

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE ADMISSIONS FORUM** held in Room 14, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Wednesday, 21 October 2009

Present:

David Brandon-Bravo	Frances Image
Dawn Day	John Kemp
Shawn Fell (Chairman)	Anne Phillips
Sigrid Hillman	Jacqueline Woodthorpe

Officers in attendance: Rosa Bonwick, Lydia Braisher, Alison Bray, John Goldsmith, Sandra Hobbs, Rob Mills and Patrick Shevlin

CBAF/09/16 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Pauline Cotton, Councillor Mrs Anita Lewis, Ian Robinson, Nick Sharpe and Ray Slade.

The Chairman welcomed the new Members and Officers to the meeting.

CBAF/09/17 **MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE ADMISSIONS FORUM HELD ON 24 JUNE 2009 AND MATTERS ARISING**

RESOLVED to approve the Minutes of the meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Admissions Forum held on 24 June 2009 as a correct record and to authorise the Chairman to sign them.

Minute No. L/04/08 - Members clarified that they would like to receive the January 2009 data held within the ACORN database rather than wait for the January 2010 data.

Minute No. L/04/09 – Members received an update on the vacancy for a School Transfer Adviser for Central Bedfordshire. An appointment had been made but the successful candidate had withdrawn. Officers would be meeting to discuss the way forward.

Minute No. L/04/10 – Members were advised that the implications arising from the report by Sir Alan Steer were being considered by Officers and Headteachers looking at locally based short stay provisions. Once the implications had been considered all parties would be consulted.

Minute No. L/04/11 – Members were advised that Officers were still awaiting a response from the Schools Adjudicator on the admission arrangements for 2010 for John Donne Voluntary Aided School.

CBAF/09/18 **CO-ORDINATION OF IN-YEAR ADMISSIONS - 2010/2011**

The Forum received a report advising Members that the arrangements for co-ordinating in-year admissions had been consulted upon as part of the co-ordinated arrangements for admissions in 2010-2011.

Members were reminded that local authorities were required to have in place a scheme each year for co-ordinating admission arrangements. From the 2010-2011 academic year, local authorities were required to formulate a scheme for applications for admissions to age groups other than the normal year of entry i.e. in-year applications. The scheme for in-year admissions had to be formulated by 1 January 2010. Members received copies of the sections relating to in-year admissions for upper schools, the academy and also those relating to primary schools. The scheme for primary schools covered middle and lower schools. Members asked that this be clearly stated. It was noted that no changes were proposed for the 2010-2011 academic year. Members were informed that as the Local Authority had already consulted on the schemes, no further action was required, other than to notify the Department for Children, Schools and Families that schemes have been formulated, consulted upon and agreed.

NOTED the co-ordinated schemes for in-year admissions for 2010/2011 with the above amendment.

CBAF/09/19 **ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS - SEPTEMBER 2011**

(i) Consultation

Members received a report concerning the arrangements for consulting on changes to admission arrangements and were reminded that the School Admissions Code required admission authorities to consult, every three years, on their proposed admission arrangements unless the admission arrangements were not the same as those determined following the last consultation.

Members were informed of the detailed consultation arrangements and noted that where an admission authority proposed an increase in their published admission number of 27 or more, the trade union representing staff at that school should be consulted.

The Forum noted that as all admission authorities had been required to consult on their arrangements for admissions in September 2010, consultation in respect of the admission arrangements for September 2011 would only be required if any changes were proposed.

NOTED the requirement on admission authorities to consult every three years, unless the admission arrangements were to be changed.

ii) **Standard Admissions Policy**

Members were reminded that at the meeting in March 2009, the Forum agreed in principle to a proposed change to the standard admissions policy for admissions in 2011 to community and voluntary controlled schools, which would give catchment siblings a higher priority than other children living in the catchment area. This change was reflected in an amended policy presented to the Forum for approval. Members were advised that there was one amendment to the policy that had been attached to the agenda and that was to amend the wording in category 2 'pupils living in the catchment area with siblings attending the school' by removing the word 'attending' so it would read 'pupils living in the catchment area with siblings at the school'.

Members noted that as this would be a significant change to the policy, it would need to be consulted upon in accordance with the requirements of the School Admissions Code.

Members agreed to recommend to the governing bodies of foundation, trust and voluntary aided schools that serve a local catchment areas, that they consider making a similar change to their admissions policies for September 2011. This recommendation would also be put forward to the Academy, but Officers were aware that any change for the Academy would need to be approved by the Secretary of State. If the governing bodies agreed to this change to the policy and it was the only change, the local authority would be prepared to consult on their behalf. If other changes were proposed then the governing body would have to undertake the necessary consultation.

RESOLVED

- 1) that the proposed change to the admissions policy for community and voluntary controlled schools for September 2011 be agreed, subject to appropriate consultation
- 2) that the governing bodies of foundation, trust and voluntary aided schools that serve a local catchment area and the Academy be asked to consider adopting a similar change to their policies.

(iii) **Admission Numbers**

Members received a report proposing a change to the admission number for Roecroft Lower School and seeking agreement to the revised exceptions which may result in the admission number for a school being exceeded.

