

**REPORT FOR: EDUCATION
CONSULTATIVE FORUM**

Date of Meeting:	7 March 2012
Subject:	Proposals for Constitutional Changes to Education Consultative Forum
Key Decision	No
Responsible Officer:	Catherine Doran Corporate Director of Children's Services
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Brian Gate Portfolio Holder Schools and Colleges
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	No
Enclosures:	Annexe A – Proposed Terms of Reference for the Education Strategy Consultative Forum (ESCF).

Section 1 – Summary

This report provides the Education Consultative Forum (EdCF) with an update on the proposals for constitutional changes to EdCF.

Recommendation:

EdCF are invited to consider and agree for recommendation to the Council's Constitution Working Group and then Cabinet;

- 1 the proposed name Education Strategy Consultative Forum;
- 2 the proposed scope and function;
- 3 the proposed composition.

Section 2 – Report

Introduction

1. At the meeting in January 2012, EdCF considered a report on proposals to change to the terms of reference and composition of the Education Consultative Forum, now that the Education Act 2011 is coming into force.
2. At the meeting EdCF agreed that a further report would be considered incorporating feedback from stakeholders. This report up-dates EdCF on the responses and further feedback will be provided verbally at the meeting.

Options considered

3. At its meeting in April 2011, the Education Consultative Forum received an information report about the *Local Authority's Strategic Role for Education in Harrow* outlining some of the changes to schools and the Council arising from the Education Bill 2011. The report also initiated the discussion about the future role of the Education Consultative Forum.
4. Up-date reports were presented to the Forum at their meetings in June 2011, November 2011 and January 2012 providing commentary on the emerging Local Authority education role. The report in January 2012 included a policy briefing on the Education Act 2011 and, where available, details about the commencement of the Act's provisions.

Education Consultative Forum Proposals for Change

5. In the context of the Education Act and the strategic role for the local authority, officers have developed some proposals that would change the constitution of EdCF. The intention of the proposed changes is to define the scope of the Forum and to ensure that there is appropriate representation from the schools and local community. The Forum is not a decision-making body but an advisory panel able to make recommendations to Cabinet to inform strategic policy development.
6. These proposals were considered by EdCF at their meeting in January 2012. It was agreed that officers would circulate the proposals to key stakeholders and report back following consideration of two specific matters relating to composition and school admission functions. The main changes considered were:

Name Change

7. It is proposed to rename the forum to become the Education Strategy Consultative Forum (ESCF). This is to acknowledge that the context for the Forum is to support the new strategic role of the local authority.

Functions, Objectives and Scope

8. It is proposed that the broad function and objectives of EdCF will remain with the new Education Strategy Consultative Forum but will have a more defined scope. ESCF will consider all matters relating to the provision of education and schooling in Harrow in three broad policy areas:
 - School Organisation and Admissions – securing the supply of sufficient school places, including nursery to 19 provision, in an increasingly autonomous context with a range of providers, and ensuring fair access for admission to school.
 - Education Excellence – fulfilling the role of the local authority to promote high standards in education and tackling underperformance through school improvement and intervention.
 - Provision for vulnerable children – including those with special educational needs and disabilities, exclusions and alternative provision, and children missing from education in the context of the changes to local authority central services and changes to admission arrangements.
9. It is proposed that ESCF also receives reports on the allocation and expenditure of revenue and capital funding, with particular reference to impact on the three policy areas.
10. It may be considered that any consultation forum should only exist if it is effective in shaping policy and recommendations to Cabinet.

School Organisation and Admissions

11. The Education Act 2011 has removed the statutory requirement to have an Admissions Forum. In this context, it is proposed that the Harrow Admissions Forum will be dissolved and ESCF will consider admission arrangements in line with the new School Admissions Code of Practice.
12. The new School Admissions Code of Practice has made a number of changes and it is proposed that in accordance with these changes that the role of ESCF in relation to admissions will include:
 - i. play an integral part during the admission arrangements consultation process;
 - ii. consider and provide advice and comments on proposed admission arrangements to admission authorities as part of the formal consultation process;
 - iii. consider and provide advice and comments on proposed co-ordination schemes as part of the formal consultation process;

- iv. consider and assist in the compilation of the annual report that the local authority must submit to the School's Adjudicator by 30 June. The report must cover the following points as minimum:
 - a) information about how admission arrangements in the area of the local authority serve the interests of looked after children and previously looked after children, children with disabilities and children with special educational needs, including any details of where problems have arisen;
 - b) an assessment of the effectiveness of Fair Access Protocols and co-ordination in their area, including how many children were admitted to each school under them;
 - c) the number and percentage of lodged and upheld parental appeals, and;
 - d) any other issues the local authority may wish to include.
 - v. consider and make recommendations on whether the local authority should make an objection to the Schools Adjudicator in relation to any admission arrangements, and;
 - vi. consider and make recommendations on the Fair Access Protocol, including considering any complaints from schools about the fairness of the process and the use of the local authority's power of direction.
10. This is not an exhaustive list of admissions related activities, and is not intended to be restrictive. It is presented to provide an indication of the scope for the forum, whilst recognising that it is not a decision-making body and the local authority and the constituents have their own rights in making objections to the Adjudicator.

Composition

13. Proposals to change the membership of the Forum were considered at the meeting on 25 January 2012. It is proposed that the membership of ESCF is changed from that of EdCF to reflect the wider scope of the Forum. It is proposed that within the school and governors constituent groups there are representatives from the academies sector. In addition, that there are representatives from the private and voluntary early years sector. The proposed membership is set out in Annexe A.
14. At the EdCF meeting there was consideration of whether to invite representatives from independent schools in Harrow. It is proposed that these representatives are not invited at this time but that established relationships between schools are developed further.

Timescales and Next Steps

15. Changes to the Forum's terms of reference and operating arrangements, particularly the proposed dissolving of the Harrow Admissions Forum, will require the approval of Council.
16. Within this process as an amendment to the Constitution will result consideration of the proposal should be made by the Council's Constitution Review Working Group (CRWG). The timeline for proposals is currently planned as:
 - CRWG - March / April 2012
 - Council – 24 May 2012
 - Cabinet – 24 May 2012 (on the rising of Council as part of the establishment of Advisory Panels and Forum's).
17. In accordance with this timescale, the first meeting of the newly formed ESCF would be in the summer term 2012.

Section 3 – Financial Implications

18. There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report as the review has been undertaken from within existing resources and no changes to services are proposed.

Section 4 – Corporate Priorities

19. These considerations will support the Council's Corporate Priorities for 2011-2012:
 - United and involved communities: a Council that listens and leads
 - Supporting and protecting people who are most in need

Name:	Emma Stabler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date:	22 February 2012		
Name:	Sarah Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date:	22 February 2012		

Section 5 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Adrian Parker, Head of Education Strategy and School Organisation, Children's Services, 020 8736 6522

Background Papers:

Report to Education Consultative Forum on 25 January 2012