

<b>Schools Forum</b>			
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	<b>Spending review of selected DSG budgets – School Admissions and Appeals Team</b>		
<b>KEY DECISION</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Item No.</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>CLASS</b>	<b>Part 1</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>6 October 2016</b>

### **1. Purpose of the Report**

As part of the budget setting process it was agreed that it was not possible to review all the budgets in the Dedicated School Grant in one meeting when the total Dedicated School Grant budget is set as it did not allow sufficient time to give proper consideration to the issues. Officers were asked to bring a rolling programme of reviews. This report reviews the School Admissions and Appeals Team

### **2. Recommendation**

The Forum note the report

### **3. Background**

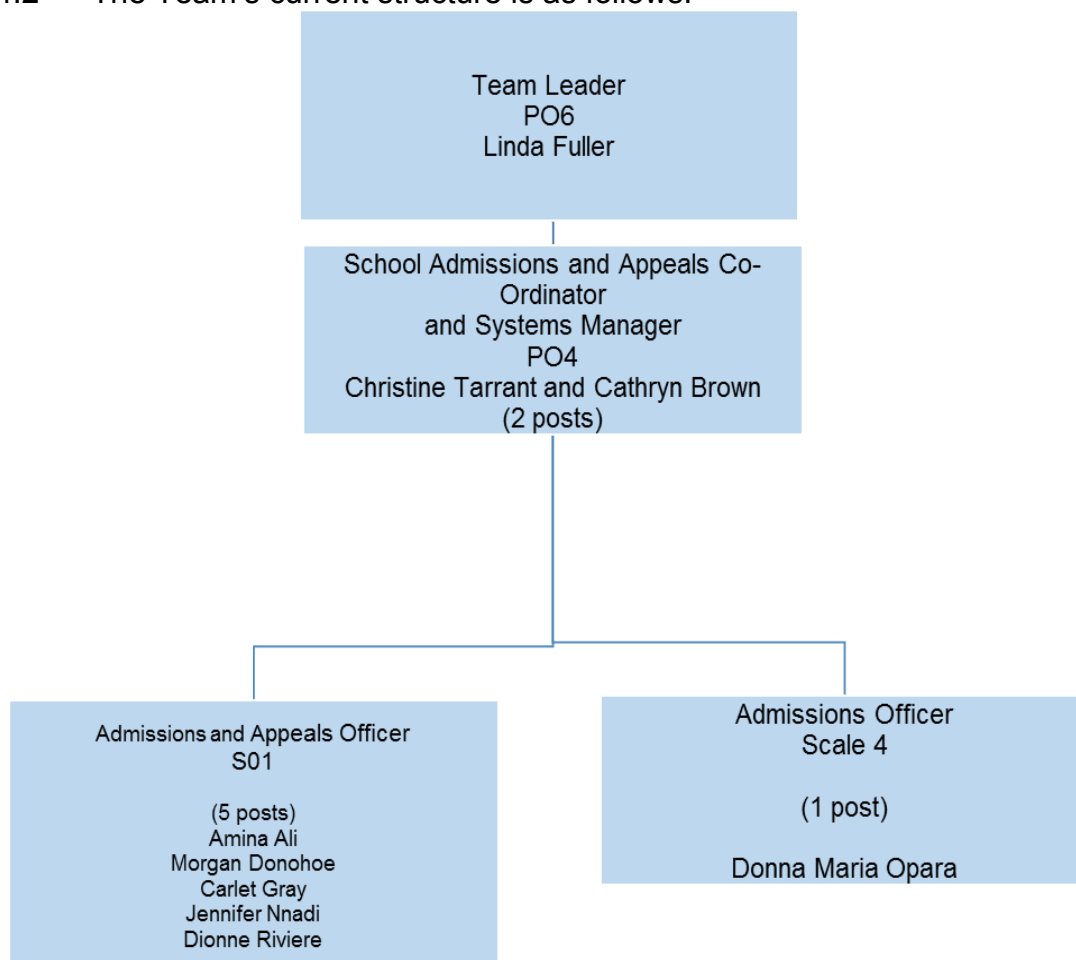
- 3.1 Lewisham is an inner London borough and the demand for school places is not expected to diminish for the foreseeable future. Current predictions are that over the next 20 years Lewisham will see one of the fastest population growths in London. The population of Lewisham is driven by the birth rate (5,000 live births each year) however immigration from overseas as well as inward migration by families seeking work in the Capital also influence demand.
- 3.2 The School Admissions and Appeals Team is the first source of school application data and information is regularly presented to the Place Planning Manager and strategic planning meetings.
- 3.3 Reception Admissions: In Lewisham 3848 Lewisham resident children made an on time application i.e. before 15 January 2016. The outcomes for these children are as follows: 80.4% first preference, 92.8% second preference.
- 3.4 Secondary Admissions: In Lewisham 3040 Lewisham resident children made an on time application i.e. by 31 October 2015. The outcomes for these children are as follows: 59.9% first preference, 84.3% second preference.

