

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Report to Council

Date of Meeting:	18 th May 2011
Report of:	Borough Solicitor
Subject/Title:	Appointments to Adoption Panel, Fostering Panel and Cheshire Admissions Forum

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 The report invites Council to approve a number of appointments to Statutory Panels and Forums which do not fall within the definition of “a Committee”.

2.0 Decision Requested

- 2.1 Council is asked to appoint –
- (a) one Councillor to the Adoption Panel;
 - (b) two Councillors to Cheshire Admissions Forum; and
 - (c) one Councillor to the Fostering Panel.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 These bodies carry out statutory functions and appointments are needed to ensure that the Council meets its obligations.

4.0 Background and Options

- 4.1 In March 2009 appointments were made to outside organisations. Cabinet appointed to Category 1 organisations (top level strategic organisations at national, regional and local level; for example, Fire Authority and Primary Care Trust). The former Governance and Constitution Committee appointed to the remaining organisations.
- 4.2 The Outside Organisations Sub-Committee (a sub-committee of the Constitution Committee) has carried out a review of appointments to outside organisations, to inform the appointments process in May 2011. As a consequence of that review, the Sub-Committee has concluded that there are some organisations which do not fall within the category of being “outside organisations” and it would be more appropriate for the Council to make such appointments as part of the annual Committee appointments

process. The organisations are Statutory Panels and Forums which do not fall within the definition of “a Committee”-

- Adoption Panel
- Cheshire Admissions Forum
- Fostering Panel

4.3 Adoption Panel

The Adoption Panel considers in detail all aspects of a plan for a “Looked After” child to be adopted and makes a recommendation as to whether or not the child should be adopted. In addition, the Panel considers the suitability of any families who apply to become adopters, and whether or not to recommend that they are suitable to adopt; and also considers the placement of any child with a particular adopter. The elected Member is a full member of the Panel. Under the performance objectives of the Panel, each member is asked to attend 75% of the meetings, which are held monthly, and in addition is asked to attend any training events and induction events that are held at least annually, and undergo an annual appraisal.

The role of the Adoption Panel and the appointment of elected Members are governed by the Adoption Agency Regulations 2005, Adoption and Children Act 2002.

The Adoption Panel comprises the following –

- Chair
- Medical Adviser
- Agency Members
- Social Workers (2)
- Elected Member (1)
- Independent members (3)
- Additional members (2)

4.4 Cheshire Admissions Forum

There is a statutory duty on the local authority to have in place an Admissions Forum.

Section 85 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 requires all local authorities to establish an Admissions Forum. Forums provide a means by which admission authorities and other key parties can discuss the effectiveness of local admissions arrangements, consider how to deal with difficult admissions issues and advise all admissions authorities on ways in which their arrangements can be improved. Forums also have a key role in ensuring a fair admissions system that promotes social equality, does not disadvantage one child compared with another and is straightforward and easy for parents to understand.

The Forum core membership comprises 14 members as follows –

- Local Education Authority Members (2)
- Schools (Community) (3)
- Schools (Voluntary Controlled) (1)
- School (Foundation) (2)
- Schools (Voluntary Aided) (2)
- Schools (Academies) (1)
- Diocesan Board Church of England Representative (1)
- Roman Catholic Diocese Representative (1)
- Parent Governor Representative (1)

4.5 Fostering Panel

The Panel considers and advises on the suitability of persons who apply to be foster carers for children who are “looked after” by the local authority. It states what its recommendations are in respect of a particular child or children and clarifies whether the prospective carers are to be approved for certain ages or categories of children.

It considers the continuing approval of foster carers following their annual carer’s review or other significant changes in their circumstances and advises on any other matter relating to the fostering service.

The Panel holds monthly meetings which are held in private. One nomination is required.

As with the Adoption Panel and the Cheshire Admissions Forum, the Fostering Panel is administered by Cheshire East Children’s Services and, as such, is not an outside organisation.

5.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer.

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