

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE SCHOOLS ADMISSION FORUM

7th March 2008 (10.00 am)

CORE MEMBERSHIP

Persons absent are marked with "A"

LOCAL AUTHORITY

A Councillor Joyce Bosnjak (Chair)

Andrew Wingard Children & Young People's Services

A John Thorn - Early Years officer

Tricia Clayton - SEN Officer

John Martin - Transport Officer Children & Young People's Services

COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS

A Ms T Head

Mr D Maddison

VOLUNTARY AIDED SCHOOLS

A Mr P Patterson (primary)

A Mr A Glover (secondary)

FOUNDATION SCHOOLS

A Ms S Jowett

CHURCH OF ENGLAND DIOCESE

Revd Dr H Worsley (Vice Chair)

ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE

A Mr E Hayes

PARENT GOVERNORS

A Ms P Burbidge

A Ms L Wooding

LOCAL COMMUNITY

A Mr A Sadiq – Race Equality Council

A Ms J Maw – Nottingham City LEA

Ms C Greaves – Parent Partnership Project

OTHER MEMBERS

A Maj E Crew – Army Welfare Service

A Mr J Wilson – Learning and Skills Council

SCHOOL MEMBERS

A Mr I Anderson – Magnus C of E School

Ms S Kerswell – Alternate for I Anderson

Mr R Haylock – Chilwell School

Mr J Loughton – Joseph Whitaker School
Mr R McDonough – West Bridgford School
A Mr M H A Naisbitt – Carlton le Willows School
Mr D Wilson – Christ the King RC School

Also present:

Mr S Hollingworth – Children & Young People's Services
Mr D Owen – Secretary

In the absence of Councillor J Bosnjak, who was ill, the chair was taken by Revd Dr H Worsley

Scott Hollingsworth was welcomed to his first meeting. Scott is now taking the lead officer role for the Forum, and will be replacing Andrew Wingard as a local authority representative.

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor J Bosnjak, Ms S Jowett, Mr E Hayes, Maj. E Crew, Mr I Anderson and Mr M Naisbitt. Andrew Wingard reported that Ms P Burbidge has resigned.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th October 2007 having been circulated were agreed as an accurate record.

MATTERS ARISING

Rob McDonough asked what had happened to the foundation schools' request to have their representation on the Forum increased to 3. Andrew said he had discussed this with the Cabinet Member and Directorate. Given that voting on the Forum is normally by groups, and having regard to the relative number of voluntary aided schools in the county the Local Authority would support an increase in representation for foundation schools from 1 to 2. Rob asked about the process for achieving this, and Andrew said that the LA is responsible for appointing Forum members, and would welcome a nomination from the foundation schools. As the LA is the only body at any point in time to have a complete list of foundation schools Andrew agreed to circulate the list to all foundation schools to facilitate the nomination process, and seek a nomination.

John Martin said that the LA had been successful in securing a pathfinder for school transport, but the government had put the exercise in suspension because of lack of sufficient interest nationally. The LA will seek to progress its submission, but at present will not have sufficient resources of its own to implement the whole scheme.

CO-ORDINATED CONSULTATION FOR 2009/10 ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS

Scott tabled a document summarising the present position on the co-ordinated consultation for the 2009/10 admission arrangements, outlining the concerns, mostly minor, identified by the LA.

School Members were concerned that the summary contained only the LA's comments on the proposed arrangements of other admission authorities, and not the comments of other admission authorities on either the LA's proposals or other admission authority proposals. Andrew said that only two admission authorities had commented on the LA proposed arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools, and he had responded to these.

Rob McDonough said that his governors had commented, and he was concerned that the Forum had not had the chance to comment on the co-ordinated scheme, in particular the issue of when the co-ordinated process should cease each year. Andrew said that the LA had considered this and was proposing to stick with the scheme as currently approved maintaining waiting lists until the end of September. The LA believes this to be in line with current government advice and what is understood to be national proposals in the pipeline. Rob said that his point was that the Forum has in effect been denied the opportunity to express a view on this. Whilst this may have been the view of the Forum when the co-ordinated scheme was agreed the position has since changed quite significantly with the establishment of many more admission authorities.

