

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held at Ground Floor Committee Room - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on 8 July 2015 from Time Not Specified - Time Not Specified

Membership

Present

Councillor Leslie Ayoola
Councillor Josh Cook
Councillor Georgina Culley
Councillor Pat Ferguson
Beverley Frost (3rd sector advocate)
Councillor Mohammed Ibrahim
Councillor Patience Ifediora
Councillor Glyn Jenkins
Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan (Chair)
Councillor Neghat Nawaz Khan
Councillor Ginny Klein
Councillor Anne Peach

Absent

Councillor Azad Choudhry
Councillor Brian Parbutt

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Councillor Jim Armstrong -

16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Azad Choudhry – non Council business
Councillor Brian Parbutt – non Council business

17 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

18 MINUTES

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 3 June 2015 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

19 SCHOOL EXPANSION PROGRAMME AND ADMISSIONS IN NOTTINGHAM

Councillor Sam Webster, Portfolio Holder for Schools, Nick Lee, Head of Access and Learning and Jonny Kirk, Service Manager for Access and Learning, delivered a presentation to the Committee on the way schools are being organised in the city to meet the demand for school places. Nancy Barnard, Governance Manager at Nottingham City Council, was present to highlight the school appeals process for Committee members.

During the presentation the following key points were highlighted:

- (a) Since 2009, an extra 1,600 primary places have been created and a further 485 places have been made available for the 2015/16 academic year. This demonstrates that there is still a growing demand for places in Nottingham City;
- (b) An additional 138 applications were received this year for primary school places, the equivalent of four extra classes of children. In 2015, there were a total of 3,877 applications for primary school places and 2,919 applications for secondary school places;
- (c) Locally, Nottingham City Council continues to reduce the number of children who receive none of their preferred school places. In 2014, 9.2% of primary applicants received none of their preferences for a school place. In 2015, this figure had reduced to 5.5%. In 2014, 8.5% of secondary applicants received none of their preferences and in 2015 this figure has reduced to 4.1%;
- (d) Of the 235 primary children who did not receive any of their preferences in 2015, 116 applicants only selected one school on their application out of a possible 6 preferences;
- (e) Statistics from the Department for Education (DfE) for parents applying for a school place in England by the national offer day for September 2015 show that, nationally 87.8% of children got their first choice, up from 80.8% in 2014. In Nottingham, 84.8% of primary applicants received a place at their first choice in 2015. DfE figures show that nationally, 84.2% of secondary applicants got their first choice, up from 81% in 2014. In Nottingham, 84.4% of secondary applicants received a place at their first choice school;
- (f) In 2014, Nottingham City Council was ranked 131 out of 152 local authorities for securing first choice preferences for primary school places. In 2015, Nottingham City Council has climbed to 116th place. In 2014, the Council was ranked 100 out of 152 local authorities in securing first choice preferences for secondary school places. In 2015, the Council has improved to 79th place;
- (g) As of today, there are a number of school places available across the city in a variety of year groups; for example, there are 207 reception places, 116 year 1 places, 67 year 2 places and 65 year 3 places;
- (h) Consultation will take place in the coming months on the school places in parts of the city. For example, consultation on primary school places in Wollaton begins in September and consultation on primary school places in Bestwood and Top Valley will begin in the next academic year. Discussions have already begun with secondary head teachers across the city in order to plan the phased increase to secondary school places and further work will take place with health sector colleagues, developers and planners to strengthen projections;

- (i) Where a school place has been refused, parents have the right to appeal the decision. The admission authority has to give parents at least 10 school days' notice before the hearing to confirm the date and appeals have to be heard within 40 school days of the appeal deadline. This right of appeal is to a panel made up of members of the public who are independent of the local authority.

Following comments and questions from the Committee, the following information was provided:

- (j) Reception school places are available across parts of the city, for example, places are available in reception classes in Forest Fields, Bilborough, St Ann's and Sneiton. The Council is keen move to a 5% surplus of school places in order to accommodate movement across the city;
- (k) The admission of children to infant classes is currently governed by legislation which states that no infant class can have more than 30 pupils per class, apart from in exceptional circumstances. As a result of this, there cases where siblings are not able to attend the same school together, however, this is often unavoidable. Nottinghamshire County Council is currently experiencing the same pressure and is in the process of consulting on removing the criteria which gives preference to sibling connections;
- (l) Nottingham City is a diverse and multi-cultural city and navigating the admissions process can often be a challenge to many parents. The Schools Admissions Team offers a reception presence at Loxley House to support parents through this process and also have staff able to speak up to 7 languages. The Appeals Team provide an interpretation service to enable parents to fully engage with the process and to possess a clear understanding of their case;
- (m) There is a trend for secondary school age pupil to travel longer distances to and from schools as many will offer particular specialisms and may be the ideal school for a particular child. Nottingham City Council only maintains one secondary school, Ellis Guilford School, therefore the remaining secondary schools as academies, set their own admissions criteria. The Council will continue to work with academies in the city to strengthen partnerships to best meet the needs of citizens in Nottingham;
- (n) School appeal panel members are sought from a range of backgrounds to reflect the demographic of Nottingham City. The School Appeals Team engaged with a number of community centres, Nottingham University and the Nottingham Community Voluntary Service to attract volunteers to sit as panel members;
- (o) Current birth rate figures obtained from the National Health Service (NHS) suggest that primary school places might have plateaued however, as a natural consequence, the number of pupils seeking a secondary school place will steadily increase from 2015 – 2020. The school expansion programme will be managed flexibly to meet the demand for places going forward, for example, there was a need for more places at Djanogly Northgate therefore the Council adapted secondary school provision to meet these needs, which can be converted back at an appropriate time.

RESOLVED to

- (1) Thank colleagues from Access and Learning, the School Appeals Team and Councillor Sam Webster for their engagement and informative presentation;**
- (2) Endorse the work currently taking place to work in partnership with local academies to support the availability of secondary school places in the City of Nottingham;**
- (3) Circulate the demographic of the School Appeal Panel members to all Committee members.**

20 PROGRAMME FOR SCRUTINY

Rav Kalsi, Senior Governance Officer, introduced a report of the Head of Democratic Services setting out the programme of activity for this Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Review Panels for 2015/16.

RESOLVED to agree the work programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Review Panels for 2015/16, as summarised in the report.