



SURREY'S SCHOOLS ADMISSIONS FORUM / FORUMS

**LOCAL COMMITTEE FOR WOKING
15 OCTOBER 2002**

KEY ISSUE: To receive the report for consultation

SUMMARY: The new Education Act will make it a statutory requirement to have an Admissions Forum. The aim of the forum is to apply a consistent approach to Admissions across the County and to ensure that the process meets the needs of schools, students and the Council's statutory obligations.

Research by the Executive Committee and officers has highlighted several possible models for the forum, and this report is presented as a consultation document to seek Members views.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to provide a view on the proposed Forum and four Admission Advisory Groups for Surrey so that Officers can present a consolidated view to the Executive in December.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The new Education Act is to make the requirement to have an Admissions Forum statutory, something that is not a legal requirement of the School Standard and Framework Act 1998 as this act only recommended that Admission Forum or Fora were convened. Recent advice from the DfES with regard to how the new Forum or Fora will work indicates that this group will be one that will have some “teeth” to ensure that Headteachers and Governors of all Surrey Schools will comply with the Admissions Forum / Fora decisions to the benefit of parents and pupils.
- 1.2 Both the Select Committee and the officers have been conducting research into the practices and procedures of other LEAs to see if there is a good model that Surrey could emulate bearing in mind that we are in a fairly unique position in that we are a Shire County, have 14 contiguous LEAs on our boundaries and within Surrey’s relevant area there are 133 different Admission Authorities. It is therefore difficult to compare like with like.
- 1.3 There has been much discussion about whether or not Surrey should have one Forum or more locally based (multiple) Fora. Having surveyed 12 LEAs regarding their Admissions Fora the one common thread throughout is that all the LEAs only had one forum irrespective of size. One minor variation on this was Hertfordshire who operated 10 Local Area Fora, reporting to one County Forum. The feedback from Hertfordshire is that this is unwieldy and likely to change following further guidance from the DfES.

ISSUES

- 2.1 Key issues for Surrey to consider in relation to this are:
1. Pros and cons re one Forum versus multiple Fora - Should Forum / Fora be cross-phase?
 2. Terms of reference for Forum / Fora
 3. Membership of Forum / Fora
 4. The timetable and consultation process in relation to establishing a Forum / Fora

One Forum versus multiple Fora: Cross-phase / single phase – see Annex 1 attached.

- 2.2 The attached table details the pros and cons of various options. It suggests there is no panacea but we would welcome the views of colleagues on the points raised.

Terms of reference for the Forum – attached in Annex 2.

- 2.3 The draft terms of reference for both the main Forum and Local Advisory Groups are attached in Annex 2. Views are sought from colleagues on their scope and practicality.

Membership of the Forum

- 2.4 Membership will be determined by the DfES and as yet we have not had definitive advice but it is believed that the membership will take the form of those representative groups attached in Annex 3.
- 2.5 We are therefore seeking proposals from the various Phase Councils in terms of the numbers of Headteacher representatives and the Select Committee in terms of members and other groups in order to inform a report to the Executive in December. We believe in order for the Forum to be balanced it will need proportionality to ensure all parties who have a vested interest in the decisions are properly represented. Consideration will need to be given as to how best to represent the views of the 133 different Admission Authorities within Surrey's relevant area.
- 2.6 Consideration will also need to be given as to proposed membership for the Local Admission Advisory Groups.

Consultation & Timetable

- 2.7 Views are being sort in relation to these matters from;
1. Secondary Phase Council
 2. Primary Phase Council
 3. Special Phase Council
 4. Select Committee for Children and Young People
 5. Local Area Committees
 6. Diocesan Authorities
 7. Surrey Governors Association
- 2.8 The timetable for the consultation process is outlined below.

Consultation With	Dates
Secondary Phase Council	11 th September 2002
Primary Phase Council	26 th September 2002
Special Headteachers Conference	3 rd December 2002
Diocesan Bodies	September / October 2002
Surrey Governors Association	September / October 2002
Local Area Committees	October – November 2002
The Executive	9 th December 2002
The Select Committee	19 th September 2002
Establishment of Forum / Forums	January / February 2003

CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 Following consideration of the issues raised in Annex 1 at the Planning for Learning Strategy Group, it is proposed;
1. To have one Admissions Forum but
 2. Four Admission Advisory Groups in line with the Education Areas in Surrey (North East, North West, South East, South West)
 3. Members of the Local Area Committees will feed in to the Admissions Advisory Group and
 4. There will be some representation from each of the four Admission Advisory Groups on the Admissions Forum.
 5. To spend the next 2 months consolidating views from stakeholders detailed above before taking a report to the Executive in December.

