

**LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM
THURSDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2023**

Present:- Mrs. I. Hartley, Mrs. M. Gambles and Peart.

Also in attendance were:- Ms. M. Jordan, Mr. C. Stones and Ms. S. Whitby.

Apologies for absence were received from:- Councillor Cusworth and Mr. D. Shenton and Mrs. J. Unwin.

79. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR OF THE LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM

Agreed:- (1) That Mrs. I. Hartley be appointed as Chair of the Rotherham Local Admissions Forum for the 2023/24 academic year.

(2) That Mrs. M. Gambles be appointed Vice-Chair of the Rotherham Local Admissions Forum for the 2023/24 academic year.

80. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 15TH JUNE, 2023

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting held on 15th June, 2023. It was noted the meeting was not quorate.

Agreed:- That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 15th June 2023, be approved as a correct record.

81. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

82. MEMBERSHIP OF THE LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM TO REVIEW

Consideration was given to the membership of the Local Admissions Forum and the vacancies discussed.

It was, therefore, suggested that the Clerk, in consultation with the Head of Service – Access to Education, would seek nominations for the vacancies to be filled and for

Agreed:- That the Clerk, in consultation with the Head of Service – Access to Education, seek nominations for the filling of all the vacancies.

83. TERMS, CONDITIONS AND CONSTITUTION TO REVIEW/AGREE FOR 2023/24

Consideration was given to the Forum's Terms of Reference and a request made as to whether they remained fit for purpose and if any changes were required.

Agreed:- That the Terms of Reference, as submitted, be considered appropriate and fit for purpose.

84. SCHOOL ADJUDICATOR REPORT FOR 2023

Consideration was given to the Annual School Adjudicator Report for 2023, noting the later submission date of 31st October, 2023.

Agreed:- That the Annual School Adjudicator Report 2023 be received and the contents noted.

85. SCHOOL ADMISSIONS PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS FOR ENTRY IN THE 2025/2026 ACADEMIC YEAR

Consideration was given to the consultation document sent to all schools regarding the proposed admission arrangements (i.e., criteria and admission number) which would apply for school admission in the 2025/2026 academic year.

As per the prescriptive timetable the details would be subject to a period of wider consultation from 27th November, 2023 to 14th January, 2024.

The report referred the admission criteria and numbers for both community and controlled schools and for voluntary aided schools, academies and trust schools.

Also included within the report were details of each school and academies proposed admission number for 2025/2026. The only change was a revision to the Published Admission Number at Sitwell Infant School from seventy-five to sixty. This was due to falling numbers in the catchment area.

It was also pointed out that the website would be subject to an overall to make it more accessible to apply for school places online. Work would also take place with the Corporate Governance Group to facilitate a greater awareness about applying for school places and make every best use of social media platforms. In addition, every avenue for publicising the deadline for applications, in collaboration with schools themselves, would be explored with additional leafleting in libraries, schools and doctors' surgeries.

Agreed:- (1) That the report be received and the contents noted.

(2) That the finalised document submitted to the February meeting for approval.

86. SCHOOL ORGANISATION UPDATE

In terms of School Organisation there was little to report with no significant changes.

Agreed:- That the update be received and the contents noted.

87. ADMISSIONS UPDATE

Consideration was given to the latest position with regards to Admissions and the very high volume of appeals, which was more than was expected for this time of year.

The Access to Education Team were receiving more applications for school places and there appeared to be more migration into and around Rotherham from families coming to work locally or study. This was placing more pressure on the system. The Team were often able to place children within a reasonable offer, but this did not guarantee a place at the nearest school. This had a knock on effect then for the Appeals Service.

Unfortunately, due to retirement and sickness the Access to Education Team were not at full capacity and currently had posts out for recruitment.

Agreed:- That the update be received and the contents noted.

88. UPDATE ON APPEALS AND PRIMARY & SECONDARY FAIR ACCESS PROTOCOL PRESENTATION

Consideration was given to the presentation circulated with the agenda papers which was presented to the meeting of Primary and Secondary School Head Teachers outlining the challenges being faced placing admissions and appeals under pressures.

Particular attention was drawn to the timeliness in the system for children and the options under consideration to alleviate some of the difficulties, which had also led to a rise in children being placed into school under the Fair Access Protocol.

An update was provided on numbers received under Fair Access over a twelve month period and the additional pressures with the rise of the numbers of children who were elective home educated coming back into education.

There was still a degree of mobility and migration into the borough from overseas which could not be predicted or planned for, but every effort was being made to place children in schools within a reasonable distance. It was not always possible to place children from one family together.

Several options were also being considered which included alternative offers for unsuccessful in year applicants, more timely referrals to Fair

Access, inclusion of Social and Medical category in the admission arrangements in future years and an appraisal of the Admissions and Appeals SLA to bring this in line with market value and reflect the work being undertaken.

Agreed:- That the presentation and the update be received and the contents noted.

89. SCHOOL ADMISSION APPEALS UPDATE

Consideration was given to the latest position in relation to admission appeals in the report submitted and the numbers of school admission appeals received and the appeal hearings taking place. Statistics were included for the full academic years 2022/23 and also to date for the 2023/24 school year.

As indicated previously the high volume of appeals received was unprecedented and every effort would be made to raise awareness with parents.

Agreed:- That the update be received and the contents noted.

90. ACADEMIES UPDATE - OCTOBER, 2023

The Forum noted the updated list of Rotherham schools which had converted/about to convert to academies as of October 2023.

Proposed conversations for April, 2024 included Newman School and Bramley Sunnyside Junior School.

Agreed:- That the information be received, and the contents noted.

91. TERM DATES CONSULTATION FOR 2025/26

Consultation on the school calendar for the 2025/26 academic year would take place with all schools in January 2024.

The traditional and fixed Easter calendar wrapped around Good Friday and Easter Monday and would be in line with Doncaster and Sheffield. It was hoped that eventually the South Yorkshire Authorities would all align.

Agreed:- The calendar update be received and the contents noted.

92. DATE OF NEXT MEETING - THURSDAY, 1ST FEBRUARY, 2024 AT 10.00 A.M.

Agreed:- That the next meeting of the Local Admissions Forum take place on Thursday, 1st February, 2024 at 10.00 a.m. via Microsoft Teams.