

Report to: Children and Young People's Panel Cabinet

Date: 13th September 2007 20th September 2007

Subject: School Admissions and Admission Forum

Report of: Director of Children and Young People's Services

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Purpose / summary: To: advise Members of the strengthened role of the Local Authority regarding School Admissions

request Members to approve the reconstitution of the Admission Forum

Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended: N/A

Recommendation / decision: Members are recommended to:

- note the role of the Local Authority regarding School Admissions
- approve the reconstitution of the Admission Forum;
- approve the core membership;
- approve the methodology for dealing with schools' membership; and
- instruct the Director of CYPS to seek nominations for core membership to the Admission Forum by October 2007.

Key Decision: This report does not involve a key decision. The decision made as a result of this report will be published within **48 hours** and cannot be actioned until **seven working days** have elapsed, i.e. before 2 October 2007

Risks / Implications:

Financial: None

Staffing: None
 Policy:
 Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted? Yes
 Wards affected: All

Property – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the Council’s asset base or its occupation?

No

Does this proposal have significant implications for the Council and the local population?

A diversity impact assessment is not necessary at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

Does this proposal involve a new policy or procedure or significant changes to an existing policy or procedure?

A diversity impact assessment is not necessary at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

Has the Director of Legal and Property Services confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council’s Constitution? **Yes**

Has the Director of Finance and IT confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council’s budget? **Yes**

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council? **No ***

* delete which applicable

For Cabinet reports only :

Categorisation of the report:			
Discussion leading to a decision	X	Discussion	
Monitoring		Decision	
Sharing for corporate understanding		Information	

Tracking/Process:

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
Panel	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council
13.9.07		20.9.07	

There are no Background Papers to this Report within the meaning of Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Proper Officer

Nick Jaman

Date

24th August 2007

1. Background

1.1 School Admissions and the duties of the Local Authority

- 1.2 The Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the School Admissions Code introduced in February 2007 require local authorities to increase opportunities for parental choice, respond to parental representations and improve community cohesion.
- 1.3 The Local Authority is required to promote fair access to educational opportunity, promote high standards and the fulfilment by every child of their educational potential, secure choice and diversity and respond to parental representations.
- 1.4 Local Authorities have a critical role to play as the commissioner of services and champion of parents. The LA must be vigilant in assessing the admission arrangements of schools in its area and objecting to the School Adjudicator in respect of unfair practices that fail to comply with the law or mandatory requirements of the Code of Practice. If the LA fails in its duty, it may be referred to the Local Government Ombudsman.

2 The Admission Forum

- 2.1 The School Admission Forum for Wigan Local Authority has been in existence since December 2001. At this stage it was not compulsory for Local Education Authorities to establish a School Admission Forum although the Code of Practice (1 April 1999) strongly advised one was in place. The Education Act 2002 made the School Admission Forum a statutory requirement. The Forum's current membership is outlined in appendix A.
- 2.2 The Admission Forum is a vehicle for discussion and consultation on School Admission Arrangements. The Forum provides a means of disseminating good practice and of challenging current admission policy and protocols.
- 2.3 The membership and purpose of the Forum has now changed due to The Education (Admission Forums)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2007 and the new School Admissions Code of Practice that came into effect on 27th and 28th February 2007 respectively.
- 2.4 The Admission Forum will have a key role:
- in ensuring there is a fair admissions system that promotes social equity and fair access;
 - has important powers to report on the effectiveness of local admission arrangements; and
 - has the power to refer any admission authority to the Schools Adjudicator where it considers admission arrangements to be unfair or not in accordance with the School Admissions Code.

