

ADMISSIONS FORUM

Meeting: 9 July 2003

At: 6.00pm

PRESENT

Councillor Colin Foster)
Councillor Jenny Humphreys)
Councillor Anthony O'Neill) Representing Stockport MBC
Councillor Paul Porgess)

Margaret Regan (Diocesan Board, Roman Catholic Representative)
Will Montgomery (Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools Representative)
Marjorie Brown (Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools Representative)
Angela McGarr (Parents' Representative)
Renée Dicken (Local Community Representative)
Mark Rogers (Assistant Director (Inclusion) Education Services, Stockport MBC)
Jan Morris (Section Manager, Pupil Services, Education Services, Stockport MBC)
Jane Sargeant (Social Inclusion Officer, Education Services, Stockport MBC)
Steve Worthington (Committee Manager)

Apologies

Councillor Paul Carter
Ian Roberts
Liz Parkinson
Chris Keeble

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED - That Councillor Paul Porgess be elected as Chair of the Admissions Forum, for a one year term of office.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED - That Councillor Jenny Humphreys be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Admissions Forum, for a one year term of office.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2003 be approved as a correct record.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. OUTCOMES OF THE 2002/03 ANNUAL ADMISSIONS CONSULTATION ROUND FOR ADMISSIONS IN 2004/05

The Director for Education Services submitted a report (Copies of which had been circulated) detailing the admission arrangements determined for 2004/05 by the respective admission authorities for maintained schools in Stockport.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

6. ADMISSIONS LITERATURE FOR PARENTS

The Director for Education Services submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing the background to and examples of the Authority's published literature on school admission arrangements. It was reported that a number of minor changes would be incorporated within the documentation, however the documents would be totally re-written in 2004.

Councillors raised a number of issues with specific regard to:-

- the outdated information contained on page 23 in respect of grants for 3 year olds;
- that feedback from parents in respect of various formats of questionnaires should be considered on an annual basis.

RESOLVED - That the report and comments be noted.

7. SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR VULNERABLE PUPILS

The Director for Education Services submitted a report (copies of which were circulated) detailing the Authority's arrangements for the admission of vulnerable pupils to mainstream schools.

RESOLVED - (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the admissions authorities in Stockport be advised on any further steps that could be taken to improve admission arrangements for vulnerable pupils.

(3) That asylum seeking children and children whose behaviour at school is causing concern, should be added to the vulnerable pupil list within the Education (Admission Forums) (England) Regulations 2002.

8. CONSULTATION ON THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ADMISSION AND EXCLUSION APPEAL PANELS

The Director for Education Services submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which detailed the proposals put forward by the Council on Tribunals in respect of the arrangements for Independent School Admissions and Exclusions Appeal Panels. The proposals contained 15 recommendations in respect of admission appeals panels, six regarding exclusion appeals panels and three in respect of training, which would apply to both panels. The key recommendations were detailed within the report.

Members expressed the following opinions:-

- That families with young children may have to travel long distances in order to attend appeal hearings which could become a burden and consequent deterrent to attendance, therefore enforcing exclusion;
- The informality allowed within the procedures of current panels, enabled a more relaxed experience for appellants, which helped to put them at ease during stressful appeals hearings. It was perceived that a rigid formal procedure would add to the high levels of stress experienced by appellants;
- The number of appeals in the North West could be between 3,000 and 4,000 and the DfES should be made aware of the potential enormity of the process which could (i) be a deterrent for potential volunteer panel members and (ii) could be the cause of severe backlogs of appeal hearings.
- The need to suggest that local diversity was a strength was expressed. Members commented that there were many nation-wide examples of good practice. Stockport's current practice was one which the DfES could use as a preferred model of appeal hearings.
- Many parents would be unable to afford the legal representation required for the latter stages of the process, therefore this could reinforce exclusion.

Members were informed that once the Council's draft response was finalised, it would be circulated to all members of the Forum for further comment.

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RESOLVED - (1) That the report and initial comments made by members of the Forum be noted.

(2) That members of the Forum be requested to submit any further comments to the Education Officer (Pupils) by 5 September 2003.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Forum would be held on Wednesday 15 October 2003 at 6.00pm in Committee Room No. 1 in Stockport Town Hall.

The meeting ended at 6.42pm.

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