

MINUTES of the meeting of Local Admissions Forum held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Thursday 5 November 2009 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor JW Hope MBE (Chairman)
Councillor AM Toon (Vice Chairman)

Mrs J Baker, Mr C Barker, Mrs S Catlow-Hawkins, Mrs O Denson, Mrs E Kearns, Denson, Weston, Mr N Parker, Mrs S Catlow-Hawkins, Barker, Robertson and Smith and Mrs C Weston,

In attendance: None

14. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Councillor AM Toon was nominated and seconded for the Vice-Chairmanship.

RESOLVED: That Mrs S Catlow-Hawkins be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Local Admissions Forum for the remainder of the ensuing year.

15. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr A Leach, Mr T Plumer and Mr T Mepham.

16. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no named substitutes.

17. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on the 18 June 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr C Barker declared a prejudicial interest in Minute No.20 being Headteacher of Fairfield High school.

Councillor AM Toon declared a prejudicial interest in Minute No. 22 being a Governor at Trinity Primary school and Whitecross High school.

Mrs J Baker, Governor at Kingstone High school declared a prejudicial interest in Minute No.20 being Governor at Kingstone High school.

19. LATE ITEMS/ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A Member proposed that this item be included as the last item on future Agenda.

RESOLVED: That the Late Items / Any other business item be included as the last item on future Admissions Forum Agenda.

20. AMENDMENTS TO SCHOOL PLANNED ADMISSION NUMBERS

The Forum considered a report presented by the Admissions and Transport Manager regarding proposed changes in the Planned Admission Numbers at Kingsland CE school, Aylestone High school and Fairfield High school.

The Admissions and Transport Manager informed the Forum that following the views of the Forum regarding the proposed changes in PANs for each school, the PANs would be put in place in September 2010.

In answer to a Member's question, the Admissions and Transport Manager informed the Forum that in accordance with the new Admissions Code which came into force in February 2009, providing a school was able to take pupil numbers, a place would be granted whether the child is in the catchment area of the school or not. He reminded Members that the decisions of the Forum with regard to Kingsland CE Primary School, Aylestone High school and Fairfield High School would form part of the consultation process with schools in future.

A Member asked why some proposals for increases to PAN at schools were not supported by the officers and some are supported. The Admissions and Transport Manager informed Members that the new Admissions Code dictates that when a request is received for a popular school and provided that the school can take the number, the place will be granted.

A Member expressed the view that the current Admissions Code did not help the falling admission numbers in certain schools.

A discussion took place regarding the current pupil numbers that schools were able to take before there was a need to request an increase to PAN. Members also noted that outside of this factor, schools were bound to admit pupils as a result of the appeals process.

A Member was of the view that schools generally did not know the full implications of the new Admissions code as it affects pupil admissions.

A Member suggested that where the Forum changes a PAN that schools should be notified of such changes through Cluster groups. The Assistant Director Planning, Performance and Development advised that if it was decided that all schools should be notified of PAN changes or oversubscription, that notification should be made 'on line' to all schools.

At this point Mr C Barker, Headteacher at Fairfield High school, remained in the meeting but did not vote or participate in the decision relating to the request for a change in PAN for Fairfield High school.

Mrs J Baker, Governor of Kingstone High school, remained in the meeting but did not vote relating to the request for a change in PAN for Fairfield High school. She informed the Forum of the High school's objections to the proposed increase in the PAN of Fairfield High school. She emphasised that any decision to increase the PAN of Fairfield High school could result in pupil numbers falling at Kingstone High school as a consequence and possible teacher redundancies.

In answer to a Member's question, the Admissions and Transport Manager informed Members that future pupil number projections indicated that 60 per cent would be taken from the school's catchment area with the remainder being taken from outside that area.

The Planning and Access Manager informed the Forum that there was no significant house building planned for the Fairfield catchment area.

A Member referred to instances where a number of parents with children of special needs have requested a place at Fairfield School but did not always get a place at that school. The Admissions and Transport Manager reminded the Forum that where parents of Statemented children request a place at a particular school, the school is bound to take those children.

A Member was of the view that there did not seem to be sufficient information contained within the report on the impact that the increase in PAN at Fairfield High school would have on other schools and that such information should be an integral part of reports to the Forum where schools request a change to their PAN.

A Member reminded the Forum that appeals against Forum decisions to change school PANs can be made to the Schools Adjudicator.

RESOLVED: That

- (i) the changes to the Planned Admission Numbers at Kingsland CE school, Aylestone High school and Fairfield High school as set out in the report be approved; and**
- (ii) in future, reports to the Admissions Forum regarding requests for permission to increase Planned Admission Numbers must contain information on the impact that such changes could have on other schools.**

Following the above decision relating to Fairfield High school, Mr C Barker returned to the meeting.

21. CO-ORDINATION OF IN YEAR TRANSFERS

The Admissions and Transport Manager presented a report regarding a scheme that Herefordshire can adopt to meet the government requirement for all local authorities to have a 'Coordinated In Year Transfer' application process in operation from September 2010. He emphasised that the process was a statutory requirement and was part of the current Admissions Code. Schools had been consulted on the proposals.

Members noted that Herefordshire currently runs a voluntary scheme where the admissions and transport teams process 70 per cent of maintained schools in year transfer requests. The new formulated scheme would mean this would rise to 100 per cent.

RESOLVED: That the Admissions Forum agrees that the In Year Transfer application process as set out in the Appendix to the report be submitted to the Department of Children's Schools and Families for its approval.

22. IN YEAR FAIR ACCESS PROPOSALS

The Admissions and Transport Manager presented a report regarding a protocol that Herefordshire can adopt to meet the government requirement for all local authorities to have an 'In Year Fair Access Protocol' in operation. He emphasised that the protocol was designed to make it easier for parents to transfer to another school.

In referring to the categories of children covered by the Fair Access Protocol, paragraph 7 in the report refers, a Member suggested that service children should be included as a category.

A Member made reference to situations where schools state that the needs of students requesting access to that school, could not be met. Also that schools could override a request from a student before a student is formally statemented.

The Admissions and Transport Manager advised that the Panel should take account of such situations.

A Member made reference to the question on the 'In Year Fair Access' application form which asks for details of the date and address of the church at which a child is baptised and suggested that the question should be amended to take account of the fact that not all Christians have their children baptised.

A Member expressed the view that it was vital that a Choice adviser or Parent Partnership Service representative should be represented on the Placement Panel.

RESOLVED: That subject to the following amendments, the Admissions Forum agrees to the proposed In Year fair Access Protocol for Herefordshire being submitted to the Department of Children's Schools and Families for its approval:

- (i) **children of service personnel and other crown services being added to categories of children covered by the Fair Access Protocol;**
- (ii) **the question on the 'In Year Fair Access' application form which asks for details of the date and address of the church at which a child is baptised be amended to take account of the fact that not all Christians have their children baptised; and**
- (iii) **the Placement Panel Membership be amended to include either a Choice Advisor or Parent Partnership Service representative.**