

Leeds Admissions Forum

20th January, 2009

PRESENT: Councillor Gruen in the Chair

Councillor R Harker
Councillor A Shelbrooke
Ms P Hill – Health Representative
Mr J Young – IGEN
Mrs F Beevers – Ripon & Leeds CE Diocese
Mr B Stott – Community School
Mrs L Bryan – Other Member
Mr J Fryett – Other Member
Mr H Browes – Other Member
Mrs S Knights – Special School
Mr I Faulkingham – Primary School

Officers

Mrs V Buckland – Education Leeds
Mr S Mahmood - Children's Services, Chief Executive's Department
Mrs D Leonard – Legal Services
Mr J Grieve – Governance Services

34 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed everyone in attendance to the January meeting of the Leeds Admission Forum. The Chair extended a special welcome to Mr Shaid Mahood, Locality Enabler, Children's Services, Chief Executive's Department who was in attendance to provide a presentation on Commissioning Arrangements.

35 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillors M Coulson, B Gettings, Mr N Pyke, Mrs B Sice, Mrs S Ulyett, Mr M Wood, Mr P Forbes and Mr J Daulby

36 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 25th November 2008 be accepted as a true and correct record.

37 MATTERS ARISING

There were no issues raised under matters arising

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Prior to consideration of the following item Councillor Harker declared a Personnel and Prejudicial Interest as a Member of the Executive Board which would consider Membership of the Admissions Forum at a later date. He took no part in the discussion or voting thereon

38 MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE AND PROCEDURE - LEEDS ADMISSION FORUM

The Secretary to the Forum submitted a report providing notification of proposed Membership changes following the introduction of the New Admission Code and Statutory Regulations which comes into force on 10th February 2009

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted
- (ii) To recommend to the Executive Board that the Forum's Membership be determined as follows:

<u>Membership</u> - (20 Members Maximum)	Recommended
Councillors – up to 2 representatives	2
Parent Governors - at least 1 representative	3
Community Schools- at least 1 representative	2
Voluntary Controlled Schools -at least 1 representative	1
Voluntary Aided Schools -at least 1 representative	1
Faith Schools (Jewish Aided) - a representative from each faith group of schools in area	1
Academies - at least 1 representative	1
Diocesan Authorities -1 representative from each body or person representing the religion or religious denomination of any foundation or voluntary schools or Academies in the area designated as having a religious character	2
City technology colleges and City Colleges for technology - at least 1 representative	1
Other members appointed on recommendation of Forum members - at least 1 representative not eligible for appointment under above	4
Other relative representative	1
Foundation School	1

Co-opted Member - none - although Members may invite interested parties to attend

The existing category of School members is removed.

The Code requires that Membership of the Forum must reflect:-

- Parent and community representatives
- Local employers
- Other relevant representatives e.g. Choice Advisers

39 CHANGES TO THE FORUMS TERMS OF REFERENCE AND PROCEDURES

The Secretary to the Forum submitted a report setting out proposed changes to the Forum's Terms of Reference and Procedure arising from the New Statutory Regulations.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted

40 COMMISSIONING ARRANGEMENTS

Members received a presentation from Mr Shaid Mahmood, Locality Enabler, Children's Services, Chief Executive's Department on the Commissioning Arrangements for the Area Management Boards.

Mr Mahmood outlined the arrangements that the Director of Children's Services is in the process of implementing to underpin the Commissioning of Services for children in Leeds.

The Chair thanked Mr Mahmood for his attendance and informative presentation.

41 CHALLENGING AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN'S SUB COMMITTEE

Commenting on the minutes of 4th November 2008 Bob Stott said since that time events had moved on and the later meeting of 8th January 2009 reflected the current position.

In providing an update Mr Stott reported on the following issues:

- (i) Leeds Inclusive Learning Strategy – It was reported that Officers would shortly go to the Programme Board with a Draft Proposal for consultations for strands two and three. The Proposal would then be submitted to the Council's Executive Board in March 2009 prior to actual consultation on the reconfiguration of the behaviour continuum and the roles of PRUs, BEST and SILCs
- (ii) Fair Access Protocols – An issue was highlighted that some schools had agreed to take pupils for financial reasons even when they needed to improve. In offering comment Mr Stott suggested pupil transfer and the funding which follows the pupil was very important, it would be difficult for the school to support the pupils needs if the appropriate funding was not in place.