3.5 To safeguard children the home local authority has a statutory duty to ensure children are placed in school without delay. The aim of Lewisham's in year admission arrangements is to provide an applicant with an outcome of their school application within 20 school days. Whilst this deadline has been achieved for in year primary admissions the deadline has not always been met for secondary applications. This is because secondary schools in Lewisham have required the Admissions Team to collect additional information about the child not already collected on the in year application form from the previous school before agreeing to offer a place. This process adds time onto the period a child is out of school and considerably delays the admissions process.

#### 4. Service Budget

4.1 The Admissions Team's budget £449,104 is met from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and predominantly covers the staff budget (92%) the remaining budget covers Lewisham's annual contribution to the pan London Register and the Schools Admissions Module (SAM) and other expenses including stationery.

4.2 The Team's current structure is as follows:



## **5. National Regulations**

The regulations state that the Local authority can propose the budget for admissions up to the amount up to the value committed in 2014-15. The schools forum have power to decide the budget level.

## **6 Value for money/ price per pupil assessment**

- 6.1 The budget has been historically capped with no allowance for inflation. With the rise in pupil numbers this has meant the cost per pupil of £16 on 2011/12 has fallen to £14. When compared with our statistical neighbours Lewisham ranks the 5<sup>th</sup> highest out of 10 authorities. Islington is the highest at £35 per pupil. Croydon reports a spend of £22. One authority reports no spend. Lewisham spend is just below the average for our statistical neighbours.
- 6.2 No other London Local Authority's Admissions Team is structured in the same way as Lewisham and local authorities are of various sizes dealing with differing cohorts. From recent recruitment opportunities advertised by other London local authorities Lewisham's admissions officers are similarly graded.

## **7. In Year Admissions 2015/16 academic year**

Although there is currently no statutory requirement for the local authority to coordinate in year admissions, Lewisham Council has determined that it will do so for all mainstream maintained schools, including faith, foundation and free schools and Academies. This enables the local authority to:

- monitor and track children's placement in school,
- refer cases to the Children Missing in Education (CME) Officer when a school offer is not taken up and it appears that the child is not attending full time education,
- inform the Place Planning Manager of demands for school places and
- identify trends in applications including outward or inward migration.

In year admissions relate to all admissions to primary or secondary schools in a year group other than the planned admissions scheme to primary (Class R to Year 6) and secondary school (Year 7 to Year 11).

Applications for reception and Year 7 made from July in the year before the admission year commences are considered as 'in year' applications'. Applications should be made on a Lewisham In Year Admission Common Application Form (iCAF) and returned direct to the School Admissions and Appeals Team.

## 7.1 Primary In Year - primary applications – academic year 2015/16

Year group	In-Year Transfer Request since 1/8/15	Not in Education applications received since 1/8/15	All Applications received since 1/8/15	Offers made since 1/8/15	Notified vacancies **	Declines
<b>R</b>	330	149	479	311	13	70
<b>1</b>	224	216	440	334	85	43
<b>2</b>	195	184	379	294	128	21
<b>3</b>	197	181	378	287	137	28
<b>4</b>	149	144	293	211	168	25
<b>5</b>	91	132	223	193	263	14
<b>6</b>	36	92	128	94	226	8
<b>Total Year R - 6</b>	<b>1222</b>	<b>1096</b>	<b>2320</b>	<b>1724</b>	<b>1020</b>	<b>209</b>

In some cases it has become necessary to admit children to primary school under the Fair Access Protocol. Such cases include the admission of:

- a Child Looked After (CLA) to their preferred school,
- a sibling where other children in the family have been offered a vacancy but where a place does not exist for the child in question,
- where the child is new to the local authority and there are no vacancies within a reasonable distance to the family home or
- where there are safeguarding concerns and it has been necessary to transfer the child to a school which is full.

