ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED PRIMARY SCHOOLS 2010-2011	10 <sup>th</sup> December 2008