

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
SCHOOL ADMISSIONS FORUM
HELD ON TUESDAY 15 FEBRUARY 2011 FROM 7.00PM TO 7:55PM**

Present:-

Local Education Authority Representatives:

David Chopping and Beth Rowland

Diocesan Representatives

David Babb

Parent Representatives:

Phiala Mehring

Representatives from the Local Community

Patricia Cuss – *Early Years Forum*

Major Richard Henderson (deputising for Col Derek McAvoy) – *Arborfield Garrison*
– *Other Faith Groups*

Schools Representatives

Elaine Stewart – *Aldryngton Primary School*

Hilary Winter – *The Piggott CE Aided Secondary School*

Jean Bateman – *Grazeley CE Aided Primary School*

Also present:-

David Armstrong, Policy and Schools Access Officer

Piers Brunning, Service Manager Children's Services Infrastructure Development

Sue Riddick, Lead Admissions Officer

Rachael Wardell, Head of Children's Services Strategy and Partnerships

Tricia Harcourt, Senior Democratic Services Officer

76. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That David Babb be elected as Chairman of the School Admissions Forum for the remainder of the 2010/11 Academic year.

77. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Phiala Mehring declared a personal interest in relation to the Designated Areas section in Item 81, Consultation on the 2011/12 Admission Arrangements, on the grounds that she lived in the proposed new Maiden Erlegh/Bulmershe designated area; and she was a governor of The Forest School.

David Chopping declared a personal interest in relation to the Designated Areas section in Item 81, Consultation on the 2011/12 Admission Arrangements, on the grounds that he was a Ward member for the Maiden Erlegh area and lived within Maiden Erlegh designated area.

78. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Hilary Winter be appointed as Vice Chairman of the School Admissions Forum for the remainder of the 2010/11 Academic year.

79. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 23 November 2010 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

80. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Col Derek McAvoy, Major Richard Henderson attended in his place.

81. MEMBERSHIP

David Armstrong reported that Sharon Jhheent, one of the Parent Representatives had withdrawn from membership of the Forum, so creating a vacancy. The Parent Representatives had been appointed by the Local Authority following public advertisement; and as there were more volunteers than vacancies, one of them could be approached to see if they were still interested.

Comment was made that there was uncertainty around the future of Admission Forums in light of proposals in the recently published Education Bill, so perhaps it would be more appropriate not to fill the vacancy.

RESOLVED: That in light of the uncertainty around the future of Admissions Forums the Parent Representative vacancy should not be filled.

82. UPDATE ON THE CONSULTATION ON 2012/2013 ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED AND COMMUNITY SCHOOLS, AND PRIMARY AND SECONDARY COORDINATED ADMISSIONS SCHEMES

David Armstrong presented the report set out on Agenda pages 6 to 13, giving an update on the progress of the consultation on the 2012/13 Admission Arrangements.

He reported that there had been over 1000 responses through the website and a similar number of emails and letters; a high proportion of which were in relation to the proposed changes to the designated areas for Maiden Erlegh and Bulmershe Schools.

It was noted that Local Authorities are legally obliged to publish their determined admission arrangements by 15 April each year. Clarification was given about the stages now required leading up to the determination;

- Officers will prepare a report on the results of the consultation and pull together a set of proposals
- The report and proposals will be considered at the meeting of the School Admissions Forum on 15 March, when recommendations on the admission arrangements, will be made and reported to the Executive
- The report on the consultation with the Admission Forum's recommendations will be considered by the Executive at its meeting on 31 March, when the final determination of the full admission arrangements will be made.

The Chairman queried whether in light of the problems for the 2010/11 admissions in finding additional places, there were going to be any permanent changes to admission numbers for 2012/13 if there were to be a similar situation in 2011/12?

Officers responded that in relation to numbers for primary admissions for 2011 so far, the situation is broadly similar to that last year, with possibly a better spread. However information was still being received from adjoining authorities, and from Voluntary Aided

schools, so the situation would be clearer later in March. There are no proposals for permanent increases to admission numbers.

