

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

6 September 2016

Report of the Strategic Director for Children's Services

SCHOOL ADMISSIONS ARRANGEMENTS

1. Purpose of Report

To propose a consultation on a change to the measurement system within the Authority's published school admission oversubscription criteria, from using the shortest available home to school route to a straight line measurement for the purpose of the assessment of school admission applications for community and voluntary controlled schools.

2. Information and Analysis

The Authority's admission arrangements for the schools for which it is the admissions authority include the following:

*Admissions criteria - Community and voluntary controlled schools
Individual pupils who have a Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education, Health and Care Plan which names the school will be admitted.*

*In deciding on admissions to all community and voluntary controlled schools in Derbyshire, the following order of priority will be adopted.
Different rules apply in Eckington and part of the Long Eaton area.*

- 1. Looked after children and children who were looked after but ceased to be so because they were adopted (or became subject to a child arrangements order or special guardianship order).*
- 2. Children living in the normal area served by the school at the time of application and admission who have brothers or sisters attending the school at the time of application and admission.*
- 3. Children living in the normal area served by the school at the time of application and admission.*

- 4. Children not living in the normal area served by the school but who have brothers or sisters attending the school at the time of application and admission.*
- 5. In the case of voluntary controlled church schools, children whose parents request a place on religious grounds.*
- 6. Other children whose parents have requested a place.*

Where, in the case of 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6 above, choices have to be made between children satisfying the same criteria, those children living nearest to the school (measured by the nearest available route) will be given preference.

However, using the nearest available route as a tie break does cause difficulties each year because the Authority's Geographic Information System (GIS) does not identify every established footpath within the county. As a consequence, some allocations are challenged as shorter routes are available that are not included in the GIS systems. The Authority does publicise a cautionary note in the Parent's Guide to forewarn parents of this. If parents intend to rely on a specific footpath as part of their application for a school place, they are advised to contact the School Admissions and Transport Team to check whether the route is included on the system. Any newly identified footpaths discovered after the allocation of places cannot be taken into account in that admissions round. This naturally causes concern to the parents involved

Measuring distance by a straight line would remove these difficulties and present a more transparent system for parents. Fewer complaints would be a consequence of such a change and it would be a more accurate way of assessing admission applications. This method of measurement is already used by all our neighbouring local authorities in the East Midlands as well as two secondary academy schools within Derbyshire.

The matter was discussed at the School Admission Forum on 20 June 2016 and no objection was raised by its members. The next process would be for the Authority to consult upon the change in the next admissions consultation period of 01 October 2016 to 31 January 2017 and then determine by 28 February 2017.

2. Financial Considerations

The straight line distance is already available within the parameters of the Geographic Information System used by the Authority thus requiring a minor adjustment to use this method. There would therefore be no cost implications.

3. Legal Considerations

The Authority's admission arrangements are required to be compliant with the Department for Education's School Admissions Code December 2014 and Section 84 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

4. Other Considerations

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered:

Prevention of Crime and Disorder, Equality of Opportunity and Environmental, Health, Human Resources Social Value and Property considerations.

5. Background Papers

Reports and recommendations as mentioned in this report.

6. Officer's Recommendations

The Cabinet Member is asked to consider:

- (1) approving the Authority's proposed consultation, to determine a change to the Authority's home to school distance measurement criteria. The intention would be to implement a straight line measuring method for the 2018-19 admissions round onwards; and
- (2) a further report on the outcome of the consultation which shall be presented to the Cabinet Member at the end of the consultation period.

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