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| Meeting:             | Cabinet  |
| Date:                | 26 March 2009  |
| Subject:             | Determination of Admission Arrangements<br>– Academic Year 2010-11   |
| Key Decision:        | Yes  |
| Responsible Officer: | Heather Clements, Director Schools and<br>Children’s Development   |
| Portfolio Holder:    | Councillor Anjana Patel, Schools and<br>Children’s Development   |
| Exempt:              | No   |
| Enclosures:          | Appendix 1 (Part A)-Definitions for<br>community school admissions<br>Appendix 1 (Part B)-Nursery School<br>Admission Arrangements<br>Appendix 1 (Part C)-Primary School<br>Sector Admission Arrangements<br>Appendix 1 (Part D) Secondary School<br>Sector Admission Arrangements<br>Appendix 2 – Schemes of Co-ordination<br>Appendix 3 – Harrow’s Relevant Area<br>Appendix 4 – Harrow’s Fair Access<br>Protocol<br>Appendix 5 – Equalities Impact<br>Assessment<br>Appendix 6 – Risk Management<br>Implications<br>Appendix 7 – Late responses from<br>Governing Bodies to consultation<br>Appendix 8 – Recommendation from<br>Harrow Admissions Forum |

## Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

Harrow is required to consult before determining admission arrangements for community schools. Consultation took place between 8 December 2008 and 13 February 2009. Members of the Harrow Admissions Forum (HAF) at their meeting on 23 February 2009 made the following recommendations for the Cabinet's consideration.

### Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to consider the recommendations made by the Harrow Admissions Forum and agree the admission arrangements for Harrow community schools as follows :

1. The definition of terms for community school admission rules as set out in Appendix 1-Part A
2. The admission arrangements for Harrow nursery schools as set out in Appendix 1-Part B.
3. The admission arrangements for Harrow primary sector schools as set out in Appendix 1-Part C, with the caveat that further consultation take place with Elmgrove First & Middle Schools and Roxeth F&M School about proposals to increase the planned admissions number
4. The admission arrangements for Harrow community co-educational high schools for the academic year 2010-11 as set out in Appendix 1-Part D with the following oversubscription criteria:
  - 1<sup>st</sup> priority Children Looked After
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> priority Agreed medical claims for student/parent(s)
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> priority Siblings attending the school at the same time (excluding students at the sixth form)
  - 4<sup>th</sup> priority For 2010 only, families with children in Year 6(11+ transfer) and Year 7(12+ transfer) who indicate they want their children to attend the same school, the following will apply: Where one child is offered a place because they best meet the admission rules at a preferred school, the other child will be given the sibling priority for that school
  - 5<sup>th</sup> priority Distance from home to school measured in a straight line
2. The admission arrangements for Bentley Wood High School for Girls as set out in Appendix 1-Part D
3. The Schemes of Co-ordination for 2010-11 as set out in See Appendix 2
4. Harrow's relevant area as set out in Appendix 3
5. Harrow's Fair Access Protocol as set out in Appendix 4
7. The following additional tie-breaker - Where applicants live equidistant from the school or in cases of multiple births where places cannot be offered to both/all children, places will be allocated by random computer selection.

## **Reason: (For recommendation)**

There is a statutory requirement under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 for admission authorities to determine admission arrangements by 15 April in the determination year (ie by 15 April 2009).

## **Section 2 – Report**

### **Background**

In October 2008 the Cabinet agreed the strategic approach to school re-organisation and established a Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) to provide advice and guidance on proposals and options for school organisation. A range of Focus Groups were engaged to work in conjunction with the SRG. The Harrow Admissions Forum set up a School Admissions Arrangement Working Groups specifically to review co-educational community high school admission arrangements.

The Working Group met on a number of occasions and developed a set of underlying principles for the review, as follows:

- Compliance with the national Code of Practice.
- Encourage parents to stay in Harrow.
- Achieve a balance so there is perceived fairness and equity across the Borough.
- Act on the commitment made to review high school admission.

### **Options Considered and Recommendations**

Options Considered:

1. No change  
The current arrangements were considered to be liable to legal challenge as they would not be deemed to be fair and equitable because:
  - Some primary schools have dual links.
  - One high school is oversubscribed by children from its feeder primary schools.
  - One high school only has one single linked school
2. Minimum change  
Retaining links but adjusting where current links are not working effectively was considered at great length but there were major difficulties in developing a model that was fair, equitable and would gain the support of parents and schools.

3. Abolish linked school arrangements  
This option considered changing from linked criteria to other alternatives:
- distance
  - random allocation (lottery)
  - banding
- Random allocation and banding were ruled out following an exercise undertaken in July 2008 to obtain early views on admission arrangements from both parents and schools. The Working Party felt that distance offered a fair, equitable and stable option both for now and the future.

