

MINUTES of a MEETING of the PEMBROKESHIRE ADMISSION FORUM held via SKYPE FOR BUSINESS on THURSDAY, 5 NOVEMBER 2020 at 8.30a.m.

Present:

Councillors John Davies and Alison Tudor

Debbie Davies (Chairman) - Head Teacher, Prendergast CP School
Heather Cale - Head Teacher, St Mark's VA School
Rev. John Cecil - Church in Wales Representative
Paul Edwards (Vice-Chairman) - Head Teacher, Ysgol Bro Gwaun
Ven. Paul Mackness - Church in Wales Representative
Steven Richards-Downes – Director of Education
Sue Roberts - Roman Catholic Church Representative
Teleri Williams - Admissions Officer

Also in Attendance:

Huw Jones - Resources & Governance Manager
David Thompson - Policy & Improvement Programme Manager
Lydia Evans - Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer

Apologies for Absence:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Guy Woodham and Paul Harris

17. Admission Forum membership

The Policy & Improvement Programme Manager provided the group with an update on the current membership vacancies as follows:

- Sue Roberts' term of office ended on 20 October 2020. It was stated that the Policy & Improvement Programme Manager wrote to the Director of Education for the Roman Catholic Church for nominations from the Dioceses and a response was awaited from Mr Paul White.
- Philip Williams' term of office ended on 3 November 2020. It was stated that the Policy & Improvement Programme Manager wrote to Governor Support Service for nominations from the parent governors where it was decided for an election to be held immediately after December half term.
- Debbie Davies' term of office was due to end on 13 October 2020 so the Policy & Improvement Programme Manager wrote to PASH/PAPH for nominations from the Headteacher group and Heather Cale (Chair of PAHPH) and Fiona Kite (Chair of PASH) agreed for Debbie Davies to remain as the representative for CP/VC Schools.

It was noted that the current group core membership consisted of 12 members and 2 vacancies.

18. Review of Constitution and Terms of Reference

The group considered the current terms of reference for the forum and a suggestion was made for an officer from the Integrated Transport Unit (ITU) to be

present at future forum meetings to enable school transport matters to be discussed on a regular basis.

AGREED

For an officer from the Integrated Transport Unit (ITU) to be present at future forum meetings

19. Minutes of the previous meeting / Matters arising from the Minutes

Moved by Ven. Paul Mackness; Seconded by Debbie Davies

AGREED

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2020 be approved as a correct record.

An update was provided by the Resources & Governance Manager on the agreed action for Minute No. 10 to state that the Authority were currently operating the usual schools admissions arrangements with regards to all schools which contain language centres on the basis that a 10 year welsh education strategic plan is prepared over the next 6 months of which the admissions policy will be covered for language centres as part of that plan.

An update was provided by the Resources & Governance Manager on the agreed action for Minute No. 12 to state that Ysgol Penrhyn Dewi had liaised with the Resources & Governance Manager on the expansion plans for the school and a meeting took place on 10 November 2020 of which the Resources & Governance Manager attended.

An update was provided by the Policy & Improvement Programme Manager on the agreed action for Minute No. 11 to state that the flowcharts had been included in the Headteachers pack.

An update was provided by the Policy & Improvement Programme Manager on the agreed action for Minute No. 13 to state that the Authority had been working with the parent partnership services regarding refusal of admissions.

20. Admissions Survey 2019/2020

The Policy & Improvement Programme Manager provided an update on the survey stating that there was a link to the survey on the offer/refusal e-mails to parents and the data was collected by the Council's marketing department who sent an annual summary to the Admissions Officer.

A number of the key responses from the summary were highlighted as follows:

- 59 surveys were completed in total
- 42% of respondents said the Information Booklet for parents was 'useful'

- 80% of respondents said they received sufficient information to make a choice of school
- 95% of respondents rated their experience of applying for a school as 'Good' or 'Satisfactory'
- 97% of respondents rated the way their application was dealt with as 'Very satisfied' or 'Satisfied'
- In the comments section Teleri Williams - Admissions Officer was personally mentioned as being 'excellent' and 'thanked for her professionalism' and the Policy & Improvement Programme Manager echoed his thanks to Teleri for her continued hard work and dedication
- When asked for how the service could improve, a concern was raised stating 'When applying the email address referred to Ceredigion when the school catchment was Pembrokeshire' and that 'the acceptance letter went straight to Junk mail'.

The forum was advised that the emails going to junk mailboxes had been looked at and had concluded that unfortunately nothing could be done about that.

21. Annual Forum Report

The Policy & Improvement Programme Manager introduced the Annual Forum Report and stated that it had been included for information and that it would be submitted to Welsh Government on 30th November 2020. It was stated that the content remained largely unchanged from last year.

