

COUNTY OF HEREFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of Local Admissions Forum held at Council Chamber, Brockington on Tuesday, 10th February, 2004 at 7.00 p.m.

Councillors: JP Thomas(Chairman), J. Stone, and Ms. A.M. Toon

Present: Fr M Carney, Mrs S Hines, A Marson, Mrs V Pawsey, A Ross, P Shannon, Rev I Terry and Mrs SE Wright

In attendance: A Blackman, M Chamberlain, and G Salmon

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from NPJ Griffiths – Headteachers representative, H Lewis – Looked After Children representative.

2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no named substitutes.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED: THAT the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2003 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the additional remarks to Minute Item 22 as set out below.

Minute Item No 22: A request was made for information to be presented at the next meeting on the criteria set out in the admissions policy for the Bishop of Hereford's Bluecoat School.

4. LATE ITEM / ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Under the agenda item for late items and any other business Members discussed the admission arrangements for the Bishop of Hereford's Bluecoat School. The School Services Manager provided the Forum with a copy of a letter received from the headteacher, Mr Marson outlining the schools' reasons for not amending the admission policy and also a copy of the admission policy for voluntary aided schools, as at Appendix 4 of the Information For Parents Booklet. Mark Chamberlain advised Members that he was seeking the views of the Forum on the policy and that if they did not feel that the policy was clear, firm and objective, there might then be a need to take the matter to the Adjudicator.

Concern was raised over the information that was provided at the time of admission and whether parents would be able to judge as to whether they would fall within the criteria outlined in the policy to make a successful application. The Chairman reminded Members that the Forum was there purely to consult with and not to decide on the criteria. A question was raised as to whether Councillor Ms Toon needed to declare an

interest as she had raised the question on the admission policy and had children attending the school. The legal services representative advised that a declaration of interest was not required as long as the Councillor was not applying for a place at the school. He added that he felt that it was important for Members to be aware of the Councillor's connection with the school in case a judgement was required by Forum Members.

Reverend Terry further outlined the admission policy for the school and how the criteria was reached. Members then discussed the clarity of the admissions policy.

RESOLVED: THAT the admissions policy for the Bishop of Hereford's Bluecoat School was judged to be clear, fair and objective.

5. **LOCAL ADMISSION FORUM MEMBERSHIP**

The School Services Manager advised the Forum that nominations were currently being sought by the Education Directorate for a parent governor representative for primary and for special schools.

6. **OVER SUBSCRIPTION POLICY FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS - 2005/06**

The School Services Manager informed Members of the legal requirement to seek the views of the Forum on the proposed admission policy for community and voluntary controlled schools for the year 2005/06. He stated there was a requirement for an over-subscription policy that had admission criteria that was clear, fair and objective and was for the benefit of all children, including those with special educational needs, disabilities or in public care. This was especially so for children with a SEN (Special Educational Needs) statement where a school was named and which could be over-subscribed, or for pupils in receipt of banded funding where the LEA would identify a specific school.

The School Services Manager added that the current policy had been in place for many years and the only additional element was related to the introduction of the banding scheme. It was believed by the LEA that the best way of clarifying the banding was by stating it was for children that had significant, severe and complex special needs and it was emphasised that most schools provided the necessary requirements for children with SEN statements.

Members discussed the report generally regarding over-subscription but were particularly concerned that those parents opting for the banding system, as opposed to a named school on the SEN statement, would not be disadvantaged.

RESOLVED: THAT the general admissions policy for determining the allocation of places in community and voluntary controlled schools for the year 2005/06 be endorsed.

7. **CO-ORDINATED PRIMARY ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS**

The School Services Manager outlined to the Forum the requirements in the Education Act 2002 for a co-ordinated admissions scheme in both primary and secondary schools. He explained that LEAs had been given the choice to commence the co-ordinated admission scheme for primary schools from September 2005 or delay it for one year if appropriate.

He stated that it was felt by the LEA that in view of the success of the implementation of

the Secondary Co-Ordinated Admission Scheme, and with the new Foundation computer software already in place within the Directorate, it seemed appropriate to implement the scheme for primary schools in 2005.

In order to progress a draft scheme for the Forum a Working Party of headteachers, chair of governors and the two diocesan authorities met to identify proposals for recommendation. Items discussed were the number of preferences allowed on the application, whether they should be ranked, a closing date and an offer date within Herefordshire.

The Working Party proposed the admission form should offer two places in ranked order on a common application form, with a closing date for applications of 14 January and an offer date for a place of 21 March. These proposals were outlined at Appendix 2 to the report. The Church of England representative advised members that a great deal of negotiation had been carried out by the Working Party in order to reach the proposals put forward. He added that he would be meeting with the headteachers of the voluntary aided schools to come to a common agreement on the admission policies for these schools in order that they also reflected what was agreed at the Forum.

RESOLVED:

THAT

(a) the Co-ordinated Primary Admission Arrangements as set out in the report be endorsed;

and

(b) the Co-ordinated Primary Admission Arrangements be introduced for admissions in September 2005.

8. CO-ORDINATED SECONDARY ADMISSIONS

The School Services Manager reminded Members of the admission scheme for co-ordinated secondary admissions currently being implemented, which had three ranked places on a common application form. Members had outlined to them the details of applications received so far and advised that the LEA was close to notifying parents of their choice of school and whether they had been successful.

Forum Members were concerned that parents having children in the private sector that now wanted to move them into an LEA school might not be informed of the required application date. It was stated that the date for application would be passed on to the private schools. However, it could not be guaranteed that all private schools would pass on this information, as they were commercial organisations. A request was made for an advertisement to be placed in the Hereford Times to assist in advising parents of the dates.

Members raised concern over those parents that had not applied for any school, which currently stood at 27 non-returned forms from known children within the system, as they were anxious that they might be allocated a place to an out of catchment school. Members were advised that, under the Rotherham Judgement, if parents had not indicated a school preference LEAs cannot assume that parents would wish to use their catchment school and therefore the LEA could not allocate a place without the parent's

consent.

As a note of interest the School Services Manager advised the Forum that the LEA had made an application to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) to pilot a scheme to have applications for secondary school admissions on line.

RESOLVED:

THAT

- (a) the Forum notes the current position on secondary transfers for September 2004;**
 - (b) the Forum supports the continuation of the co-ordinated scheme based on the current format and arrangements, noting the earlier application date of 29 October 2004;**
- and**
- (c) an advertisement be placed in the Hereford Times to advise parents of the date for application to an LEA Secondary School.**

9. SA3 FORM AND CASUAL HIGH SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

The School Services Manager asked the Forum to consider the changes to the SA3 Form, as outlined at Appendix 1 to the report, along with the summary of secondary school casual admissions over the last 12 months. He explained that there was a need to amend the form to make it more user friendly, self-explanatory and clarify the question regarding a child in the care of Herefordshire Council. Members agreed that it would be more appropriate to put on the form looked after children and requested that the name of the Social Worker assigned to the child be added also.

In addition there was a query in relation to supportive information requested if an application to a school was being made on medical, social or compassionate grounds. Members felt that a greater emphasis needed to be put on the form requesting supportive information. Two suggested proposals were:

- *Not submitting supportive information may prejudice your application.*
- *Has your child any special educational needs involving assessment by an outside professional?*

The Forum agreed that officers in consultation with the Chairman could carry out the proposed amendments to the SA3 form.

RESOLVED:

THAT

- (a) the number of casual admissions for secondary schools in 2003 be noted;**

and

- (b) officers revise the SA3 Form, in consultation with the Chairman, with consideration given to the amendments as set out above.**

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm

CHAIRMAN

