EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The paper sets out, at Appendix A, the proposed admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools, for which the county council is the statutory admission authority. The LA is required to consult on any changes to the policy, including on proposed reductions to published admission numbers (PANs). Consultation on the 2016-17 arrangements must take place for an 8-week period between 1 November 2014 and 1 March 2015.

1.2 As well as various minor proposed changes in PAN, the paper details proposed changes to the School Admission Code on which DfE has recently consulted. This paper also sets out, at Appendix B, the proposed coordinated scheme for school admissions in 2016-17, which the LA is required to formulate by 1 January 2015.

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

2.1 These proposals will be supportive of the Council Plan priorities

- Ensuring that the most vulnerable people in our communities receive the support that they need; and
- Improving the chances in life of the most disadvantaged in Cumbria.

by allowing parents to express preferences for a range of schools and by giving top priority in oversubscription criteria to children with statements of special educational needs and those looked after or previously looked after by a local authority.
3.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

3.1 Approve the amended admissions policy for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools at Appendix A for consultation with other admission authorities (subject to a decision on the recommendation at paragraph 3.1).

3.2 Note that a further report will be brought to Cabinet in Spring 2015 to provide feedback from consultations and to seek a decision on adoption of the policy.

3.3 Approve the proposed coordinated scheme set out at Appendix B.

3.4 Agree to consult on PAN increases at Cummersdale School, Cumwhinton School, Kirkbampton CE School, Orgill School and Wreay CE School.

3.5 Agree that responsibility be delegated to the Corporate Director – Children’s Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning, to make any necessary amendments, prior to the launch of the consultation, following publication of the Schools Admissions Code on 19 December 2014.

**ADVICE OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR – CHILDREN’S SERVICES**

4.0 **BACKGROUND**

4.1 The School Admissions Code 2012 introduced various changes to the school admissions process and contains a number of statutory responsibilities for the county council.

4.2 The county council retains the role of admissions authority for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools in the county, and must determine admission arrangements, including the criteria to be applied to applicants in the case of oversubscription, by 15 April 2015 for the 2016-17 academic year.

4.3 The county council also retains responsibility for coordinating the main admissions round for all schools and academies in the county. It is required to formulate a coordinated scheme setting out the various stages in the admissions process by 1 January 2015 for the 2016-17 academic year.

4.4 DfE is now revising the School Admissions Code 2012 and relevant accompanying regulations. DfE’s stated aim is to improve the fair and open allocation of school places in maintained schools and academies and support social mobility. The proposals include two significant changes and a number of minor amendments designed to improve the clarity of the Code. The significant changes are:
- To allow schools the option to give priority to applicants eligible for the Pupil Premium, and
- To bring forward the timetable for determining admission arrangements so that objections can be resolved by the Schools Adjudicator before the start of the admissions round.

4.5 It is expected that the new School Admissions Code will come into force from 19 December 2014 and, unless otherwise stated, will be applied with immediate effect. It will apply to admission arrangements determined in 2015 for admission in school year 2016/17.

4.6 Where changes are proposed to admission arrangements (see paragraph 4.9), including reductions in PANs, the county council is required to consult with:

a) Parents of children between the ages of two and eighteen;

b) Other persons in the relevant area which 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

f) In the case of faith schools, the body or person representing the religion or religious denomination.

(School Admissions Code 2012: paragraph 1.44)

4.7 There is also a requirement to consult the governing bodies of individual schools on the PAN the county council proposes to use for their school in September 2016 where it is proposed to remain unchanged or to increase.

4.8 The consultation process must last for a minimum of 8 weeks and can begin no earlier than 1 November 2014. Consultation relates only to the proposed admission arrangements; no consultation is required on the coordinated scheme.

4.9 Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans will replace the current statement of SEN. No new statements of SEN will be offered from 1 September 2014. There will be a four year transition period and by 1 April 2018, LAs must have transferred all children and young people with statements to the new SEN and disability system following a ‘transfer review’. The determined policy for the admission arrangements to community and voluntary schools will be amended to reflect these changes, but because the changes are statutory there is no requirement to consult on them.

Proposed Changes to Previous Admissions Policy:

Summer Born Children

4.10 This is not a change to existing arrangements, rather a clarification of the legislation relating to early and deferred entry to schools, of which members
should be aware. Schools are required to make places available to children from the September following their fourth birthday, but compulsory school age is not attained until the beginning of the term after the child’s fifth birthday. Summer-born children could, therefore, begin school a matter of days after they turn 4, but are not required to start school until a full year after they could enter a Reception class.