Mrs Hill said that the work undertaken by the LILs was very important to the Health Authority and requested that she be kept informed.

The Chair suggested said that some valuable work had been made but the Sub Committee need to be mindful of how external bodies monitor Education Leeds.

On a separate issue Mrs Knights expressed concern that a major change had taken place in the management of the LILs but it had not been reported at the last meeting of the Sub Committee.

In providing a response Mr Fryett said that matter to which Mrs Knight referred was not public knowledge at that time and it would have been inappropriate to make any such announcements in a public meeting.

In drawing the debate to a conclusion the Chair said a lot of progress had been made and achieved.

The Chair reported that Mrs Fiona Beevers had resigned as a Member of the Challenging and Vulnerable Children's Sub Committee and that nominations were now sought to fill the resulting vacancy

Mrs Sue Knight nominated Mr Ian Faulkingham, this was seconded by Councillor Gruen

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the minutes of the Challenging and Vulnerable Children's Sub Committee held on 4th November 2008 and 8th January 2009 be accepted as a true and correct record
- (iii) That Mr Ian Faulkingham be nominated to serve on the Challenging and Vulnerable Children's Sub Committee

42 OVERVIEW OF NEW ADMISSION CODE

The Chief Executive Education Leeds submitted a report which provided an overview of the New Admission Code.

In providing background to the report Mrs Buckland, Head of Service – Admissions and Transport, Education Leeds said that following DCSF consultation exercise a new School Admissions Code will come into force on 10th February 2009. The DCSF received 635 responses to the consultation: 200 responses from parents or parent governors, 153 from Local Authorities and 130 from schools or Headteachers.

Responses

Improving the application and allocation process – The consultation was looking at local authorities becoming the sole contact point for parents seeking a school place both in the normal admission round and throughout the year. Many authorities

expressed concern about the resource implications of implementing this, however, there was widespread support for the proposal, including Leeds. This will now form part of the new Code.

Local consultation process – The consultation was seeking to allow consultation to take place only every three years, but that consultation must take place for a minimum of eight weeks and must include parents and local community groups. Many respondents felt that local groups should be determined locally and the new Code will allow the local authority to do so with the agreement of the Admission Forum.

Admission Forums – The consultation was seeking views on making Admission Forums voluntary. Leeds strongly disagreed with the Forum being a voluntary body and described the merits of an effective Forum. The majority of respondents felt the same way and the new Code will continue to require the Admission Forum to be mandatory. The membership is being reduced in number and is seeking to be more widely representative. The focus of the Forum will be on the fairness of admission arrangements rather than the legality.

School admission appeals – The consultation sought views on an independent reviewer for infant class size appeals, encouraging schools to use a centrally provided appeals system and appeals panellists considering lawfulness of admission arrangements. The idea of school appeals being collectively administered was supported by a large majority although the new Code will stop short of introducing the other changes. We are advised that we can expect further legislation at a later date relating to appeals.

Information for parents – This referred to a deadline by which the composite prospectus must be published and the need to make this available on the website. As we already publish the information on our website a month prior to the deadline this will require no changes in Leeds.

Ensuring fair and lawful admission arrangements – This was to require local authorities to report annually to the Schools Adjudicator on the fairness and legality of admission arrangements. This will now appear in the new Code and extends the duty imposed last year to report on legality of admission policies, to include a similar detailed report that was previously the responsibility of the Admission Forum.

Fair Access Protocols – Views were sought on including the children of Service families in the protocol, to include deadlines and more description of how decisions are made under the protocol. These amendments were widely accepted as appropriate and the new Code would require greater detail for parents in the Fair Access Protocol. The young people to be included as a minimum in the protocol have been defined and there is a requirement to define deadlines and some decision making rationale. The Admission Forum continue to have a duty to monitor the operation of the Fair Access Protocol and the local authority have a duty to report on the operation of the protocol in their report to the Schools Adjudicator.

