

LIFELONG LEARNING
24th February, 2009

Present:- Councillor Rushforth (in the Chair); Councillor Havenhand.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Falvey.

39. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 6TH JANUARY, 2009

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 6th January, 2009 be received as a correct record.

40. PROPOSED CHANGES ON VARIOUS SCHOOL ORGANISATION MATTERS

Martin Harrop, Principal Officer, Forward Planning, presented the submitted report on proposed changes recently notified by the DCSF in respect of various school organisation matters.

The DCSF is proposing the following changes:-

- 1) - draft amendments to school organisation, governance, middle schools, federations and information as to provision of education regulations; and
- 2) - draft decision maker's guidance for both sixth form presumptions (i.e. presumption to approve proposals in particular circumstances) and establishing new National Challenge Trust Schools.

1) Changes to Regulations

The amendments to various regulations are, in the main, minor/technical amendments (e.g. changes to timescales) which will have no major significance.

The main change (already signalled within the recent consultation on admissions changes) is the amendment to remove the need to publish statutory proposals for certain increases in a school's PAN (Published Admission Number). It is now intended that **any changes** to the number of pupils to be admitted should be consulted on as part of the annual admissions determination arrangements.

2) i) Sixth Form Presumptions

There will be changes to the Decision Maker's Guidance for Expanding a school or adding a Sixth Form. This is the guidance which decision makers for statutory proposals (local authorities or the Schools Adjudicator) must follow.

The amended guidance reaffirms the strong presumption that proposals from 'presumption schools' (high performing schools)* should be approved, **but it stresses the need for the presumption school to collaborate with partners in drawing up plans.** This guidance recognises that there can be tension between the wishes of an individual school and the need to build and sustain effective patterns of 14-19 organisation across a local area in order to deliver the new 14-19 entitlement.

(* the strong presumption to approve proposals relates to the following:

- the school is a high performing specialist school that has opted for a vocational specialism; or
- the school, whether specialist or not, meets the DCSF criteria for 'high performing' and does not require capital support.

For the first category shown above, capital funding would be available from the 16-19 Capital Fund).

ii) New National Challenge Trust Schools

There will be an addition of a presumption to approve proposals to establish a new maintained school.

This will apply in the following circumstances:

To support the National Challenge, a possible structural solution for local authorities (in the case of a school at risk of missing the floor target) is to close the existing school and open a new National Challenge Trust School. This would be a Foundation School with a foundation composed of agreed Trust partners, including a strong education partner, which will appoint a majority of governors to the new school. There will be a **strong presumption to approve** such proposals.

A new National Challenge Trust school will have clear and specific plans for raising attainment which have been agreed with the DCSF.

Resolved:- That the report be received and the changes noted.

41. SCHOOL ADMISSIONS (NEW REGULATIONS) AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM

Martin Harrop, Principal Officer, Forward Planning, presented the submitted report on School Admissions (New Regulations) and Membership of the Local Admissions Forum.

There are a number of new regulations which cover school admissions and the salient points are shown at Appendix 1 of the report now submitted.

Changes will be required to the membership of the Local Admissions Forum (LAF).

The main changes to note are:

- (i) Admissions consultation now includes parents and 'others who appear to have an interest'.
- (ii) Consultation can be undertaken every 3 years (rather than annually) where there are no proposed changes to the arrangements.
- (iii) Co-ordination of admission arrangements will, from 10/11, fully cover Primary and Secondary applications (including late and in-year applications) and all applications will be made to the home authority from 2011/12 onwards.

- (iv) The LA rather than the LAF will produce the main annual report on school admissions matters.
- (v) Appeals panels can consider the lawfulness of admission arrangements and can uphold an infant class size appeal if an unlawful admissions policy prevented a place being offered to the appellant.
- (vi) New regulations amend the membership of the LAF.

It is point 6) above which requires particular consideration.

The current membership of the LAF is shown at Appendix 2. This was agreed by the Authority in line with the provisions contained within the Education (Admissions Forums)(England) Regulations 2002 as amended by the Education (Admissions Forums) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2007, which allowed for a core membership made up as follows:

The outcome of the DCSF's recent consultation on admissions matters was that:-

'There was general agreement by consultation respondents to our proposals to make Forums small advisory groups representing those with an interest in school admissions in the local area. There were concerns that local authority schools are too heavily represented. The most common consultation response was that Forums function differently in different areas and so need to reflect the local context, be less prescriptive and more flexible in operation. We have therefore revised the membership of Admission Forums, through the revised School Admissions Code and Regulations, to set a maximum number of 20 and replace the current prescriptive and complex membership with a make-up that reflects the local area.'

The report set out the actual make up of the membership which should

now be derived from Section 8 of the new regulations.

The changed regulations provide uncertainty for current members of the LAF. The suggested make up of the new membership could allow for reappointments and mitigate against the risks of losing some expertise that has been built up over the years.

In addition, a Co-ordination Timeline for admission arrangements during 2009, 2010 and 2011 was made available at the meeting.

Resolved:- (1) That the changes, as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report now submitted, be noted.

(2) That the report be submitted to the next meeting of the Local Admissions Forum to be held on 19th March, 2009, for their consideration of the proposed make-up of the Local Admissions Forum.

42. **ANNUAL DETERMINATION - THE LOCAL AUTHORITY (POST-COMPULSORY EDUCATION AWARDS) REGULATIONS 2000**

Alison Leone, Principal Officer, Student Support, presented the submitted report on the Annual Determination – The Local Authority (Post-Compulsory Education Awards) Regulations 2000.

