

SCHOOL ADMISSIONS FORUM

Minutes: 3rd December 2010

- Present: Councillor L. Kelly (Local Authority) (Chair)
P. Burns (Independent School Appeal Panel)
Reverend T. Colling (SACRE)
K. Edwards (Catholic Diocese)
C. Firth (Choice Adviser)
J. McHale (Schools – Community)
C. Mulley (Church of England Diocese)
M. Simpson (Special Educational Needs)
- In Attendance: J. Applegarth (Children, Learning and Young People Directorate)
E. Atkins (Finance and Legal Services Directorate)
S. Heawood (Children, Learning and Young People Directorate)
G. Paddan (Customer and Workforce Services Directorate)
C. Shearsby (Children, Learning and Young People Directorate)
- Apologies: C. Buchanan (Schools – Voluntary Aided)
Councillor Mrs H. Johnson (Local Authority)
- Public: A. A. Burr
A. J. White

158. Introduction and Apologies

Members introduced themselves and were welcomed to the meeting.

Apologies were received from C. Buchanan and Councillor Mrs Johnson.

159. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 24th September 2010 were agreed as a true record.

160. Matters Arising

- a) With reference to Minute 156(c), it was agreed that the agenda and associated paperwork/reports for the School Admissions Forum meetings be emailed to Members alongside hard copies. Members agreed to provide their email addresses.

- b) It was noted by the Forum that the earlier starting time of the Forum meetings had contributed to some Member absences.

161. Expanding Primary School Places

The Forum received a report (Document 2) on the provision of primary school places. It was noted that the Authority consulted during December 2009 to January 2010 on proposals to increase the admission numbers of 17 primary schools for September 2011 and September 2012. The table illustrated revised admission numbers for September 2011 and 2012 as detailed in the published Statutory Notices. Members were advised that there had been a delay in the progress of some building work due to a number of issues, for example, problems with moving water mains.

It was noted that the provision of primary and secondary school places needed to be under continuous review, as whilst there was evident demand for places over the next few years the available evidence appeared to suggest that the demand would not be maintained. In order to meet the fluctuations in demand alternative solutions to meet demand were being explored e.g. – ‘Bumper year group’ solution was applied in Moseley School for September 2011; there will be an enlarged year group admission for one year only.

Members of the Forum expressed concern about the difficulties in forecasting the future number of applicants for school places. Judith Applegarth advised that the Authority was monitoring the numbers of pre-school children available from its own data and, whilst awaiting health service data, the clarification of available capital funding streams and carrying out further exploration of alternative options. It was agreed that a letter or an advisory note would be sent to the Voluntary Aided Schools/School Governors to confirm the accommodation plans for those to be expanded in 2011/12.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

162. Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements for 2012

In accordance with The School Admissions Regulations 2008, admission authorities are no longer required to consult annually but every three years unless the proposed admission arrangements are different to those determined in the previous year.

The Forum considered the Primary, Infant and Junior School Co-ordination Admissions Scheme 2012/13 (Document 3a). Following review of the document some amendments were proposed to the following pages and sections: page 1, 4ii, page 3 s14c, page 4, s22 and page 5.

Discussion was held on potential changes relating to the reintroduction of a social and medical need oversubscription criteria but this item was not pursued.

It was noted that online applications had increased and this should be reflected within the document. The dates in the reports had been highlighted as these were not confirmed due to the delay of administration meetings with neighbouring authorities. It was reported that the dates were comparable each year plus/minus a few days.

Members reviewed the Secondary School Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme 2012/2013 (Document 3b). This was a similar account with online application numbers being increased. Amendments were discussed for the following pages and sections - page 2, s4ii, page 3, s15 bullet 3, page 5, s26 and page 5, s28.

The Forum agreed that the wording under section 4ii within both reports be replaced with the following paragraph: 'If a place cannot be offered at a nominated school, a place will be offered at the nearest available school following consultation with own admission authorities where appropriate'.

RESOLVED that the Primary and Secondary Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for 2012 be approved subject to the amendments outlined above and sent out for consultation.

163. Minority Group Support Services (MGSS) on Children from abroad

Chris Shearsby gave a presentation on pupils recently arrived from overseas that had been admitted to schools in the City during the period September 2009 to August 2010. The statistics showed that the total number was 1,001 (1,212 in 2008/09), which represented a reduction of 211 (-17%) on previous year. It was noted that primary admissions were 62% and 38% to secondary schools.

The presentation also showed the past nine year trends on pupils from overseas, together with monthly admission trends. Details were also provided in terms of ethnicity and immigration status of these pupils and the Forum noted in particular the variety of languages spoken by these pupils.

Statistics were also reported in respect of the waiting time for pupils from overseas to be admitted to schools and the number of days lost, which raised some concern. It was agreed that delays in admissions should not be identified as being a failing of the Admissions Team but that the new co-ordinated scheme had played some part along with school based delays.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

164. In-year Admissions Process

Sue Heawood explained the situation in respect of the In-Year admissions process. She detailed difficulties on implementation of the new system, which were in part due to IT system problems in September. It was noted that it was not just an issue for Coventry but also for neighbouring authorities. It was acknowledged that for some head teachers the process was confusing. Officers

were working in collaboration with schools aiming for a clear and efficient process of allocation.

Members of the Forum were advised that the School Admissions Code is due to go out to consultation. Some concern was voiced about possible over simplification of the Admissions Code. Details will be provided when the consultation takes place.

RESOLVED that the verbal report be noted.

165. Transport Update

A verbal report was presented to Members on the City Council's Secondary School transport policy consultation. It was noted that savings had to be made as a result of substantial reduction in government spending, and that all discretionary spending had to be scrutinised. As approximately 65% of the budget for school bus passes for mainstream schools was spent as a result of the discretionary transport policy for secondary schools, this policy was now being consulted on. It was noted that the consultation period would run from 13th December 2010 to 13th February 2011. New policy implementation would commence with a change for all Year 7 pupils in September 2012 but that any changes to the discretionary transport policy would not affect those pupils already entitled to a pass.

Post minute note: an email was circulated to Members providing the website link to the transport consultation document, as discussed at the meeting.

166. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

167. Date of next meeting

The Forum noted that the date of the next meeting would be 18th February 2011.

Chair