

# MINUTES

## County Admissions Forum

Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2007  
6.30 p.m., Committee Room B, County Hall

<b>Admission Forum Members</b>		<b>Officers Attending:</b>	
Mr Alan Gray	Present	Mr Lao Cooper	Present
Mrs Mary Calvert	Resigned	Mrs Julia Findley	Present
Mrs Pat Cherry	Present	Mr John Harris	Present
Mrs Terrie Clifft	Present	Mr Stephen Hozier	Present
Mr Brian Coulshed	Present	Ms Jayne Howard	Present
Dr Steven Burton	Present	Mrs Jill Jackson	Present
Mrs Janet Goldsmith	Resigned	Mr Lindsay Martin	
Cllr Robert Gordon	Present	Mrs Sarah Vize	Present
Cllr Tanis Kent	Present	Ms Alison Delyth	Present
Cllr Aislinn Lee	Present	<b>Others Attending</b>	
Cllr David Lloyd	Present	Dr Edgar Anderson (Governor, Rickmansworth School)	Present
Mrs Maureen Roe	Present		
Mr Alan Scouller	Present		
Mrs Jeanette Shire	Resigned		
Cllr Richard Smith	Present		
Mrs Brenda Southorn	Present		
Cllr Richard Thake	Present		
Mr Rodney Tucker	Present		
Mrs Jane Winterbone			

	<b>ITEM</b>
1.	<b>Apologies for Absence:</b>  None received
2.	<b>Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2006</b>  The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record. It was noted that there was nothing further to report on the review of schools in the Bushey area.

**3. Primary Allocations 2007 (attached)**

The Admissions Forum was informed of the allocations to primary schools within Hertfordshire for 2006/07. It was noted that the satisfaction levels of pupils receiving a ranked allocation decreased by 1.56% compared to last year. The paper provides an analysis by county and district. The percentage of children offered a ranked school on allocation day was 95.95%.

With regard to the St Albans area Admission Forum members were consulted on the supply of places. An additional 90 primary places have been made available in the centre of ST Albans. This was agreed due to the local demand evidenced and would ensure that parental preference was maximised. A meeting will take place with Head Teachers to consider the medium term provision.

Work is taking place currently to evaluate the situation in relation to the requirements for PANs in the area in 2008.

The point was made that schools on 'tight sites' cannot be expected to continue to take large numbers. A large increase in numbers will inevitably put pressure on secondary schools longer term. There will therefore be an evaluation of capacity in 2008.

A number of reviews of primary provision are taking place and this inevitably affects satisfaction rates. There were 20% of places unfilled in 2006 and 13% in 2007. It is not anticipated that primary satisfaction rates will rise as the number of spare places is reduced. This would appear to be a natural consequence of a closer fit for supply and demand.

There was a request that the appeal figures, broken down by area, are provided at the next Admission Forum meeting.

**4. Education and Inspections Act: Admissions and Transport Act (attached)**

This paper updated the Admissions Forum on matters relating to admissions and transport arising from the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

A submission was made to the DfES regarding the revised Code of Practice on Admissions.

The report noted that the Code of Practice was laid on 8 January 2007 and will come into force on 28 February 2007.

The new Code of Practice on Appeals has not yet been laid.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 extends local authority (LA) duties and powers in relation to school travel and transport.

The Act seeks to support parental preference and to promote fair access.

The Admissions Forum was asked to consider 3.1 of the report. It was noted that schools are currently consulting on their admission arrangements for 2008.

4.2 of the report highlights the key areas of concern which Hertfordshire Admissions Forum raised during the DfES consultation. The differences between the draft and the laid versions of the Code of Practice on Admissions in relation to the sibling rule for schools with pre-existing partial selection and Children of Staff

are therefore highlighted.

In regard to representation at appeals, the Code of Practice on Appeals has not yet been laid.

Appendix 2 provides a clear definition on the roles and responsibilities of Admission Forums in the future.

In relation to 4.10(c) the admissions literature was considered at a recent Admissions Forum meeting. With regard to 4.10(d) some local authorities are currently producing reports on the effectiveness of the authority's proposed co-ordinated admission arrangements.

Appendix 3 provides the update to (a) and (c)

Appendix 4 – 1.7 notes that interviews are unlawful and that attendance at open evenings cannot be a condition within the admissions process.

The points detailed in 1.71 relating to supplementary information forms are quoted from the new Code of Practice on Admissions.

