

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**CABINET**

DATE: 28 NOVEMBER 2023

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: CLARE CURRAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, LIFELONG LEARNING

LEAD OFFICER: LIZ MILLS, DIRECTOR EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

SUBJECT: COORDINATED ADMISSIONS SCHEME FOR SEPTEMBER 2025

ORGANISATION STRATEGY PRIORITY AREA: NO ONE LEFT BEHIND

10

Purpose of the Report:

The purpose of this report is to ensure Surrey determines and publishes its coordinated admissions scheme for 2025 in accordance with the requirements of the School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Coordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations and the School Admissions Code.

Each year, Surrey County Council is responsible for processing approximately 30,000 applications for a school place from Surrey residents and coordinates offers for over 350 schools. This piece of work helps Surrey County Council meet its organisational strategy objective of 'No One Left Behind' by ensuring, as far as possible, that multiple offers are eliminated, thus freeing up a place to be offered to every child who needs one.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Cabinet make the following recommendation to the County Council:

1. That the coordinated admissions scheme that will apply to all applicants and schools for 2025 is agreed as set out in Enclosure 1.

Reason for Recommendations:

- The coordinated admissions scheme for 2025 is essentially the same as 2024 with dates updated
- There is just one point of clarification in paragraph 3 of the primary and secondary scheme (pages 3 and 9 of Annex 1), but this does not alter current practice
- The coordinated admissions scheme will enable the County Council to meet its statutory duties regarding school admissions

- The coordinated admissions scheme is working well
- The Local Authority has a statutory duty to publish its coordinated admissions scheme for 2025 by 1 January 2024
- The proposed scheme meets the statutory requirements of the School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Coordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 and the School Admissions Code

Executive Summary:

1. The School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Coordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 set out the requirements for the coordinated admissions scheme and require each local authority to formulate a scheme by 1 January each year.
2. The School Admissions Code also requires local authorities to publish their scheme by 1 January each year.
3. Coordinated admissions schemes describe the process by which each local authority will coordinate the applications for school places for their residents and for their schools, to ensure, as far as possible, each child only receives one offer of a school place.
4. The coordinated admissions scheme sets out the timetable for application, the dates that the local authority will exchange information about school preferences and outcomes with other admission authorities (including schools and other local authorities) and when they will make offers of places for schools in their area.
5. Due to the number of cross border applications and offers, Surrey participates in the Pan London Admissions scheme whereby dates and the process for data exchange are coordinated with London LAs and other LAs bordering London.
6. The coordinated admission scheme in Surrey is working well with all schools participating, as they are legally required to.
7. The coordinated scheme proposed for 2025 complies with the statutory requirements for a scheme. It provides for all preferences to be named on one application form and for applications to be coordinated to ensure that, as far as possible, each child only receives one offer of a place on the primary and secondary national offer days.
8. Dates within the coordinated admissions scheme for 2025 have been updated to ensure they comply with the Pan London timetable.
9. The only other change is a point of clarification in paragraph 3 of the primary and secondary scheme (pages 3 and 9 of Annex 1). This confirms that the order of preference might be shared with an own admission authority school if a parent exercises their right to appeal and a copy of the application is requested by the school to help them demonstrate that the admission arrangements have been correctly and impartially applied. However, this change does not alter current practice.

Consultation:

10. Regulations require consultation to take place where:
 - the qualifying scheme is substantially different from the qualifying scheme adopted for the preceding academic year, or
 - the local authority has not consulted on a qualifying scheme adopted in the previous seven years
11. The Local Authority last consulted on its coordinated admissions scheme for 2022 and so the seven-year threshold has not been met for consultation. In addition, the coordinated admissions scheme that has been proposed for 2025 is the same as for 2024, with only dates updated, so there are no significant changes. As such, no consultation has been undertaken on the scheme for 2025.

Risk Management and Implications:

12. The risks of implementing the coordinated admissions scheme is very low, with a greater risk if the scheme is not agreed.

Financial and Value for Money Implications:

13. The coordinated admissions scheme ensures processes can be streamlined and thus carried out within the available budget envelope.

Section 151 Officer Commentary:

14. Significant progress has been made in recent years to improve the Council's financial resilience and the financial management capabilities across the organisation. Whilst this has built a stronger financial base from which to deliver our services, the increased cost of living, global financial uncertainty, high inflation and government policy changes mean we continue to face challenges to our financial position. This requires an increased focus on financial management to protect service delivery, a continuation of the need to be forward looking in the medium term, as well as the delivery of the efficiencies to achieve a balanced budget position each year.
15. In addition to these immediate challenges, the medium-term financial outlook beyond 2023/24 remains uncertain. With no clarity on central government funding in the medium term, our working assumption is that financial resources will continue to be constrained, as they have been for the majority of the past decade. This places an onus on the Council to continue to consider issues of financial sustainability as a priority, in order to ensure the stable provision of services in the medium term.
16. As such, the Section 151 Officer supports the continuation of the coordinated admissions scheme to meet statutory obligations.

Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer:

17. The coordinated admission scheme complies with legislation on school admissions and the School Admissions Code.

18. The best value duty is contained in s3 of the Local Government Act 1999 as a result of which the Council is under a duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The relevant guidance states that Councils should consider overall value, including economic, environmental and social value when reviewing service provision.

Equalities and Diversity:

19. The Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed in full and is attached in Annex 2. The adoption of a coordinated admission scheme is a statutory requirement. The coordinated admissions scheme does not discriminate according to age, gender, ethnicity, faith, disability or sexual orientation.

Other Implications:

20. The potential implications for the following council priorities and policy areas have been considered. Where the impact is potentially significant a summary of the issues is set out in detail below.

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	No significant implications arising from this report
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	Set out below
Environmental sustainability	No significant implications arising from this report
Compliance against net-zero emissions target and future climate compatibility/resilience	No significant implications arising from this report
Public Health	No significant implications arising from this report

Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults implications:

21. The efficient and timely administration of the school admission process, as set out in the coordinated admissions scheme, coupled with the equitable distribution of school places in accordance with the School Admission Code and parental preference, contribute to the County Council's priority for safeguarding vulnerable children.

What Happens Next:

22. The coordinated admissions scheme will be ratified by the full County Council on 12 December 2023.

23. The scheme will then be published on Surrey's website by 1 January 2024 and all Surrey schools will be notified.

Report Author:

Claire Potier: Service Manager School Admissions - claire.potier@surreycc.gov.uk

Consulted:

Carrie Traill, Head of Education

Amanda Scally, Legal and Democratic Services

Rachel Wigley, Director of Finance – Insight and Performance

Annexes:

Annex 1 Coordinated admissions scheme

Annex 2 Equality Impact Assessment

Sources/background papers:

- School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Coordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012
 - School Standards and Framework Act 1998
 - Education Act 2002
 - School Admissions Code 2021
-

This page is intentionally left blank