

SCHOOL ADMISSIONS FORUM

**King Charles Centre, Surbiton
Tuesday 6 July 2010 at 06:30 pm**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Present:

Members

Janice Anastasi (Vice Chair),

Keith Burleton

Sunil Chotai

Marianne Cohen

Tracey Coton

Councillor Andrea Craig

Michael Hall

Carol Jerwood

Sharon Mehta (Chair)

Michael Reading

Councillor David Ryder-Mills

Officers

Hatija Bhatia (Principal Admissions & Governance Officer)

Julie Ely (Strategic Manager SEN Assessment & Support for Learning)

Tina Herring (Service Director Learning & School Effectiveness)

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES

Rhammel Afflick, Tom Cahill, Amtul Lally Malik, Sinead Noble, Pam Dryden, Rev Fr Martin Hislop.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3. MINUTES

Minutes of the previous meeting of 24 February 2010 were approved.

4. APPOINTMENTS TO THE FORUM

The Chair advised that Councillor Andrea Craig had joined the Forum, and welcomed her.

5. UPDATE ON THE EXPANSION OF PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES (Appendix A)

The Service Director Learning & School Effectiveness outlined the information presented to the Council's Executive committee on 30 June 2010; a phased strategy which recommends permanent expansion of 8.5 forms of entry (255 permanent places) for 2011 and the deferment of 5 previously proposed forms of entry for review in February 2011. The reasons for which are largely financial but will allow time for a further set of birth and admissions data to inform planning and allow traffic working groups to consider some concerns raised during the consultation process.

The Executive agreed to publish a notice for schools in Phase 1 of the strategy to enable an additional 255 permanent places to be available from September 2011. The minutes of the Executive were not yet available.

In addition to the permanent expansion of places, the revised strategy for 2011 is likely to include two additional classes of 30 pupils on a temporary basis, at two infant schools in the Surbiton area. It is expected that pupils would remain at the schools until the end of Year 2. The new Surbiton school, which will open in 2012, would, from 2014, include pupils in Reception Year and Years 1, 2 and 3. Other additional classes will be added where necessary.

The estimated costs of the accommodation changes required in Phase 1 are £48.5m, which exceeds the £42m capital programme but the usual payment profile indicates 2.5% will fall due within a third financial year.

It is important that as the permanent expansion plan is implemented that care is taken not to create places that, whilst required in the short term, may not be needed after a year or two. The current number of surplus places in the system is recommended to be 5% but financial constraint may mean that this is reduced. It is likely that these schools will be within the Malden Cluster and not in Kingston where all expansion plans are in Phase 1. Additional classes will not be in schools undergoing permanent expansion. It is anticipated that the location of all temporary classes would be available for parents during the Autumn term 2010, before the January 2011 application deadline.

Members of the Forum expressed concern about the difficulties in forecasting future numbers of applicants for school places. The Service Director Learning & School Effectiveness informed the Forum that the latest Greater London Authority (GLA) data indicated that for some Local Authorities such as Richmond, a peak in numbers had been reached. This is not the case in Kingston. In addition the expansion in neighbouring Sutton has impacted on admissions to schools on the boundary with Sutton. Revised Local Authority

(LA) data indicated that there was a 90% of births became applications for schools and this figure was higher than in previous years which typically averaged 79%.

The Service Director Learning & School Effectiveness verbally reported on the Department for Education announcement on 6 July 2010 regarding Building Schools for the Future (BSF). She confirmed that the Government had said it was reviewing demographic data to identify population expansion. The Council is still hopeful that funding will be available to build the new secondary school in North Kingston and the Council was being active in seeking clarification and support for the proposals. Referring to the report before the Forum, she noted that there has been 2,141 responses to the consultation on the new 8 form entry secondary school in North Kingston; the biggest ever response to a consultation of this type.

A consultation on the Draft Planning Brief for the redevelopment of the North Kingston Centre is underway. Potential providers of the new school attended a meeting on 18 May 2010 and must submit bids by 23 August 2010. The provider competition is expected to close around October 2010. If the Local Authority bids, the competition process and evaluation of bids will be undertaken by the Office of the School's Adjudicator.

6. PRIMARY SCHOOL ADMISSIONS FOR SEPTEMBER 2010 (Appendix B)

The Principal Admissions & Governance Officer presented the report informing Members of the latest position regarding Primary School admissions and the number of Kingston Borough children without a school place.

This year Kingston Borough primary schools received 1818 applications by the allocation date of 24 March 2010. A total of 270 extra places have been added across 10 schools in response to the increased demand for places. This increased the available places from 1575 to 1845.

Members were advised that at the initial allocation 1632 Kingston Borough children made an application and 94 were not offered a school place on 24 March. 83% of RBK residents were offered their highest preference and 94% were offered a preference. 6% (94) were not offered a preference.

After the initial allocation in March, 19 schools had waiting lists and places were initially available at 10 schools. This has now reduced to 9 schools and currently 20 schools have waiting lists.

