

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Education and Skills held at 11.00
am on Monday, 3 February 2020

Present:

Members: (Cabinet Member)
Councillor J Blundell (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Non-Voting Opposition

Members:

Co-Opted Members:

Other Members: Councillors

Employees (by Directorate):

K Nelson, People Directorate
S Heawood, People Directorate
M Rose, Resources Directorate

Apologies: Councillor

Public Business

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th January, 2019 were signed as a true record.

3. Community and Voluntary Controlled School Admission Policies for 2021/22 and Co-ordinated School Admission Schemes for 2021/22

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) that sought approval of the Admissions Policy for Community and Voluntary Controlled Primary, Infant and Junior Schools for 2021/22 and approval of the Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for Primary, Infant and Junior Schools and Secondary Schools in Coventry for 2021/22. The proposed Admissions Policy and Schemes were appended to the report.

Each year the Department for Education requires Local Authorities to determine the co-ordination schemes for school admissions in their areas and the admissions policies for community and voluntary controlled schools which were the responsibility of the local authority, by 28 February.

In April 2006, Cabinet agreed that consideration of reports on school admission arrangements would be delegated to the appropriate Cabinet Member in years

where there were no significant changes to admission arrangements. (Cabinet minute number 253/06 refers). The only change was in the reduction of published admission numbers at three primary schools and a consultation had taken place as required by the School Admissions Code 2014.

After several years of expanding primary schools across the city, there had recently been reducing birth rates and lower demand for places in reception at primary school. This trend was forecast to continue. Where schools had high numbers of spare places this created financial difficulties for the schools. In order to meet these challenges as a local authority we needed to be able to offer a sustainable level of school places to offer parental choice whilst supporting schools to manage their financial position.

All primary schools were notified in the summer term about the general picture of falling demand which would leave 12% available spaces across the city which was considerably above the Department for Education recommended levels of 4 – 8% spare capacity. Schools were asked to consider whether their governing bodies would wish to consult on reducing their published admission numbers (PAN). Meetings were held with schools in local planning areas where forecasts showed particularly high levels of surplus places. A meeting of the primary partnership in the autumn term 2019 also provided an opportunity to discuss the strategic picture again.

Alderman's Green and Spon Gate primary schools requested a reduction in their PAN from 2020 and so a separate application had been made to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator to reduce the admission number at each school by one form of entry. Whilst awaiting the result of this application, both schools had been put forward for a reduction from 2021. The governing body of Frederick Bird School also proposed a reduction to assist in managing the reducing level of demand across schools in their local planning area. In each case the schools were proposing to reduce by one form of entry and the consultation had taken place from 27 November to 8 January 2020.

On 9 January 2020 the Office of the Schools Adjudicator published their decision to agree to the reduction of the PAN at Spon Gate School from 2020 onwards to 30. This meant that the consultation for a reduction to 30 from 2021 was no longer required. On 13 January 2020 the Office of the Schools Adjudicator published their decision to agree to the reduction of the PAN at Alderman's Green School from 2020 onwards to 60. This meant that the consultation for a reduction to 60 from 2021 was no longer required.

The consultation period was held between the 27 November 2019 to 8 January 2020 using the council online consultation platform Let's Talk Coventry. At the close of the consultation survey 59 visitors had downloaded the consultation documents and 19 responses were received. A full analysis was appended to the report. Overall the proposals were supported for each school. The numbers of parents who disagreed with the proposed reductions were 5 (plus 2 non-parents) at Alderman's Green, 2 parents at Frederick Bird and 3 parents (plus 2 non-parents) at Spon Gate. Comments and concerns raised mainly related to whether all new housing developments were taken into account, the sustainability of one form of entry primary schools and the impact on parental choice in local areas

where places were reduced. Responses had been included in the consultation results document to show how these concerns were being addressed.

The Cabinet Member and Shadow Cabinet Member discussed with officers the council's role in admissions, forms of entry in the City and the one infant and one junior school that remained separate. The also discussed sustainability and resilience of the system which provides an element of choice and the best use of resources when there was an increase in secondary places required while primary places were decreasing.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Skills and Education approves:

- 1) the Admissions Policy for Community and Voluntary Controlled Primary, Infant and Junior Schools for 2021/22 as set out in appendix 1 to the report.**
- 2) the Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for Primary, Infant and Junior Schools in Coventry for 2021/22 as set out in appendix 2 to the report**
- 3) the Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for Secondary Schools in Coventry for 2021/22 as set out in see appendix 3 to the report.**

4. Outstanding Issues

There were no outstanding issues.

5. Any Other Items of Public Business

There were no other items of business.

(Meeting closed at 11.15 am)