



Administration of School Admission Appeals

SUMMARY

- 1.1 At its meeting on 14 September 2010, the Children and Young People Commission asked that it be provided with more information on procedures relating to the administration of school admission appeals. This report provides background to the Council's legal requirement to facilitate school admission appeals and details the procedures it uses to do this.
- 1.2 The report also outlines the heavy reliance on independent panel members, who volunteer a considerable amount of their time to enable the Council to meet this duty. A recommendation suggesting a way in which the Council could thank these individuals is detailed at paragraph 2.2.
- 1.3 It is also proposed that Members support the ongoing effort to increase the pool of panel members and tackle the under-representation of ethnic minority groups.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To note the large number of school admission appeals the Council organises and the heavy reliance upon independent panel members to facilitate this.
- 2.2 To request that the Mayor holds a reception for independent members of the School Admission Appeals Panel to thank them for their hard work and commitment.
- 2.3 To request that, through their role as community leaders, all Members support an ongoing effort to increase the pool of panel members and tackle the under-representation of ethnic minority groups.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 To recognise the considerable contribution made by independent members of the School Admission Appeals Panel.
- 3.2 To attempt to remedy the under-representation of ethnic minority groups on the pool of independent members of the School Admission Appeals Panel.

Background to school admission appeals

- 4.1 The School Admissions Code came into force in February 2010. The code includes both mandatory requirements that must be adhered to and recommended guidelines that should be adhered to in school admission arrangements. The Council publicises its own admission arrangements in accordance with the code and other regulations.
- 4.2 Under the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998, parents may appeal against decisions relating to their child's school allocation. The School Admission Appeals Code imposes mandatory requirements and provides guidelines on how appeal panels are set up and hearings are conducted.

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- 4.3 During the 2009/10 municipal year, the Council organised 526 school admission appeals. Unsurprisingly, the busiest time of year was during the summer, with 243 of those appeals being scheduled in June or July. A monthly breakdown of the appeals scheduled during 2009/10 is supplied at Appendix 2.
- 4.4 Each school admission appeal requires three independent members to sit and to reach a decision to either allow or refuse the appeal. At least one member of the panel must be experienced in education and at least one member must be lay. Certain people are disqualified from sitting on school admission appeal panels, including most employees of the authority and councillors.
- 4.5 There are presently 23 independent members of the School Admissions Appeals Panel, meaning that independent members heard an average of 69 appeals each during the 2009/10 municipal year. It is estimated that a one-day hearing of around 8-12 appeals would require each independent member to spend at least one full day reading the background papers in advance of the hearings.

Recruitment, retention and remuneration of independent members

- 4.6 The Council has used a number of means to recruit independent members. These have included newspaper advertising, contacting neighbouring admissions authorities and encouraging existing independent members to recommend potential suitors to the role. Following an application, potential members are asked to supply references and are fully trained on the School Admissions Appeals Code before joining the pool.
- 4.7 Independent members are able to reclaim transport costs. Car travel is paid at 40p per mile in keeping with Council policy and bus/train tickets are also repaid upon production of a receipt/ticket. In addition, a daily subsistence allowance of £6.17 can be claimed when the independent member has been present for a morning session and afternoon beyond 1pm. There are no other allowances.

- 4.8 A number of issues have unfortunately resulted in independent members leaving the pool in recent months. These have included one former member who cited an increasing number of appeals as a reason and another who felt the reduction in car expense payments to 40p per mile did not properly compensate for the time consumed.

Panel demographics

- 4.9 One area of concern which past recruitment has been unable to remedy is that the demographics of the pool of independent members is a poor reflection of the city's demographics. More specifically, only two of the 23 independent members are from an ethnic minority background.
- 4.10 Members may wish to consider a role they can play as community leaders in supporting the ongoing effort to rectify this, such as by encouraging appropriate candidates known to them to put their names forward as potential independent members.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 None.

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Legal officer	N/A
Financial officer	N/A
Human Resources officer	N/A
Service Director(s)	
Other(s)	None

For more information contact:	David Walsh 01332 255503 david.walsh@derby.gov.uk
Background papers:	None
List of appendices:	Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 – School Admission Appeals by month – 2009/10 municipal year

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

- 1.1 There would be a nominal cost to hosting a Mayoral reception, which would be met from the existing budget for civic events.

Legal

- 2.1 None.

Personnel

- 3.1 None.

Equalities Impact

- 4.1 The proposal that Members use their role as community leaders to encourage appropriate candidates to put their names forward as potential independent members would help make the pool better representative of the city's demographics.

Health and Safety

- 5.1 None.

Carbon commitment

- 6.1 None.

Value for money

- 7.1 None.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 8.1 City for Children and Young People – a more representative pool of independent members would better place the Council to undertake its responsibilities in relation to School Admission Appeals.

School Admission Appeals by month – 2009/10 municipal year

Month	Number of Appeals
June 2009	127
July 2009	116
August 2009	50
September 2009	31
October 2009	101
November 2009	29
December 2009	10
January 2010	20
February 2010	6
March 2010	27
April 2010	9