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CORRESPONDENCE FOLLOWING THE COMMITTEE MEETING

Committee CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date and Time of Meeting TUESDAY, 14 NOVEMBER 2017, 4.30 PM

Please find below correspondence send by the Committee Chair following the meeting, together with any responses received.

For any further details, please contact scrutinyviewpoints@cardiff.gov.uk

10 **Correspondence Following Committee Meeting** (Pages 3 - 10)

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ALBANY SOLICITORS

Attn of M Hutchings
Clerk to the Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Committee

MHutchings@cardiff.gov.uk

Partners:
Misha Slough LL.M., LL.B.
Sara Poontaub LL.B.
Adam Sinfield LL.B. PGDiplaw (BVC) FCILEx

Case Workers:
Sarah Barwick LL.B.
Kate Hawkes BA PGDiplaw
Jennifer Jimenez Young JD
Sin Mei Lam BA GDL LPC

Your ref:

Our ref:

Date: 14th November 2017

Dear Sirs

Draft Cabinet Report – School Admissions Arrangements 2019/2020

We understand that the Council are currently giving consideration to amending the schools admissions arrangements for the academic year 2019/2020, with specific consideration to be given to a feeder school system for admission to Secondary education. We believe that this is to address over subscription in some particular schools in the Local Authority area.

We write as the largest legal firm representing asylum seekers, refugees and members of the BME communities across Cardiff. We wish to raise concerns about this proposal as we do not believe that it addresses the issue of over subscription and is in fact detrimental to particular communities. It is acknowledged that oversubscription in the Local Authority area is an issue, and has indeed been an issue for a number of years. It is noted that the Local Authority previously maintained a feeder school system but that this was changed over 15 years ago to the current system, in line with many local authorities across Wales and the rest of the UK. It is submitted that the re-introduction of the feeder system in Cardiff actively discriminates against sections of the community which are more mobile and hence are less likely to be on the school roll throughout the primary phase or move into catchment later in the primary phase. This may include BME communities, children of asylum seekers and refugees, and the traveller community.

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Immigration
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The Local Authority may not be aware that children of Asylum Seekers are accommodated by the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) and as such have no choice in their accommodation location. Families are given little notice of a change of accommodation and that accommodation could be located in any catchment area in the city. There is no consideration by NASS as to the impact this would have on a child in accessing education in a Local Authority where a feeder school system has been implemented.

The proposed system prejudices vulnerable, low income families who do not maintain permanent, secure accommodation and as such yet seems to benefit wealthier parents who are able to move into a permanent home in a "desirable" catchment area whilst their children are pre-primary age. The feeder system clearly places BME communities, children of asylum seekers and refugees, and the traveller community at a significant disadvantage when seeking admission.

Given the fact that the above groups are more "mobile" then this is likely to lead to significant transport issues in both congestion on the city network, and the Local Authority having to fund the transportation of these pupils across the city to the specified Secondary School. The Local Authority encourages children to walk or cycle to school or use sustainable transport for the purposes of healthy living and mind-set but this would not be encouraged by the suggested proposals.

It is acknowledged that the oversubscription of some schools is problematic in the Local Authority area but it seems illogical to seek to introduce a feeder school system at this stage, without giving more detailed consideration to the implications of the size and locations of catchment boundaries. It would be unreasonable to implement a policy which appears to benefit a small section of the Local Authority area, and place other groups, in particular those from a less fortunate socio-economic background across the Local Authority area at significant disadvantage.

In addition, given the significant implications of the admissions policy change, should the cabinet seek to implement the proposed feeder school system it is submitted that children currently in the primary school system are not prejudiced by the change.

Finally, we confirm that we are happy to contribute any further information as might be needed by the cabinet on the impact of admissions arrangements changes on Asylum Seeker, Refugee and Immigrant families if required.

Yours faithfully



ALBANY SOLICITORS



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Date 20 November 2017

My Ref SS/CYP/MJH

Councillor Graham Hinchey
Cabinet Member for Children and Families
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
CARDIFF
CF10 4UW

Dear Graham

The Committee was disappointed to receive your apologies for the meeting on 14 November, but understood that you were unable to attend this Committee meeting.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank Tony Young, Director of Social Services, Angela Bourge, Operational Manager Resources and Ceri George, Improvement Project manager, Prevention and Partnerships for your attendance to present the **Families First Annual Review 2016/17**

The Committee was extremely impressed with the work that the Annual Review report highlighted. Members were specifically impressive is the partnership working, the clear monitoring of the packages and presentation of outcomes achieved. Members noted the clear positive impact across all packages. Finally the Committee wished to thank all the staff for their hard work in ensuring that Families First is a success.

Following the question and answer session the Committee raise a number of issues for the future operation of Families First, namely:

- That the loss of funding of 11% last year had clearly impacted on engagement across all the programmes, the Committee wished to recommend that appropriate actions are undertaken to minimise the impact of reduced funding on engagement;
- Members noted that Families who need support were being directed to two help lines. The Family Information Service and the Families First Freephone service. The Committee considered this to be confusing and a duplication of resources. Members recommended that the two help line services should be merged.
- That providers will have to be informed of the future of each scheme, as soon as possible, to enable them to complete their work with Clients, organise hand overs with new providers, and inform staff of their future.

Finally the Committee discussed at some length the Education Directorate and Schools involvement in the Parenting and Youth Support service programmes. The Members

expressed some concern that funding was being linked to Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) funding (5%). The Members commented that PDG funding must only be used to improve attainment of pupils EFSM or Looked After Children. Members also commented that the level of PDG defers across Cardiff Schools which would result in different levels of Families First funding across the schools. The Committee recommended that the use of the PDG funding formula should only be used as an indication of funding levels and not part of the actual resources.

