

Bristol City Council Overview and Scrutiny – Inquiry Day

School Admission Arrangements in Bristol

Date: Friday, 3rd February 2017

Venue: Conference Hall, City Hall

Time: 9.30am – 1 pm

Preparation pack

Thank you for accepting the invitation to participate in the Inquiry Day.

Please find enclosed some information to help you prepare for the session. You are recommended to familiarise yourself with this and the workshop information pack before the Inquiry as time will be limited on the day.

The Information pack consists of:

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4.	Information about other Local Authorities, including information received from other Core Cities	6
5.	Information pack from the workshop on the 19 th December 2016	Attached separately



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Programme

9.30am Welcome and Introductions

- Councillor Brenda Massey – Chair of the People Scrutiny Commission and Councillor Claire Hiscott – Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

9.35am An overview of the School Place Planning and Admissions workshop – 19th December

- Paul Jacobs, Education and Skills Service Director

9.45 am Information / evidence from Stakeholders

- Abdul Ahmed, Said Burale and Hanna Ahmed - The Somali Forum (10 mins)
- Christine Townsend – former Mayoral Candidate (May 2016) (10 mins)
- Peninah Achieng-Kindberg and Sauda Kyalambuka - African Voices Forum (10 mins)
- Nimo Ibrahim and Iman Abdi - The Bristol Somali Women’s Group (10 mins)
- Abdul Jama – Bristol Education Welfare Service, Bristol City Council (10 mins)

10.35 am Question and Answers and group discussion

----- 10.45 – 11am - Comfort break -----

11.00 am Information from School Representatives

Click on the school name to view the admission arrangements

- Ms Jo Butler, Head teacher – [Cotham School](#)
- Mr A Perry , Executive Principal – [Colston’s Girls’ School](#)
- Mr Graham Diles , Deputy Head – [Saint Mary Redcliffe and Temple School](#)
- Ms Keziah Featherstone, Head teacher - [Bridge Learning Campus](#)
- Mr Rupert Moreton, Vice Principal – [Bristol Cathedral Choir School](#)

11:50 am Question and Answer session

12:10 pm The approach to school admissions in other Local Authority areas

- Hayley Leman – School Admissions Lead and Ian Bell - Place Planning Manager

12.20 pm Question and Answer session



12.30 pm **Table discussion**

Key Questions to be considered:

- Should Bristol City Council be doing anything differently?
- From the information provided, are there any suggestions or recommendations you'd like to make to the Mayor?

12.55 **Plenary feedback**

1pm **Close**



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Background information for participants

What is scrutiny?

Scrutiny inquiry days are part of Bristol City Council's scrutiny function. Scrutiny acts as a counter-balance to the council's executive (which consists of the Mayor) and provides a means for elected members to input in to policy-making, as well as review executive decisions and performance.

This happens via ongoing scrutiny commission meetings, select committees and inquiry days. The scrutiny function is not decision-making, but scrutiny bodies and events generate reports and recommendations which must be considered and responded to by the council's cabinet, and by some partners.

What is a scrutiny inquiry day?

Scrutiny inquiry days enable councillors to acquire an understanding of complex issues by hearing expert speakers and engaging in debate with specialists, and thus to identify well-informed evidence-based recommendations. Representatives of council teams, partner agencies and expert witnesses are invited to input their expertise and views or to showcase work via the workshop sessions, to help councillors identify and understand key issues. Inquiry days aim to create a balance between information-sharing and discussion whilst allowing the broad range of views to be heard, and enabling participants to share their particular perspective.

In addition, inquiry days can substantially raise the profile of initiatives or areas of work and beneficially affect inter-agency working and communication through networking opportunities.

Background to this Inquiry Day

The People Scrutiny Councillors identified 'school admission arrangements in Bristol' as a priority area at the scrutiny work planning workshop in September 2016.

The Mayor has also identified this as a priority area and the draft Corporate Strategy references the need to increase the number of school places and further consideration of the admissions process (Our future – Bristol and its council in 2022). The Mayor referred the issue to the People Scrutiny Commission for consideration at the work planning workshop.



Councillor Brenda Massey, the People Scrutiny Commission Chair led a steering group of four Councillors, supported by Officers, to consider the most appropriate approach. It was agreed that to fully explore the issues, two scrutiny events would be required (outlined below). This is the information pack for the second event – the Inquiry day.