During the 2015/16 academic year 44 children were placed to accommodate such children by Admissions Officers under the Fair Access Protocol in the following year groups:

Year Group	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
<b>Placements</b>	19	5	5	2	7	5	1	44

## 7.2 Secondary In Year – secondary applications 2015/16 academic year

Year group	In-Year Transfer Request since 1/8/15	Not in Education applications received since 1/8/15	All Applications received since 1/8/15	Offers made since 1/8/15	Notified vacancies **	Declines
7	114	45	159	88	134	6
8	130	60	190	101	207	4
9	93	60	153	90	260	5
10	71	58	129	70	187	0
11	31	40	71	57	222	1
<b>Total Year 7-11</b>	<b>439</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>702</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>1010</b>	<b>16</b>

Bonus Pastor Catholic College, Haberdashers' Aske's Knights Academy and Sedgehill School did not update their roll information during the 2015/16 academic year so the actual number of vacancies may be greater than those given above.

The Admissions and Appeals Team has reminded all schools of the requirement to update their admissions numbers regularly and as they change for the 2016/17 academic year. The Team will challenge those schools who do not comply and, if necessary, cases will be escalated to senior officers for resolution.

## 7.3 In Year Admissions – 2016/17 academic year

The demand for school places for the 2016/17 academic year shows no sign of abating. Data relating to the in year admissions process so far this academic year (up to 29 September 2016) is as follows:

Primary and Secondary In-Year applications as at 29th September 2016

### Primary

Year	Applications	Offers/Accepted	Awaiting Proofs	Withdrawn
R	125	88	3	31
1	187	93	11	69
2	112	67	10	36
3	113	74	17	28
4	97	63	10	34
5	90	64	7	27
6	61	45	9	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>785</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>239</b>

<b>Secondary</b>				
<b>Year</b>	<b>Applications</b>	<b>Offers/Accepted</b>	<b>Awaiting Proofs</b>	<b>Withdrawn</b>
7	35	20	4	5
8	65	25	18	14
9	49	31	4	8
10	40	12	13	10
11	39	24	8	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>44</b>
Grand total	1013	606	114	283

Applications that are 'withdrawn' are those who are already on a roll of a local school, have applied for a transfer to another school in the area and where a place cannot be offered.

## 8. Challenges / gaps

8.1 There is likely to be a greater demand on officer's time to:

- Counsel and advise parents on the process. Senior officers are attending eight secondary transfer meetings at Lewisham primary schools this month. They are all out of hours and means staff have to take time off in lieu (the team has not been able to claim overtime for these meetings for many years). This puts pressure on a small team at the start of the term.
- Process a higher proportion of applications. Although parents apply electronically the admissions process is not simply a press of a couple of buttons.
- Respond to growing numbers of enquiries; telephone, emails, complaints, MP enquiries etc:
  - 18 Corporate Stage 1
  - 1 Corporate Stage 2
  - 1 Corporate Stage 3
  - 28 MP enquiries
  - 2 Councillor enquiries
  - 1 Mayor enquiry
  - 4 General enquiries
  - 21 Freedom of Information requests
- Present and defend admission appeals – in a year the local authority was unable to meet demand for reception class places the Team presented and defended 120 admissions appeals.

- Meet groups of disgruntled parents – again the year the local authority was unable to meet demand the lead Councillor agreed to meet with groups of parents which required Officer presence.
- Have a lead on customer services and communications to manage the relationships with schools.
- Respond to customer enquiries including emails. So far the team have received and responded to:  
1200 emails addressed to the School Admissions inbox in August and September 2016.  
600 (approx.) emails each sent direct to the two Lead Officers and the Team Manager.

8.2 Ideally we would like more capacity to support the challenges and gaps identified in order to have a stronger customer service and communications focus, to better manage the relationships with schools, deal with the complaints and increase in work load, in particular during the busy periods, which the service is experiencing a growth in.