4.11 Previously, this has frequently meant summer-born children missing the whole of the Reception year, and joining an established class at the beginning of Year 1. DfE is now seeking to clarify that parents of summer-born children are able to seek a place in Reception for children who could be moving into Year 1, i.e. there is no barrier to children being educated outside of their chronologically correct cohort.

4.12 DfE points out that each application must be assessed on its merits, including input from education professionals, with the aim of securing a consensus over a decision to delay entry. Where parents do seek to apply a year ‘late’, their applications, as they are now, will be ranked alongside those of all other applicants, and places allocated accordingly. Essentially, those applying for places outside of their chronological year group will be treated no differently to any other applicant.

PAN Changes

4.13 It is proposed that the following five schools increase their PAN from September 2016:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Current PAN</th>
<th>Proposed PAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cummersdale School</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumwhinton School</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirkbampton CE School</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orgill School</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wreay CE School</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Admissions Timetable

4.21 Members should also note the DfE’s proposal that the timetable for admissions be revised to bring forward the dates for admissions authorities to consult locally on their arrangements. These proposed changes will take effect in October 2015, and will not, therefore, apply until the 2017/18 arrangements are considered.

5.0 OPTIONS

5.1 Members can decide to retain the existing policy for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools or seek to consult on amendments to it:
5.2 Should members decide to consult on the changes proposed, officers would undertake an 8-week consultation exercise as required by regulations. Following publication of the School Admissions Code on 19 December 2014, it might be necessary to make changes to the consultation document. Members are asked to delegate responsibility to the Corporate Director – Children’s Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning to agree any such changes prior to the start of the consultation.

5.3 Members can also decide to approve the coordinated scheme for publication, or make certain amendments to it. This does not require consultation.

6.0 **RESOURCE AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 This report recommends amendments to the school admission policy and PANs for five schools.

6.2 In October 2014, Cabinet approved the formula on which the Dedicated Schools Grant is to be allocated to schools in 2015/16. The recommendations within this Schools Admissions report to Cabinet will have no effect on that formula.

6.3 It should be noted that any amendments to the admission policy or school PANs may have a small effect for school transport budgets however this is considered to be immaterial.

7.0 **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 Where changes are proposed to admission arrangements, The School Admissions Regulations require that all admissions authorities must consult on their admission arrangements that will apply for admission applications the following school years. For arrangements determined in 2015 for entry in September 2016, the arrangements must be determined by 15 April 2015. Consultation must be for a minimum of 8 weeks and must be completed by 1 March 2015. A list of consultees is included at para 4.5 of the report. It is a decision for Cabinet on whether to adopt the proposed Annex A as the proposed admission arrangements to be consulted on.

8.0 The final version of the School Admissions Code 2014, which sets out the legal requirements for admission authorities to follow is not yet available. The School Admissions Regulations 2014 (which give effect to the revised code) have been made on 30 October 2014 but they do not come into force until 19 December 2014, when the 2014 Code comes into force. It is anticipated that the revised Admissions Code 2014 will be published before Cabinet meets on 18 December, at which time further legal comments will be added to this section should it be necessary.
9.0 **CONCLUSION**

9.1 The production of a coordinated admissions scheme and determination of admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools are statutory requirements.

9.2 Most elements of both the coordinated scheme and admission arrangements remain as they have in previous years, when the admissions process has run smoothly, suggesting that no substantial change is required.

9.3 Members will, however, need to give careful consideration to the introduction of a new priority aimed at supporting the most disadvantaged children in the community.

John Macilwraith  
Corporate Director – Children’s Services  

*December 2014*

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**APPENDICES**

**Appendix A Admissions Policy for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools**

**Appendix B Coordinated admissions scheme**

Electoral Division(s):  All

| Executive Decision | Yes |  
| Key Decision | Yes |  
| If a Key Decision, is the proposal published in the current Forward Plan? | Yes |  
| Is the decision exempt from call-in on grounds of urgency? | No |  
| If exempt from call-in, has the agreement of the Chair of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee been sought or obtained? | N/A |  
| Has this matter been considered by Overview and Scrutiny? | No |  
| If so, give details below. |  
| Has an environmental or sustainability impact assessment been undertaken? | N/A |  
| Has an equality impact assessment been undertaken? | Yes |  


N.B. If an executive decision is made, then a decision cannot be implemented until the expiry of the eighth working day after the date of the meeting – unless the decision is urgent and exempt from call-in and the Corporate Director has obtained the necessary approvals.

PREVIOUS RELEVANT COUNCIL OR EXECUTIVE DECISIONS
[including Local Committees]

No previous relevant decisions

CONSIDERATION BY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Not considered by Overview and Scrutiny

BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers

RESPONSIBLE CABINET MEMBER

Clare Feeney-Johnson, Cabinet Member – Schools & Learning

REPORT AUTHOR

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