

DEVON LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM

17 March 2011

Present

Devon County Council
Councillor Channon (Chairman)

Devon Schools Group

Academy Schools
Mr Bishop

Community Schools
Mr Lovett
Mrs Boote

Voluntary Aided Schools
Mr Tancock

Church of England Diocese
Mrs Mabin (Vice Chairman)

Devon Association of Governors
Mr Rogers

Roman Catholic Diocese
Ms Blyth (RC Diocese)

Community
Ms Butler (early years)
Ms Booth (children in care)
Mr Juby

Neighbouring Authorities (Non Voting)
Mrs Jago (Cornwall Council)
Mrs Wallace (Plymouth Council)

Apologies
Mrs Denson (Service Families) and Mr Evans (Academy Schools)

69

Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2010 be signed as a correct record.

70 LAF Membership

RESOLVED that in view of the provisions within the Education Bill and pending a decision of the LA about the future of the Forum further consideration of the membership be deferred.

71 Devon Choice Advice Service

The Forum considered the report of the Secretary (CY/11/23) on the Service for the year to March 2011 and since its inception in April 2007. The Choice Advisers gave a presentation of their work, the development of the service since its inception in 2007, and referred to the positive outcome of an independent 'light touch' inspection by the National Choice Advice Network on the value of the service in Devon. The report also gave examples of parents' feedback.

The Forum noted that pending publication of the draft Admissions Code anticipated late in March, it was unclear whether Choice Advice would remain a statutory duty for local authorities. The current LA budget did not allow for the continuation of the service and the contracts of the two remaining advisers would not be renewed. The national inspection/quality assurance network would also be ceasing from 31 March 2011.

The Access Services Manager reported that the Admissions Team would continue to offer advice to parents but they would not be able to provide the same level of independent and dedicated support as had been the case with the Choice Advice service.

The Forum acknowledged the value of the Service in supporting vulnerable families and children through the transition to secondary education and other aspects of their work. Members suggested that the advisers could investigate forming as a 'traded service' through, for example, the Local Learning Communities and or the County Council.

The Chairman thanked the Advisers for the report and for their work in supporting parents and children.

72 Proposed Admission Arrangement for 2012-13

The Forum considered the report of the Secretary (CY/11/14) on the consultation outcomes in respect of proposed admission arrangements for 2012-13 and on the arrangements to be recommended to the Cabinet meeting on 13 April 2011. The report detailed in annex A the individual submissions made, responses from the Local Authority and recommendations. The report also detailed the LA proposals for consultation in 2013 - 14.

Members' discussion points with the Policy & Strategy Officer (Education) (CYPS Directorate) included:

- the need for clarity on the arrangements particularly for primary schools

- the need for timely information on children particularly in respect of in-year admissions; and in respect of children moving from Personalised Learning settings; and the need for appropriate support for these vulnerable children
- the request from the Horwood and Newton Tracey Primary School to extend its designated area which was not supported by the Local Authority.

The Chairman indicated that should any member have any comments on the proposals or responses these should be relayed to Andrew Brent (andrew.brent@devon.gov.uk) by 25 March 2011.

RESOLVED

(a) that the admission arrangements proposed and consulted upon by the LA as admissions authority for community and voluntary controlled schools (at www.devon.gov.uk/admissionsarrangements) be supported for approval by the Cabinet;

(b) that the LA proposals at sections 3.5-6 for consultation for 2013/14 be supported;

(c) that a further report be made to the next meeting on Year 11 admissions.

73 Proposed Voluntary Aided Admission Arrangements for 2012/13

The Forum considered the report of the Secretary (CY/11/15) on the consultation process for Voluntary Aided schools. A model policy approved by the Diocese and supported by the LA had been adopted by 46 of 49 VA schools in Devon.

The Forum noted that all the Voluntary Aided schools were legally compliant with the Admissions Code which allowed for differing oversubscription criteria according to the schools' Christian ethos and trust deeds.

RESOLVED that the review of the consultation process by the Diocese and LA be supported.

74 Raising Parental Awareness of Admissions Processes: DfE Response to Councillor Channon's Letter to Michael Gove MP

The Forum noted the report of the Secretary (CY/11/16) on a letter from the DfE in response to representations asking for a national awareness campaign for parents on the admissions process to minimise late applications.

Discussion points with the Schools Access Services Manager included:

- the current work of the LA's Admissions Team and the Early Years and Child Care Teams to raise awareness particularly within pre-school settings and for parents whose children were about to apply for a primary place
- the value a national campaign would have if introduced by government with the now common national closing dates for applications
- the large proportion of children getting their first preference 91.7% (on which there would be further details in a report to the next meeting) and whilst the level

of late applications was relatively very low these did have a serious impact for the families concerned, particularly in more rural areas

- the value of the Choice Advice service in this area for more vulnerable families
- whether there would be advice on awareness and support for parents within the impending revised Code.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and further consideration be given to this pending the publication of the draft Admissions Code (note: further consideration would be given to this by the Task Group responding to the consultation on the Admissions Code).

75 Payment of Pupil Premium: Parameters

The Forum noted the report of the Secretary (CY/11/17) which explained that pupils known to the LA as eligible for Free School Meals would receive the Pupil Premium as well as Looked After Children (longer than 6 months). A premium would also be introduced for children whose parents were in the armed services.