Report by: Anne Macavoy, Head of Admissions and Transport Policy, School Planning and Resources

LEAD/CONTACT OFFICER: John Ambrose

TELEPHONE NUMBER: (01483) 518106

BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

Version No. 1

Date: 20/09/2002

Time: 09:40

Initials: AM

No of annexes: 3

ANNEX 1

OPTIONS	PROS	CONS
One forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ More manageable in terms of time and resources ➤ Fewer meetings ➤ Ensure consistency and equity both in policy terms and cross phase. ➤ Maximise chances of decisions being enforceable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Large numbers, difficulties in reaching consensus ➤ Multiple interest groups could lead to fragmentation ➤ Long agendas with multiple issues to discuss ➤ Can local issues be discussed and resolved in a meaningful way? ➤ Lack of meaningful representation
Local Admissions Advisory Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Allows a local focus. ➤ Sounding board for main forum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Can they effectively link to the main forum? ➤ Could be regarded as “talking shops” ➤ Minority groups may not get represented ➤ Officers and others would have to attend more meetings
4 Local fora	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Fewer members ➤ Local issues highlighted (e.g. armed forces, travellers) ➤ More likely to reach consensus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Diocesan Bodies Senior Council Officers would have to attend more / all meetings ➤ More disparate decisions, potential lack of equity and no ready mechanism to resolve it. ➤ Could lead to different time-tables, admission criteria etc being established. ➤ More administrative support needed
Single phase fora	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Separates primary / secondary issues ➤ Fewest members representative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Issues are similar cross phase ➤ Primary Fora / Forum? ➤ Secondary Forum – Likely to be as large as one forum option. ➤ Diocese Bodies and Senior Council Officers would have to attend more meetings ➤ Potential for disparate / inconsistent decisions ➤ More administrative support needed

ANNEX 2

DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE: ADMISSIONS FORUM

Purpose

To consider:

- A change to Surrey's Relevant Area.
- Proposed admission arrangements for the County and issues arising from them. This work will be carried out in partnership with the Council's School Planning and Resources Service and will identify linkages to ensure the wider issues (School Place Planning, PANs and SEN) are addressed.
- How local arrangements can best meet the needs of parents/carers.
- The 'Information For Parents' booklet produced by the Local Education Authority describing admission arrangements for county-maintained schools.
- Proposals to have co-ordinated admission arrangements.
- Proposals for individual admissions authorities to alter admissions criteria.
- Procedure for consulting on admission arrangements with all admission authorities within the Relevant Area.
- How admission arrangements may be best integrated with those in neighbouring authorities.
- The issue of a common timetable with other admission authorities and a standard application form.
- A procedure for the admission of 'difficult to place children' to ensure all schools achieve a broad and balanced intake.

The aim of the forum is to develop a countywide consensus which will allow all those involved to work together to arrive at satisfactory admission arrangements that meet, so far as is possible, school and student needs and the Council's statutory obligations. Failure to reach consensus or a majority view may result in the matters being referred to the Officers of the Schools' Adjudicators.

DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE: LOCAL ADVISORY GROUPS

Purpose

To work within the terms of reference of the Countywide Admissions Forum and apply a local perspective to school admissions and planning issues in order to input timely advice to the main Forum.

ANNEX 3

1. MEMBERSHIP OF ADMISSIONS FORUM

1.1 LEA representatives

Members will be nominated by group leaders in agreement with the Executive Member and Executive Director for Children and Young People and shall be in the proportion to the political balance of the Council as a whole. Those elected members who serve on the School Organisation Committee may also be invited to be representatives on the Admissions Forum. There will be no more than 7 representatives.

1.2 Governors – Governors representatives will be selected by the Surrey Governors Association and must include governor representatives from all sectors and all admission authorities (e.g., Primary, Secondary and Special Community, Voluntary Aided and Foundation Schools). Representatives should not be drawn from parent governors. There will be no more than 5 representatives.