It was noted that Appendix 1 provides an overview of the laid Code of Practice on Admissions.

In respect of 5.1(a) of the report, information is provided to parents through the hertsdirect and individual school websites.

### **Transport Guidance**

5.1(b) of the report outlines the extended entitlement to free home to school transport for families receiving Maximum Working Tax Credit and Free School Meals.

A point was raised in respect of special consideration being given to children with special educational needs and emotional and behavioural difficulties. With regard to disabled parents work is currently being done to respond to that requirement.

It was stated that Hertfordshire is unlikely to propose a Pathfinder scheme at this stage, although a formal decision is still to be made.

The Admissions Forum expressed disappointment that the laid Code of Practice on Admissions still retains some ambiguity for selective schools in relation to siblings.

Testing Arrangements (Paragraph 2.92) – the Forum noted that this section remained in the new Code despite feedback from the DfES representative at the Admissions seminar in November 2006 advising that this paragraph was not going to be in the final version. The Forum considered 2.92 and formally agreed that it would not be feasible or practical to provide parents with the results of their tests prior to parents making their preferences.

The point was raised that the Admissions Forum has adopted a constructive approach in working with and giving helpful advice to VA and Foundation schools.

The remit of Admissions Forums set out in Appendix 2 notes that it is expected that an evaluative approach will be taken.

National guidance reflects what has been happening in Hertfordshire and this is good to see.

**5. Consultation on Admissions 2008-2009: Foundation and Voluntary-Aided Primary Schools (tabled).**

This paper reports to the Forum on the proposed arrangements for VA and Foundation primary schools for 2008-2009.

Alison Delyth commented that productive dialogue was currently taking place between schools and officers regarding proposed arrangements for 2008. The Admissions Forum will need to consider the situation at their next meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2007 in relation to any outstanding issues and actions to be taken.

It would seem that any set of admission criteria should enable a parent to assess whether they have a reasonable chance of obtaining a place at a particular school. Some proposed arrangements appear to be very complicated.

Some issues, such as children of school staff, quotas, attaching photos to supplementary information forms etc feature in some of the proposed arrangements.

The LA intends to change the admission rules for community schools in relation to children with a statement of special educational needs.

Sets of the proposed admission arrangements for Voluntary-Aided and Foundation schools had been sent to Admissions Forum members and Appendix 1 provides comments on the rules for each school. Some updated admission rules were circulated at the meeting

It was agreed that a further paper would be provided for the next meeting of the Admissions forum on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2007. The intervening period of time will also allow further dialogue to take place with schools.

The point was raised that due to last year's adjudications schools may be less co-operative this year.

It was stated that the Admissions Forum had certain accountabilities and where there are (musts) it is mandatory that they are carried out.

Last year the LA took schools to the adjudicator where LAC were not top priority in the admissions criteria. John Harris stated that it is essential that we are able to admit LAC to schools as they are very vulnerable children and further damage could result if they were not given priority.

The meeting felt that there should be a clear steer to schools from the Forum. Whilst building on the relationship with schools the Forum also has a duty to ensure that the Code of Practice on Admissions is followed. David Lloyd will send a letter to schools on behalf of the Admissions Forum.

It was noted that LAC do not always have the necessary paperwork. The Diocese are very aware of this issue and are trying to support this with a degree of flexibility in the wording of criteria.

For schools to prioritise LAC of the faith is compliant with legislation and the Code of Practice on Admissions.

**6. Consultation on Admissions 2008-2009 – Voluntary-Aided and Foundation Secondary Schools**

It was noted that it would be desirable to get to a point where a 'holiday' came into

play for schools.

It was felt that it was crucial this year to ensure that there was compliance with the 'musts' and then consider the arrangements subsequently, as appropriate, where an admitting authority can have a 'holiday' if their admission arrangements are fully compliant.

It was stated that a 'holiday' for an admitting authority was not dependent on compliance by the rest of the schools in the relevant area.

The Admissions Forum will need to consider the admission arrangements for secondary Voluntary-Aided and Foundation schools in relation to any outstanding issues and actions to be taken at the next meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2007.

**7. Consultation on Admissions 2008-2009 – Community and Voluntary-Controlled School (tabled)**

The proposed changes set out in respect of the sibling rule in 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3. Appendix 2 provides information on the allocation of siblings from outside the priority area for community and voluntary-controlled schools.

