

MINUTES of the meeting of Local Admissions Forum held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Thursday, 19th June, 2008 at 7.00 p.m.

Present:	Local Education Authority	JW Hope MBE (Chairman) and AM Toon
	Church Representative	Revd. I. Terry (Church of England)
	Headteachers	C. Barker (Community High School)
	School Governors	(none)
	Parent Governors	A Wood
	Local Community Rep	(none)

In attendance: (none)

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Councillor JW Hope was nominated and seconded for the Chairmanship.

RESOLVED: that Councillor JW Hope be elected Chairman of the Local Admissions Forum for the ensuing year.

Councillor JW Hope in the Chair.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

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

RESOLVED: that Councillor AM Toon be appointed Vice-Chairman for the ensuing year.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Ann Robertson, Sara Catlow-Hawkins and A Ross.

4. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no named substitutes.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED: that subject to the insertion of the word 'schools' after the word 'the' in the second line of the fourth paragraph of the preamble to Minute No.

25, the Minutes of the meeting held on the 28th February 2008 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

7. LATE ITEMS/ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no late items or any other business.

8. CHILDREN OUT OF YEAR - CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

The Forum considered a report seeking responses to the Children Out of Year General Advice Document.

Dave Scott, Principal Educational Psychologist, referred to the document attached to the report at Appendix 1.1 and stated that the document centres on ensuring that children's needs are noted and considered fully before any decisions are made.

Dave Scott informed the Forum that emotional, academic and maturity needs of children are taken into account and the individual family's circumstances. Once a decision is taken it impacts on future years and aspects of life.

RESOLVED: that the document attached to the report at Appendix 1.1 be noted and endorsed.

9. CONSTITUTION OF THE LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM

Consideration was given to a report seeking agreement to amendments to the Local Admission Forum's Constitution in accordance with the provisions of the School Admissions Code 2007.

Sharon Menghini, Director of Childrens Services, expressed the view that the addition of a member of the armed services community would be beneficial to the Forum. The Forum would also need to satisfy itself that it always took into account the particular issues affecting children who are looked after. It was suggested that the Forum invite specialists for specific items relating to looked after children as required.

With regard to 'Decision Making' in the Constitution, it was suggested that any oral presentations by schools should be set at a maximum time limit of five minutes or such time limit to be set by the Chairman.

A Member suggested that contact be made with the Hereford Cathedral School for a nomination to attend Forum meetings.

A Member further suggested that the information which sets out Acts of parliament and School Admissions Code in the 'Background' paragraph contained in the covering report, would be a useful addition to the Constitution.

RESOLVED: (a) that subject to the following additions to the Local Admissions Forum Constitution, the amendments as set out in the report be approved:

(i) the information detailing the Acts of parliament and School Admissions Code as they relate to the Forum, as referred to in the 'Background' paragraph of the report, be included in the Constitution;

(ii) the words 'or such time limit to be set by the

Chairman' be inserted after the word 'Minutes' in the fourth line of the third paragraph relating to 'Decision Making';and

(b) that the Hereford Cathedral School be approached to nominate a representative to the Forum as a Key Interested Group;

(c) that the Forum seeks representation from the armed forces and that whenever issues considered affect children who are looked after, that specialists from the Children and Young People's Directorate are present at the Forum.

10. INFORMATION FOR PARENTS BOOKLETS

The Forum considered a report requesting approval of booklets for the admission/transfer of pupils into primary and secondary schools. .

It was noted that paragraph 4 (ii) of Appendix 3A 6 should read 'High School' not 'Infants'.

A Member referred to paragraph 4.1(i) regarding the Statement of Special Educational Needs which names the school and suggested that this is the parent's choice.

Sharon Menghini informed the Forum that it is the parent's/carer's choice to decide which school they prefer.

Concern was expressed by a member that parent's appeals regarding school preference decisions do not have any regard or relationship with school waiting lists and that this anomaly applied to the numbers of children given places at schools in accordance with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

Andrew Blackman, School Admissions and Transport Manager, stated that waiting lists and school appeals together with SEN children given places at schools are administered in accordance the appropriate regulations.

Sharon Menghini, Director of Childrens Services, suggested that a transparent statement be included in the appropriate booklet which highlights the non association between the rules, procedures and protocols relating to school appeals, SEN children and school waiting lists and would give a greater understanding of these issues.

A Member referred to the fact that some parents made a decision not to send their children to certain schools because they could not afford the cost of the school uniforms. The Member suggested that school uniform costs should not be an issue with children not choosing schools and that there should be rules in place to help with these problems.

A Member referred to the rules where parents can write to the Chair of Governors with complaints, page 32 of Appendix 3A refers, and took the view that communication with the chairman of governors should be available via email.

Sharon Menghini informed the Forum that work was in progress to include a list of Chairman of Governors email addresses on a Web site which parents could log into and that reference to the list would be included in the appropriate paragraph in relation to complaints procedure on page 32 of the Appendix to the report.

Discussion ensued regarding the non compliance of admission policies at some schools. It was suggested that where there is non-compliance of policies, the school should be informed that it has a period of one month to comply and that failure to do so would result in the issue being brought to the attention of the Schools Adjudicator. Also that a letter be written to the Chairman of Governors advising of the situation.

A Member referred to the Forms for completion regarding Statemented Children and suggested that the Forms should read 'Statemented and Banded Funding'.

Sharon Menghini, Director of Childrens Services, informed the Forum that the 'Statemented and Banded' issue was currently being reviewed.

A Member made reference to the use of the term 'Open Place Special' under the heading 'How Places were Allocated' and that this category should be explained.

Sharon Menghini took the view that that the word 'Special' was inappropriate.

With reference to paragraph 4 on page 175, a Member requested clarity on how the definitions in the bullet points are rated.

The discussed the Admission Policies of School Sixth Forms and reference was made to the omission of information in respect of Wyebridge Sports College.

Sharon Menghini agreed that there should be an appropriate Sixth Form Policy for Wyebridge.

RESOLVED: (a) that the booklets for admission/transfer of pupils into primary and secondary schools be approved subject to the following amendments:

(i) a transparent statement be included which highlights the non association between the rules, procedures and protocols relating to school appeals, SEN children and school waiting lists;

(ii) a policy be written which gives a school one month to comply with admission policies and that failure to comply will result in the school being reported to the Schools Adjudicator. The Policy to include written notification to the School's Chairman of Governors of the notice period;

(iii) information indicating how ratings are attained at the bullet points in paragraph 4 on page 175 be included;

(iv) an appropriate paragraph be included giving details for Wyebridge Sports College in the 'Admission Policies for School Sixth Forms';

(b) that the issue regarding the association of Uniform costs preventing children being admitted to some schools be investigated.

11. STANDARD APPLICATION FORMS FOR SCHOOL YEAR 2009/2010

Consideration was given to a report seeking to approve the layout and content of the "common application form" to be used for the co-ordinated secondary transfer arrangement for September 2009, SA1, and the PA1 form for primary co-ordination to be introduced from the same time.

RESOLVED: that the application forms be approved.

12. APPLYING FOR A PLACE AT HIGH SCHOOL AND STARTING SCHOOL

Consideration was given to a report seeking approval of the layout and content of the simple guidance notes in relation to admission of children into reception class at 4 years of age and the transfer of pupils into high school at age 11.

RESOLVED: that the layout and content of the guidance notes attached to the report be approved.

13. ANNUAL REPORT REQUIRED TO BE PRODUCED BY THE HEREFORDSHIRE LOCAL ADMISSION FORUM

Consideration was given to the annual report shown as required by The Education (Admission Forums) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2007.

A Member referred to a Note issued by the Department Children Schools and Families which sets out the purpose of admission Forum reports and provides guidelines on their content.