The Forum discussed issues relating to take-up of free school meals by parents and how eligible parents should be encouraged to apply.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

76 Update on School Transport and Responses to Consultation on Policy Proposals for 2011/12

The Forum considered the report of Secretary (CY/11/18) on the County Council's current school transport policy (including for post 16 learners) and the outcome of consultations on proposed changes following cuts in the budget agreed by the County Council. The report also referred to cuts in public service contracts which would also impact on entitled students for whom alternative transport arrangements would have to be made.

Members' discussion with the Schools Access Services Manager included:

- the relative costs and impact on learners of the 4 options for post 16 education arising from the County Council budget reductions
- the mechanism for appeals for learners and consideration of appeals based on hardship grounds (based on the eligibility for Free School meals) and the likelihood of increased numbers of appeals arising from any change resulting in increased costs for young people and parents
- the work of the County Council's Transport Coordination Service with bus operators to maintain some level of contract services and their work with individual schools
- the increases in the cost for discretionary post 16 transport from £378/year to a range from £450 - £650, to be determined by the Cabinet.
- the obligation of the County Council to facilitate access to appropriate post 16 education and possible impending changes regarding national transport policy which is currently being reviewed
- the recent loss to students of the educational maintenance allowances used, in part, to off set transport costs.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Council's statutory responsibilities regarding the provision of education transport be noted;
- (b) that the consultation on proposed policy changes for September 2011 including Options for post 16 transport be noted;
- (c) that the responses to the consultation be noted;
- (d) that the Forum's view on Post 16 Transport (below) be relayed to the Cabinet:

'that Option 2 be recommended to the Cabinet in that it should have least detrimental impact on students and the LAF also express its concern over any 'significant' increase in costs in view of the impact on more vulnerable post 16 learners in Devon'.

77

Education White Paper: Summary

The Forum considered the report of the Secretary (CY/11/19) summarising the provisions within the White paper: 'The Importance of Teaching' including the ending of the requirement to operate an Admissions Forum and new draft Admission and Admission Appeal Codes which were expected to be published later this month for consultation.

Members' discussion points with the Schools Access Services Manager included:

- a reference from the Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee to the Cabinet expressing concern about the proposed abolition of the duty for LAs to operate Local Admissions Forums
- the value of the Local Admissions Forum continuing on a discretionary basis with its representation from schools, neighbouring authorities, the dioceses, and parents in helping to co-ordinate admission processes, particularly in view of the increasing numbers of academies (who are their own 'admitting authorities'). The role of the Forum as a representative and independent body advising the County Council's Cabinet, the Devon Education Forum and other organisations such as the Office of the Schools Adjudicator. The LAF could also assist the County Council in acting as a 'Champion for Parents' as referred to in the White Paper. The respective officers indicated that both Plymouth and Cornwall would be recommended to continue with their respective LAFs
- the need for the Forum to respond to the consultation on the draft Admissions Code before the next meeting.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the concerns of the CYPS Scrutiny Committee regarding the proposed removal of the statutory requirement for Local Authorities to convene Admissions Forums under the Education Bill be noted; and

(b) that the Cabinet be advised that the LAF should continue in some form on a discretionary basis and continue to advise the Cabinet, the Devon Education Forum and other bodies as appropriate;

(c) that a Working Group comprising the Vice-Chairman Mrs Mabin, Mr Juby and Mrs Blyth supported by Mrs Boon be convened to consider the impending new Admissions Code and make a response to the DfE on behalf of the Forum for approval by the Chairman (note the Working Group to meet on Thursday, 5 May at 9.30 at Capital Court).

78 Testing Before Preference: Update

The Forum noted the report of the Secretary (CY/10/20) on an update. For 2012-13 Torbay selective schools would not now be testing before preference as this was not a viable option and had requested that the LA provide ranking data as soon as possible after the closing date 31 October. The schools intend to test on 19 and 26 November and accept that any candidates whose details were not received in time would be able to be tested shortly afterwards.

This outcome was viewed by the Local Authority as the fairest for Devon children.

79 Inclusion

The Forum considered the report of the Secretary (CY/10/21) on monitoring of the admission of children who arrive outside of the normal admission round and the fair distribution among local schools and the operation of the Fair Access Protocol. The report included appendices with data on children in care allocated by the schools admissions team, and other in-year admissions to Devon secondary Schools. These arrangements would however be subject to national consultation in the draft Admissions Code expected later this month. The report also referred to the need for continued data from academies which to date was not the case in respect of the new academies in Devon. The academy representative referred to the administrative problems during these early stages and indicated that the academies wished to continue to work collaboratively with the LA through their continued membership of the Associations and the Local Learning Communities.

RESOLVED that the Academies be invited through the Devon Education Forum to make data available regarding in-year admissions.

80 Dates of Meetings 2011

Thursday, 14 July 2011 and Thursday 17 November 2011 at 10.30 am at County Hall.

The Minutes of the Forum are published on the County Council's Website at:-
http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/learning/schools/admissions/admissions_forum.htm

The meeting started at 10.30 am and finished at 12.40 pm