Section 7.4 of the report provides information on community and voluntary-controlled schools where the PAN is less than the IAN and for whom notices will need to be published should these numbers be determined.

Section 7.5 of the report provides information on the voluntary-aided and foundation schools where there is likely to be a need for these schools to publish a notice depending on the size of the PAN they wish to consult on for 2008.

Richard Westergreen-Thorne, Head Teacher, made a submission to the Admissions Forum regarding the PAN for Barnwell School, Stevenage for 2008.

It was noted that the responsibility for place planning is a decision for the Cabinet. PANs are consulted on at the same time as admissions criteria and discussions are taking place with the school. The discussion does not stem from the admission rules in this case.

The point was made that parental satisfaction in Stevenage will go down if the PAN is lowered.

Two options are being consulted in respect of the sibling rule as set out in 6.2.

Option 2 includes a sibling link for Years 12 and 13. This option could be seen to be subjective and challengeable as it is not always known if older children will attend the sixth form, as this is frequently dependent on examination results.

Arrangements for multiple births and twins – the proposal is to continue with the current practice. This is not an excepted category for Key Stage 1 class size limits.

Legal advice has outlined that it would not be appropriate to admit the subsequent child(ren) where only one is allocated a place under random allocation, as this would compromise the random element of the process.

6.8 confirms the method of distance measurement. 6.9 re-enforces the right to verify the address given and parents will be asked to agree to give HCC permission to verify the details provided in their application.

In relation to the management of fraudulent applications it is proposed to continue

	<p>with the current practice as set out in 6.9.</p> <p>The question was asked whether it was possible to treat fraudulent applications as criminal.</p> <p>In relation to PANs and IANs it was felt that to say there were sufficient places to meet parental demand in the area did not provide a detailed enough explanation. This was noted as helpful guidance.</p> <p>Option 2 was agreed for the sibling rule and there was no dissent on the other proposals put forward.</p>
8.	<p><b>Consultation on Scheme of Co-ordination in Hertfordshire for 2008-2009</b></p> <p>It was noted that there were strong working relationships with other admitting authorities and the Dioceses.</p> <p>The insertion of 4.2 is to assist with clarity.</p> <p>The laid Code of Practice on Admissions requires that the scheme of co-ordination is continued beyond 1 March each year.</p> <p>The scheme will therefore need to be adapted and letter sent to all schools.</p> <p>4.8 concerns the provision of names by admitting authorities. Ideally 50% of names should be provided. It is suggested that a pilot scheme is run with one secondary school in each area.</p> <p>With regard to the feedback on tests Leventhorpe School has written to the MP. The Admissions Forum would not wish to challenge this as it is a 'should' rather than a 'must'.</p> <p>Appendix 3 confirms that a governing body of a foundation or voluntary-aided may request that parents/carers complete a supplementary information form. Point E outlines the current DfES guidance in relation to the content of the form. The county application form is the 'legal' document in respect of the application process.</p>
9.	<p><b>Online Admissions</b></p> <p>The report informs Admission Forum members of the progress on online admissions.</p> <p>The percentage uptake for the process for admission in 2007 is detailed in section 2.2 of the report.</p> <p>With regard to nursery applications 2,122 booklets were sent out as compared to 12,062 the previous year.</p> <p>The figures represent the highest uptake in a 'county' authority.</p> <p>It was suggested that a 'memory jogger' be provided for parents who would be applying for primary next year.</p>
10.	<p><b>Additional Item – Briefing Note: Secondary Allocations 2007 Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements – Preparation for National Allocation Day on 1 March 2007 (tabled)</b></p> <p>John Harris spoke to the briefing note explaining the fault which had occurred in</p>

	<p>Hertfordshire County Council's software. It was noted that voluntary-aided and foundation schools are working with the LA and the measures being taken were outlined. A joint statement has been issued by John Harris and the director of PAN London and no adverse consequences are anticipated for national allocation day on 1 March 2007.</p> <p>Thanks were expressed by the Forum on behalf of all schools in Hertfordshire for the actions which had been taken to address the situation, ensuring that children and families in Hertfordshire would receive their allocations on the published date.</p>
11.	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p>There were no items of any other business.</p>
12.	<p><b>Date of Next Meetings:</b></p> <p>Monday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2007 at 18.30 – Committee Room B Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2007 at 18.30 – Committee Room B Wednesday 10 October 2007 at 18.30 – Committee Room B</p>