There is a breakdown of matters the Admission Forum report must cover at appendix B

3. Responsibilities of an Admission Forum

3.1 In carrying out its duties the Admission Forum must:

- consider how well existing and proposed admission arrangements serve the interests of children and parents within the area of the authority;
- promote agreement on admission issues;
- consider the comprehensiveness and accessibility of the admission literature within the area of the forum;
- consider the effectiveness of the authority's proposed co-ordinated admission arrangements;
- consider the means by which admissions processes might be improved and how actual admissions relate to the admissions numbers published;
- monitor the admission of children who arrive in the authority's area outside a normal admission round with a view to promoting arrangements for the fair distribution of such children among local schools;
- promote the arrangements for children with special educational needs, children in care and children who have been excluded from school; and
- consider any other admission issues that arise.

4. Membership of the Admission Forum

4.1 The core membership of the Admission Forum is set out in regulations and is shown at appendix C. The appendix gives a suggested number of representatives for each group.

4.2 In addition to the core membership the Admission Forum shall comprise of one member from every maintained school, other than a special school, in the area of the authority. The member should be either the head teacher or a governor (unless the school is already represented by a core member). These are to be known as 'school members'. It is suggested that each school is notified of meetings so that they may send a representative if they so wish, and that all schools are provided with minutes of meetings.

4.3 Once the core membership of the Forum is established it may ask the local authority to appoint anyone the Forum considers to represent significant interests in the local community. The Forum should include representatives of neighbouring local authorities where there are significant cross-border issues.

5 Proposals:

Members are asked to note the content of this report and:

- approve the reconstitution of the Admission Forum;
- approve the core membership as outlined in Appendix C;
- approve the methodology for dealing with schools' membership as outlined in 4.2 above; and
- instruct the Director of CYPS to seek nominations for core membership to the Admission Forum by October 2007.

Appendix A

Current membership of the Admission Forum

Membership	Representatives
LEA	3 Elected members
Schools (Headteachers or Governors) Community or voluntary-controlled	1 primary 1 secondary 1 special
Voluntary-aided	2 primary 1 secondary
Diocese Church of England	1 Liverpool Diocese
Roman Catholic	1 Liverpool Archdiocese
Parent Governors	1 Governor
Community representative	3 community representatives

Appendix B

Admission Forum Annual report on local admission arrangements

Where an Admission Forum exercises its powers to produce an annual report the report must provide information in the following matters:

- A breakdown of preferences met by ranking 1st, 2nd 3rd preferences and the main factors affecting whether preferences were met
- The number of admission appeals made for the schools in the area
- The ethnic and social mix of pupils attending schools in the area, and factors which effect this
- The extent to which existing and proposed admission arrangements serve the interests of vulnerable children
- How well the In-Year Fair Access Protocols are working and the number of children admitted to each school under the protocol
- Whether primary schools are complying with infant class size legislation
- Details of other matters that affect how fairly admission arrangements service the interests of local children and parents
- Any recommendation or recommendations that the Forum wishes to make in order to improve parental choice and access to education in the authority's local area

The Admission Forum report may cover additional information pertaining to social equity and fair access to school places.

Proposed Core Membership of the Admissions Forum

Group member	Membership	Suggested numbers
Local authority – any representative of the authority	1 to 5 Elected members, to be decided by the Director of Children and Young People's Service following a recommendation from the Children and Young People's Panel.	3
Community and voluntary controlled schools	1 to 3 Headteachers decided by Headteacher Forum	3 (1 primary, 1 secondary, 1 special)
Voluntary aided schools	1 to 3 Headteachers decided by Headteacher Forum	2 (1 primary, 1 secondary)
Church of England Diocesan Board representatives	1 to 3 Representatives covering Wigan LA.	2 Church of England (1 Liverpool and 1 Manchester)
Roman Catholic Diocese representatives	1 to 3 Representatives covering Wigan LA.	1 Roman Catholic (Liverpool)
Parent Governor Representatives	1 to 3 School Governors through Governor Forum	3 (1 primary, 1 secondary, 1 special)
Representatives of the local community	Up to 3 Voluntary groups in the area decided by the Director of Children and Young People's Services following a recommendation from the Admission Forum.	2 (1 special needs, 1 ethnic minority)
Total Core Membership		16