

CARMARTHENSHIRE ADMISSIONS FORUM

MONDAY 11TH DECEMBER 2023

PRESENT: Mr G.R. Richards [Chair]

Carmarthenshire County Council Representatives:

Councillors B. Jones, D. Jones, P.T. Warlow and D.E. Williams

Local Community Representative:

S.G. Jones

Church in Wales Representative:

Rev. Canon J. Cecil

Headteacher Representative:

D. Williams

Also Present:

S. Davies - Head of Access to Education

S. John - School Organisation & Admissions Manager

A. Carter - Schools' Transformation and Change Manager

G. Williams - Assistant Solicitor

E. Anthony - Senior School Admissions Officer

S. Arundel - School Admissions Development Officer

M. Evans Thomas - Principal Democratic Services Officer

S. Rees - Simultaneous Translator

Virtual Meeting : 2.00 pm - 2.40 pm

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Paul White (Roman Catholic Church Representative), Rev. Delyth Richards (Church in Wales Representative), Carol Seabourne (Parent Governor Representative) and Cllr J Holliday (Local Community Representative).

Rev. Canon J. Cecil was substituting for Rev. Delyth Richards.

2. TO CONFIRM AND SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 29TH JUNE 2023

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 29th June, 2023 be signed as a correct record.

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

3. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

With regard to minute no. 8 – Rising 4's Policy, the Forum was informed that Cabinet had asked for a Gap Analysis which had been presented to them earlier that day and Cabinet was now happy to proceed with consultation in the New Year.

NOTED.

4. **MEP UPDATE & RISING 4'S POLICY**

The Head of Access to Education provided the Forum with a verbal update on the Modernising Education Programme (MEP) and the Rising 4's Policy.

A number of workshops have been held with all members over the past few months. A draft strategy has since been prepared which was ready to take through the democratic process and which aligned with the 10 Year Departmental Plan.

He added that an Investment Suite of Projects would be prepared shortly and put forward for consideration.

With regard to the Rising 4's Policy he referred to the earlier update provided under the matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting and had nothing extra to add. Cabinet have all the information they need to make a decision post-consultation.

The Forum was informed that the Rev Canon John Cecil and Paul White had been contacted to ensure that the faith schools are involved in the consultation process.

The Chair referred to the fact that this would be a shift in policy in Carmarthenshire and asked for details of the communications strategy which was in place to support this. The School Organisation & Admissions Manager explained that there would be two arms to this, the normal annual consultation process undertaken with Forum members, all Headteachers, all schools etc but a public consultation exercise will also be undertaken for a six week period. Focus Groups will be held amongst other things to ensure that everyone has a chance to feed into the process. The Head of Access to Education added that officers in his department are working with colleagues in Media & Marketing to make sure that everything is covered.

In response to a question regarding the threshold i.e. what number of parents opposing the abolishing of the Rising 4's Policy would it take before officers will not proceed to introduce the new policy. The Head of Access to Education replied that there was currently no set threshold. Officers will present the consultation responses to Cabinet who will consider these when making their determination.

UNANIMOUSLY AGREED that the verbal update be received.

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

5. WELSH GOVERNMENT NEW ADMISSIONS APPEALS CODE 2023

The School Organisation & Admissions Manager provided the Forum with a verbal update on the Welsh Government New Admissions Appeals Code 2023, which replaces the 2013 Admissions Appeals Code.

The Forum was informed that the new Code allows Admissions Authorities to hold virtual appeals via Zoom or by phone call with parents as well as face to face if requested. Temporary Regulations were issued by Welsh Government during the Covid pandemic which allowed for virtual appeals to be held as physical meetings were not possible. This provision had now been formally adopted and included in the Code. This would make attendance at appeals hearings far easier for parents.

UNANIMOUSLY AGREED that the verbal update be received.

6. SCHOOL ADMISSIONS REPORT - REVIEW OF 23/24 AND ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 24/25 & 25/26

The Senior Schools Admissions Officer presented the School Admissions Report which provided a review of 2023/24 and outlined the admission arrangements for 2024/25 and 2025/26.

As part of its remit the Forum is required to consider certain aspects of the School Admission Arrangements and the appropriate excerpts were reproduced for the Forum's information.

UNANIMOUSLY AGREED that the report be received.

7. WELSH GOVERNMENT ANNUAL FORUM REPORT 2022/23

The Senior School Admissions Officer presented the Welsh Government Annual Forum Report 2022/23 which included details of School Admissions and Appeals. He informed the Forum that the Authority is now also required to report on how we put in place arrangements for vulnerable children. Officers are working on that and the information will be available next year.

Asked whether there was any data available in relation to the transfer of pupils between Welsh and English education, the Head of Access to Education replied that officers will endeavour to pull that information together for the last academic year.

Asked whether it would be worth evaluating the impact of covid, the Head of Access to Education informed the Forum that he would discuss this with colleagues in the Data Team to ascertain what information is available.

UNANIMOUSLY AGREED that the report be received.

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Head of Access to Education informed the Forum that the Welsh Government has an open consultation on co-ordinating admission arrangements for primary schools. He had a link to the consultation page if any Forum members would like him to forward it to them. He was in the process of putting together an e-mail explaining as clearly as possible what the consultation is all about which was basically that only one offer will be made for every child on national offer day.

9. DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

AGREED, subject to confirmation, that the next meeting be held at 2.00 p.m. on Thursday, 21st March, 2024.

CHAIR

DATE

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.