

SCHOOL ADMISSIONS FORUM

King Charles Centre, Surbiton

Tuesday 11 October 2011

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Present:

Sinead Noble (Chair - outgoing)
Michael Reading
Councillor David Ryder-Mills
Councillor Andrea Craig
Brian Burns
Pam Dryden
Michael Hall
Anna-Marie Boyd
Vanessa Ward (on behalf of Tiffin Schools)

Officers:

Tina Herring (Service Director Learning & School Effectiveness)
Hatija Bhatia (Principal Admissions & Governance Officer)
Julie Ely (Strategic Manager SEN Assessment & Support for Learning)

1. APOLOGIES

Tom Cahill, Dr Carol Jerwood, Marianne Cohen, Tracey Coton,

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3. APPOINTMENTS

Hilda Clark, Headteacher of Tiffin School, Janet Tuck, Executive Headteacher King Athelstan and St John's C of E Primary Schools, and Brian Burns Acting Headteacher Southborough High School were acknowledged as new members of the Forum. Brian Burns was welcomed to his first meeting as was Vanessa Ward, Head at Tiffin Girls' School who attended as an alternate for Hilda Clark.

Sinead Noble informed the Forum of her decision to resign as Chair of the Forum. Marian Cohen agreed to take over the role of Chair and Michael Reading as Vice Chair, Both appointments were seconded and confirmed.

It was noted that Michael Reading has indicated his intention to retire next year and in the interim, Michael will be Vice Chair. In Marianne's absence Michael agreed to chair the meeting. The Forum thanks Sinead for all her work during the last year and wished her well.

4. MINUTES

As 3.above Michael Reading was pleased to accept the thanks of the Forum and confirmed he would be continuing in his role on the Forum in the short term. With this amendment, the minutes of the previous meeting, 6 July 2011 were approved.

5. VERBAL UPDATE ON THE EXPANSION OF PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES

The Service Director Learning & School Effectiveness gave a verbal update on the outcome of the expansion of primary places for September 2011. Apart from the permanent expansion of 6.5 forms of entry, an additional 4.5 temporary classes had been added to meet demand. Currently, there are less than 1% of places as surplus, against a target of 2-3%. It was noted that there had been significant new arrivals in the borough and officers are monitoring the situation with regard to pressure for places.

The Service Director also informed the Forum that Surbiton Education Health Trust had been confirmed as the provider for the new primary school on the Surbiton Hospital site and the school will operate community schools criteria. The LA will shortly be announcing dates for prospective parents to hear more about the school and to meet the new Headteacher. Plans continue to progress for the scheduled opening of the new primary school in Surbiton in September 2012.

It was noted that progress with plans for the new Secondary School was slower as funding has not yet been secured. The Local Authority (LA) is entering a bidding round for Government funding. The timetable for decisions is December. This option would involve a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and affordability is a concern, however decision to enter would not be made until later and it was felt worthwhile to bid as there is no other funding mechanism.

6. ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR SEPTEMBER 2013/14 (Appendix A)

The Forum noted that there are no changes proposed to the existing admission arrangements to community schools for September 2013.

The Principal Admissions & Governance Officer explained that the current School Admissions Code 2010 has been the subject of a recent review and consultation, the outcome of which may be changes in legislation and/or guidance which impact on current arrangements.

Members of the Forum asked, in relation to distance measuring for Admissions, whether the LA verified safe walking routes. The Principal Admissions & Governance Officer explained that in this regard distance was not used to recommend safest routes of travel, but as a consistent measuring tool through a computerised approach using Geographical Information System (GIS), for determining home to school distance as an admissions criterion.

7. REPORT ON RELEVANT AREA (Appendix B)

The Principal Admissions & Governance Officer outlined the Regulations which place responsibility on Local Authorities to review the relevant area within which consultation on admission arrangements for schools are conducted. She explained that it is for each individual Local Authority to determine what constitutes the relevant area following consultation with designated admission authorities. Most LAs in south west London have determined their relevant area as the Local Authority boundary.

In recent years, after each appropriate consultation, the LA has determined that the relevant area for Kingston remains the administrative boundary of the Authority. There have been no difficulties arising from the determination of the Borough boundary as the relevant area and the Forum supported the continuation of the administrative boundary as the relevant area for admissions purposes.

8. INFORMATION ITEMS (Appendix C)

The Principal Admissions & Governance Officer gave an update on:

A. Reception and Year 7 admissions for September 2011

As at the date of the meeting, there was 1 Primary (Reception) child whose school destination remained unknown, with places available in 5 schools. No Secondary school (Year 7) child was in this position.

B. In-Year Admissions for the academic year 2010/2011

For 2010/11 the requirement for all in-year applications to be made via the Home LA meant that it was the first year that the LA was able to record the total number of applications made by its residents for in and out borough schools and for Kingston schools by out borough residents. There were 862 Primary and 450 Secondary in-year admissions during the academic year 2010/2011. This has also enabled the LA to have an informed view of the demand for place across year groups during the academic year.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Principal Admissions & Governance Officer outlined communication from the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) in which 2 prospective future applicants for secondary school, resident outside of Kingston Borough, were unhappy with the distance measurement, citing an alternative walking route. The OSA was satisfied with the Council's commitment to review its advice to parents and give further clarification on the computerised system. The OSA advised that the complaint would not be investigated further.

The Principal Admissions & Governance Officer advised the Forum that London Borough of Richmond upon Thames is proposing to remove the linked school criterion in their consultation for admission arrangements for community schools for entry in September 2013. The Forum noted this may impact on Fern Hill Primary School and Latchmere School pupils applying to Grey Court School and pupils from St Paul's C of E Junior School applying to Teddington School. The Principal Admissions & Governance Officer confirmed that the relevant Kingston primary headteachers were aware of the consultation.

Members of the Forum asked for clarification in respect of supplementary forms for the secondary application process as there had been some feedback from parents that there were 2 versions of the same form for Holy Cross. The Principal Admissions Officer agreed to investigate and provide clarification for the forum.

A question was asked about changes to the relationship between the LA and schools which had converted to academy status. The Service Director reassured the Forum of a commitment to the principle of joint working.

DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

22 February 2012. All meetings will be held at King Charles Centre at 6:30 pm