

ADMISSIONS FORUM

Meeting: 17 September 2008

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Shan Alexander (Vice-Chair) in the chair

Councillor Colin Foster

Councillor Hazel Lees

Councillor Mark Weldon

Marjorie Brown

- Voluntary Controlled Schools Representative

Renee Dickens

- Community Representative

Patricia M Goodstadt

- Shrewsbury Diocese

Ian Roberts

- Church of England Representative

Officers

Pat Morgan

- Head of Service, Pupils, Parents & Schools

Jan Morris

- Children's Services Officer (Admissions)

Julie Eltrincham

- Head teacher of Virtual School for Looked After Children

David Tomlinson

- Scrutiny Officer

Steve Worthington

- Principal Democratic Services Officer

Apologies

Councillor Jenny Humphreys

Liz Parkinson

Tim McCarthy

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 April, 2008 were approved as a correct record.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors and officers were invited to declare any interests which they had in any of the items on the agenda for the meeting.

The following interest was declared:-

Personal interest

Councillor

Interest

Mark Weldon

Agenda item No.3 as a teacher at a school in Tameside.

3. DCSF ADMISSION CONSULTATION

The Forum considered copies of the School Admissions Consultation – Delivering the Children's Plan (copies of which had been circulated) together with an oral explanation of the proposed changes detailed within. The new code was designed to improve systems whilst endeavouring to ensuring fairness and compatibility with all schools. In response to a Member's question, the Panel noted that all Schools in Stockport complied with the over subscription criteria.

Discussion ensued on the various merits or otherwise of the proposed changes and made a number of comments; in particular that the current informality of individual appeals was positive and helped appellants in putting forward their case in a more relaxed manner. In addition the Panel:-

- Disagreed with the statements and proposals in relation to the ethos of schools as part of the admissions process as this would give more knowledgeable parents an advantage during an appeal.
- Considered that the publishing requirements were too onerous and unduly expensive for the individual schools and that publication of the arrangements should be limited to the Council website, school's websites and school brochures.
- Agreed with the idea of sub-group working within Admissions Forums was an appropriate way forward and should be supported.
- Agreed that consultation once every three years rather than one would be preferable.
- Agreed that the members of the Forum under the proposed arrangements should not be voluntary.
- Agreed that issues increasing the flexibility for schools to increase admission limits were divisive and would not allow sufficient management of the system for both schools and the local authority to respond to movement of places.

RESLOVED - That the Head of Service, Pupils, Parents & Schools be requested to fill out the outline consultation and circulate the outcome to all Members prior to submission to the DCSF.

4. WORKING GROUP FEEDBACK

The Minutes of the meetings of the Working Group held on 19 May, 1 July and 2 September 2008 were circulated for information. In addition, the Head of Service, Pupils, Parents & Schools and the Head teacher of Virtual School for Looked After Children submitted extensive information (copies of which were circulated at the meeting) which had been compiled in response to the detailed requests at the previous meeting.

Councillors made a number of initial comments and recognised that the information relating building stock could not be reasonably produced. However, the Forum reiterated its request for figures relating to Statemented SEN pupils within the secondary sector.

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Furthermore, the Forum was informed that it was almost impossible for an independent adviser to be identified who could fulfil the role previously envisaged by the Forum in respect of a critical friend from a neighbouring authority.

RESOLVED – (1) That the information be carefully considered at the next meeting of the Admissions Forum Working Group at its meeting to be held on 23 September, 2008 further information would be provided at the meeting in October 2008.

(2) That the Statistics Team and the Admissions Team be thanked for identifying and compiling the information circulated to the Group.

(3) That the final Admissions Forum report should be written and compiled by the Chief Executive's representative in conjunction with the relevant support from the Children and Young People's Directorate.

(4) That an appropriate officer from the Children and Young People's Directorate be requested to attend the meeting of the Admissions Forum Sub-Group scheduled for 23rd September, 2008.

5. DATES OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED - That it be noted that the next meeting of the Forum be held on Tuesday 4th November 2008 at 6.00pm in Committee Room 3.

The meeting closed at 7.55 pm