

CARMARTHENSHIRE ADMISSIONS FORUM

THURSDAY, 29 JUNE 2023

PRESENT: G. R. Richards (Chair)

Carmarthenshire County Council Representatives: Councillors D. Jones, M.J.A. Lewis (substitute for D. Thomas), P.T. Warlow and D.E. Williams;

Local Community Representatives: S.G. Jones;

Headteacher Representatives: A. Hurley and N. Neave;

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 Officer;
E. M. Jones, School Admissions Officer for Refugees;
S. Rees, Simultaneous Translator;
M.S. Davies, Democratic Services Officer.

Virtual Meeting: 2.00 pm - 3.30 pm

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR & VICE CHAIR

The Forum formally appointed:-

- Mr. G. Richards as Chair of the Carmarthenshire Admission Forum for 2023/24;
- Mr. A. Hurley as Vice-Chair of the Carmarthenshire Admission Forum for 2023/24.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Paul White (Roman Catholic Church Representative), Rev. Delyth Richards (Church in Wales Representative), Carol Seabourne and Carly Lee (Parent Governor Representatives) and County Councillors Betsan Jones and Dai Thomas.

3. NEW ADMISSION FORUM MEMBERSHIP

The Forum received a verbal report from the Head of Access to Education confirming the membership of the Forum. It was noted that following the recent resignation of Julian Kennedy as a headteacher representative further nominations would be sought as would a further nomination for a Town & Community Councillor representative.

NOTED.

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

4. TO CONFIRM AND SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25TH NOVEMBER 2021

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 25th November, 2021 be signed as a correct record.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF 25TH NOVEMBER 2021

There were no matters arising.

6. MEP UPDATE

The Head of Access to Education provided the forum with a verbal update on the Modernising Education Programme [MEP] which had previously been reviewed in 2016 and confirmed in 2017. A further review had been undertaken since, albeit delayed as a result of the covid pandemic, which had included workshops with elected members. As a result of comments received the strategy document was being updated and it was anticipated that this would be taken through the Council's democratic processes during the Autumn term.

AGREED that the verbal update be received.

7. DRAFT FAIR ACCESS PROTOCOL

Members of the Forum considered a draft Fair Access Protocol which would apply to all primary and secondary community and voluntary aided schools within Carmarthenshire County Council. It was intended for use with pupils not on a school roll, particularly with vulnerable pupils who were not accessing education and with children and young people for whom it was difficult to secure a school place because of their social, emotional and behavioural problems. The protocol had been prepared in consultation with Carmarthenshire County Council's - Admissions Forum, CCC Admissions Team, the Head teacher consultative groups, Strategic Focus Groups and the ECS Departmental Management Team.

It was hoped that the Protocol would be in place as soon as possible subject to it being considered at a Headteacher's business meeting so that all headteachers could familiarise themselves with the policy.

AGREED that the report be received.

8. RISING 4'S POLICY

Members of the Forum considered a Primary School Admissions Review (Rising 4s) report which:

- Described the current arrangements for nursery and full-time admissions to primary schools in Carmarthenshire;
- Considered these arrangements in relation to other Authorities in Wales;
- Identified current challenges of the existing primary school admission arrangements;

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As the Admissions Authority for Community and Voluntary Controlled primary schools the Council would be:

- consulting on a change to the full-time admission arrangements of learners from the term of their 4th birthday to the term after their 4th birthday during the annual admissions consultation exercise in September 2023, for potential implementation in September 2025;
- undertaking a detailed assessment on the impact of the change in policy on each school and bringing forward a recommendation for each setting;
- reporting back on the results of the consultation;
- Engaging with Voluntary Aided and Roman Catholic primary schools on the consultation and proposed change of policy.

It was noted that the consultation document was available in 14 languages. Members were advised that during the consultation period a full gap analysis would be undertaken to identify where there may be pressure points in individual schools and geographical areas if the policy was changed.

AGREED that the report be received.

9. SCHOOL ADMISSIONS FORUM INFORMATION SHEET FOR NEW MEMBERS

The School Organisation & Admissions Manager provided the forum with a verbal overview of the Schools Admissions Forum Information Sheet for new members which provided information, including links, on issues within the Forum's remit.

NOTED.

10. SCHOOL ADMISSIONS POLICY CONSULTATION 2023-24 & 2024-25 FEEDBACK

The School Organisation & Admissions Manager provided the forum with a verbal update on feedback on the School Admissions Policy consultation 2023-24 & 2024-25. For the academic year for 2023-24 three schools had responded with queries during the consultation but there had been no impact on the Policy itself. The Policy and the Information for Parents booklet had been published on the Council's website within Statutory requirements.

In January 2023 consultation had taken place on the School Admissions Policy for 2024-25. Two schools had responded with queries during the consultation but there had been no impact on the Policy itself. The Policy had subsequently been published on the Council's website. The Information for Parents booklet was still in the process of being finalised and would be published in October 2023 in line with Statutory requirements.

In response to a query regarding the review of school catchment areas the Head of Access to Education stated that it was not yet possible to undertake a wholesale review of catchment areas whilst the future school provision in Carmarthenshire remained uncertain. In certain areas however catchment lines continued to be

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tweaked if, for example, new housing developments spanned two catchment areas.

AGREED that the verbal update be received.

11. SCHOOL ADMISSIONS REPORT - REVIEW OF 22/23 AND ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 24/24 & 24/25

The Assistant School Admissions Officer presented a report which reviewed the Admission Round for 2022-2023 and detailed Admission Arrangements for 2023/24 and 2024/25.

AGREED that the report be received.

12. SUMMARY OF 2022 & 2023 SECONDARY ADMISSIONS ROUND

The Senior School Admissions Officer provided the forum with a verbal summary of the 2022 & 2023 secondary admissions round. Members were advised that 9 out of the 12 secondary schools had either attained or exceeded their Admission Number. All Welsh medium schools had reached their Admission Number, including the bilingual schools where discretion had been used to meet the demands for Welsh medium education across the county. For the current year offers had been made in March and pupils would transfer from primary to secondary schools in September. Pressure on the secondary schools continued.

AGREED that the verbal update be received.

13. WELSH GOVERNMENT ANNUAL FORUM REPORT 2021/22

The Senior School Admissions Officer presented the Welsh Government Annual Forum Report 2021/22 which included details of School Admissions and Appeals. It was noted that the Admission Number for Llangunnor Primary School was 42 and not 37 as indicated in the report.

AGREED that the report be received.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

15. DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

AGREED, subject to confirmation, that the next meeting be held at 2.00 p.m. on Thursday 23rd November 2023.

CHAIR

DATE

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