

**SCHOOL ADMISSION APPEAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR ALL ADMISSION AUTHORITIES  
FINANCIAL YEAR 2019/20 ONWARDS**

**To:** Cambridgeshire Schools Forum

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**Purpose:** To advise Schools Forum of the need to change the way in which the cost associated with the provision of School Admission Appeals is funded in response to revisions contained within 2018/19 schools revenue funding operational guidance

**Recommendation:**

- a) Note the contents of the report; and
- b) To approve the increase in funding to the admissions service from the Central School Services Block to support the cost of delivery of school admission appeals for all schools in Cambridgeshire. The total additional requirement is £110k for the 2019-20 academic year (£64k for the 2019-20 financial year) with costs being reviewed annually

**1. BACKGROUND**

1.1 The School Admission Appeals Code ("the Appeals Code"), issued under Section 84 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, imposes mandatory requirements in relation to the appeals lodged against a decision to refuse the admission of a child to a school. The Local Authority (LA) is responsible for arranging appeals as the admission authority for community and voluntary controlled schools in Cambridgeshire. This is currently provided as a free service.

1.2 Own admission authority schools (Voluntary Aided, Foundation and Academies) are able to buy the following services from the LA:-

- All work undertaken in preparation for the Appeal hearing in compliance with the School Admissions Appeals Code
- Presentation of the case against admission at the independent appeal hearing,
- Clerking of the appeal hearing
- The presence of a legal advisor at the appeal hearing
- Communication with parents after the appeal hearing
- Response to any subsequent complaints lodged by the family

Democratic Services, working with the School Admissions Team to ensure the independence of the process, book meeting rooms and liaise with panel members for each appeal scheduled. Clerking of the appeal hearing is undertaken through a commissioned arrangement, currently, with LGSS Law Limited. **Appendix 1** details the current charges made to own admission authority schools for this service

- 1.3 Currently only 1 secondary school chooses not to use the appeal service provided for any admission rounds. A further 5 secondary schools, those who choose to manage their own in year admissions, are unable to use the service for appeals as the LA has not been involved in the decisions leading up to the refusal of a place.

## 2. MAIN ISSUES

- 2.1 As stated in section 1.2, Cambridgeshire charges own admission authority schools who wish to use its appeals service. This arrangement has been in place for several years and has never been challenged. However, some recent correspondence (**Appendix 2**), shared by a colleague in a neighbouring LA, suggests that as a result of a change to Department for Education (DfE) Operational Guidance, it will no longer be possible to differentiate between own admission authority schools and those for which the LA is the admissions authority (Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools).
- 2.2 As own admission authority schools will have already made buy-in decisions regarding the school admission appeals service before the end of the last academic year, the earliest any change could come into effective would be for the start of the 2019 financial year.
- 2.3 The table below shows the number of appeals lodged and heard over the last four years and the total cost of delivering the statutory requirements of the appeals service in those years.

<i><b>Academic Year</b></i>	<i><b>No of appeals lodged</b></i>	<i><b>No of appeals heard</b></i>	<i><b>Total cost of service</b></i>
<b>2014/15</b>	<b>721</b>	<b>486</b>	<b>£128,590</b>
<b>2015/16</b>	<b>812</b>	<b>471</b>	<b>£105,602</b>
<b>2016/17</b>	<b>711</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>£109,031</b>
<b>2017/18</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>476</b>	<b>£105,711</b>

- 2.4 Officers have identified three possible options in response to the DfE letter attached as Appendix 2. The options appraisal is set out in **Appendix 3**. Officers' view is that Option 1 would provide the best means of securing a fair, independent and consistent school admissions appeals service for Cambridgeshire families irrespective of the status of the school at which they are seeking a school place.
- 2.5 Taking an average of the last four years it has been identified that an amount of £110,000 would be sufficient to enable the delivery of the statutory appeal services to all schools in the next financial year as described in Option 1. It is proposed that this amount would be found within the overall available Central Services School Block (CSSB), including any uplift received, without the need to ask schools for additional funding or any anticipated impact on any other services/budget.

Source Documents	Location
<i>School Admissions Code (2014)</i>	<a href="https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/389388/School_Admissions_Code_2014_-_19_Dec.pdf">https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/389388/School_Admissions_Code_2014 - 19 Dec.pdf</a>
<i>School Admission Appeals Code (2012)</i>	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-admissions-appeals-code">https://www.gov.uk/government/publ ications/school-admissions-appeals- code</a>