Ven. Paul Mackness expressed his sincere thanks to all Education staff who had kept the Education service operating successfully during the recent challenging times.

The consistent reduction of admissions of both primary and secondary within the north-east Pembrokeshire area was recognised and it was stated that they would be monitored.

22. Update on secondary transfer for September 2020

The Admissions Officer referred to the document as provided in the agenda pack and provided additional updates on secondary transfers for September 2020 as follows:

- Milford Haven Comprehensive School were over their admission number for September 2020 due to late applications from children living within the catchment area.
- It was stated that letters had been sent out to parents of year 6 children within primary schools to prompt them to apply for their children's secondary place for September 2021 of which the closing date was noted as being 20 December 2020 with the outcomes being released on 1 March 2021.

23. Admission Procedures

A number of updates were provided regarding admissions procedures as follows:

Appeal booklet and form

The Policy & Improvement Programme Manager advised that they had worked with the Parent Partnership Service to produce the booklet and form which were available on the Councils website.

It was commented that it had been a successful piece of work which would assist parents with what the appeals procedure entails.

Waiting list and appeal allocations

The Policy & Improvement Programme Manager provided an update stating that a Headteacher had raised a point that when a place became available, the current procedure for allocating places from the waiting list differed from allocating a place from 'mid-year' transfers. It was stated that the current procedure for allocating from a waiting list was for a place to be allocated immediately, whereas mid-term transfers were processed to start from the beginning of the next half term.

It was noted that the Authority had acknowledged the point from the Headteacher and recognised that waiting list admissions should not be treated any differently from mid-term transfers, unless there were exceptional circumstances. The forum was advised that the Authority were satisfied that there was nothing within the School Admissions Code which required waiting list admissions to take place immediately, and therefore stated that they would be treated in the same way going forward.

The group was advised that the same arrangements would be adopted for places allocated as a result of a successful admissions appeal – this being that a place would be allocated at the beginning of the next half term, unless there was a change of address or exceptional circumstances, in which case a place would be allocated immediately.

It was noted that Ysgol Penrhyn Dewi were looking to adopt a similar procedure.

Admissions procedures advice for Headteachers

The Policy & Improvement Programme Manager stated that the document had been provided for information and was produced yearly by the Admissions Officer. It was noted that the flowcharts had now been included.

Increased synergy with School Transport

The Resources & Governance Manager highlighted the importance for parents to understand that a place at a school did not mean automatic qualification for school transport. The group was advised that the Authority's website was being updated to make it more user friendly and to advise parents that any transport

requirements would need to be applied for at the time of applying for the school place.

It was recognised that an increase in transport appeal numbers had been seen and it was queried what the Authority had learnt from that. The Resources & Governance Manager stated that they had learnt that the two processes needed to be outlined clearly together on the website, not in two different places as they were currently, which would enable parents to understand that they were two different processes and needed to be considered separately.

Clarification was sought as to whether Cabinet has signed off the updated policy. The Forum was advised that Cabinet signed off the revised policy in October 2020 which prompted an email being sent to all schools outlining the revised transport policy.

It was noted that the revised policy would be included in the educational newsletter for the upcoming week.

24. Report on Admission Appeals

The Policy & Improvement Programme Manager outlined the current admission appeal position as follows:

Since the last meeting of the Forum on 18th June 2020, **38** individual appeals were received.

Of the **38** appeals, **8** were subsequently withdrawn by the parent due to a change of circumstances and **6** were cancelled due to places being offered at a later date.

Of the remaining appeals, **19** were heard; **8** were upheld and **11** were refused:

- 2 - Caer Elen - upheld
- 1 - Fenton - upheld
- 2 - Haverfordwest High VC – upheld
- 1 – Tenby VC – upheld
- 1 – Gelliswick – upheld
- 1 – Milford Haven CP - upheld
- 2 - Caer Elen – refused
- 6 - Tavernspite – refused
- 1 – Fenton - refused
- 1 – Templeton - refused
- 1 – Pembroke Dock – refused

The remaining **5** were due to be heard within the next 30 days.

25. Review of Parent Information Booklet for 2021-22

The Admissions Officer informed the group that the latest version had been uploaded to the Authority's website and stated that last year's booklet would remain on the website as it outlined the process for mid-term transfers which were still on-going.

26. Suggestions for future items for consideration by the Forum

Reference was made to a decision made earlier in the meeting for an officer from the Integrated Transport Unit (ITU) to be present at future Forum meetings which would enable transport matters to be discussed regularly and would become a standing item on the Forums agenda.

27. Date of next meetings

The group agreed the dates of future meetings as follows:

- 10 June 2021 – 08:30am
- 4 November 2021 - 08:30am

The meeting ended at 9.07a.m.