

SHROPSHIRE LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM

4A

Present: Claire Gaskin (CG) – Aided School Head
Phil Adams (PA) – Own Admissions Authority Schools Head Teacher
Cary Tay (CT) – Early Years Representative
Barbara Wollaston (BW) Service Children's Representative

In attendance: Phil Wilson (PW) – Shropshire Local Authority (Chair)
Carol Sneddon (CS) Shropshire Local Authority
Ruth Griffiths (RG) - Shropshire Local Authority

Apologies: Bob Thompson (BT) – Community Member
Nick Bardsley (NB) – Council Member
Karen Morris (KM) – Primary School Head Teacher
Karen Bradshaw (KB) – Shropshire Local Authority
Alan Doust (AD) – Secondary School Head Teacher
Sabrina Hobbs (SH) – Special School Representative
Lichfield Diocese
Lisa Crossley (LC) – Telford & Wrekin CYPS

Date: Tuesday, 27 November 2018

Venue: Wenlock Room, Shirehall, Shrewsbury

| No. | Action | Owner |
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| 1. | <u>Apologies for absence</u> Apologies were confirmed as above. | |
| 2 | <u>Welcome to new members</u> PW welcomed BW to the group. BW is the Armed Forces Covenant Project Support Officer and she explained that she works across two Councils, namely Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin. CS stated that there are forces' bases in Shawbury, Tern Hill and Cosford and so it is particularly useful to have a link with BW. | |
| 3. | <u>Declaration of interest in agenda items</u> PW explained that this is a standard item and asked members to declare their interest, as and when relevant. | |
| 4. | <u>To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2018 (Appendix A)</u> The minutes were read and agreed as an accurate record. | |

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| 5. | <p><u>Matters arising from the minutes</u></p> <p>There were no Matters Arising from the minutes.</p> | |
| 6 | <p><u>LAF Membership</u></p> <p>It was proposed and agreed that this item should be deferred until the next meeting when there will be a wider representation. CS explained that we now have far more Academy schools and so it is now an appropriate time to revisit the membership of this forum.</p> <p>PA queried the situation re in-year applications. CS explained that whilst there has been some discussion regarding Local Authorities taking back this responsibility, as it stands currently, this role has been devolved to Shropshire schools.</p> <p>LAF membership will therefore be deferred until the January meeting.</p> | Agenda Item - January |
| 7. | <p><u>Admission Arrangements 2020/21</u></p> <p>a) <u>Former LAC from overseas</u></p> <p>School admission authorities are currently required to give looked after children and previously looked after children highest priority in their oversubscription criteria. This currently applies to children being provided with accommodation by a local authority in <u>England</u> in the exercise of their social services functions.</p> <p>The DfE are now proposing to extend this to children who were previously in state care outside of England, and have ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted. This would include children from Wales, Scotland and essentially anywhere else in the world.</p> <p>They are advising that Local Authorities introduce oversubscription criteria to give these children second highest priority for admission into school.</p> <p>For Local Authority maintained schools, this proposal is now out for consultation and the amendment will be introduced formally from 2020/21. CS has emailed own admission authority schools advising them of this change and asking whether they wish to include it in their own arrangements. She stated it would be difficult for own admission authority schools to argue against this proposal, however, it does need to be included in their policy.</p> <p>CG questioned how schools gain the necessary evidence. CS explained that the DfE have been more flexible in their advice. She explained that there is usually some sort of paperwork to evidence this however Admission Authorities may need to use their professional judgement to decide whether the child should be treated as LAC/previously LAC status.</p> <p>b) Alveley Primary School is proposing a reduction to their published admission number (PAN) from 17 to 15. This is to allow for greater flexibility in class organisation. It would allow the school to have a mixed Year 1/Year 2 class.</p> | |

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| | <p>CS confirmed that the LA consider this to be a sensible proposal and the revised admission number would continue to more than meet the needs of known 'in-area children'.</p> <p>c) Bridgnorth Endowed Secondary School are currently consulting on closing their Sixth Form. The numbers in sixth form are low – approximately 40 students on roll with other students attending Oldbury Wells School and other local colleges, such as Shrewsbury, Stourbridge etc. CG stated that local Heads have received an email informing them of the proposals and requesting that it is shared with governors and other interested parties. Discussions took place as to whether this proposal would have any impact on the Year 6 transfer group, particularly whether the option of a sixth form would have been part of their secondary school considerations. CS stated that if parents wished to change their preferences, in light of this proposal, this would have to be considered at the review stage. Sarah Godden, Headteacher at Oldbury Wells has given a reassurance to Bridgnorth parents, that Oldbury Wells would have the capacity to accommodate their children at sixth form, if they wish. PA felt that the impact would be fairly minimal – children and parents often look at various providers for sixth form education.</p> <p>d) Ludlow School are proposing to reduce their PAN from 174 to 140. CS explained that the LA would support this proposal – certainly the reduced PAN would more than adequately meet the number of known children in the catchment area and also some of the accommodation at Ludlow School is not really fit for purpose.</p> <p>e) Church Stretton School are proposing a reduction in their PAN from 124 to 96. Traditionally this school have taken children from outside the catchment area, most notably from Bishops Castle and Ludlow. PA stated that previously a number of children used to attend from Bayston Hill. CS stated that out of area parents could continue to apply for a place, but again Church Stretton School could adequately meet the needs of known in-area children, even with the reduced PAN.</p> <p>f) Staff Criteria – Coleham Primary School has proposed the addition of staff criterion as a low priority (after those who live out of catchment with a sibling at the school). St. John's Catholic Primary School has proposed the priority of staff criteria in every criteria.</p> <p>g) Severn Bridges Academy Trust - Greenfields Primary School, Mount Pleasant Primary School and Radbrook Primary School have added exceptional special circumstances just before out of area applicants.</p> | |
| 7(i) | <p><u>Tiebreaker for Shared Care</u></p> <p>CS explained that where a child's parents live separately at two different addresses, the School Admissions Team need to determine which address should be used in order to ensure it is considered under the right criteria and to establish the distance from home to school.</p> <p>Where a child shares their time equally between addresses, both parents are asked to complete a calendar of a 4-week period. The number of school nights (Sunday to</p> | |