## **Recommendations**

Members of HAF received regular reports from the School Admissions Arrangement Working Group. On the basis of their initial work it was considered that there should be two options for consultation.

- Distance from home to school measured in a straight line.
- A revised links model.

After very careful consideration, the Working Group did not believe it was possible to develop a revised links model that would gain the support of parents and schools. The Working Group was concerned about the disruptive impact of changes to current links and the knowledge, based on previous experience, that any change to long established links was going to be extremely unpopular.

In view of this, the School Admission Arrangements Working Group recommended to HAF that there should be a single option for consultation, namely, distance from home to school measured in a straight line.

The Working Group also considered the impact the proposed change to school organisation in Harrow from September 2010 would have on those families with a child in both the Year 6 and Year 7 transfer groups. In order to ensure siblings would be offered the same school it was proposed that an additional sibling rule apply for the 2010 academic year only:

## **New School Admissions Code of Practice**

At its meeting on 23 February 2009, the Harrow Admissions Forum was advised that a new School Admissions Code came into force with effect from 10 February 2009.

This code gives a list of prohibited oversubscription criteria, which includes giving priority to children according to their date of birth. As a tie-breaker, in cases where applicants live equidistant from the preferred school and places cannot be offered to both children, Harrow currently gives priority to the oldest child. This also applies in the case of multiple births.

Members of the Admissions Forum reviewed Harrow's current admission arrangements and agreed to recommend a change to the tie-breaker in circumstances where applicants live equidistant or in cases of multiple births. The proposal is that places should be allocated using a random computer selection (similar to that used for Bentley Wood).

# CONSULTATION

## Consultation arrangements

### When

- Consultation on admission arrangements took place between 8 December 2008 and 13 February 2009. This met the statutory timetable for consultation.

### Who was involved

- All Harrow governing bodies and schools
- Parents
- Community groups
- Neighbouring LAs

### How

- Report to all Harrow governing bodies and pro-forma response forms.
- Information/pro-formas provided for schools to use with parents.
- Schools' normal communication channels (ie newsletters, parent's evenings, etc).
- Posters provided for schools, nurseries, pre-school playgroups, community notice boards, medical centres, doctors' surgeries, supermarkets, etc. to display in order to inform parents about the consultation
- Notice published in the local press
- Harrow People magazine January 2009.
- Harrow website.
- Powerpoint presentation for schools to use
- Officer attendance at meetings (if required).

## Consultation Feedback

### **Response from Parents**

752 individual responses were received from parents (including 21 website responses).

Parents were able to comment on any area of the admission arrangements. However, responses received concentrated mainly on increases to the PAN of two primary schools and the admissions criteria to high school. A summary of the responses is as follows:

| <b>Primary school admission arrangements</b>               | <b>FOR</b>   | <b>AGAINST</b> |
|--|--|----------------|
| Increase in Planned Admission Number for Elmgrove School   | 60%  | 22%            |
| Increase in Planned Admission Number for Roxeth F&M School | 58%  | 27%            |
| Other areas of admission arrangements                      | See further observations arising from consultation |                |

| <b>High school admission arrangements</b>   | <b>FOR</b>   | <b>AGAINST</b> |
|---|--|----------------|
| Agreed medical claims   | 81%  | 8%             |
| Sibling link for children attending school at the same time (excluding 6 <sup>th</sup> form students) | 88%  | 6%             |
| Sibling link for 2010 only  | 77%  | 15%            |
| Remove linked schools and change to distance  | 54%  | 37%            |
| Other areas of admission arrangements   | See further observations arising from consultation |                |

### **Response from Governing Bodies**

One high school and 16 primary school governing bodies responded to the consultation. Their responses are as follows:

| <b>Primary school admission arrangements</b>               | <b>FOR</b>  | <b>AGAINST</b> |
|--|-------------|----------------|
| Schemes of co-ordination                                   | 14          |                |
| Increase in Planned Admission Number for Elmgrove School   | 13          |                |
| Increase in Planned Admission Number for Roxeth F&M School | 13          | 1              |
| Other areas of primary admission arrangements              | No comments |                |

| <b>High school admission arrangements</b>   | <b>FOR</b>  | <b>AGAINST</b> |
|---|-------------|----------------|
| Schemes of co-ordination  | 14          |                |
| Agreed medical claims   | 16          |                |
| Sibling link for children attending school at the same time (excluding 6 <sup>th</sup> form students) | 16          |                |
| Sibling link for 2010 only  | 15          |                |
| Remove linked schools and change to distance  | 12          | 5              |
| Other areas of admission arrangements   | No comments |                |

### **Response from Community Groups**

A letter and consultation response pro-forma was sent to a number of community groups. No responses were received.

