1. SUMMARY

1.1 Admission arrangements for all schools are required to be determined annually by the approving body.

1.2 This report provides information on the proposed admission arrangements for community schools in Waltham Forest for 2016-2017.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Cabinet is recommended to:

2.1.1 Approve the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools in Waltham Forest for 2016-2017.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Under the School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Coordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 and the School Admissions Code 2014, all admission authorities must determine their admission arrangements by 15 April every year, even if they have not changed from previous years and a consultation has not been required.

3.2 London Borough Waltham Forest is the admission authority for all community and voluntary controlled schools within the borough.
3.3 Admission arrangements include the overall procedure, practices and oversubscription criteria used in deciding the allocation of school places.

3.4 All admission authorities must participate in the normal rounds of co-ordination by the Local Authority, but any school is permitted to conduct their own in-year allocations.

3.5 Academies, including free schools, voluntary aided and foundation schools are their own admission authority and must determine their own admission arrangements in line with statutory requirements.

4. OPTIONS & ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

4.1 Determining the admission arrangements on an annual basis is a statutory requirement.

4.2 Not determining the admission arrangements would put the Local Authority in breach of its statutory duty.

5. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY PRIORITIES (AND OTHER NATIONAL OR LOCAL POLICIES OR STRATEGIES)

5.1 The Community Strategy promotes economic, social and environmental well-being of the local area.

5.2 Ensuring that children are allocated a school place while adhering to the School Admission Code is an essential element to this strategy.

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 The School Admissions Code 2014 specifies that a statutory consultation is required where a change is proposed for admission arrangements, or at least once every seven years, even if there have been no changes during that period.

6.2 All schools were asked to confirm if they are willing to continue with the current arrangements, and the Federation of St. Mary’s and St. Saviour's Church of England Primary Schools have opted to conduct their own in-year admissions from 2016/17. Furthermore, the Local Authority itself has proposed to introduce an additional oversubscription criterion to give priority to children of staff. More detailed information on these changes is provided in the Admission Arrangements 2016/17 document (page 3), Appendix A.

6.3 Therefore the Local Authority conducted a consultation to account for these changes.

6.4 The consultation was sent to all heads, published on the Local Authority website, advertised in the Waltham Forest News, and was sent to all neighbouring local authorities.

6.5 It is a requirement that the consultation be for 8 weeks; the duration of the consultation was 15 December 2014 to 9 February 2015.
6.6 As the Local Authority is the admission authority for all community and voluntary controlled schools within the borough, the oversubscription criteria that are set apply to all of those schools. Therefore, oversubscription criteria will only change as a result of a majority of affected schools responding that they agree to adopt the proposed criteria. It was assumed that any affected schools that did not respond were in agreement with the proposal.

6.7 Three responses were received. Two agreed with the proposal to give children of staff at the school priority. The third response stated they did not agree to provide children of staff priority if they do not live in the area. Although this was not one of the options described in the proposal, officers do not recommend making any changes to the proposal in the light of that response. A further comment was received stating a preference for the Local Authority to co-ordinate all in-year applications.

6.8 The admission arrangements and responses to the consultation have been considered by senior officers within the Families Directorate, and the Portfolio Lead Member for Children and Young People. Members are asked to take those responses into account when making a decision whether or not to agree to approve the proposed admission arrangements.

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Finance, Value for Money and Risk

7.1.1 The admission arrangements are fully compliant with the School Admissions Code 2014. Adhering to the regulations ensures that the Local Authority acts legally and will keep to a minimum officer hours and costs associated with time spent on preparing for and attending school admission appeals.

7.2 Legal

7.2.1 The School Admissions Code was issued under Section 84 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. The admission arrangements outlined in this report are fully compliant with the School Admissions Code 2014 which came into force on 19th December 2014 and which applies to admission arrangements to be determined in 2015 for admissions in the school year 2016/17 and any future years.

7.2.2 The consultation was carried out in accordance with the statutory requirements. Members must conscientiously take into account the views expressed by those who have taken part in the consultation when making their decision. Consultation responses are not binding on members but need to be taken into account.

7.3 Equalities and Diversity

7.3.1 The School Admissions Code 2014 promotes equality, and adhering to these regulations will ensure the Local Authority supports equality. No negative impacts on equality groups have been identified as a result of the proposed admission arrangements.
7.4 Sustainability (including climate change, health, crime and disorder)

7.4.1 No implications

7.5 Council Infrastructure

7.5.1 No implications

BACKGROUND INFORMATION (as defined by Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985)

School Admissions Code 2014

The School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Coordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012