Ethos – The consultation proposed that schools be allowed to include an ethos statement and that may form part of their oversubscription criteria. In Leeds we

objected that this would introduce the potential for manipulation and that more articulate parents would confirm their belief in the ethos realising this would increase their chance of gaining a place. This would place less well informed parents at a disadvantage without good reason. The consultation response by the DCSF quotes, almost verbatim, the arguments presented in our submission, and consequently schools can include an ethos statement but cannot use it as part of their oversubscription criteria.

Conclusion

Whilst much of the consultation has been followed through into the new Code, there have been some amendments. Notably this includes the requirement for an Admission Forum, rather than the proposal that Admission Forums become voluntary. The new consultation process is already underway as the DCSF have required local authorities to consult with parents on admission arrangements for 2010, ahead of the new Code. Full coordination of school places will have a significant impact on the workload of local authorities from 2010. The local authority now has responsibility for an annual report to the Schools Adjudicator replacing the previous duty on the Admission Forum to report to the Schools Commissioner.

RESOLVED – That the outcome of the consultation be noted

43 WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10

Members received and considered the Forum's Work Programme for the period 2009/2010

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the scheduled Work Programme for 2009/2010
- (ii) To update the Work Programme to reflect decisions made at today's meeting

44 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items raised under any other business

45 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED – To note that the next meeting will take place on Tuesday 12th May 2009 at 4.00pm in the Civic Hall, Leeds.

46 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following parts of the agenda designated as containing exempt information on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present there would be disclosures to them of exempt information, as follows:

The report referred to in minute 36 is exempt under the terms of Access to Information Procedure Rule 10.4 (1,2) on the grounds that the public interest in maintaining the information as exempt, outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information

47 HOTSPOTS 2009

The Chief Executive Education Leeds submitted a report which highlighted the key issues arising out of the allocation of places for September 2009.

Mrs Buckland said that the information contained within the report should remain confidential until March 1st 2009 had passed. Parents would receive their offer letter on this date and it would be inappropriate to release the information earlier.

Addressing the main issues Mrs Buckland said there was demographic decline in young people entering secondary school. Demand at a number of schools has fallen as a result. It is expected the decline to continue in the secondary sector for a number of years, however there has been an increase in the birth rate over recent years. That increase has already begun to affect entry into primary schools and will ultimately filter through to secondary.

Mrs Buckland said the birth rate has been rising for the last couple of years and there was a very small, but increasing number of primary schools who are unable to accommodate their nearest children. The number of primary schools oversubscribed on first preferences is increasing with 69 schools to date, but we still have plenty of surplus places in the primary sector.

Primary

There are slightly more schools this year where nearest children are unlikely to be offered places. At present there are 15 schools where it may be difficult to offer nearest children a place. The situation is being monitored to ensure that children who would be unable to access a school within a reasonable distance are identified.

Secondary

There are a small number of schools who will be oversubscribed, although there a number of the neighbouring schools who are experiencing a decline in preferences and therefore there should be sufficient places in the area. One significant change in the east of Leeds is that one school is currently oversubscribed on first preferences with more than double the number of first preferences than those two years ago. In south Leeds the position is easing significantly although there still remains a pressure at one school.

There has again been a significant demand for one school in the West of the City this year with 324 first preferences for 195 places. Clearly the school cannot meet this demand, however the additional children do not have the school as their nearest.

The majority of schools have either retained a similar level of first preferences to last year or have seen a fall in the number of applications. The demographic decline has been projected for some time and it is expected this pattern will continue for a few more years in the secondary sector.

CONCLUSION

The early indications with Reception preferences is that there an increasing number of hotspots however there continue to be more than sufficient primary places available within the City. With secondary applications the hotspots are significantly reducing and whilst demand remains high for some schools the issue of accessing a nearest school is continuing to fall. There are fewer pressure points in terms of nearest children although it is expected that some popular schools would remain oversubscribed leading to unmet demand. This is a natural consequence of an equal preference system whereby parents are encouraged to be aspirational in expressing their preferences.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted