

MINUTES of the meeting of the Herefordshire Local Admissions Forum held at Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on 30 June 2003 at 7.00 pm

Present: Mr N Griffiths, Mrs H Hines, Mr H Lewis, Mr A Marson, Ms V Pawsey, Mr A Ross, Cllr J Stone, Cllr JP Thomas, Cllr Ms AM Toon, Mrs S Wright.

Mr M. Chamberlain, School Services Manager, welcomed the members and invited nominations for Chairman.

13. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Councillor JP Thomas be elected Chairman of the Forum for the ensuing municipal year.

14. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Councillor J Stone be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Forum for the ensuing year.

15. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from M Burgess – Parent Governor representative, P Shannon – RC Church representative, Mrs J Thompson – School Governor representative.

16. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no named substitutes.

17. LATE ITEMS/ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no late items or any other business declared.

18. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2003 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

19. INFORMATION ITEM – COUNCIL ADMISSIONS POLICY

The Director of Education reported to Members on the Cabinet meeting earlier in June when the Council's School Admissions Policy was discussed following the Forum's recommendation to Cabinet against selection by aptitude for pupils for secondary schools. It was agreed that every opportunity had been provided at several different meetings for schools involved to air their views on the subject.

RESOLVED: THAT the report be noted.

20. STANDARD APPLICATION FORM SCHOOL YEAR 2004/2005

The School Services Manager reminded the Forum of the LEAs decision to implement the new co-ordinated admission scheme from September 2004 proposed

under the Education Act 2002, which radically changes the transfer system from primary to secondary schools. This requires that there is a common application form covering all community and voluntary aided schools and parents are invited to express three preferences for schools that may be within or beyond the Herefordshire county boundaries. This form, the new SA1, will be sent out in September to all year six primary school pupils to be returned by 7 November.

Members discussed the proposed form and the information held on it. Members were concerned that a false address could be used in order for a child to gain a place at a particular school. Members were reassured that a great deal of effort was made to verify an address through the primary school in order to prevent this occurring. Members felt it would also be helpful for parents to know at the time of completing the application form, as to when each secondary school held its open evening. It was agreed that these dates would be added to the form. It was also felt that the form should state that no application would be processed prior to 7 November and that this statement to be added to the Information for Parents booklet 2004-05.

Discussion was also held on whether the form should ask about faith, ethnicity and race. Members were advised that the form should have regard only for parents' preferences and that the schools collate this information when a child starts there. It was added that voluntary aided schools would have an additional form regarding faith for any church place applications. In addition it was felt that clarification was needed on the SA1 form regarding the question as to whether a child was looked after by Herefordshire Council or any other local authority. Members were advised that a help line was provided for parents and headteachers for primary schools were also going to hold briefing sessions for parents on the completion of the form and provide assistance where necessary.

RESOLVED:

That:

- (a) in addition the SA1 form would:**
 - (i) provide the dates for all secondary school open evenings, and;**
 - (ii) clarify if a child was looked after by Herefordshire Council or by any other local authority;**
- and;**
- (b) no application form to be processed prior to 7 November and this statement to be added to the Information for Parents booklet.**

21. APPLYING FOR A PLACE AT HIGH SCHOOL

The School Services Manager advised Members that the leaflet 'Applying for a Place at High School in Herefordshire' had been amended to reflect the changes in the new co-ordinated admissions scheme, which allows parents to express three preferences for a high school. He stated that the purpose of the leaflet was to summarise the policy and procedures for a child transferring into high school at age 11. The leaflet is forwarded to parents at the same time as the Information for Parents booklet and the SA1 application form.

The aim of the leaflet was to address the questions most likely asked by parents and there was also a section addressing any issues relating to applying for a school place in another LEA area. It was appreciated that it could prove confusing for parents but the Admissions and Transport department were working closely with adjoining LEAs to avoid any possible confusion.

Members agreed that at Item 6 on the leaflet any reference to interviews being conducted by a local vicar or priest for church place at a voluntary aided school should be removed, as this was no longer carried out.

RESOLVED: THAT the leaflet be approved subject to the removal of Item 6 relating to interviews carried out for church places.

22. INFORMATION FOR PARENTS BOOKLET 2004/05

The School Services Manager informed Members that the booklet was required by statute and he outlined the changes that had been made for 2004/05 resulting from the new co-ordinated admission scheme. He stated that the major changes were to be found in chapters 5 and 6 as outlined in the agenda papers and in addition five new appendices had been added relating to:

- Appendix 1 Local Code of Practice;
- Appendix 2 Co-ordinated admission arrangements (setting out the 2004 transfer scheme);
- Appendix 5 Admission policies for sixth forms;
- Appendix 7 Post 16 transport policies;
- Appendix 8 Data Protection – providing details to parents about information held about pupils.

In addition Appendix 4 – aided schools' policies – had been amended following consultation with governing bodies.

RESOLVED: THAT the Information for Parents Booklet 2004/05 be approved subject to the agreed changes outlined above.

23. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items for discussion under any other business.

The meeting ended at 9.30 pm

CHAIRMAN