### **Response from Other LEAs and Admission Authorities**

A copy of the consultation report and schemes of co-ordination were sent to neighbouring LEAs. No responses were received.

A full analysis of responses will be made available in the Members' Library and on the Harrow website. The completed response pro-formas will also be available in the Members' Library,

## **FURTHER OBSERVATIONS ARISING FROM THE CONSULTATION**

### **Increase in the Planned Admission Numbers for Elmgrove First and Middle Schools and Roxeth First & Middle School**

Parents who responded to the consultation were in the main in favour of this proposal. However, parents took the opportunity when responding to the proposal to raise their concerns about class sizes and overcrowding in primary schools.

The Governing Body of Roxeth First & Middle School raised concern that they were not approached prior to the consultation. Having now had the opportunity speak to officers about capital development The Governing Body of Roxeth First & Middle School believe that they may be able to increase class sizes with support of the LA but they are unlikely to achieve this by 2010.

### **Change from Linked Schools to Distance**

54% of parents supported this change, with 37% indicating they were against the proposal. Some themes that arose from this consultation were as follows:

- If the proposal is to go ahead then there should be a phased introduction, otherwise it is unfair to children who are already in the system. Parents have chosen their child's primary school on the basis of the linked high school.
- Parents felt there were benefits to the current linked system, particularly in terms of security for children in knowing the high school to which they would transfer.
- Concern was raised that the change could impact on housing and house prices.
- Some respondents mentioned the benefits of using distance in terms of fairness and also for children of walking to school and impact on the environment

There was quite a low response from Governors, with 12 supporting the change to distance and five in favour of remaining with linked schools.

### **Medical Claims**

81% of parents were in favour of the medical claim criterion, as were the majority of governors who responded.

## **Sibling Link**

88% of parents supported the use of the sibling link, with 77% supporting an additional sibling link for 2010 only to ensure siblings in the 11+ and 12+ transfer groups could attend the same school.

The majority of governors who responded were also in favour of both sibling link proposals.

Some parents took the opportunity to mention the issue of the exclusion of 6<sup>th</sup> form students from the sibling link.

## **Equalities Impact**

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken. A copy is at Appendix 5. There is no identified detrimental impact on any of the equality groups. Overall the proposed change in admission arrangements brings Harrow more in line with neighbouring boroughs (only one of the 33 London boroughs uses links schools) and will enhance the equality of opportunity and choice for young people.

## **Legal comments**

The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 enables the Council to publish annually the criteria for admission arrangements for the schools for which it is the responsible admission authority

## **Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications arising from this report

## **Performance Issues**

A fair and transparent admissions process is crucial to the local school system and to maintaining high standards found in Harrow's schools. The relevant national indicators include:

- NI 72 - 74 Key stage attainment
- NI 92 -93 Progression at key stages
- NI 102 Narrowing the gap - free school meals
- NI 104-5 Narrowing the gap - Special Educational Needs
- 107 Key stage 2 attainment for BME groups
- 108 Key stage 4 attainment for BME groups

Challenging targets have been set for of these indicators and the first set of results will be available at the end of 2008/9.



## Risk Management Implications

There is a risk register for the school reorganisation project that is reviewed by the School Organisation Officer Group. It contains a high level risk for each of the workstreams, including review of admission arrangements, and is subject to on-going review and development. An extract is provided at Appendix 6.

## Environmental Impact

The proposed change from linked schools to distance should mean that more children will attend a local high school. This should reduce the number of car journeys to school.

## Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

|                            |                                     |   |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Name:.....Emma Stabler.... | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | on behalf of the<br>Chief Financial Officer |
| Date: ..... 25.2.09.....   |                                     |   |
| Name: ... Helen White      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | on behalf of the<br>Monitoring Officer      |
| Date: ..... 16.3.09.....   |                                     |   |

## Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

|                              |                                     |  |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Name:...David Harrington.... | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | on behalf of the<br>Divisional Director<br>(Strategy and<br>Improvement) |
| Date: ...2.3.09.....         |                                     |  |

## Section 5 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance

|                            |                                     |  |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Name: ... Andrew Baker.... | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | on behalf of the<br>Divisional Director<br>(Environmental<br>Services) |
| Date: ... 2.3.09.....      |                                     |  |

## Section 6 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Madeleine Hitchens, Manager, :Place Planning & Admissions – 020  
8424 1398