

Leeds Admissions Forum

Tuesday, 15th November, 2011

PRESENT: Councillor in the Chair

Councillors P Gruen

Councillor

Mrs S Norfolk – Leeds Primary Care Trust
Mr R Hamilton – Black Governors Information Network
Ms F Woolaston – Community School
Mrs H Lewis – Jewish Aided School
Mr R Madeley – Controlled School
Ms A Morehouse – Other member
Ms A Williamson – Other Member
Mrs L Bryan – High School (Parent)
Mr P Forbes – David Young Academy

In Attendance

Mr N Richardson – Director of Children's Services
Mrs V Buckland – Children's Services
Mrs A Oldroyd – Legal Services
Mr J Grieve – Governance Services

70 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcome everyone in attendance to this, the November meeting of the Leeds Admission Forum.

The Chair suggested that this may be the final meeting of the Leeds Admissions Forum in it's current format. Changes to the Education Bill and the introduction of the new Admission Code remove the Admission Forum as a Statutory Body.

The Chair said he was aware that Sue Knight had recently been ill and was recovering well. A letter wishing her a speedy recovery had been sent on behalf of Forum Members

71 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J Dowson, Mr R Raj, Mrs S Knights and Mr J Daulby,

72 UPDATE ON MEMBERSHIP - LEEDS ADMISSION FORUM

In view of the uncertainty around future meetings of the Leeds Admission Forum, Membership issues were not discussed

73 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR - CHALLENGING AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN'S SUB COMMITTEE

In view of the uncertainty around future meetings of the Leeds Admission Forum and it's Sub Committees, Membership issues were not discussed

74 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – That the meeting of the previous meeting held on 15th June 2011 were accepted as a true and correct record

75 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no issues raised under matters arising

76 THE CHALLENGES AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Chair introduced and welcomed Nigel Richardson, Director of Children's Services who was in attendance to speak about the challenges and achievements of Children's Services.

In addressing the Forum Mr Richardson said that he'd now been in post for just over 12 months. He explained that he'd arrived at a time when there were fundamental changes taking place to the Education Service in Leeds.

Referring to the establishment of Education Leeds, Mr Richardson said the work of Education Leeds had come to an end and the education services had returned to the responsibility of Leeds City Council bringing with it many new governance arrangements with clear responsibilities and accountability.

There was an ambition for Leeds to be the Best City in the UK. "Best City for Children" based on the UNICEF model of Friendly Cities and bringing with it economic regeneration.

First stage would be to seek the views of children, "what's it like to be a child growing up in Leeds, likes, dislikes and how can things be done better?"

Further challenges also include:

- Reducing the need to be looked after
- School attendance, pupils not in school
- Destinations, not in Education, employment or training (NEET)
- City wide partnership, outcomes based on accountability
- Restorative Practice – Doing things with people, as opposed to doing it for them (how we behave)

Mr Richardson said the education service in Leeds was divided into 3 operational area, 12 Area Committees and 27 clusters. The clusters were working well with good sound practices already in place. To tie all this together was the "Leeds Education Challenge"

Commenting on the most recent Ofsted report Mr Richardson said improvements had been made and the services had achieved the status of adequate. He said that although this was a significant improvement there was a good deal more to be improved upon.

Reg Hamilton asked how such improvements would be achieved.

In responding Mr Richardson said by fulfilling our statutory responsibility, through the safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children

Reg Hamilton asked if there was a review taking place

Mr Richardson said there was currently in place an internal checking system which was overseen by the Executive Board

On the future of the Leeds Admissions Forum, Mr Richardson said that the issue would be raised at a future meeting of the Children's Trust Board, considering if the potential of the Forum had been fully explored, if it had, then the Forum should be retained.

In passing comment the Chair said it was a question of getting the balance right, not too much bureaucracy?

Paul Forbes asked how Children's Services were going to cope with the lower levels of family income given the recent austerity measures.

In responding Mr Richardson said it was important to have all the facts and collection of data from the clusters would assist in providing solutions.

The Chair thanked Mr Richardson for his attendance and his thoughts about the future of Children's Services in Leeds, commenting that it had been interesting debate learning about the achievements and aspirations of Children's Services

77 CHALLENGING AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN'S SUB COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Challenging and Vulnerable Children's Sub Committee held on 1st November 2011 were submitted for Members consideration.

The Chair pointed out that with only two Members in attendance the meeting had been inquorate.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the minutes of the Challenging and Vulnerable Children's Sub Committee held on 1st November 2011 be accepted as a true and correct record
- (ii) That any required authority/ actions arising from the meeting be now approved

78 REVIEW BY THE ADMISSIONS TEAM ON THE IMPACT OF THE FAIR ACCESS PANELS ON THE ADMISSION OF CHILDREN DURING THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2010/11

Members considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which set out the results of a review undertaken by the Admissions Team on the impact of the Fair Access Panels on the admission of children during the academic year 2010/11

Addressing the report Mrs Buckland said reported that since the recruitment of a dedicated Fair Access Officer for Primary schools , the process had been streamlined ensuring applications were dealt with as quickly as possible and without the need for a Headteacher Panel. With the rapidly rising birth rate, and a need to

comply with the infant class size legislation, this had become more complex and resource intensive and that the dedicated resource should continue.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To continue to improve access and admission for some of the most vulnerable and challenging young people.
- (ii) To consult with Headteachers and Project Directors on the forthcoming changes within the new Schools Admissions Code and any changes that may be required to ensure that the Protocol remains effective.
- (iii) To consult with Headteachers and Project Directors to agree a more efficient and streamlined process with the Admissions Team taking into account austerity measures and any changes in the current Wedge working across the City.