The current position is that 31 children are without a known primary school destination although there are currently 130 vacancies in the borough. This figure will include families recently moved to the area e.g. in Kingston Town cluster there are 17 pupils without a place, including 4 pupils moved in since 1

June 2010 and there are 28 vacant places in the cluster. Parents are advised where there are vacancies in borough and in the neighbouring areas.

Members of the Forum asked about the level of applicants who do not take up places and whether the lateness of some appeals hearings caused uncertainty for families. The Principal Admissions & Governance Officer stated that the percentage drop-out rate between the number at the allocation date and at the beginning of September is 5.9% (in the past two years) which equates to 108 places. In regard to appeals, all Admission Authorities were working in accordance with the requirements of the School Admissions Code 2009, to particular dates and that whilst families found the appeal process stressful, there had been no particular feedback about the timescales.

The Chair queried why the Local Authority had not automatically allocated places at schools with vacancies to unplaced children this year. The Principal Admissions & Governance Officer clarified that applicants from other LA areas are advised to contact their home LA and currently, it was not necessary to allocate places for RBK residents because these children are not of statutory school age although this will change with Primary Co-ordinated Admissions for 2011, when LAs will be expected to allocate places to any resident applicants without a preference offer. The Admissions Team has been piloting the new In-Year co-ordinated arrangements since 1 July in preparation for September 2010.

7. SECONDARY SCHOOL ADMISSIONS FOR SEPTEMBER 2010 (Appendix C)

The Principal Admissions & Governance Officer presented the report informing Members of the latest position regarding Secondary School admissions and the number of Kingston children without a school place.

Members were advised that on 1 March 2010, of 1565 RBK applicants, 60% of parents received an offer of a place at their first preferred secondary school. 95% of parents have received an offer of one of their preferred schools. For September 2009, the figures were 57% and 95% respectively. This was above the figure for last year and the London average for this year.

At the initial allocation, 80 Kingston parents did not receive an offer for any of the secondary schools which they named as their preference. To date, there are 3 (all girls) Kingston children without a known destination of a school in September 2010, all of whom have been offered alternative places at schools with vacancies. There are 75 vacancies in total across the Borough, comprising of places at Tolworth Girls' School, Coombe Boys' School and Southborough High School.

Members of the Forum noted that there were appeals for Chessington Community College. The Service Director Learning & School Effectiveness commented on the increase in popularity with parents applying for Kingston Borough secondary schools.

8. FAIR ACCESS PROTOCOL (Appendix D)

The Principal Admissions & Governance Officer advised the Forum that following the revised School Admissions Code in 2009, which was published in February 2009, the Local Authority and schools have been working to draft and recently reviewed Fair Access Protocol (FAP) at Annex 1.

Since September 2007 the Government has expected all Local Authorities to have a Fair Access Protocol in place and which has the full support and participation of all secondary schools in the Local Authority's area. The School Admissions Code 2009 strengthened the role of LAs and schools to ensure their commitment to fair access to school for every child. The Code states that no school is expected to take more than its fair share of hard to place pupils and that undersubscribed schools are not be expected to admit a greater proportion of children with challenging behaviour than other schools.

During the period from April 2009 to the end of the summer term 2009, 3 placements were made at three schools under the protocol. A further 4 pupils have been placed at three schools during the current academic year 2009/10.

Sunil Chotai, Headteacher of Southborough High School, reported his experience that all schools were represented at the panel discussion which forms part of the protocol and that from his perspective the panel was working effectively. Headteachers acknowledged that the process was difficult but the issues were being addressed and some initial concerns that the distribution of challenging pupils would be unbalanced have been overcome by the use of the protocol.

Members of the Forum asked about the effectiveness of the protocol and panel process. The Principal Admissions & Governance Officer stated that to date, all of the children who had been admitted as a result of the protocol had remained in their school. She commented that it was a tribute to all Head Teachers from Kingston's schools who worked together to agree the FAP. The Forum noted this success.

Members of the Forum also sought clarification on whether the number of pupils referred to the Fair Access Panel had fallen, if schools falling into Ofsted categories were exempt from the Protocol and sought assurances that the most vulnerable pupils were not out of school for longer than necessary. The Principal Admissions & Governance Officer explained that the Fair

Access Panel meets twice a term with the stated understanding that an extraordinary meeting can be called if required to avoid delays in placing children. She also explained whilst some pupils needs are addressed through other processes such as the Pupil Placement Panel, the number of pupils referred to Fair Access are low. The Service Director Learning & School Effectiveness explained that the Ofsted categorisation process formally allows the LA to amend admissions processes and exclusion rates in Kingston are reducing.

Members of the Forum asked for confirmation that the financial arrangements for the Fair Access Protocol were consistent with the schools formula requirements for money which follows excluded pupils. The Principal Admissions & Governance Officer agreed to undertake this on behalf of the Forum.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

12 October 2010, King Charles Centre at 6:30 pm

10. AMENDMENT TO THE MEETING

On behalf of the Forum, the Service Director Learning & School Effectiveness formally thanked the Chair for her contribution to the work of the Forum over the period since her appointment.