

SHROPSHIRE LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM

Present: Bob Thompson (BT) – Community Member (Chair)
 Phil Adams (PA) – Own Admissions Authority Schools Head Teacher
 Lisa Crossley (LC) – Telford & Wrekin CYPS
 Hilary Burke (HB) – Secondary Head Teacher
 Roger Evans (RE) – Council Member
 Mark Davies (MD) – Lichfield Diocese
 Karen Morris (KM) – Primary School Head Teacher
 Peggy Mullock (PM) – Council Member

In attendance: Phil Wilson (PW) – Shropshire Local Authority
 Carol Sneddon (CS) Shropshire Local Authority
 Ruth Griffiths (RG) - Shropshire Local Authority

Apologies: Nick Bardsley (NB) – Council Member
 Karen Bradshaw (KB) – Shropshire Local Authority
 Claire Gaskin (CG) –Aided School Head Teacher
 Sabrina Hobbs (SH) – Special School Representative
 Philip Sell (PS) – Hereford Diocese
 Carol Morgan (CM) – Diocesan Boards of Education - Shrewsbury

Date: Tuesday, 13 June 2017

Venue: Wenlock Room, Shirehall, Shrewsbury

No.	Action	Owner
1.	<u>Apologies for absence</u> Apologies were confirmed as above.	
2	<u>Welcome to new members</u> BT welcomed PM, Council Member to the group.	
3.	<u>Declaration of interest in agenda items</u> BT explained that this is a standard item and asked members to declare their interest, as and when relevant.	
4.	<u>To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2017</u> The minutes were read and agreed as an accurate record.	

<p>5.</p>	<p><u>Matters arising from the minutes</u></p> <p>6.2.1 <u>Update on Objections referred to the Schools Adjudicator</u></p> <p>Proposal from Lacon Childe to give priority to children who live out of catchment but who attend a primary school that is part of their multi academy trust.</p> <p>CS reported that last year the Schools Adjudicator found that it was not relevant for an objection to be considered as the ‘admission arrangements had not been correctly determined’ by Lacon Childe for that academic year.</p> <p>Lacon Childe has now determined its admission arrangements for this year and, as before, is proposing to give priority to children who attend a primary that is part of their multi academy trust. CS reported that, with the agreement of LAF, she has referred a Local Authority objection to the Adjudicator and has received notification that they have appointed an adjudicator to look into this. They have requested a summary of the number of applications received and how many are likely to be affected by this proposed change. Interestingly, this year the school received 20 applications in excess of its PAN.</p> <p>6.2.2 Proposal from Shrewsbury Academy Trust to reduce their PAN from 237 to 187, meaning a reduction of 50 places per year group and 250 overall school places.</p> <p>The LA raised an objection with the Office of the Schools Adjudicator and an Independent Adjudicator has been appointed. Specific questions are now being asked of both the Trust and of the Local Authority. CS will keep LAF members informed via email when she has received an adjudication on this issue.</p> <p>PA questioned whether there will be sufficient places for Shrewsbury children, if the Trust is allowed to reduce its PAN. CS reported that the proposal is from 2018/19 so essentially, if agreed, it would apply to those Year 6 children applying for a secondary school place this September. CS explained that the LA has revised its figures in light of the school census information and has also included an allocation for the additional housing. From these figures, the Local Authority believes that there would be a shortfall of around 20 places across Shrewsbury, if this proposal is approved.</p> <p>Members felt that with the predicted growth in numbers expected, this could develop into a crisis very quickly. The year 2020 is a year when the numbers are expected to peak and CS said that even without the proposed reduction of 50 places per year, it is likely that we will see significant pressure on school places.</p> <p>BT questioned the likely timescale of hearing a response from the Schools Adjudicator. CS stated that from the way things are progressing, she is anticipating that a response will be received before the end of term, however, that is not guaranteed.</p> <p>LAF members questioned whether the Adjudicator has the power to direct an Academy Trust. CS said that the LA is responsible for place planning. When an Academy Trust proposes a reduction in their PAN, they are duty bound to consult widely on that proposal and it is at that point that any party can comment/object on it.</p>	<p>CS</p>
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CS explained that despite searching on the Adjudicator Office's website for similar cases, she has only found details of one case that bore any similarity and it was resolved at a much earlier stage.

PA stated that this is a very unusual situation. In most cases, Academies will be wishing to increase their pupil numbers. He recalled from the previous meeting that part of the Shrewsbury Academy Trust's reason for reducing their PAN was so the school would have slightly more control on its admissions to the school. If a school has reached its Admission Number, it can refuse applications.

RE queried the implications for pupil places in 2018/19. CS stated that the four Shrewsbury secondary schools are unique in the fact that they share one overall catchment area. Shrewsbury parents, like any other parent, can name up to three school preferences. However, they will be considered to be in the catchment area for all four Shrewsbury secondary schools. They will receive higher priority for their nearest school, as measured as a straight line distance.

CS stated that if Belvidere, Meole Brace and Priory were all full, then the offered school would be Shrewsbury Academy. However, if the school is successful in reducing its Admission Number, then children would be offered a place at their next nearest school, which may for example be Mary Webb, Church Stretton, Thomas Adams, etc which would undoubtedly be more than 3 miles distance. The Local Authority would then be responsible for providing and funding transport to that school.

RE questioned whether it is reasonable to expect a child moving into the new development at Otley Road for example, being offered a place at Shrewsbury Academy, as the nearest school with vacancies. This would involve catching a bus into Shrewsbury and then another bus to Shrewsbury Academy. CS reported that as part of place planning, the Local Authority is looking at where it could make additional places available. Up until now, it has been possible to manage this within the town.