79 DEMOGRAPHIC REPORT - NOVEMBER 2011

Members considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided an update of the demographic situation in Leeds.

Addressing the report, Mrs V Buckland said the birth rate across Leeds had significantly changed over the past 10 years. In 2001, Leeds saw its lowest birth numbers with 7562 children being born between September 2000 and August 2001. Since that time births had risen each year. The latest data received from the Area Health Authority shows 9996 births were recorded in Leeds between September 2010 and August 2011. This averages at 243 extra children being born each year since 2001 and an overall change of over 32% in the last 10 years.

It was reported that to meet rising demand for school places, nearly 700 additional reception places had been created since 2009. However, more places were still required and proposals were being developed to create these for 2013 and beyond.

Mrs Buckland said that planning for these extra places was underway with a priority being given to identifying any surplus or hidden capacity within schools. This would include making sure that schools were utilising their accommodation relevant to the delivery of the curriculum. The sixth form and 14-19 strategies would also be key to how schools best use their accommodation and may in turn provide options for expansion.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the proposals to create additional places for September 2013 & 2014
- (ii) To accept the ongoing need for additional reception places
- (iii) To note the significant increase in the year seven cohorts entering secondary from 2014

80 UPDATE ON THE ADMISSION ROUND 2011/12

Members considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided an update about the allocations that took place for September 2011 entry into Reception and year 7

Addressing the report Mrs Buckland said it was the role of the Admissions Team to allocate children to primary, infant, junior and secondary schools and defend admission appeals for community and voluntary controlled schools, including co-ordinating admissions between the voluntary-aided and foundation schools, the four neighbouring LEAs and the Academies.

The birth rate had risen and the number of children entering Reception continued to grow, although the number entering Secondary school was at its lowest point for many years, but this will begin to rise from next year. The Admission Team continue to explore more ways to let parents know about the need to apply for a primary school place. Last year 480 parents applied between the offer day and the start of term, and this has reduced to 250 this year. Parents who applied on time had a much greater chance of gaining one of their preferences, or a local school.

The online admissions service continues to increase in popularity with a total of 11,000 parents applying online, representing 70% of applications.

RESOLVED – To note the statistical information on the Admissions round including:

- Percentage of first preferences achieved was 85.4%, with 95.3% achieving one of their three preferences
- The increasing number of primary appeals, and the further 6% improvement in the successful defence of in year appeals
- The continued increase in use of the online application system with 70% of parents now choosing to apply online (up from 44% last year)

81 BRIEFING ON THE DRAFT ADMISSIONS AND ADMISSIONS APPEAL CODES

Members considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided a brief summary of the changes to the School Admissions Code and School Admissions Appeal Code which were published on 2nd November 2011 and come into force in February 2012.

Mrs Buckland highlighted the following areas where amendments had been made to the Admission Code:

- Consultation
- Oversubscription Criteria
- Entry into Reception – Infant Class Size
- Coordination
- Fair Access Protocol
- Admission Forum

- Choice advice

In terms of the School Admissions Appeal Code, the publication of a timetable for appeals and timescales around submission and hearing of appeals were the main areas of change

In passing comment the Chair said there was no reference to an Admission Forum within the new code suggesting it would no longer be a Statutory Body and as a consequence the future of the Leeds Admission Forum was, at this stage unclear.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted
- (ii) To be aware that at this stage the future of the Leeds Admission Forum was unclear

82 REVIEW OF PUBLISHED INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Members considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which highlighted the requirement of the Forum to consider the comprehensiveness and accessibility of the admissions literature and information produced for parents by each admission authority through published composite prospectus and the delivery of Choice Advice.

Copies of the booklets: Starting Primary School in Leeds and Starting Secondary School in Leeds 2012 to 2013 were circulated at the meeting.

A report summarising the work of the Choice Service was circulated to Members in advance of the meeting.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the contents of the report be welcomed
- (ii) To note the efforts being made to improve the quality and scope of information supplied to parents on admissions
- (iii) To note and welcome the work being undertaken by the Choice Advice Service

83 ADMISSION FORUM WORK PROGRAMME

Members received and considered the Forum's Work Programme for 2011/12

RESOLVED – That the contents of the Work Programme be noted

84 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no issues raised under any other business

85 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED - To note that the next meeting of the Forum is scheduled for Tuesday 13th March 2012 (Subject to confirmation)

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Date Not Specified