

Minutes

For: Admissions and Place Planning Forum – Extra Ordinary Meeting

Date: 10 September 2019

Time: 18:00 – 20:00

Location: Ellen Wilkinson Primary School

Attendees:

Chair

Councillor Julianne Marriott: Cabinet Member for Education (JM)

Local Authority Officers

Peter Gibb: Head of Access and Infrastructure (PG)

Tracy Jones: Group Manager, Pupil Services (TJ)

Clerk

Kiran Parkash Singh: Pupil Services

Representative: Nursery schools

Nicola Hayden Oliver Thomas Nursery

Representatives: Maintained primary schools

Diane Barrick: Head Teacher, Carpenters Primary School

Sue Ferguson: Head Teacher, Ellen Wilkinson Primary School

Representatives: Maintained secondary schools

Anthony Wilson: CEO Newham Community Schools Trust

Ian Wilson: Head Teacher, Little Ilford Primary School (Chair of Newham Association of Secondary Head teachers - NASH)

Representatives: Academy primary schools

Paul Harris: CEO Tapscott Trust

Representatives: Academy secondary schools

Simon Elliott: CEO Community Schools Trust

Peter Whittle: Associate Principal, Langdon Academy

Representative: University Technical Colleges

Geoffrey Fowler: Principal, London Design and Engineering UTC

Faith Representative: Church of England schools

Matt Hipperson: Head Teacher, St. Luke's Church of England Primary School

Representative: Single sex schools

Charlotte Robinson: Head Teacher, Rokeby School (boys only)

Looked After Children Representative: Virtual School

Val Naylor: Executive Head Teacher

Apologies

Andrew Seager: Head Teacher, Stratford School Academy

Quintin Peppiatt: New Vision Trust

Diane Rochford: Executive Head, John F Kennedy Special School

Shirleyann Jones: Head Teacher, St. James' Church of England Junior School

Gael Hicks: Head Teacher, St Helen's Roman Catholic Primary School

Simon McKenzie, Interim Head of Service 0-25 SEND

Key

Secondary Head Teacher – SHT

Primary Head Teacher - PHT

APPROVED

Action Points

Item 2 Fair Access Protocol

Final version of Fair Access Protocol to be published

Item 3 Alternative Allocation Policy

Draft version of alternative allocation policy to be developed based on Option 5.

1. Introductions

Chair introduced herself and asked the other members of the forum to do the same. JM explained the purpose of the meeting. As raised at previous Admissions Forums, it had been agreed that the forum should convene to agree the final version of the Fair Access Protocol and to consider alternatives to the current alternative allocation process.

2. Fair Access

TJ thanked schools for their input and contribution in drafting the most recent version of the protocol and advised that it was ready to be published. The matter of the definition of what is deemed a challenging child was still outstanding as primary school heads have a different view to secondary school leaders.

The protocol could be published in its current version but had needed to be finalised by October half term.

All agreed to the protocol being signed off and published.

TJ advised the panel that Newham Fair Access panel, (Pupil Placement Panel) will now consider special educational needs cases. PG added that this had also been agreed at Education Partnership Board in order to ensure that there was a fair and equal distribution of special educational needs cases across schools.

JM requested that the process be monitored and that feedback was provided at the spring forum.

3. Alternative Allocations

PG outlined the current process and provided an overview of the range of options that could be considered as alternatives (these were presented at the previous forum).

The authority were aware of concerns of some schools who felt that the current process was impacting more on them than other schools, owing to their geographical position in the borough. Schools located in the centre of the borough were being allocated more children who were not offered one of their preferences, than other schools who were located in other

parts of Newham.

Any alternatives to the current process needed to be assessed to ensure that they were compliant with the law, transparent, in the interest of the child, operationally deliverable and defined in plain English so that it could easily be understood by parents/carers.

Previous forums have agreed that random allocation was not viable and home to school distance needed to form part of the process.

The process had been narrowed down to two options from the Alternative Allocation Paper;

- Option 3 - Even distribution and home to school distance
Places allocated on a 'one for you, one for you' basis using home to school distance up to the point schools fill.
- Option 5 - Proportional distribution and home to school distance
Allocated shared on a proportional basis with places available being set using a percentage share of pupils based on vacancies set against school published admission numbers.

Whatever option was explored it could just be implemented for national offer day.

A PHT asked if these would be code compliant and added that whatever option is considered it was important to remember that children could still move school if a place became available from the waiting list. TJ acknowledged that children could be offered another school from the waiting list.

TJ then provided the panel with modelling examples of each option, with an explanation of how the allocations for admission in September 2019 would have looked if options 3 or 5 would have been used for alternative allocations.

TJ added that any process would also have to consider gender split too.

A SHT commented that a new process needed to also consider on time and late applications as the majority of late applicants will ultimately end up with an alternative allocation as most schools were full.

A PHT asked what impact would be on bulge classes should the process change. TJ responded that a change could have an impact as bulges are put in early in order to meet demand and prevent churn if they were added after offer day.

JM added that she understood the impact on secondary schools but a concern has never been raised for primary as the number of alternative allocations are relatively low. As projection data for reception cohorts show a decline in number, the greater impact would be in year 7. The forum needed to consider this.

A PHT asked what the birth rate projections were. PG added that they were currently stable but the forecast was for a slight decline.

JM then asked individual forum members for their views. Each forum member present gave their opinion.

JM thanked everyone for their views and advised that they would be taken on board should there be an agreement to change.

PG added that the Education Partnership Board will be kept informed as the strategic board for education in Newham. It will also be discussed with the Mayor and Cabinet as ultimately it is a Council decision. If the council decided to take this further there would have to be a six week public consultation and it would be for admission from September 2021.

JM added it was important to get the viewpoint from a range of head teachers before deciding to go through the consultation process.

TJ said that any change needed to consider the impact of children travelling. For example children living in Manor Park benefitted from being allocated a secondary school in the central part of the borough.

In addition evidence from members' casework suggested that parent/carers had concerns over children travelling alone and having to go to schools further away from their homes with many citing fears over knife crime and young people fearing having to travel alone. Another factor was the cost of changing the process as it had to be deliverable in the existing admissions database.

A SHT added that one of the Mayor's priorities was to ensure young people felt safe when they were out and about in Newham.

A PHT stated that changes to the current system would impact each phase of admission (normal primary and secondary and in year primary and secondary) in different ways. There was a need to know what the impact would be on each phase.

JM said that the Council could consider going to consultation. Was there sufficient information to go to consultation or was further information required?

PG suggested that a draft arrangement could be developed and feedback could be sought from Newham's legal services (to ensure compliancy) and the Office of Schools Adjudicator to gauge a viewpoint from them about whether proposed arrangements would be sound and defensible if appealed.

A SHT added that from the comments of the forum members, if there was going to be a change, option 5 would be preferred. Draft arrangements should therefore be based on that.

Another SHT added that any change should not be rushed as maybe this should be considered for September 2022. A SHT responded that a number of schools had been struggling under the current process and a change should not be delayed.

All agreed that option 5 would be preferred to option 3 and that forum should reconvene after draft arrangements had been through the legal and OSA review to discuss further.

4. Pressure on places year group 10

PG and TJ advised the panel that currently the local authority had been struggling with a lack of places across all schools in year 10. It was important for schools to declare all vacancies and offer additional places where possible.

A SHT asked if children who were number one on the waiting list but transferring from another Newham school could be skipped as they already had a school place. TJ advised that they couldn't.

Meeting Closed 20:15

End.