David Wilson made the point that the Forum is responsible for keeping the admission arrangements under review to ensure they are operating fairly. Without the relevant information the Forum is unable to discharge this responsibility. Andrew pointed out that last year was the first time the LA had co-ordinated the consultation process, and had used the same format for the current year.

It was accepted that these concerns could not be resolved at this meeting because the detail had not been tabled. It was also accepted that the June meeting would be too late to comply with the statutory requirements for objections. It was agreed that a special meeting be convened to discuss these matters further with all of the relevant information being made available with the agenda. The presently approved co-ordinated arrangements are published on the Forum web page of the County Council web site. **(It was agreed later in the meeting that the date for the special meeting will be Wednesday 2nd April 2008 at 10.00 am venue to be confirmed – Scott Hollingworth to make the arrangements).**

FRAMEWORK FOR ANNUAL REPORT

Andrew circulated a paper setting out preliminary thinking on the format for an annual report. It is still work in progress that reflects the requirements of the regulations. He answered questions on the proposed format.

David Wilson asked whether the Forum had ever formally decided to produce an annual report given that it is optional. Derek Owen said that most issues before the Forum are determined by consensus rather than a formal vote. The clear consensus had been to support the production of an annual report, whilst recognising that the Forum has no infrastructure or resources of its own, and has to rely on the LA to do all the work. Andrew said that the intention is to bring a draft report to the June meeting.

SCHOOLS ADMISSIONS APPEALS CODE

Andrew spoke to the report circulated with agenda summarising the main changes to the revised Code. He said that the driver behind the revisions is the need to consider whether there is scope for providing a fairer more consistent process by means of centralisation.

Rob McDonough asked about the reference to LA's ensuring there is sufficient funding to resource appeals. Andrew said that whilst he was not familiar with the detail the LA does meet the cost of all admission appeals.

Andrew drew attention to the new timetable for completion of appeals. The LA has set 17th June as the deadline for dealing with primary appeals, and the Code sets a deadline of 17th July for secondary appeals.

Howard Worsley reported that at the City Forum members had expressed concern about the requirement to publish to appellants the names of the members and clerk to the appeal panel. The Code requires this to be done at least 3 days prior to the appeal. The concern was the opportunity this gives appellants to identify the addresses of panel members and to lobby them.

At this point the vice chair had to leave the meeting, and the chair was taken by Andrew Wingard.

INITIAL FEEDBACK ON CURRENT ADMISSION ROUND

All secondary offers had been sent out on time and the LA is on target to issue primary offers on 17th March.

David Wilson said that the decision not to provide schools with the details of preferences was unhelpful. The system last year was much better when the information was provided. Providing the information does not prejudice the LA and helps schools to manage admissions. He pointed out that whatever advice the LA may have received from the centre the Admissions Code does not prohibit the provision of this information to schools. He asked that the LA review this decision and seek definitive legal advice. Scott Hollingworth said he would look at this, and is happy to consider any suggestions for improving the process. Andrew said the LA had been told it could not provide the information, but if told it can then LA will be happy to comply. Andrew said the LA would look at what additional data the LA is able to provide to make the schools' job easier.

Rob McDonough asked how many first preferences had been offered. Andrew said that as at the offer date 95.5% of first preferences had been offered. This compared with last year. This year the number of late applications had been halved.

Dave Maddison asked if the timetable of Forum meetings could be reviewed to embrace primary offers at the same meeting to which secondary offers are reported.

Andrew said he would like to record his appreciation for the efforts of primary schools in chasing secondary applications to ensure they are received on time.

There was general support for the production of an annual timetable for Forum meetings that identifies standing items that need to go to particular meetings.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next scheduled meeting is Friday 20th June 2008 10.00 a.m. at Chilwell School

The special meeting to consider co-ordinated consultation responses will be Wednesday 2nd April 2008 10.00 a.m. - venue to be confirmed

Andrew proposed that a further special meeting be arranged at a later date to consider co-ordinated schemes for primary and secondary

ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Dave Maddison asked for the following to be on the agenda:

- The impact of school holidays on primary admissions
- Clear guidance on current requirements for infant class size
- Freedom for all infant/primary schools to determine the dates for transfer from reception to full-time
- Draft Annual Report

The meeting concluded at 11.45 a.m.