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| | <p>Thursday) are counted for each parent and the one with the higher number of school nights, is determined to be the child's home address. In the event, that equal school nights are spent with each parent, the Admissions Team will ask who is in receipt of the child benefit as a tie-breaker.</p> <p>The use of child benefit as a tie-breaker in determining the address of a child has been questioned on the grounds of equality by a Shropshire parent. The parent has stated that because the majority of child benefit claimants are mothers, this discriminates against fathers.</p> <p>CS stated that it is necessary to have a determination factor and it is essential that the admissions procedure is both fair and transparent. The Local Authority would be reluctant to give parents the option of deciding which is the home address because they are likely to use that to their own advantage. The reason that child benefit is used as a tie-breaker, in the event of equal school nights being spent with each parent, is that is something directly associated with the child.</p> <p>CS stated that even if a parent is not eligible to receive child benefit because they exceed the income threshold, one of the child's parents would still be named as the child benefit claimant as it will help with National Insurance credits which count towards a person's state pension.</p> <p>CT clarified what constitutes a 'temporary' address. She explained that parents may split up and one parent may leave the family home and live in a temporary address whilst the finances are sorted out and before securing something more permanent. CS accepted that the policy may not suit all situations, however, as an Admissions Authority, we have to show fairness, clarity and have a mechanism for making an objective decision. Although some authorities have used factors such as where a child is registered with a GP, this may not be relevant because some children are registered with a GP close to a grandparent, or close to a place of work. Equally, a family may move to an area but struggle to register with a GP.</p> <p>CS explained that as part of her investigations, she discovered that some authorities are use the claiming of child benefit as a pre-requisite to making an application. She stated that this is unfair and potentially unlawful because it excludes a parent not in receipt of child benefit from making an application. Everyone with parental responsibility is eligible to apply for a school place.</p> <p>CS stated that the parent has asked for the matter to be considered and it was therefore appropriate for discussion at this meeting. LAF members felt that whilst the existing policy may not be ideal for everyone, it is the fairest way and hopefully less open to manipulation. It was agreed therefore that the existing policy should stand and should be taken forward for consultation.</p> <p>The second issue is where parents cannot agree on the preferred school. The Local Authority have stated that in this situation, they will put the application on hold and recommend that parents attempt to reach agreement or seek advice through the family courts.</p> | |
| 8. | <p><u>Place Planning</u></p> <p>PW stated that he wished to bring LAF members up to speed on the building and</p> | |

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| | <p>developments projects that are currently taking place.</p> <p>He explained that the LA works in a 20 year cycle, ie 2006 – 2026 and within that looks at 10 year blocks. The LA are now looking at place planning for 2026-2036. Obviously, in looking at 2036, we can only work with known children who are born currently and following trends.</p> <p>In 2016 a statement was produced, and identified 5 areas where pupil numbers were expected to grow. The five towns were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shrewsbury • Market Drayton • Shifnal • Whitchurch • Oswestry <p>PW said that he has visited these communities and met with Head Teachers and leaders. Essentially, the funding that is available for new build are; Section 106 monies and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). However, Education is bidding against other service areas for CIL. Over the last 3 months, Councillors have been releasing community infrastructure monies, however this has received opposition from Parish Councils who were seeing the monies for their preferred projects. As a result, Councillors are challenging sites, questioning the cost of the additional provision and also asking why we need permanent buildings instead of temporary buildings.</p> <p>PW said that clearly we need to fill up surplus capacity and the first step was to look at those schools who have spare classroom provision before we look towards new build. However, the school places need to be in the areas where we are seeing pressure points. In addition to bringing existing accommodation into classroom use, new building work had been commissioned at the following 10 sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shifnal Primary • St Andrews Primary, Shifnal • Market Drayton Infant and Junior School • Whitchurch Infant & Junior School • Meole Brace Primary • Mereside Primary • Baschurch Primary • Hadnall Primary <p>The west side of Shrewsbury has seen significant growth and as a result the Local Authority is looking at a new primary school in Bowbrook and looking to extend one of the Shrewsbury secondary schools by building additional classrooms.</p> <p>PW said that he wanted to reassure LAF that there is a plan, despite some of the reports in the media. He agreed to keep this group engaged on future plans. In addition, PW/CS are meeting with Politicians in January to talk about education planning.</p> <p>Discussions took place regarding the new classrooms at Shifnal Primary School. CS said the house building is still very much ongoing and the Local Authority do not want the places to be filled up by Out of Area children, at the expense of catchment children moving into the new build as and when they are available. Similarly, they do not want</p> | |
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| | to pull children from surrounding rural schools. As a result Shifnal Primary School has not yet increased its PAN. | |
| 9. | <u>Any Other Business</u> There was no further business. | |
| 10. | <u>Date and time of next meeting</u> The next meeting will take place on Tuesday, 29 January 2019 at 5 pm at The Shirehall. | |