

Minute of Meeting Petitions Board

Date	Time	Venue
Monday, 01 February 2021	14:00	Teams Meeting,

Present

Councillor Jennifer Marion Adam-McGregor, Councillor Bill Brown, Councillor Stephen Burns, Councillor Michelle Campbell, Councillor Neill Graham, Councillor Lisa-Marie Hughes, Councillor Scott Kerr

Chair

Councillor Adam-McGregor, Convener, presided.

In Attendance

K Graham, Head of Corporate Governance, K McDonagh, Education Manager (Children's Services) and C MacDonald, Senior Committee Services Officer, P Shiach Committee Services Officer and K O'Neill, Assistant Committee Services Officer (all Finance & Resources).

Apology

Councillor Steel.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest intimated prior to the commencement of the meeting.

Recording of Meeting

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Convener intimated that this meeting of the Policy Board would be recorded and that the recording would be available to view on the Council's website.

1 Petition: Admission Policy, Ralston Early Learning and Childcare Class

There was submitted a petition from Mr Steven Harrigan in the following terms: -

"I am raising this issue as a concerned parent. I reside in the Ralston area, yet my son has been denied the opportunity to attend his local pre-school nursery at Ralston Primary. This is mainly due to the zoning of the school by the council and in turn taking in a greater zoning area that the school can cope with, thus in turn leaving local residents and their children to go outside the area, despite paying council tax for Ralston. The zone for Ralston takes in places such as Gallowhill and Hawkhead Road, despite both areas having at least one suitable local pre-school nursery. As Ralston is a very desirable school this leads to a large number of parents in these areas making Ralston their preference when selecting options. This has led to a large number of local children, including my own missing out on their local school, when I feel strongly that local children should be given preference first.

I have previously raised the issue with the council, the school and my local Councillor Neil Graham. I was then granted a video call with a representative from each. Kathleen McDonagh from the council, Mr Graham and the Head of Ralston, Jillian McGowan. They outlined the reasons behind the decision and stated it was the Council who indeed make the rules. This is what I'm hoping to get changed, as I previously stated I feel it is neither fair nor right local children miss out on their local schools".

The Board was advised that the Education Manager had indicated that the parent had applied for a place at Ralston Nursery for his son and did not get a place due to over demand for places. The allocation process was in line with the early years admissions policy. The catchment area for early learning and childcare (ELC) was different from a primary school.

The Education Manager further advised the Board that a placement at nursery had no bearing on the school a child attended as not every primary school had an ELC class. The Scottish Government and local policy commitment was to provide parents with a range of options in terms of early years provision, for example term time/school day places and 52 weeks/extended day provision, and to ensure provision for children that were entitled to ELC. Within the Ralston area there was only one ELC provision which was Ralston Nursery. This was a term time class and would not provide the range of options for parents.

The Board was advised that this parent's application went directly to Ralston ELC. It was considered by the area admissions panel for a place commencing August 2020. The parent would have been notified of the outcome of the panel around May 2020. It was the Education Manager's understanding that following receipt of this request the parent contacted the ELC class. The parent emailed his local Councillor in early June 2020 regarding this matter and the Education Manager responded to Councillor Graham confirming the position.

The report indicated that in August 2020 Mr Harrigan requested a meeting with the Council and his local councillor to discuss his concerns. The Education Manager, along with the Head Teacher met with Mr Harrigan and Councillor Graham to discuss the matter.

The report intimated that the parent was looking for the admissions panel area for Ralston to be changed to only give priority to the Ralston families. Admissions panels and the admissions policy was monitored and reviewed on an on-going basis by Council officers, with any required changes to the policy submitted to and approved by the Policy Board. Colleagues from Children's Services meet annually following the admissions process for a new school session. When Council officers met this year, they did reflect on the panel area for the Ralston area and believed it would not be feasible to consider Ralston on its own as a defined catchment area. The policy was not amended/approved annually, but only when required, and was last approved in November 2018.

The Board then heard from the Petitioner in support of the Petition.

Councillor Adam-McGregor, seconded by Councillor Campbell moved that the Petition be referred to the Education Policy Board with the recommendation that that Board review the current admissions policy in relation to Early Learning and Childcare across Renfrewshire. This was agreed unanimously.

DECIDED: That the Petition be referred to the Education Policy Board with the recommendation that that Board review the current admissions policy in relation to Early Learning and Childcare across Renfrewshire.