

People Scrutiny Commission

17th July 2017



Report of: Andrea Dell, Service Manager – Democratic Engagement

Title: An overview of the School Admission Arrangements in Bristol - Conclusions of the People Scrutiny Commission

Ward: Citywide

Officer Presenting Report: Paul Jacobs, Service Director- Education & Skills

Contact Telephone Number: 0117 92 24836

Recommendation

It is recommended that the People Scrutiny Commission:

- a) Agree the report and the recommendations attached as appendix A
- b) Refer the report to the Mayor and Cabinet for consideration.

If the report and recommendations are accepted by the Mayor and Cabinet updates will be provided via an annual School Admissions report to the People Scrutiny Commission.

Summary

School admission arrangements were highlighted as a priority area by the People Scrutiny Commission in the 2016/17 work programme.

Two Scrutiny events were held:

- Overview: A workshop in December 2016 provided Councillors with a detailed overview of how School Admission arrangements were administered in Bristol.
- Scrutiny: An Inquiry Day in February 2017 provided a forum for community stakeholders and school representatives to present their views on the school admission arrangements in Bristol.

The significant issues in the report are:

The report at Appendix A.

Policy

1. Mayor Marvin Rees identified School Admissions as a priority area in The Bristol City Council Corporate Strategy 2017 - 2022. The strategy outlines seven key commitments, with one of them being 'We will increase the number of school places and introduce a fairer admissions policy'.

The Mayor recognised the need for in depth consideration of the complex issue and the item was referred to the People Scrutiny Commission.

The School Admissions Code and the School Admission Appeals Code set the legal framework for admissions. Both the local authority and schools must comply with the requirements and restrictions of these codes.

Consultation

2. Internal

2.1 In order to ensure the workshop provided the information Councillors required a survey was circulated prior to the workshop.

A steering group was formed to plan and oversee the workshop and inquiry day. Members of the steering group were:

- 4 x People Scrutiny councillors
- The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills
- The Service Director for Education and Skills
- Officers from the School Admissions team
- Officers from Place Planning team.

The steering group have approved the attached report and recommendations (appendix A).

2.2 External

- A range of community representatives were invited to attend the inquiry day to present their view on school admission arrangements.
- All secondary schools in Bristol were invited to attend the inquiry day to present their view on school admission arrangements.

Context

3. Following the referral from the Mayor, School admission arrangements were highlighted as a priority area by the People Scrutiny Commission in the 2016/17 work programme. Councillors had questions about how the Local Authority approached school admissions and school appeals and further clarity was required around the relationship between Bristol City Council and Academies. Councillors felt it was important to receive information from residents on their experience of school admission arrangements in Bristol.

Due to the complexity of the issue it was agreed that two scrutiny events would be required:

i. Councillor workshop – December 2016

The workshop aimed to:

- ◆ Provide Councillors with an in-depth knowledge about School Admission arrangements in Bristol. The information provided at the workshop would assist Councillors to support and sign post constituents and manage public expectations prior, during and after the admissions process.
- ◆ Provide the knowledge required for the Inquiry Day, including information on the Local Authority’s strategic responsibilities.

The outcome of the workshop shaped the planning of an Inquiry Day.

ii. Inquiry Day – February 2017

The aim of the event was to receive information from external representatives and provide a forum for Councillors to ask questions;

- ◆ to receive information from community groups on their experiences of school admission arrangements
- ◆ to receive information about school admission arrangement from school representatives.

Following the Inquiry Day the steering group met to reflect on the wealth of knowledge received and agreed five recommendations (R):

R1. Strengthen Bristol City Council’s oversight of Admissions through an Annual update. For example, Scrutiny could review school admissions information annually and submit a report which tracked the inquiry day recommendations, to the Executive Board. It is recommended that the update is presented to scrutiny in late May/early June so observations can be included in the comments section of the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) annual report.

R2. Councillors recommend that the Mayor:

- a) meets with Principals and Chairs of Academy Boards that have a catchment area that extends beyond Bristol to discuss increasing the percentage of places reserved for Bristol pupils
- b) requires all new or expanding schools which receive capital investment from Bristol City Council to prioritise Bristol pupils as part of their admission criteria.

R3. Officers to work with Councillors and community groups to strengthen advice and support available for parents on admissions processes, building on the successful Health Champions model in Public Health (appendix 1 provides an outline of Health Champions). Councillors should actively encouraged parents / carers to use all three of their preference choices and include a local school.

R4. Councillors recommend that the Mayor endorses a campaign, to include social media, faith groups and City Partners to recruit more Black and Minority Ethnicity members on BCC Appeals Panels*

R5. Request the Mayor, Councillors and City Partners to take opportunities to promote Bristol schools and offer targeted support for under-subscribed schools, for example Councillors and City Partners could

- Meet with Head teachers and attend school open days
- Promote local business links
- Become a school governor.

* The School Appeal team ran a recruitment campaign that has attracted around 15 new panel members from the BME community. The new panel members have received training and are now starting to shadow appeals.

Proposal

4. It is recommended that the People Scrutiny Commission:
 - a) Formally agree the report and the recommendations attached as appendix A.
 - b) Refer the report to the Mayor and Cabinet for consideration.

If the Mayor and Cabinet agree the report updates on the recommendations will be provided to People Scrutiny commission via the annual School Admissions report.

Other Options Considered

5. None.

Risk Assessment

6. Not applicable

Public Sector Equality Duties

- 7 Before making a decision, section 149 Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following “protected characteristics”: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Each decision-maker must, therefore, have due regard to the need to:
 - i) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010.
 - ii) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to --

- remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic;
 - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it (in relation to disabled people, this includes, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities);
 - encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
- iii) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to –
- tackle prejudice; and
 - promote understanding.

Legal and Resource Implications

Legal

None

Financial

None at this stage

Land

Not applicable.

Personnel

Not applicable.

Appendices:

Appendix A – An overview of the School Admission Arrangements in Bristol - Conclusions of the People Scrutiny Commission.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers:

None.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers: Background information has provided in the appendices of the report (attached as appendix A).