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**SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGMENTS FOR 2008/09**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Chris McEwan, Children's Services Portfolio**

**Responsible Director - Murray Rose, Director of Children's Services**

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**Purpose of Report**

1. To seek Members' approval to the changes required to the Local Authority's admission policy for 2008/09 and the co-ordinated arrangements for all schools in the Borough.

**Information and Analysis**

2. The Local Authority acts as a 'clearing house' for all primary applications for Darlington schools as part of a co-ordinated scheme. It acts as the admissions authority for community or voluntary controlled schools and on behalf of the admission authority of voluntary aided schools, for the Borough. The Authority will make a single offer of a school place each academic year, to parents who have expressed a preference for their child to be admitted to a maintained school within Darlington. Although all applications will be considered on an equal weighting basis, should a child be eligible for a place at more than one school, parents/carers are requested to rank their order of preference on the Common Application Form (CAF) in order that only one offer will be made. The relevant admissions criteria will be applied to all schools that are oversubscribed.
3. The Authority operates a similar co-ordinated scheme for secondary applications, although at present we use 1st preference first.
4. The recent changes to the School Admissions Code of Practice, which came into force in February 2007, prevents the further use of 1st preference first. Therefore all admission authorities must use an Equal Ranking system to allocate school places. The current co-ordinated admission arrangements that the Local Authority administers will have to be revised for secondary school admissions, for primary it will remain relatively the same.
5. Equal ranking will give parents the opportunity to express preferences for the schools of their choice and for these to be met the maximum extent possible. See **Appendix 1** for primary admissions and **Appendix 2** for secondary.
6. The Authority is currently consulting on the closure of Eastbourne School from 31 August 2007, conditional on the establishment of an academy to replace it from 1 September 2007. The School Organisation Committee will make a decision on the proposed at the end of April 2007. Appendix 2 to this report provides information on proposed admission numbers for both Eastbourne school and the replacement Academy, should the proposal proceed.

## **Outcome of Consultation**

7. The Authority is legally obliged to consult with relevant admission authorities each year by 1st March. The Local Authority has not received any comments on its proposed co-ordinated scheme for 2008/09.

## **Legal Implications**

8. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

## **Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

9. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

## **Council Policy Framework**

10. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework.

## **Decision Deadline**

11. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.

## **Key Decisions**

12. This is a key decision as it affects more than three wards in Darlington.

## **Recommendation**

13. It is recommended that Members consider and approve the changes required to the Local Authorities admissions policy for 2008/2009.

## **Reason**

14. The Authority is under a statutory duty to use an Equal Ranking system to allocate school places

**Murray Rose**  
**Director of Children's Services**

## **Background Papers**

School Admissions Code of Practice

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