



12 May 2023

<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>APPOINTMENT TO THE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL ADMISSION APPEAL PANEL</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC AND MEMBER SERVICES</b>

## **REPORT SUMMARY**

The report provides details of newly trained volunteers to be appointed to the Independent Appeal Panel to undertake hearings for appeals for entry to primary and secondary schools in Wirral and Liverpool.

The matter affects all wards but is not a key decision.

The matter contributes to the Brighter Futures Wirral Plan priority by ensuring that children within Wirral have access to a fair and transparent independent school appeal process.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

The Director of Law and Governance is recommended to appoint Dave Mitchell, Vicky Wilson, Fiona Clague and Sue Smith to the Independent Appeal Panel.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

1.1 To enable the members listed to undertake appeal hearings during May 2023.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

2.1 The other option would be to not appoint the members listed to the Independent Appeal Panel. This was discounted as they are required to ensure that all appellants have access to an Independent Panel to hear their appeal.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

3.1 Wirral Council's Committee Services team provides administrative and secretarial support to the Independent School Appeal process for all maintained Wirral schools, most Wirral academy schools and some Liverpool academy schools.

3.2 The Admission Appeals Code 2022 requires that a Panel, independent of the school and the admissions authority, must be appointed to undertake the appeal hearings for entry to that particular school, and that the same Panel must hear all of the on-time appeals.

3.3 Wirral has a pool of over 30 volunteers who hear over 500 appeals a year, the majority of which take place between May and July.

3.4 For 2023, it has been necessary to undertake a recruitment drive to ensure that there are sufficient Panel Members to hear all of the appeals that have been received. Dave Mitchell, Vicky Wilson, Fiona Clague and Sue Smith were all recruited and have received the necessary training.

3.5 Members of the Independent Appeal Panel are appointed annually by the Children, Young People and Education Committee. Therefore the Director of Law and Governance is asked to appoint the aforementioned Panel Members in advance of the next meeting of the Children, Young People and Education Committee to enable them to hear appeals in May 2023.

### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Panel Members are volunteers and only expenses are covered. The cost of this is met through existing budget raised through income from undertaking admission appeal hearings on behalf of academy schools.

### **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 It is a requirement of the Admission Appeals Code 2022 to ensure that a Panel is properly appointed and that the same three Panel Members hear all on-time appeals for the same school. The recommendations within this report enable the Council to meet this legal requirement.

### **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

6.1 There are no direct resource implications as a result of this report.

## **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

7.1 The key risk is not being able to provide a fair and on-time hearing for all residents who appeal for entry to a preferred school. The recommendations within this report enable the Council to have a strong pool of volunteers and ensure that all appeals can be heard in a timely manner.

## **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

8.1 A recruitment drive has taken place to attract further volunteers to the Panel.

## **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.

9.2 There is no requirement for an Equality Impact Assessment as a result of this report.

## **10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no direct environ and climate implications as a result of this report. Panel Members are encouraged to travel by public transport where possible, and appeals are now mainly undertaken at Birkenhead Town Hall which has good access links.

## **11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 Being a member of the Independent Appeal Panel provides Panel Members with excellent training and experience. Most Panel Members are Wirral residents.

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## **APPENDICES**

N/A

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

School Admission Appeals Code 2022

## **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Children, Young People and Education Committee</b>	<b>June 2022</b>
	<b>June 2021</b>