

MINUTES of the meeting of Local Admissions Forum held at Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford HR1 1SH on Thursday, 25th September, 2008 at 6.30 p.m.

Present:	Local Education Authority	JW Hope(Chairman) and AM Toon (Vice-Chairman)
	Church Representative	Anne Robertson (Roman Catholic Church)
	Headteachers	C. Barker (Community High School)
	School Governors	Mr Ross (Primary Schools)
	Parent Governors	R Stevenson
	Local Community Rep	None

In attendance: Councillors SJ Robertson and J Woodward

18. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J Pemberton, A Leach, Sara Catlow -Hawkins and N Parker.

19. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no named substitutes.

20. MINUTES

Councillor AM Toon made reference to Resolutions (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv) to Minute No.10 and requested clarification that the Parents Information booklet had been amended to take these amendments into account.

Andrew Blackman, Admissions and Transport Manager, reported that the Information booklet would be amended to take account of the Resolutions.

Resolved: that subject to the following amendment, the Minutes of the meeting of the meeting held on the 19th June 2008 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman:

the substitution of the number '16' for the number '41' in the final line of the final paragraph in the preamble to Minute No.13.

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

22. LATE ITEMS/ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Councillor AM Toon made reference to children who were eligible for funding in

schools either via Special Educational Needs (SEN) or alternatively Banded funding. She expressed concern about the way in which some schools were administering this eligibility and were tending to support the funding of such children through the Banded funding criteria to alleviate the schools from the more bureaucratic SEN funding process.

Sharon Menghini, Director of Children's Services informed the members that at a future meeting, the Forum would be considering a consultation document with regard to changes to Banded Funding out to schools and at that point, the issues referred to by Councillor Toon could be considered. A professional view together with families views would also be included in the consultation document. She emphasised that legally, parents had the right for their children to a statutory assessment for SEN funding but that there was the possibility that the assessment could result in their case being turned down.

Councillor Toon referred to the issue where in some cases parents had acquired a private assessment for their child as evidence to present to the school for SEN funding and that this was due to those schools being disinclined to consider SEN funding initially.

RESOLVED: That the Director of Children's Services investigate the issues raised by Councillor AM Toon in respect of the way in which some schools are assessing children for additional funding through either SEN or Banded Bunding and also, that Children's Services Scrutiny Committee be requested to review these issues.

23. SCHOOL ADMISSIONS CONSULTATION AND RESPONSE

A report was considered which requested the Forum to prepare a response in respect of the School Admissions Consultation process. The report referred to the Government's announcement in the Children's Plan of its commitment to improve the system by which parents apply for school places for their children and the way in which places are allocated.

Andrew Blackman, Admissions and Transport Manager, informed members that the report summarised the main elements of the Consultation document. He reminded the Forum that in the past the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Schools Adjudicator had declined to comment on the issue where some schools in Herefordshire were not complying with School Published Admission Numbers (PAN) and that hopefully the proposed changes would improve that problem. He emphasised that the proposal to allow schools to take additional pupils above their PAN by a total of 27 without the requirement for statutory proposals could cause problems with children moving between schools in a falling Roll environment.

Sharon Menghini stated that although schools would respond individually in so far as their PAN is concerned, the Forum needs to respond to the proposals as they would affect Herefordshire as a whole. Where schools compete for children, this is where the proposals can be problematical. She expressed concern that if all the Hereford City schools decided to increase their numbers on Roll in this way, then it would change the shape of the rural schools intake.

Carol Weston, Choice Advisor, suggested that transportation was an issue for families that were not mobile and that this would be highlighted where the choice of schools was reduced by this factor and thereby causing these families to be

disadvantaged.

Councillor Toon was of the view that by agreeing to the additional entry intake up to 27 additional pupils, this would create a pyramid scenario where the resources of some schools are increased as a consequence with a larger number of schools resources being decreased. Also, that this would not help the falling Rolls problem at schools. She welcomed the changes proposed to the Schools Adjudicator's role to enable them to ensure the compliance of schools and the statement in paragraph 4.5 of the document that it will not be permissible for schools to ask for voluntary contributions as part of the admission process.

Members welcomed the proportional representation aspect with regard to membership of Forums but took the view that although the establishment of Admission Forums would be voluntary under the proposals, that the Herefordshire Local Admission Forum should continue to be the Forum where admission arrangements are considered and whether the Schools Adjudicator should be involved.

In noting a view put forward that some schools had not considered the Consultation document, Sharon Menghini informed the Forum that she would write to all schools to remind them of the need to consider and reply to the document.

RESOLVED: That the Department of Children Schools and Families be informed of the concerns of the Forum as set out in the preamble to this Minute in respect of particular issues contained in the Schools Admissions consultation document.

24. WORKPLAN AND MEMBER TRAINING

The Forum discussed the way forward in respect of member training and a workplan.

Andrew Blackman, Admissions and Transport Manager, referred to the Constitution of the Forum which sets out its role and purpose. He stated that generally it is the officers who provide the matters for consideration on the Forum agenda but that members of the Forum have the right to include items on the agenda. Officers would find benefit in having feedback from members on various issues. He suggested that the Forum might consider a meeting of officers and Forum members to discuss the member officer relationship with regard to the role of the Forum and members involvement.

Councillor AM Toon suggested that it would be very useful to meet parents who had been involved in the School Appeals process for their views on how the process was administered.

Sharon Meghini, Director of Children's Services, stated that she was concerned about a communication gap in Herefordshire whether it is a budget issue or Schools Forum issue and that the Forum should consider these concerns. A discussion took place about the need for representatives at any meeting to take responsibility for communicating the issues as part of a two way process. Meetings had been organised with Heads and School Governors groups and the role of the Local Admissions Forum would be one of the issues to be discussed at those meetings.

Carol Weston, Choice Advisor, informed the Forum of a small pilot programme in Year 6 regarding information for parents with regard to school choices. The pilot had been well attended by parents who had found it to be extremely useful and

informative. The programme was being continued with Year 6 and that it would be run through the extended schools service. She was hopeful that the programme would be taken to Primary Schools.

RESOLVED: that

- (a) Forum members to ask the group that they represent as to the issues that they would like to be considered by the Forum;**
- (b) Headteachers and Chairmen of Schools Governors be requested to put forward topics for the Forum to discuss;**
- (c) a training session be organised for members to discuss**
 - (i) the set up of Local Admissions Forums in other local authorities;**
 - (ii) to include The School Admissions Code of Practice and Banded funding;**
 - (iii) the Forum member and officer relationship with regard to the role of the Forum and members involvement; and**
 - (iv) a meeting between the Leader of the Council and Heads of Schools and suggestions put forward for consideration by the Authority.**

The meeting ended at 7.50 p.m.

CHAIRMAN