19 12 16	All Councillor Workshop	<p>Bristol City Council Officers used a combination of presentations and group discussions to provide a detailed overview of the school place planning and admission process in Bristol.</p> <p>The workshop aimed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Assist Councillors to support / sign post constituents and manage public expectations b) Provide the knowledge required for the Inquiry Day (see below), including information on the Local Authority’s strategic responsibilities. <p>At the conclusion of the workshop Councillors agreed that an Inquiry Day would be required and the following information was requested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about school admission from other Local Authorities • Information from stakeholders on the challenges faced by Bristol families • Information from Head teacher and Principals from schools around Bristol.
03 02 17	Inquiry Day	<p>The Inquiry Day will seek to establish:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are Councillors satisfied that the school admission arrangements support Bristol families? • Is the Council providing appropriate support and challenge to school admission arrangement policies? • Should Bristol City Council be doing anything differently? • From the information provided, are there any suggestions Scrutiny Councillors would like to make to the Mayor?

What happens after the Inquiry Day?

A report will be created which summarises the scrutiny activity and outlines any agreed actions and recommendations.

The People Scrutiny Commission would be required to agree the report and if recommendations have been made the report would then be referred to the relevant decision making body, i.e. the Cabinet, for consideration.

If you have any question please contact Karen Blong – Policy Advisor, Scrutiny



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School Admission Arrangements in Bristol

Different Admission Systems

Admission Authorities use different systems to allocate school places. These may include:

- Banding - an equal number of places allocated from each band to achieve a balanced comprehensive intake.
- Geographical areas - priority given to children living within a defined geographical area.
- Home to school distance – measured by direct line or walking route.
- Random Allocation – a random draw under an admission criterion.
- Priority to children of staff/founding directors.
- Priority to children with social or medical reasons for attending a school.
- Priority to children with a child protection plan in place.
- Priority to children with an aptitude in a particular area such as music, sport or languages.
- Priority to children with a sibling attending the school.
- Priority to children entitled to Free School Meals or Pupil Premium.

Different Authorities' Approaches

Brighton and Hove

Priority to Children in Care and Children Previously in Care.

- Sibling attending the preferred school.
- A wide geographical area served by several schools – if school is over-subscribed within this criterion places are allocated randomly.
- When random allocation introduced first preferences met reduced from 84% to 78%.

In 2010 a report by the Institute for Education and the Universities of London and Bristol found that lotteries alone did not give poor children a higher chance of securing a place at a top school.

Lancaster University found that Brighton and Hove attempts to address inequalities in education through a school lottery system had been largely unsuccessful.

Hackney

Once Children in Care, Children Previously in Care and siblings are considered, places allocated as follow:

- No geographical areas in place – places allocated by dividing applications into 5 bands. If a band is over-subscribed, home to school distance used as tie-breaker.
- Some schools have an inner band (home address up to 1 km from the school) and an outer band (home address 1 km to 2.2 km from the school).



Hackney primary schools build into the school day sitting the Cognitive Ability Tests (CATS) to enable children to be placed in bands. Children educated out of area sit the test on a set day at a number of secondary schools.

Completing applications is part of the school day with support given by primary school.

For Reception applications, library staff available every Thursday to help parents/carers apply on-line. Bristol could adopt this policy and extend it to Citizen Points.

Oldham, Bradford and Burnley Local Authorities

Bradford – to aid cohesion closed 2 two schools and established a new school taking largely equal number of children from different communities.

Also introduced exchange programmes and joint projects to break down segregation and share good practice. Similar projects in place in Epping Forest and Solihull.

Birmingham

New Academy opened in 2015 sponsored by the local university. Home to school distance measured to 4 'nodal' points to ensure a mixed intake in terms of socio-economic, ethnicity and academic ability.

- 50% of places offered to first point close to the school site.
- Remaining 50% of places offered to children living within 3 other nodal areas.



Information from Core Cities

The following question was sent to the School admission and Scrutiny teams at the other [Core Cities](#).

Has the Local Authority ever taken any action specifically designed to improve diversity , i.e. changed catchment areas to make them more representative, adjusted policy or procedures to take positive action to address admissions arrangement with disproportionality high or low numbers of BME or FSM children?

The following responses were received:

Local Authority	Response received:
Newcastle	No work undertaken
Nottingham City Council	No work undertaken on this specifically. An introductory piece of work on place planning took place in July 2015 – click here to view.
Leeds	As a Scrutiny Board we have considered numbers and sufficiency, and do each year. A couple of years ago we had issues in the North of Leeds where there were not enough school places and parents were being offered places as schools they had not preference. There was no specific focus on BME or FSM by the Scrutiny Board.
Cardiff	In March 2016 the Committee reviewed the performance of Education as at Quarter 3 (click here to view the papers and minutes). During the scrutiny of the item members questioned the admissions process and in particular the process across Faith Schools, Welsh Schools and English Medium Schools. Members agreed that it would be helpful if there was one co-ordinated admissions process. As a result the Chairman wrote to the Archdiocese to seek their views on a co-ordinated approach. The Chairman received a positive response and as such a co-ordinated admissions procedure is now being developed. In March 2017 the Committee has programmed to review the admissions process again