Roecroft Lower School was being replaced, subject to funding approval. The admission number for the new school would be 60 compared to the published admission number of 30 for the current school, necessitating consultation on the increased admission number. As the relevant trade unions would have been consulted when the statutory notice for the

replacement school was published, it was not necessary to include the trade unions in the consultation process. The Forum was advised that although no other increases were proposed for September 2011, community and voluntary controlled schools would be written to about the arrangements proposed which may result in other changes which would be reported to the next meeting of the Forum.

Members were reminded of the exceptions agreed at the meeting in March 2009, which could result in the admission number for a school being exceeded. The Forum also considered an additional exception concerning the admission of twins or children from multiple births. This was that the local authority would normally seek to admit those children to the same school, even if the school had reached its published admission number, provided the admission of those children would not cause a breach of infant class size limits. It was recommended that this be added to the list of exceptions.

RESOLVED

- 1) that the proposed change to the admission number for the replacement Roecroft Lower School be noted
- 2) that the additional exception as set out above, which could result in the admission number being exceeded, be approved
- 3) to invite the governing bodies of foundation, trust and voluntary aided schools and the Academy to adopt the revised exceptions.

(iv) Co-ordinated Admission Schemes

Members received a report proposing no changes to the co-ordinated admissions scheme for upper schools and the Academy for 2011/2012 but seeking agreement to changes to the co-ordinated admissions scheme for primary schools for 2011/2012.

Members were advised that although no changes were proposed to the co-ordinated scheme for upper schools and the Academy, timescales had been updated for 2011/2012. It was noted that the national closing date of 31 October 2010 fell at the weekend. The Department for Children, Schools and Families had confirmed that the national closing date had been set irrespective of whether those dates were working days and that there was no flexibility in changing this date. Members also highlighted that this date fell at the end of half-term. Officers did state that the online facility would close on 31 October, but if Officers received any paper applications a couple of days after this date they would still be accepted.

Members received a copy of the co-ordinated scheme proposed for primary schools which included middle and lower schools and which had been updated to reflect the requirements, from September 2011, for local authorities to co-ordinate primary applications from residents living in the local authority area. The application process was explained and Members

were advised that the joint arrangements for processing primary applications between Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough, included in the admissions scheme for 2010/2011, had been removed from the scheme for 2011/2012 as those joint arrangements would cease before the 2011 admissions round commenced.

A query was raised with regard to foster children and it was clarified that applications for foster children would have to be made to the authority in which the foster child lived. Officers confirmed that for children with parents in the Armed Forces who were being relocated to the area, a letter from their headquarters confirming the address they would be moving to would be sufficient.

As there would be a significant change to the co-ordinated scheme for primary admissions, consultation would be required in accordance with the School Admissions Code. Although there were no changes to the co-ordinated scheme for upper schools and the academy, other than the timescales, the Forum agreed with the suggestion that this scheme be issued as part of the consultation, for information purposes only.

RESOLVED

- 1) that the co-ordinated admissions scheme for upper schools and the academy be noted
- 2) that the proposed changes to the co-ordinated admissions scheme for primary schools be agreed.

(v) Open Evenings

Members received a report setting out the proposed dates for open evenings.

RESOLVED that the following dates be approved for open evenings in connection with the admission arrangements for September 2011:

Upper Schools: 20 September 2010 – 22 October 2010
Middle Schools: 1 November 2010 – 26 November 2010

CBAF/09/20 MEMBERSHIP OF THE ADMISSIONS FORUM

Members received an oral update on the position regarding membership of the Admissions Forum for the four year period from 1 January 2010. There were 20 available positions on the Forum, but only 17 of these positions had been filled. Members were advised that there were two vacancies for headteachers or governors of Voluntary Controlled Schools (VCS) and one vacancy for a headteacher of an upper school.

Officers had contacted headteachers and Chairs of Governors of the VCS and of the upper schools in June and September, but had not yet received any nominations. Members suggested that the Chairs of the headteacher groups be contacted seeking nominations for these positions.

RESOLVED that Officers contact the Chairs of the headteacher groups to seek nominations for the two vacancies for headteachers or governors of VCS and the one vacancy for a headteacher of an upper school.

CBAF/09/21 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

RESOLVED that the next meeting be held at 8.30 a.m. in Room 14, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands on 24 March 2010.

CBAF/09/22 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Admissions information was tabled for the Transforming Teaching and Learning Board. The Board were looking at the best way to configure schools in the future and were collecting certain pieces of information as follows:

- Standard Admission Number
- Pupil Numbers on roll
- Current Net Capacity
- First preference as % of admission figure

Members also suggested that it would be appropriate to also collect data on the number of children living in each of the schools catchment areas. It was noted that in some cases the number of children per year group living in the catchment area could exceed the admission number, but that due to parental preference, the catchment school would not necessarily be oversubscribed.

Members were also advised that a situation had arisen whereby a child had been offered a place at a school when there were two other children ahead of them on the waiting list. Officers indicated that headteachers should not offer places unless this had been cleared by the Admissions Team, as this could lead to the school exceeding its published admissions number. Officers would remind headteachers, when writing to them next year, of this requirement. A query was raised as to whether this applied to Foundation Schools and Officers advised that the local authority had the final decision over whether a school could admit above its published admission number. For Academies the final decision rested with the Secretary of State.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 8.30 a.m. and concluded at 9.20 a.m.)