

CAMBRIDGESHIRE ADMISSION FORUM: MINUTES

Date: 5th February 2015

Time: 2.05pm – 3.00pm

Place: Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge

Present: Local Authority Representatives
Councillors: D Harty (Chairman), J Whitehead

Academy School Representative (South Cambs & City)
M Sanders MBE

Community School Representative
M Smart

Roman Catholic Diocesan Representative
Revd Dr G Cook

Local Employers' Representative
G Prangnell

Parents' School Preference Advisor
M Lesniak

Looked After Children Representative
J Pallett

In Attendance
M Joshi (Manager Admissions and Transport
S Surtees (Strategic Policy and Early Years Operations Manager, former
Manager: Admissions, Transport and Education Welfare Benefits)
R Yule (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies: J Barnes, S Hall, S Platt, J Scally, P Stanton, K Tolley

1. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and all present introduced themselves.

2. APOLOGIES & DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies - as listed above. There were no declarations of interest.

Martin Smart, who had served on the Forum as a Community School Representative, advised that he was no longer a school governor and therefore not qualified to be a member of the Forum. At the Chairman's invitation, he participated in the meeting informally.

3. MINUTES: 3rd July 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd July 2014 were agreed as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Minute 8: LA Report to Office of Schools Adjudicator – noted that the Manager Admissions and Transport would circulate the in-year admissions figures as a percentage of the total number of pupils again.

Minute 8 – noted that the County Inclusion Manager had not yet been invited to attend the Forum to talk about issues associated with the working of the Fair Access Protocol and what could be done to improve information-sharing with schools

Minute 8 – noted that the Manager Admissions and Transport would supply information on the reasons for local breaches of Infant Class Size to accompany the minutes of the present meeting [attached as Appendix A, for Forum members only because it contains information which could potentially identify an individual].

5. ADMISSION FORUM TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP

The Forum considered its terms of reference and membership. Members noted that there was no change in the statutory position (i.e. no requirement that the Local Authority maintain an admission forum), and that the number of members had been a matter for each admission forum to decide following the lifting of the requirement to maintain a forum.

The Forum noted that Sue Hains had ceased to be Head of Virtual School for Looked After Children, and agreed that her successor, Joanna Pallett, should become the Looked After Children Representative. It was also noted that Rosemary Miller had resigned as a Community School Representative.

In the course of discussion, it was suggested that Governor Services and the Cambridgeshire Primary Heads Forum and/or the Cambridgeshire Secondary Heads Forum (as appropriate) be approached to seek representatives for community schools (which were all primaries), voluntary controlled schools (primaries), and foundation schools (one secondary and several primary schools). **Action: R Yule**

It was decided to make one change to the Terms of Reference, to allow for the fact that Cambridgeshire now had a City Technology College (CTC), and to ask the CTC to nominate a representative to the Forum. **Action: R Yule**

The revised terms of reference are attached to these minutes as Appendix B.

6. FEEDBACK FROM ADMISSION FORUM REGARDING THE ANNUAL CONSULTATION PROPOSALS FOR 2016-17

The Forum considered the consultation proposals for admission policies for 2016-17 [http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20059/schools_and_learning/363/apply_for_a_school_place/10]. Attention was drawn to the changes in Planned Admission Numbers (PANs) set out in paragraph 2 of the main consultation document, and it was noted that there had been some slight changes to admission criteria [PAN changes attached as Appendix C].

Members of the Forum were asked to submit comments, or to inform the Manager Admissions and Transport if they had not comment on the consultation proposals.

7. UPDATE ON PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOL APPLICATIONS

The Forum was advised that nearly 6,000 applications for secondary school places had been received, of which 10% – 12% had been late. The secondary offer date for admission in September 2015 was 2nd March; admissions officers were currently busy co-ordinating applications with other neighbouring authorities.

A large number of in-year applications was being received in the current school year, 2,410 since September 2014, compared with a total of 4,900 for the full year 2013-14. Officers reported that some areas in the region were experiencing a reduced number of in-year transfers compared with 2013-14, while Cambridgeshire's numbers, already high, were likely to be similar to or slightly higher than 2013-14. Forum members noted that possible explanations for reduced numbers of in-year transfers elsewhere might be that new housing developments had already been completed, or that schools were known to be full, so families realised that there was little likelihood of a successful application to change schools.

The Manager Admissions and Transport undertook to supply final information on both primary and secondary applications for September 2015 once the offer dates had passed.

Action: M Joshi

8. ANY OTHER FEEDBACK/ REQUESTS FROM SCHOOLS

The Admissions Manager circulated a briefing note on the new Admissions Code [attached as Appendix D], which had come into force on 19th December 2014. Forum members noted that the code

- permitted schools to give priority to children eligible for the early years pupil premium or service premium who attended a nursery established and run by the school; this was in marked contrast to the schools adjudicator's statements in previous years that giving priority to such children was against the code because of the element of monetary consideration involved
- did not contain any clear definition of what was meant by 'established and run by the school', whether this covered for example a nursery class, or a pre-school with a committee under the auspices of the governing body; it would be for each school to clarify what it meant in its admission criteria, and their definitions would need to be tested
- did not cover admission arrangements for nursery schools. For nursery schools and classes run by a local authority (LA) these were determined by the LA; other nursery schools and classes determined arrangements for themselves
- established an earlier and shorter period of consultation on admission arrangements than in previous years, with the consultation taking place in the autumn term; this had the advantage of allowing the schools adjudicator a longer period before the national secondary and primary offer dates..

Discussing these changes, members noted that admission authorities would have to decide whether or not to make use of the permission to give priority to some of the children who attended linked nursery provision.

9. ACADEMIES UPDATE

The Manager Admissions and Transport circulated a document [attached as Appendix E] reporting on academy conversions completed and in progress, and planned new academies and free schools.

10. REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

None

11. REPORTS' STATUS

It was agreed that all the documents circulated, both with the agenda and at the meeting, had open status and could be placed upon the Council's website.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS & ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

In answer to an enquiry about progress with admission appeals, the Manager offered to circulate the figures as at the end of the academic year [attached as Appendix F]. The final submission to the Department for Education was usually made in December, by which time all the late appeals had been determined. It was suggested that appeals should be a topic for the Forum's next meeting.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS:

Following the meeting, the next three dates were identified, all Thursdays at 2pm:

- 11th June 2015
- 22nd October 2015
- 3rd March 2016.