

HARROW ADMISSIONS FORUM

21 OCTOBER 2009

Chairman:	* Reverend P Reece		
Councillors:	* Mrs Anjana Patel * Bill Stephenson		
Community School Representatives:	<u>Governor</u> (Vacancy)	<u>Primary</u> Sue Jones	<u>Secondary</u> * Janice Howkins
Jewish School Representative:	Mrs D Palman		
Roman Catholic School Representative:	† Mr M Murphy		
Church of England School Representative:	* Mrs S Hinton		
Krishna Avanti Primary School Representative:	(Vacancy)		
Church of England Diocese Representative:	* Rev'd Paul Reece		
Catholic Schools Diocese Representative:	Miss M Ryan		
United Synagogue Representative:	(Vacancy)		
I-Foundation Representative:	* Dr Kamlesh Bahl		
Primary Elected Parent Governor Representative:	* Mrs D Speel		
Secondary Elected Parent Governor Representative:	* Mr R Chauhan		
Harrow Council for Racial Equality Representative:	Julia Smith		
Early Years Development Partnership Representative:	* Helena Tucker		
Children's Services Representative:	(Vacancy)		

* Denotes Member present

† Denotes apologies received

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS**RECOMMENDATION 1 - Changes to Requirement for Proof of Address**

An officer presented a report of the Director of Schools and Children's Development, which put forward a proposal to change the current arrangements for confirming addresses in relation to applications for school places. The report recommended that two pieces of documentary evidence be requested as proof of address when dealing with applications for maintained schools, with the preferred documents being a current year council tax bill and a utility bill issued within the last 3 months.

In response to questions from the Forum, the officer explained that:

- the Education Department would maintain a flexible approach when requesting proof of address and would be willing to accept other documentation if individuals could not meet the initial requirements;
- the public part of the electoral roll could be used to confirm the address of an applicant;

- the public part of the electoral roll could be used to confirm the address of an applicant;
- as the Admissions Service had access to the council tax database, it was possible to check that an applicant lived at the address given on an application form. Only in circumstances where the applicant was not still registered at the address was it necessary to contact the applicant to request further proof of address.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (To the Portfolio Holder for Schools and Children's Development)

That two pieces of documentary evidence be requested as proof of address in Harrow when dealing with applications for maintained school places.

Reason for Recommendation: To ensure there is fairness and equity across all Harrow schools in relation to providing proof of address as part of the application process.

PART II - MINUTES

131. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance at this meeting.

132. **Declarations of Interest:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interests made by Members.

133. **Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations:**

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were put, or petitions or deputations received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rules 16, 14 and 15 respectively.

134. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the special and ordinary meetings held on 14 July 2009 be taken as read and signed as a correct record. Officers agreed to seek clarification on the decision made at the last meeting regarding Membership of the Harrow Admissions Forum.

135. **Flexible Entry to Reception:**

An officer presented a report of the Director of Schools and Children's Development, which called for the Forum to determine whether the current admission arrangements of the Council met the needs of younger and less developed children, or whether a change was required. It was noted that under the current arrangements the School Admissions Code of Practice required that admission authorities allow parents to defer their child's entry into reception class later into the school year if the child was not of compulsory school age at the beginning of term.

Following discussion, the Forum noted that the Cambridge Group review was due to be published shortly and the recommendations set out in the Director's report ought to be deferred.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report be noted;

(2) the Forum await guidance on the matter from the Department for Children, Schools and Families before making a decision.

136. **INFORMATION REPORT - Harrow Admission Forum Working Party on Nursery Admissions:**

An officer presented a report of the Director of Schools and Children's Development, which set out the role of the Nursery Admissions Working Party.

The officer stated that in recent years the authority had reviewed both Rising 5 and high school admission arrangements. Nursery arrangements had not been reviewed since 1997. It was now a suitable time to look at nursery arrangements to determine whether the criteria still met local needs or whether they should be revised.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report be noted;

(2) members of the Nursery Admissions Working Party focus on the oversubscription criteria, including tie-breakers, and whether the current administrative arrangements were working in the best interests of children and families.

137. **INFORMATION REPORT - Admissions Policy and Location of School Gate:**

An officer presented a report of the Director of Legal and Governance Services on the designation of entry points for schools when calculating distances for admission purposes. The officer stated that the Council's Legal and Governance Department had clarified that decisions relating to the determination of official entry points were the responsibility of school governors.

In response to questions from the Forum, the officer stated that:

- maps showing the designated entry points for all community schools in Harrow were available on the Council's website;
- the system currently used by residents to calculate the distance from an address to a school did not detail the entry point being used. The Council was considering developing the service so that the information would be provided.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

138. **INFORMATION REPORT - New Requirement to Co-Ordinate Primary and In-Year Admissions:**

An officer presented a report of the Director of Schools and Children's Development on the new requirement to co-ordinate in-year admissions and admissions to reception classes from 2010 and September 2011 respectively.

In response to a question from the Forum, the officer stated that faith schools had been involved in talks concerning the new requirement and a meeting would be arranged with the Krishna Avanti School and Moriah Jewish Day School.

A member of the Forum noted that there were concerns that the new procedure would slow the admissions process, although it was accepted that the new procedure was required by statute.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

139. **INFORMATION REPORT - Applicants Not Offered Any of Their Four Preferred Schools for September 2009:**

An officer presented a report of the Director of Schools and Children's Development, which had been submitted in response to a request from the Forum for information on applicants that had not been offered any of their four preferred schools. For each applicant, the report detailed the four preferred schools, the school that had been offered and the nearest school to the individual's home.

The officer explained that six applicants had been offered schools that were a greater distance from their home than the schools that they had requested.

In response to questions from the Forum, the officer stated that:

- the possibility of offering applicants the opportunity to select six preferred schools, as opposed to four, would be considered at the next meeting of the Forum;
- common law required applicants that had expressed a preference to attend a school to be given priority over applicants that had not expressed a preference, regardless of the distance from their address to the school in question;
- when deciding the outcome of an application various factors were considered, including the number of siblings and the number of children living closer to the school;
- if there were further developments in the town centre, there could be an increased need for school places in the borough.

The Forum stated that there was concern that some applicants who selected their nearest schools as preferences were unable to gain a place at any, due to the distance oversubscription criteria. In response, an officer stated that this problem currently applied to a small number of applicants and that the current system was seen as the most effective way of processing applications for admissions.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

140. **Any Other Business:**

(i) High School Admissions

In accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) 1985, this item was admitted late to the agenda to allow the Forum to consider the situation in respect of applications for high school admissions, the deadline for which was 23 October 2009.

An officer reported that:

- application forms and reminders had been sent to parents at the beginning of the school term. Notices had also been sent to schools;
- at present, approximately 400 11+ and 12+ applications had not been submitted;
- the deadline for applications was 23 October 2009. Applicants could use the internet to submit their application until midnight on that date. Alternatively, applications could be handed to a child's current primary school or sent, preferably with proof of postage, to the Council;
- as Harrow schools were part of a pan-London admissions system, the Council had to maintain the current deadline and adopt the same procedures as other boroughs;
- any individual that had started an online application and not completed it would be sent an email reminding them of the deadline.

RESOLVED: That the position with regards to high school admissions be noted.

(ii) Membership

In response to a query over a decision made at the last meeting regarding Membership of the Harrow Admissions Forum, officers agreed to seek clarification.

(iii) Mrs S Hinton

The Forum noted that the term of Mrs S Hinton had come to an end. Members of the Forum expressed their gratitude for her contribution to the Forum over the past 12 years.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 6.17 pm, closed at 7.30 pm)

(Signed) REVEREND P REECE
Chairman