Under the Local Authority (Post-Compulsory Education Awards) Regulations 2000, LAs are required to make an annual determination on exercising powers to make financial awards to new HE and FE students.

The Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998 removed the power for LEAs to make discretionary awards to FE (and HE) students under the 1962 Education Act. Previous to this, the LA had run a scheme of financial support to FE, sixth form and some HE students who would otherwise have not been eligible for funding. Section 129 of The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 conferred a revised power on LEAs, should they wish to use it, to make awards to new FE (and HE) students, and to 16-19 year olds who are still attending school.

In parallel with the removal of the power to make discretionary awards, funding was withdrawn from the Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) from 1999-2000. From that date, the LEA determined not to make any new awards. New funding was available to students from a new Standards Fund in the form of Learner Support Funds. Also, since September 2004, the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) has been available to FE learners.

Authorities are however still required to make an annual determination for each financial year in regard to the revised power

conferred in 1998. They have 3 main choices under the regulations:

i) to determine not to take up the power in any circumstances and not make any provision for considering applications;

ii) to decide to exercise the power only in respect of certain groups or categories of student;

or

iii) to decide to exercise the power generally and consider applications from all students - still in accordance with its policies on eligibility.

Resolved:- That the power to make financial awards for new FE and HE students is not adopted in any circumstances, and that no provision be made for considering applications for awards to new FE and HE students, and to 16-19 year olds who are still attending school.

43. UPDATE ON TRANSITION OF HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENT FINANCE DELIVERY

Pursuant to Minute No. 33 of a previous meeting held on 27th November, 2007, Alison Leone, Principal Officer, Student Support presented the submitted report which gave an update on Transition of Higher Education Student Finance Delivery.

In November 2007, a report to the Cabinet Member, Lifelong Learning, outlined plans for the Government's transformation and centralisation of the Student Finance Service in England.

In April 2011, all higher education financial support cases being administered by the Local Authority will be transferred to Student Finance England and the Local Authority will cease all Higher Education Student Support Functions.

The purpose of the submitted report is to inform the Cabinet Member of the transition arrangements made by the service since the last report and the implications of these for members of staff and service delivery.

The report set out issues concerning Centralisation and Transition Planning.

Implications for the Student Support team in Rotherham and Local Service Delivery are as follows:-

(i) Case Load

- In 2009/10 we expect to receive approximately 2500 applications from continuing students.
- In 2010/11 we expect a further decrease in the number of applicants to

approx 1500.

- From April 2011 the SLC will become responsible for **all** applicants, new and returning and all local functions will cease.

(ii) Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)

The existing information, advice and guidance (IAG) service provided by Rotherham will be replaced by on-line information and a telephone advice line provided nationally by the SLC. The SLC has appointed Regional Consultants to develop IAG materials and engage with partner organisations including schools and universities.

Locally, IAG should also be provided by the new Connexions service provider as part of the Quality Standards for Young People's Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG). In Rotherham, 3 newly appointed graduates to the Aim Higher programme will also provide advice and guidance to schools on the HE finance application process. The SLC intends that students should not be prevented from applying for support by a lack of access to advice and guidance.

(iii) Staffing

From April 2009, staffing levels will be reduced by 1.5 FTE posts to reflect the reduction in case load and government funding.

The section expect to be able to retain sufficient staffing levels to carry out the LA's statutory duties until March 2011. However, if there is an unexpected loss of skilled staff which puts at risk the section's ability to carry out these duties, a reciprocal contingency arrangement has been made with three neighbouring authorities (Barnsley, Doncaster and Sheffield).

Subject to need and capacity, each of the South Yorkshire Authorities may be able to offer help with part of another authority's caseload. Staff would remain in the employment of their home authority with payment made by the 'borrowing' authority for staff time and expenses.

The following risks and uncertainties were outlined:-

- Loss of local customer service to residents of Rotherham Borough, especially Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG).
- Loss of personalised local service to vulnerable customers such as students with disabilities who are currently dealt with by named senior staff.
- Redeployment/redundancy of student support service team.
- Local skill shortages in Student Finance as current team members seek alternative employment during the transition period.
- Performance and stability of current national on-line computer system, 'PROTOCOL'.

- Future location of further education finance scheme within the Authority.
- Loss of Rotherham's local partnership role in the co-ordination of EMA advice and guidance.

The Cabinet Member acknowledged the sad loss of local service delivery and the implications of this for Rotherham students.

Resolved:- (1) That the implications for local service delivery during the transition period be noted.

(2) To note that the report informs future service, budget and workforce planning.

(3) That the report be referred to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services.

44. HEALTH, WELFARE AND SAFETY PANEL - VISITS OF INSPECTION TO SCHOOLS

Consideration was given to the contents of reports submitted which set out items requiring attention following visits of inspection involving the following schools:-

Broom Valley Junior and Infant School
Aston Springwood Junior and Infant School
Wath Victoria Junior and Infant School
Swinton Fitzwilliam Junior and Infant School
Ravenfield Primary School
Maltby Hilltop School
Anston Hillcrest School

Resolved:- That the action being taken on the items requiring attention be noted.

45. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That the next meeting of the Cabinet Member for Lifelong Learning take place on Tuesday, 10th March, 2009 at 10.30 a.m.