Andrew Blackman, Admissions and Transport Manager, informed the Forum that the content of the Annual report was in accordance with the provisions of the School Admissions Code 2007.

Sharon Menghini referred to the possible inclusion of an element in the Annual report on the issue regarding some parents being unable to afford school Uniforms and in such cases, schools would make provision to alleviate this problem. It would be for the forum to decide if an appropriate paragraph should be included in the Annual report.

Andrew Blackman made reference to paragraph 7 of the report and informed the Forum that since the report was circulated, it had come to his attention that Bosbury and Mordiford Primary schools had not complied with the Admissions Code of Practice. This was the subject of report also Minute No.41 to these Minutes.

RESOLVED: that the draft report be noted subject to the inclusion of an element which asks schools to make provision to alleviate the problem where parents are unable to afford Uniforms for their children who are allocated a place at a school.

14. INFORMATION REGARDING TRANSFERS OUTSIDE OF THE NORMAL ADMISSION ROUNDS

Consideration was given to a report regarding the statistics in relation to secondary school "in-year" transfers.

A member expressed concern regarding the numbers of children transferred from a school as a consequence of them being unhappy.

Andrew Blackman stated that he would issue a summary to Members which indicated the reasons for children requesting a transfer from schools.

RESOLVED: that headteachers be requested to comment and discuss with officers the issues regarding children requesting to leave their school as a consequence of being unhappy.

15. AMENDMENTS TO SCHOOL PLANNED ADMISSION NUMBERS

Consideration was given to a report regarding changes to the Planned Admission Numbers (PAN) at Aylestone High School, Kingstone High School, Leominster Junior School and St Martin's Primary School.

Andrew Blackman, Admissions and Transport Manager, informed the Forum that he had not yet received confirmation from the Chairman of Governors of Kingstone High School that the PAN should be reduced.

RESOLVED: (a) that the proposed changes to the Planned Admission Numbers at Aylestone High School, Leominster Junior School and St Martin's Primary School be approved; and

(b) that consideration of proposed changes to the Planned Admission Numbers at Kingstone High School be deferred.

16. UNAUTHORISED ADDITIONAL ADMISSIONS IN EXCESS OF AGREED SCHOOL PUBLISHED ADMISSION NUMBERS

Consideration was given to a report regarding unauthorised changes to the Published Admission Numbers (PAN) at St Mary's R C High School and Kingsland C.E. Primary School.

Andrew Blackman, Admissions and Transport Manager informed the Forum that since the report had been circulated, seven admission appeals had been allowed for places at Bosbury Primary school due to the school's Chairman of Governors indicating to two parents that the school could admit their children. Also, that five appeals had been allowed for places at Mordiford primary school due to the Appeals Hearing being informed by the Headteacher that the school could take the children.

Circulated at the meeting, and is attached to the Agenda, was correspondence from the Headteacher of St Mary's RC High School indicating that his statement at the appeals hearing regarding room at the school for another class was taken out of context.

Alan McLaughlin stated that an alternative course of action would be to write to the schools seeking their reassurance in writing that they will in future adhere to the regulations, procedures and protocols regarding school admissions particularly in the light of falling rolls.

RESOLVED: that the unauthorised changes to school admission numbers to the Published Admission Numbers (PAN) at St Mary's R C High School, Kingsland C.E. Primary School, Bosbury Primary School and Mordiford Primary school be referred to the Schools Adjudicator

17. CONSULTATION BY DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES (DCSF) ON ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS

Consideration was given to a late item regarding consultation by DCSF on admission arrangements. Members were circulated with the Web site where details of the consultation paper were available if they wish to participate in the consultation. Dates for consultation were from 12th July to 2nd October 2008.

RESOLVED: that members of the Forum to participate in the consultation independently via the appropriate DCSF Web site.

The Chairman informed Members that this was the last meeting that the Rev. I Terry would be attending. He thanked him for all his work for the Forum and the way in which he had fulfilled his duties.

The meeting ended at 9.16 p.m.

CHAIRMAN