PW said that he has met with all Shrewsbury school heads and discussed both the anticipated pressure on places and the plans that the LA has. The first call is on primary and he is already having conversations with specific groups in Shrewsbury. The intention then is to meet with secondary colleagues again to outline the numbers forecast and to explore what options are available. Projected forecasts are showing the year 2020 will see a pressure on secondary school places but clearly discussions need to be taking place this year.

CS said that traditionally people whose nearest school is the Shrewsbury Academy have been able to access places at other Shrewsbury schools, particularly Belvidere and Meole Brace. However, we are seeing a transition stage where people who would previously have been eligible for a place at Belvidere and Meole Brace now not qualifying in terms of over subscription criteria. It is particularly difficult to accommodate people who move into the area in-year and not as part of the transfer group.

BT queried whether there was an appeal process or whether the School Adjudicator's decision is binding. CS stated that if the LA is unsuccessful in gaining the support of the Adjudicator, then it would be in financial difficulty in ensuring that there are sufficient places in the Shrewsbury area. It would need to be applying to the DfE for basic need funding.

BT queried whether the three Shrewsbury secondary schools are aware of the

	<p>situation. CS confirmed that the schools are aware of the proposal but she was unsure whether colleagues were aware of the possible implications for Shrewsbury residents. RE felt that this is particularly sensitive because of the Wakeman closure in 2013. He queried when this information will be made available to Shrewsbury residents. PW said that obviously this will depend on the decision made by the Adjudicator. However, he and CS agreed to look at what information can be shared with the local media, which may provide some reassurance to local residents. However, firstly we need to await the outcome of the Adjudicator's report.</p>	<p>PW/ CS</p>
<p>6</p>	<p><u>Secondary and Primary Allocations 2017/18 (Appendix 5B)</u></p> <p>LAF group last met in January and CS felt it would be useful to reflect on the allocation round for 2017/18.</p> <p>As yet, she is still awaiting the national and regional figures and she agreed to update this report when these figures have been released. However, in 2017, Shropshire met 95.8% of its first preference requests for secondary school placements. The majority of primary to secondary transfer appeals have now been heard – 43 appeal applications were received. This was considerably down on last year, largely due to a significant number of successful outcomes for applicants to Shrewsbury schools.</p> <p>At the plenary session of two secondary schools, namely William Brookes and Idsall, it was found that there was 'no prejudice case' and so all the appellants were automatically allowed a place above the Admission Number. CS explained that the number of appellants for these two schools was fairly low and the panel may have felt there was a strong possibility that numbers may reduce further. Both schools were also carrying vacancies in other year groups.</p> <p>For primary schools, Shropshire met 94.5% first preference requests and 99.5% for junior schools. Appeals are in the process of being heard for primary schools but fewer will be allowed due to the infant class size legislation.</p> <p>PA said that he is aware that Shrewsbury is a pressure point. He queried whether the market towns are seeing a reduction in numbers. CS said that we are seeing pockets of over subscription in some rural areas. She stated that The Corbet School's allocation this year, may indicate that it will be a future pressure point, particularly as we are seeing an increase in numbers at Baschurch Primary and Hadnall Primary.</p> <p>RE explained the difficulty rural primary schools have in predicting future numbers on roll. Whilst they receive information from the LA of 'known' children in their catchment area, there is no allowance made for children who may be displaced from Shrewsbury primary schools because of the pressure on places there. It is extremely difficult for rural schools to plan budgets, staffing arrangements, expansion etc.</p> <p>PW recognised that problem and said it may be that additional information could be shared with primary schools. He and CS agreed to look into this further.</p>	<p>CS</p> <p>CS/ PW</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p><u>Report to Office of the Schools Adjudicator (Appendix 6c)</u></p> <p>CS shared a report which the LA authority has to complete and return to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator. This requires Local Authorities to report on the previous</p>	

	<p>admission round, highlighting any problems that have been experienced. The Chief Adjudicator then submits an annual report and makes recommendations to the DfE. One recommendation is currently pending – ie, that in-year admissions should revert back to the LA.</p> <p>CS felt it important that LAF members see the questions being asked. If members have any specific comments that they would like included, then they should email CS by 20 June. CS will send a copy of the completed report to LAF members.</p>	CS
8.	<p><u>Parents' Guide to Education in Shropshire 2018/19</u></p> <p>This will be available electronically via the Shropshire Council website. Hard copies are also produced for schools, libraries, appeal panel members, LAF members, etc.</p> <p>PA felt that the timescale for Year 6 pupils and parents to make their secondary school selection is very tight. He queried whether the Parent's Guide and secondary school application process could be brought forward, perhaps before the end of the Summer.</p> <p>CS said that we are seeing an increasing number of Year 5 pupils at secondary school open evenings. KM confirmed that some of her Year 4 and Year 5 pupils are receiving invites for open evenings. However, it was recognised that this would not be possible in some secondary schools – HB stated that Meole Brace School would have difficulty in offering a further open evening for Year 4/5 pupils.</p> <p>KM queried why Oswestry schools are listed under 'O' section as opposed to alphabetically under their school name. CS said that this also happens in other areas. The idea behind this was that if you move to a new area, you may not know the name of all the schools in the locality and so listings by town is helpful and it is immediately apparent which schools are within your area.</p>	
9.	<p><u>Any Other Business</u></p> <p>CS shared her appreciation for this forum's views on admissions. She explained that it is useful to discuss and debate issues with members who have various backgrounds and experiences.</p>	
10.	<p><u>Date of Next Meeting</u></p> <p>The next meetings will take place on; Tuesday, 28 November 2017 Tuesday, 30 January 2018 Tuesday, 12 June 2018</p>	