

Cambridgeshire Admission Forum

Terms of Reference

INTRODUCTION

1. Admission Forums

Local Authorities are no longer required to establish Admission Forums. However they can have a key role in ensuring a fair admissions system that promotes social equity and acts in accordance with the School Admissions Code.

Admission Forums provide a vehicle for admission authorities and other key interested parties to discuss the fairness and effectiveness of local admission arrangements, consider how to deal with difficult admission issues and advise admission authorities on ways in which their arrangements can be improved.

2. Purpose of the Forum

The role of the Forum is to consider and advise on the fairness of admission arrangements for schools in the relevant area, in particular:

- The extent to which the current admission arrangements serve the interests of looked after children, children with disabilities and children with special educational needs.
- The effectiveness of any fair access protocol in place.
- The effectiveness of the scheme for coordinating admission arrangements in the area, and where relevant, any adjoining local authority area.
- The details of any other matter which affect the fair operation of admission arrangements.

The Forum will:

- Advise the LA and the governing bodies of all voluntary aided and foundation schools by 30th November each year which persons or bodies in the area the Forum considers have an interest in proposed admission arrangements (and therefore should be consulted with)
- consider and advise on any proposed qualifying scheme for the coordination of admission arrangements referred to it by the LA
- consider admission arrangements referred to it and consider whether to exercise its power to refer an objection to any such arrangements to the Adjudicator.
- consider any composite prospectus published by the LA and advise the authority on whether this might be improved to raise the standard of information provided to parents;

- consider on an annual basis, whether to produce an annual report, who will produce it and how the Forum will be invited to participate.

MEMBERSHIP AND APPOINTMENT

3. Membership

The Forum comprises no more than 20 members, coordinated by the Local Authority including:

- a) At least one (and Cambridgeshire Forum recommends, two, and in the case of Academies three) representatives of each of the following schools:
 - (i) community school
 - (ii) voluntary controlled schools
 - (iii) voluntary aided schools
 - (iv) foundation schools (one representative only)
 - (v) Academies (3 representatives covering Cambridge City & South Cambs, Huntingdonshire, and East Cambs & Fenland).
 - (vi) City technology colleges and city colleges for the technology of the arts (not currently applicable in Cambridgeshire)

The representatives must be either a Head teacher or Governor, appointed by the governing body (and not a LA Governor who is also a Councillor)

- b) one representative nominated by the Diocesan Board of Education for the diocese of the Church of England which comprises the area of the authority;
- c) one representative nominated by the Bishop of the Roman Catholic Church diocese which comprises the area of the authority;
- d) at least one parent member. The parent must be resident in the county and parent of a child of at least two years and in primary education **or** of compulsory school age at the time of appointment.

Beyond the school representatives, the Forum is also made up of the following community membership:

- e) Persons to represent the interests of each of the following sections of the local community, as agreed by **Members 3 a) to d)** above:
 - Two County Councillors
 - UK Service Personnel
 - Parents' School Preference Advisor
 - Teaching Union Representative
 - Local Employer
 - Special Educational Needs
 - Minority Groups
 - Looked after Children

4. Appointment and Tenure

Members of the Forum are appointed for a period not exceeding 4 years, after which they are eligible for reappointment, if they still meet the membership requirements listed above.

The membership of the Forum shall be reviewed in September, or the next meeting thereafter, each year. A Member must vacate office:

- a) where the member was appointed under 3 a), ceases to be a head teacher or a governor of a school falling within that paragraph, by virtue of which he/she became eligible for appointment to the Forum; or
- b) where the member was appointed under 3 b) and c), and the body who nominated the member are of the opinion that the member should no longer be a member of the forum, and notify the Secretary accordingly; or
- c) where the member was appointed under 3 d), ceases to be a parent within the meaning of 3 d)
- d) where the authority, following a recommendation from the core members (3 a-d), are of the opinion that a member appointed under 3 e) should no longer be a member of the forum.

4. Alternate Members

Any member of the Forum may nominate an alternate member (provided they comply with the same membership criteria for that member's category and are approved by their nominating board (except in the case of schools representatives which do not need to be approved by the Governing Body) to attend meetings of the Forum in their absence.

Notification of a substitute member must be made to the Secretary in advance of the meeting.

5. County Council Officers

Officers may attend forum meetings in an advisory capacity only, *unless they are members of the Forum.*

OPERATING CONVENTIONS

6. Ordinary Meetings

The Forum will meet at least three times a year.