Phiala Mehring referred to issues she knew of that had been raised in consultation responses relating to support being given for Bulmershe School; decisions on access routes; and the impact of new housing developments, and asked whether they would be addressed in the report.

Officers responded that the report would be about the admission arrangements; it would not address school improvement and other issues raised.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted and no further comments be made.

83. CONSULTATIONS ON VOLUNTARY AIDED SCHOOLS' ADMISSION POLICIES FOR 2012/2013

Sue Riddick presented the report on Agenda pages 14 to 57 detailing the consultations on admission arrangements submitted by Voluntary Aided schools in the Borough. Copies of the draft policies from the following schools were included in the agenda:

- Finchampstead CE Aided Primary School
- Grazeley CE Aided Primary School
- St Dominic Savio Catholic Primary School
- St Sebastian's CE Aided Primary School
- St Teresa's Catholic Primary School
- The Piggott Church of England School

It was noted that Sonning CE Aided Primary School and Shinfield St Mary's CE Aided Junior School were not proposing to make any changes to their admissions policy for 2012/13, so had not undertaken a consultation. Arrangements for All Saints CE Aided Primary and Earley St Peter's CE Aided Primary School had been considered at the previous meeting.

The report gave details of the Local Authority's comments on the submitted policies, which have now been passed to the schools. The Forum now had the opportunity to make on its own behalf.

Comment was made that the School Admissions Code required a permanent change to admission numbers if more than 26 additional children are admitted to school in any three year period; those admitted on appeal are not included.

Rachael Wardell mentioned that last year the Forum had written to the Roman Catholic Diocese expressing concerns that non baptised Looked After Children are not included as the highest priority in the admission criteria for the Catholic schools. Both St Dominic Savio and St Teresa's have a separate criterion for non-Catholic Looked After Children. The Chairman commented that he was aware that following complaints to the Schools Adjudicator on this issue, there had been a determination that within the Code it is permitted to give baptised Catholic children priority in admissions.

Forum members felt that this was discriminating against Looked After Children who were either not Catholic or a non baptised Catholic; and that the individual school could set their own admission criteria, and it was

RESOLVED: to write to the Roman Catholic Diocese and individual Catholic schools expressing the Forum's concerns that the admission criteria discriminate against non baptised Catholic Looked After Children.

84 REPORT ON NON COMPLIANCE WITH ADMISSION POLICY

David Armstrong reported that, following issues around the number of points of first entry to primary schools in the previous school year, the Forum had requested to be informed of any instances of non-compliance with admission policies. Currently there was nothing to report, as all schools had moved to two points of entry for 2010/11. It was noted that from the 2011/12 academic year there will only be one point of first entry to primary schools, in September. So, all children who are five during that academic year have to be offered a place starting in September.

Patricia Cuss asked for clarification about what the arrangements were for September in relation to part time places, and whether it would be consistent across the Borough, as there seemed to be confusion with parents in Early Years settings.

Officers confirmed that all children have to be offered a full time place starting on the first day of term in September. However parents can request that the entry is deferred until later in the school year or until their child reaches compulsory school age (the term after their fifth birthday). in that school year. Also parents can request that their child attends part-time until their child reaches compulsory school age.

Comment was made that having very young children starting full time immediately may cause problems, and in the past schools made arrangements for part time attendance initially. It was pointed out that such arrangements would have to be made between parents and schools, and parents had the option to request part time or defer entry; it is up to them to make the decision.

85. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS.

It was noted that the next meeting will be on 15 March, with further meetings planned for: 14 June, 23 November 2011 and 22 February, 14 March 2012.

Comment was made that revisions were being made to the School Admissions Code, with the Department for Education planning to publish a revised Code for consultation at the end of February. The Forum could make comments on the revised Code, and it was suggested that if details were not available by the next meeting, a working group could be set up to prepare a response. The last time revisions to the Code were consulted on, the Forum and Officers prepared a joint response.

These are the Minutes of a meeting of the School Admissions Forum

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