1.3 Diocese - one representative for Roman Catholic Dioceses and one for the Church of England Dioceses within Surrey's Relevant Area.

1.4 Local Parents – 4 local parents nominated by the individual Governing Bodies to represent parents of Primary and Secondary age pupils for each area of the County and selected by the Executive Director for Children and Young People in accordance with the published criteria.

1.5 Headteachers – 4 primary, 4 secondary and one special school Headteacher to be nominated by the relevant Phase Councils to ensure there are representatives from Community, Voluntary Aided and Foundation Schools.

1.6 Relevant LEA officers will attend meetings of the Forum and provide verbal and written briefings.

1.7 The Forum may invite people with particular expertise or interests to speak at a meeting, but these people will not have voting rights. Such invitations may be extended to the Local Advisory Groups as appropriate.

2. TERMS OF OFFICE

2.1 Representatives will serve for 3 years, subject to them remaining eligible. At the end of their term of appointment membership must be reviewed and an individual may stand down or be re-nominated. Members must stand down if the body that nominated them decide they should do so and notify the LEA, or its agent accordingly.

2.2 A member may resign at any time by writing to the LEA, or its agent and be required to leave if they do not attend 3 consecutive meetings.

3. CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

3.1 Members must elect a chair and vice chair at the first meeting of the Admissions Forum by a majority of votes cast by members. Their term of office will be for one year (with the possibility of annual re-election) and is held until the first meeting after they have served a whole year.

3.2 The chair and vice chair should not be drawn from the same group of representatives.

- 3.3 They will cease to hold office either by submitting their written resignation to the secretary or when they cease to be members of the Forum.

4. ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

- 4.1 LEA officers, or its agent would ensure that they administratively support the Forum by preparing agendas, producing minutes and circulating all relevant papers, within a minimum of 5 days in advance of the meetings.
- 4.2 Items for inclusion on the agenda must be sent to the LEA officer, or its agent acting as clerk / Secretary at least 10 days prior to the forthcoming meeting.

5. MEETINGS

- 5.1 Dates of meeting will be set in advance at the inaugural meeting. At least 5 working days notice will be given for all meetings by the sending of an agenda and any relevant paperwork to each member of the Forum.

6. QUORUM

- 6.1 The Forum will meet at least once a term, subject to the pressure of business.
- 6.2 At least one third of the members of the Forum should be present at a meeting for it to be a quorate.
- 6.3 At least half the representatives should be present for voting on membership matters, amendments to the terms of reference and the delegation of responsibility to a task group.

7. VOTING

- 7.1 Each member will have one single vote. In the event of there being the same number of votes for and against a proposal, the chair will have a second or casting vote.
- 7.2 The result of voting should always be minuted to indicate how the majority or minority felt.

8.0 BUDGET

- 8.1 Members of the Forum will be entitled to assistance with costs of travel in accordance with the prevailing scheme of allowances for Surrey Council Members.

9.0 MEMBERSHIP OF LOCAL ADMISSIONS ADVISORY GROUPS

The following proposed membership proposals will apply equally to each of the local groups.

- 9.1 Representatives - Five elected members from Divisions within the local area to be nominated by group leaders for the Executive Director to determine.
- 9.2 Governors Representatives – Three Governors, not parent governors, from local schools, nominated by the Surrey Governors Association.
- 9.3 Diocese - one representative for Roman Catholic Dioceses and one for the Church of England Dioceses within Surrey's Relevant Area.
- 9.4 Local Parents – Three local parents nominated by the individual Governing Bodies to represent parents of Primary and Secondary age pupils for each area of the County and selected by the Executive Director for Children and Young People in accordance with the published criteria.

- 9.5 Headteachers – Two primary, two secondary and one special school Headteacher to be nominated by the relevant area to the Executive Director for Children and Young People.
- 9.6 Neighbouring Authorities – One representative from each as appropriate to the Local Advisory Group.
- 9.7 The attached Local Education Officer plus other officers as required will attend the relevant local group and provide briefing material as necessary.
- 9.8 The Local Advisory Group may invite people with particular expertise or interests to speak at a meeting. These people will not have voting rights.
- 9.9 Terms of Office, election of chair and vice chair, quorum details, voting details, administrative support and budgets will be in line with the terms established for the main forum.

The terms of reference will be reviewed after 2 years.