

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Admissions Committee

Meeting held 26 September 2023

PRESENT: Councillors Maleiki Haybe (Chair), Safiya Saeed, Talib Hussain, Sioned-Mair Richards and Ann Whitaker

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Garry Weatherall and Ann Woolhouse.

2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

- 2.1 RESOLVED: That the public and press be excluded from the meeting before discussion takes place on items 7 and 8 on the agenda (Items 6 and 7 of these minutes), on the grounds that, if the public and press were present during the transaction of such business, there would be a disclosure to them of exempt information described in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- 4.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25 July, 2023 were approved as a correct record.

5. ACTION TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

- 5.1 The Committee noted that, since its last meeting, no decisions had been made by the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, under powers delegated to her with regard to home to school transport or school admissions.

6. HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT APPEALS

- 6.1 In attendance were the appellant, the appellant's husband and Andy Tierney and Semaira Asif (Customer Services).

- 6.2 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked attendees to introduce themselves. He then outlined the procedure which would be followed during the meeting.
- 6.3 The Strategic Director of Children's Services, submitted a report and commented upon a case where the parent had appealed against the administrative decision made by the Strategic Director with regard to the refusal to grant a home to school travel bus pass (Case No.AS/01).
- 6.4 Andy Tierney explained the Stage 1 review and Stage 2 appeals process regarding the City Council's Home to School Transport Policy. Mr Tierney informed the Committee of the reasons why the request for a home to school travel pass had been refused at Stage 1. He also informed the Committee that the child was attending a school based upon parental choice, that was not a qualifying school.
- 6.5 The appellant and her husband explained the reasons for their preference for their child be educated in a Catholic school. They stated that they had not applied for the school travel pass on the basis of low income, but due to their wish to continue their child's education at their nearest Catholic school, which they believed to be the most appropriate school for him. They added that they had found the current policy difficult to navigate and believed that it discriminated against parental choice of those with religious beliefs.
- 6.6 At this stage in the proceedings, the appellant, the appellant's husband and the officers left the meeting to enable the Committee to consider the evidence.
- 6.7 RESOLVED: That:-
- (a) the appeal be not upheld on the grounds that there are no exceptional medical, financial, family and social circumstances demonstrated (Case No.AS/01); and
 - (b) the Committee undertake to request that the Education, Children and Families Policy Committee consider commissioning a review of the Home to School Transport Policy, with particular regard to how other local authorities process applications for Zero Fare Bus Passes for travel to faith schools.

7. SCHOOL ADMISSION REQUESTS - SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES

7.1 Request for Fresh Right of Appeal

- 7.1.1 The Strategic Director of Children's Services submitted a report and commented upon a case (Case No. M2) where a parent had expressed a wish for their child to be admitted to two secondary school of their choice. The Strategic Director stated that places at the secondary schools had been identified by the City Council, in accordance with the published admission criteria, and it had been agreed that the Strategic Director would provisionally allocate places at the schools where there were places available, up to the standard number/admission limit. The Committee was requested to consider granting a fresh right of appeal.

7.1.2 The Committee gave consideration to all the supporting evidence and information provided by the pupil's parents, including supporting letters provided by the child's GP and the child's primary school, and arising therefrom, it was:-

7.1.3 RESOLVED: That the pupil be not granted a fresh right of appeal on the grounds that the Committee considers that there are no exceptional educational, financial, medical or family circumstances demonstrated (Case No.M2).

7.2 Request for Prioritisation on Waiting List

7.2.1 The Strategic Director of Children's Services submitted reports and commented upon three cases (Cases Nos. M1, KE1 and N1) where a parent had expressed a wish for her child to be admitted to secondary schools of her choice. The Strategic Director stated that places in secondary schools had been identified by the City Council, in accordance with the published admission criteria, and it had been agreed that the Director would provisionally allocate places at those schools where there were places available, up to the standard number/admission limit. The Committee was requested to consider prioritising the pupil on waiting lists, within their respective categories, for admission if and when places become available.

7.2.2 The Committee gave consideration to all the supporting evidence and information provided by the pupil's parents including a letter provided by the child's GP, and arising therefrom, it was:-

7.2.3 RESOLVED: That :-

(a) the pupil be prioritised at the top of the waiting list in the 'catchment' category on the grounds that there are exceptional medical and family circumstances demonstrated (Case No. N1);

(b) the pupil not be prioritised on the waiting list within the 'catchment' category as there are no exceptional circumstances demonstrated (Case No. M1); and

(c) the pupil not be prioritised on the waiting list within the 'other' category as there are no exceptional circumstances demonstrated (Case No. KE1).

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

8.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Tuesday 31 October, 2023, at 2.00 p.m., in the Town Hall.