

EDUCATION, CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL

MINUTES OF A MEETING of the Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel held on Friday 10 June 2011 at 5pm in the Guildhall, Portsmouth.

(NB These minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting)

Present

Councillors: Steve Wemyss (Chair) (from 5:15pm)
Paula Riches (in the chair until 5:15pm)
Margaret Adair
James Williams

Also present

Councillor Lee Mason
Duncan Cope (parent governor representative)
Mike Fowler, Head of Transforming Education Services
Sue Barratt, Admissions Officer
Mike Stoneman, Strategic Commissioning Manager

21 Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 1)

Councillor Paula Riches declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest as a member of the Fostering Panel.

Councillor James Williams declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest as a member of the Grandparents' Association.

Councillor Steve Wemyss declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest in that three years ago he had unsuccessfully applied for a place for his son at Springfield School.

22 Apologies for Absence (AI 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Peter Eddis and Caroline Scott. Councillor Simon Boshier, the proposer of the Notice of Motion before the City Council regarding Springfield School admissions, had been invited to attend the meeting but had sent his apologies.

23 Minutes of Meeting held on 3 March 2011 (AI 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education, Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 3 March 2011 be agreed as a correct record.

24 Review of Admissions to Springfield School having regard to the number of pupils living in the catchment area and attending feeder schools who failed to gain a place at the school for September 2011 (AI 4).

Sue Barratt, Admissions Officer introduced the report on the School Admissions Process and Springfield School Allocation 2011 which was circulated with the agenda.

In response to questions from the panel, the following points were discussed and clarified:

- i. With regard to children living in the school's catchment area and the distance between the family home and the school, this criterion is taken into account after sibling link and attending a feeder school in that order.
- ii. A map was produced to indicate that successful applicants were evenly spread throughout the school's catchment area.
- iii. In 2011 Springfield was the only school which was not able to admit all catchment pupils.
- iv. Nearly all the unsuccessful applicants for Springfield School were successful in gaining places at their second preference schools. Only six applicants were allocated places at schools for which they did not express a preference.
- v. The Local Authority Admissions staff provide information and advice to help parents to make informed decisions about their choice of school.
- vi. The School Admissions Code makes some provision for the special circumstances of the children of forces families who often have to move around the country and abroad. Therefore, the Admissions Service can be more flexible in dealing with applications for places from forces families, who very often apply for a place in the middle of a school term. The Admissions Team accepts a Ministry of Defence notice of placement as proof of residence and, on that basis, allocates places for forces children in advance of the family taking up residence in the area. However, they are not permitted to hold unallocated school places for forces families.

- vii. It was suggested that there was a shortage of schools in the northern end of the city; but officers pointed out that places were available in King Richard and City Boys' schools in the north of the city and stressed that allowing one school to become oversubscribed while places are available at other schools in the city is an inefficient and ineffective use of resources. The point was also made that increasing the number of pupils at a popular school could lead to a loss of what is successful and valuable and may result in deterioration in academic standards at the school.
- viii. Reference was made to the draft new School Admissions Code open to consultation until 19 August which proposes changes to the existing code. The Admissions Officer undertook to provide information on how to feed into the consultation process, as the panel believed that it might be appropriate for them to comment.
- ix. Proposed housing development on the Southern Electric site would be likely to increase demands on the school.

Panel members put forward the following proposals to deal with the insufficient number of school places in the Springfield catchment area:

- i. Review school catchment areas.
- ii. Review the need for catchment areas.
- iii. Change the structure of the school day by introducing a shift system, with for example, the lower school attending for the early part of the school day and the upper school attending for the latter part of the day. This would enable the school to be enlarged without having to undertake expensive building works. Increasing the number of pupils would attract additional funding to pay for the necessary additional staff.
- iv. Build another secondary school in the north of the city.
- v. City Boys School should become a co-educational school.

Responding to the proposals, Mike Fowler, Head of Transforming Education Services made the following points:

- i. The current and predicted demographics of the city's population did not appear to indicate a need for another secondary school in the city.
- ii. Predictions of demographic fluctuations for the next five years indicated that during some academic years Springfield would not be able to admit all its catchment area pupils; but in other years lower numbers of secondary transfers would mean that all catchment applicants could be admitted.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. The scoping document be approved subject to the evidence from the Planning Service be received at the second meeting.**
- 2. Submissions from the Royal Navy be requested for the next meeting, to provide input on issues affecting service families moving into the school's catchment area.**
- 3. Submissions from the Head teacher and representatives from the Governing Body of Springfield be considered at the next meeting.**

4. The report on the School Admissions Process and Springfield School Allocation 2011 be noted.
5. The following dates for meetings be agreed: 24 June and 8 July.

25 Date of Next Meeting (AI 5)

RESOLVED that the next meeting be held on Friday, 24 June 2011. The time of the meeting will be either 2pm or 5pm, depending on the availability of the chair.

The meeting closed at 6:05pm.

Chairman