7. Sub-Committees

Where a sub-committee is established, the Forum is responsible in determining the sub-committee's:

- a) membership and constitution
- b) procedure for convening and holding of meetings
- c) promulgation of advice and recommendations.

8. Joint Forums

The LA may establish a Joint Forum with one or more other local education authorities.

Where an authority decides to establish a Joint Forum, the existing Forum must be dissolved before the Joint Forum is constituted.

9. Secretary to the Forum

The members will appoint a person, nominated by the Local Authority, who is not a member of the Forum to act as secretary to the forum.

10. Notice of Meetings

Forum members will be given at least 7 working days' notice of the date, time and place of meetings. Forum members should receive agenda and papers 7 days (not necessarily working days) in advance of the meeting.

Every forum report will be given a recommended confidentiality status (Open Access or Sensitive / Confidential) prior to the meeting, to be determined at the meeting. It is the expectation that most reports will be open access and available to all. [Sensitive / Confidential reports can be made available to members of the Forum, report authors, Lead Officers, Group Leaders, Service Spokes and Local Members only].

The agenda, and all open access reports and non-confidential minutes will be published on the County Council's Internet following despatch.

11. Chairman and Vice-Chairman

At the first meeting of the Forum and annually thereafter, the members shall elect a chairman and vice-chairman from the members of the Forum. (Provided the chairman and vice-chairman are still members of the Forum, they are eligible for re-election after the year elapses).

12. Quorum

The Forum shall be quorate if no less than one quarter of the current members are present at the meeting.

13. Advice and Recommendations of the Forum

The Forum will promulgate their advice and recommendations to all admission authorities, maintained schools and Academies within the area and will make that advice available to any other persons with an interest.

This advice will be made available through the Schools Portal, and the County's Internet. **This advice will also be included in the composite prospectus published by the local authority each year for parents.**

The advice and recommendations should represent the agreed views of the whole Forum, arising from discussions at meetings of the Forum.

*Where the Forum is unable to reach a consensus view, the matter will be subject to a recorded vote of **all members**. Each Member shall have only 1 vote. Advice issued by the Forum on this basis shall include an explanation that it was a majority rather than a consensus decision. If no clear decision is made the Chairman may move to defer an item to allow further exploration of the issues.*

In any vote regarding the Forum's power to refer an objection to the Adjudicator, the vote must be carried by simple majority, in the case of a tied vote, be decided by the Chairman's (or Vice Chairman's) casting vote.

Where an admission authority does not follow the advice of the Forum, the Forum shall write to the admission authority requesting compliance within a specified period and explaining that failure to do so would result in the matter being referred to the Schools Adjudicator.

The Adjudicator needs to receive the objection within 6 weeks of the determination of the Forum being received by the objector. The Adjudicator's determination on any referred objection is final and binding on all parties, and can only be challenged by judicial review.

14. Interpretation of the Terms of Reference

The Chairman or Vice Chairman presiding at the meeting, following legal advice, shall be the final arbiter regarding the interpretation of the Forum's Terms of Reference.

The constitution shall be interpreted in conjunction with any relevant provisions contained in legislation relating to the Forum's proceedings. The requirements of legislation will prevail in the event of their being any inconsistency between the legislation and the Forum's Terms of Reference.

15. Amendment to the Terms of Reference

The Forum may vary its constitution by a simple majority vote by the members, provided that prior notice of the nature of the proposed variation is made and included on the agenda for the meeting.

Reviewed and revised
13th February 2014

Declarations of Interest

Any Member of the Forum who has an interest in any proposal which directly affects a school at which they are a Head teacher or Governor, or which their children attend, or in which they might have a personal or prejudicial interest in, shall declare the interest at the beginning of the relevant item. **In the case of a prejudicial interest**, the member shall then take no further part in the discussion on that item.

While it is clear that a decision in which a member has such an interest is likely to arise at a particular meeting, the member concerned may invite a substitute member, in accordance with the constitution, with no interest to declare, to attend that meeting in their place.

Elected Members are subject to the governance of the County Council's Code of Conduct.

Expenses

The LA shall reimburse the travel expenses members of the Forum when members submit appropriate claims, in connection with attendance at meetings. Travel expenses should be claimed at the standard County Council rates and forms are available in Member Services.

Supply cover **should only be claimed by the school representatives of the Forum**, when it has been necessary to employ a supply cover teacher to enable the Head teacher to attend the Forum. An invoice will need to be supplied to confirm the expenses reimbursement.