

TITLE	School Admissions Working Group Update
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Schools Forum on 13 October 2021
WARD	None Specific
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Children's Services - Carol Cammiss

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Clear understanding of the new organisational arrangements for School Admissions and the development of task and finish group activity to inform co-produced improvement.

RECOMMENDATION

- To note and support the content of the report and the actions identified.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report updates members of School Forum on the activities of the Wokingham School Admissions Task & Finish Group as a sub-group of Wokingham Schools Forum.

The last meeting of the School Admissions Task & Finish Group was held on 4th October 2021, with the updated Terms of Reference and updated Fair Access Protocol as the key agenda items. The School Admissions Team arrangements and Secondary School Strategy were two additional agenda items discussed within the meeting.

The Terms of Reference have now been approved by the Working Group (as renamed).

The revised Fair Access Protocol documentation was presented following the re-review at the previous meeting. This documentation was approved by the Working Group and recommended to all schools for the adoption consultation.

An input on admissions challenges, and secondary school strategy were also delivered.

Background

This was the fourth meeting of the Wokingham School Admissions Task and Finish Group and was chaired by Brian Pebble, (Head Teacher at Rivermead Primary School) as the newly elected Chairperson.

Terms of Reference

Changes that had been made to the terms of reference following the previous meeting had been made and were agreed by members of the Working Group. A copy of the final Terms of Reference is appended to this report.

Fair Access Protocol

The updated Fair Access Protocol (FAP) was presented to the meeting following the amendments made after consultation with Working Group members at the last meeting.

The Fair Access Protocol was approved by the Working Group Membership and recommended to schools for adoption consultation.

The formal adoption consultation process went live on the 4th October on behalf of the Working Group, and will run to the 31st October seeking an 'Approved' or 'Not Approved' response from schools.

The Fair Access Protocol is a statutory instrument and requires support of 51% of schools. For the purpose of the consultation, it was agreed that we would work to the percentages of school responses by the deadline date of the consultation.

A copy of the final version being consulted on for adoption is appended to this report.

School Admissions Challenges

Schools were thanked for their support in relation to the placing of additional students who have arrived in Wokingham over the past weeks. It was noted that many of these were from Hong Kong and that Wokingham had seen a higher proportion of Hong Kong nationals taking up residence in Wokingham than our neighbouring boroughs.

Work is continuing on the development of the Schools Portal to enhance the efficiency and timeliness of data and information as it relates to the admissions timetable and subsequent impacts on schools.

A discussion on the need for timely 'on' and 'off' roll information to support the management of wait lists was held, and whilst it is anticipated that the new portal will assist, an interim approach is needed. This will support both the LA in understanding where places may be available, but also assist schools in having a reliable source of information regarding the management of their own wait lists.

It was agreed that the LA will seek to share indicative numbers of offers made for each school on school offer day to assist with school planning. It was noted that these numbers were indicative only, as they will not take account of any 'churn' between national offer day and the start of the academic year (and as such come with a clear health warning); but it was felt that schools would find this information helpful.

Secondary School Strategy & Post 16 Strategy Review

The Secondary School Strategy consultation is now live and can be found here [Current consultations - Wokingham Borough Council](#)

We are currently drafting a secondary strategy for the next decade, and whilst it is acknowledged that things will change over this type of time period it is still important in setting a vision for that time.

It was shared that a big challenge with the strategy is there is a big bulge coming through now, have some surplus capacity in key stage 1 but full in key stage 2, with projections to come into the secondary sector and that presents issues. Need to find more places for a peak in the mid 2020's which then should drop back down near the end of the decade.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	N/A		
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	N/A		
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	N/A		

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
N/A

Cross-Council Implications
These changes and the outcomes from the proposed task & finish group will also have further beneficial impact on our Home to School Transport and SEND Admissions arrangements

Public Sector Equality Duty
An Equalities Impact Assessment has not been undertaken at this point as the change to hold a Task & Finish Group has no direct impact on members of the public. In respect of any issues relating to equality and diversity resultant from the proposed changes emerging from the Task & Finish Group will be addressed as part of that exercise.

List of Background Papers
1) Wokingham School Admissions Working Group Terms of Reference 2) Wokingham Fair Access Protocol (for adoption consultation)

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