To recap, this letter requests several actions, and recommendations, as follows and requires:

- Recommended that appropriate actions are undertaken to minimise the impact of reduced funding on engagement;
- Recommended that the two help line services should be merged
- that providers will have to be informed of the future of each scheme, as soon as possible, to enable them to complete their work with Clients, organise hand overs with new providers, and inform staff of their future
- recommended that PDG funding formula should only be used as an indication off the level of resources needed to provide the Parenting and Youth Support service

I hope that these comments, advice and recommendations will be of use and support in improving outcomes for Families First. The Committee looks forward to receiving a formal response within the next month

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'L. BRIDGEMAN', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR LEE BRIDGEMAN
Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

CC: Tony Young, Director of Social Service
Jo Watkins – Cabinet Business Manger
Angela Bourge, Operational Manager Resources
Ceri George, Improvement Project manager, Prevention and Partnerships

My Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/MJH

15 November 2017

Councillor Sarah Merry
Cabinet Member - Education and Skills
County Hall
CARDIFF CF10 4UW



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Dear Sarah

On behalf of the Committee I would like to thank you for attending the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 14 November 2017 to provide an opening statement and answering questions on **School Admission Arrangements 2019/20 – draft Cabinet Report**

I would also like to thank Nick Batchelar, Director of Education and Lifelong Learning Michele Duddridge-Hussain, Operational Manager, Planning and Provision, Brett Andrewartha, and Chris Taylor, Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods, Cardiff University, School of Social Sciences (WISERD), for their attendance, reports and answers to Members questions. Members really welcomed the opportunity to discuss the research report that Education had commissioned as well as being able to comment on this report prior to Cabinet.

The Committee noted that the draft Cabinet report informed Cabinet of recent research undertaken regarding school admission criteria and proposed changes to Cardiff Council's school admission arrangements in advance of consultation on the Council's School Admissions Policy 2019/20. The draft report recommended Cabinet to:

1. authorise officers to consult on the revised admissions oversubscription criteria for admission to nursery, primary and secondary education as included in Appendix 4.
2. note that Cabinet will receive a report in Spring 2018 on the outcome of the consultation to support determination of the Admission Arrangements for 2019/20
3. authorise officers to give further consideration to how alternative admissions criteria may impact positively on diversity and/or socio-economically disadvantaged pupils
4. note that revisions to school catchment areas will follow the consultations on proposed changes to the existing pattern of school provision arising from the 21st Century School Band B programme.

The Committee discussed, at some length, the changes to the Admissions Criteria, Catchment area changes and 21st Century School Programme (Band B), and the

WISERD research report and its recommendations. The Committee agreed not to fully commend the report to Cabinet.

Recommendation 1 – The Members agreed that the Cabinet should consult on the minor changes to admissions criteria as set out in the report, namely:

Removal of:

- Directed sibling
- Premature admission
- Nearest to alternative

Potential new criteria at secondary:

- Attendance at in catchment primary school
- Children with Individual Funded Health Plans (IFHP)

The Amendment of:

- EYAP/CAP funding to become IFHP

Recommendation 2 - The Committee also agreed to commend to Cabinet, that Cabinet receives a report in spring 2018 on the outcome of the consultation to support determination of the Admission Arrangements for 2019/20.

The Committee, agreed to recommend to Cabinet that it not approve:

Recommendation 3 - to authorise officers to give further consideration to how alternative admissions criteria may impact positively on diversity and/or socio-economically disadvantaged pupils, at this point in time. The Members felt that it was too early, to undertake any further reviews of admission criteria, and the Committee also recommended that the Cabinet agree the guiding principles for the review, prior to considering any alternative admissions criteria.

The Committee also agreed to recommend to Cabinet that it not approve:

Recommendation 4 - the revisions to school catchment areas, which will follow the consultations on proposed changes to the existing pattern of school provision arising from the 21st Century School, Band B programme. The Members recommended that a future report should be presented to Cabinet, once the sizes of schools as a result of any agreed reorganisation project, has been fully developed.

Following the question and answer session the Committee raise a number of issues which they felt should be considered prior to the publication of the 2019/20 School Admission Arrangements, namely:

- That the Admissions Booklet, which is provided to Parents of children seeking admissions to schools, is reviewed to ensure that the each of the admissions criteria is fully explained and clarified;
- That within the booklet it is made clear that the admissions criteria have been consulted on with statutory stakeholders and that this does not include parents.

The Committee also wished to highlight that it disagrees with a statement in the research report *“However, there is still evidence that segregation is higher where*

there are faith schools. Allen (2013) makes the very useful observation that faith-based criteria should be based on a binary criterion of religious adherence (i.e. yes or no) rather than the current form of a 'continuum' approach to religious adherence (e.g. baptised, regular attendance, attended a faith primary school) that so many faith schools tend to use". The Committee was informed that considerable work has been undertaken by the Catholic Archdiocese of Cardiff, over the last three years, to reduce the perceived segregation in their Faith Schools, and recommended that the Director of Education and Cabinet member should reference this work in future.

Finally a letter was tabled at Committee from Albany Solicitors, who represents Asylum Seeker, Refugees and members of the BME communities. The letter provides its comments and concerns on the arrangements, I have therefore attached a copy for your consideration at Cabinet.

I hope that these comments will be of use and support in the School Admission Arrangements, Criteria and Catchment Areas, and the Committee looks forward to working with the Directorate and Cabinet in the future. As such I would wish this letter to be considered by Cabinet prior to its consideration of the draft Cabinet report, and provide the Committee with a response within the next month.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. BRIDGEMAN', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR LEE BRIDGEMAN
Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

CC: Nick Batchelar, Director of Education and Lifelong learning
Jo Watkins – Cabinet Business Manager
Michele Duddridge-Hussain, Operational manager, Planning and Provision.

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