

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee

The Cabinet

Date of Committee

26th May 2005

Report Title

The Avon Valley School

Summary

This report details responses received following consultation to increase the admission number of Avon Valley School and seeks to support the school's Governing Body in issuing statutory notices.

For further information please contact:

Phil Astle
Education Officer (School Organisation)
Tel: 01926 412820
philastle@warwickshire.gov.uk

Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? [please identify relevant plan/budget provision]

No

Background papers

- Cabinet report 16.9.04
- Cabinet exempt report 24.2.05
- Consultation paper March 2005

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:-

Details to be specified

Other Committees

Rugby Area Committee 16.3.05

Local Member(s)

Cllr Katherine King – Brownsover
Cllr John Wells – Brownsover

Other Elected Members

Cllr John Burton – *“noted”*
Cllr Richard Grant – *“supports the proposal”*
Cllr Jerry Roodhouse

Cabinet Member

.....

Chief Executive

.....

- Legal Jane Pollard / Richard Freeth – comments incorporated in the report
- Finance David Clarke, County Treasurer – “fine”
- Other Chief Officers
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police
- Other Bodies/Individuals Parents with children at the school, other schools in the area, other admission authorities, diocesan authorities, neighbouring LEAs

FINAL DECISION **NO**

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee
- To Council
- To Cabinet
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee
- Further Consultation

Following publication of statutory notices, if any objections are raised the matter will be report to the School Organisation Committee in September.

The Cabinet – 26th May 2005

The Avon Valley School

Report of the County Education Officer

Recommendations:

- (1) That the responses to the consultation on proposals to increase Avon Valley School's admission number be noted.
- (2) That Cabinet support the proposal.
- (3) ***Either***
That, subject to the Governing Body of Avon Valley School making a determination to increase the size of the school to 1,100 pupils, the LEA support the Governing Body in publishing the necessary statutory notices.
or
That, should the Governing Body of Avon Valley School not make such a determination to increase the size of the school to 1,100 pupils, further talks between the Governing Body and the LEA be authorised.

1. Background

- 1.1 In June 2004 most of Avon Valley School was destroyed by fire. At their meeting on the 16th September 2004 the Cabinet resolved to consult stakeholders on proposals to rebuild the school as a larger, 1,100 pupil capacity (220 pupils per year) school to meet the forecast demand for secondary school places in Rugby.
- 1.2 It is estimated that before the fire the capacity of the school was approximately 968, giving an Indicated Admission Number of 193, however, that is difficult to confirm. There was also a six-classroom block being built, although this was planned to replace some leased, temporary classrooms. The published Planned Admission Number (PAN) of 166 was a notional one pending a full re-measurement upon completion of the new classroom block and possible removal of temporary classrooms. Avon Valley School is a Foundation school and therefore the Admissions Authority for the school. In recent times the Governing Body has in fact admitted in the region of 200 pupils per year and is expected to admit around 200 pupils in September 2005.

Table 1 : Numbers on roll at Rugby secondary schools – January 2005, Years 7 to 11

DfES No.	School	Age 11	Age 12	Age 13	Age 14	Age 15	Planned admission numbers
		Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	
5400	The Avon Valley	218	220	213	195	142	193
4238	Bilton High	225	272	269	266	277	285
4241	Ashlawn	250	275	243	245	241	256
4720	Bishop Wulstan Catholic	48	66	66	73	70	83
4802	Harris	143	142	113	111	111	157
4620	Lawrence Sheriff	113	94	90	88	92	94
5406	Rugby High	94	93	88	94	88	94
	TOTAL	1,091	1,162	1,082	1,072	1,021	1,162

- 1.3 While the consultation process was technically for Avon Valley School, as a Foundation school, to manage, the rebuilding of the school is of such strategic importance the proposal was made jointly by the County Council and Governing Body.
- 1.4 Since the fire the school has operated utilising a temporary facility on the school site. Although this temporary arrangement is working well, it is important that a permanent replacement building is developed as soon as possible.
- 1.5 A feasibility study has now been undertaken which established that the overall cost of the new school would be in the order of £17.5m. The DfES has confirmed the granting of a £5.5m contribution to the cost of providing the new larger 1,100-place school. This funding is crucial to the project.

2. The proposal

- 2.1 In assessing the likely demand for school places, forecast figures include the pupils living in all of the Rugby priority areas served by the town's secondary schools, a factor for out-county pupils and also for new housing developments. Table 2 shows a pupil forecast up to 2010:

Table 2 : Secondary pupil cohorts forecast 2005 to 2010

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Numbers in Rugby area	1,051	1,040	1,000	1,057	997	1,021
Housing estimates	73	73	73	73	73	73
Out county	60	60	60	60	60	60
Total cohort	1,184	1,173	1,133	1,190	1,130	1,154

- 2.2 It is forecast that the total demand for Year 7 places in Rugby may fluctuate between 1,130 and 1,190 pupils per year over the next six years. This forecast includes an allowance for future housing development up to 2010.

- 2.3 It should be noted that any calculation of the pupil product from housing is inevitably speculative. In addition to the normal cautions about rate and timing of construction and variations due to the economy, there is some local evidence that new homes tend to generate primary pupils for local schools in the short term and it can be some time before these increased numbers work through to the secondary sector. A good proportion of the proposed housing development is expected to take place at Coton and the former Willans Works, which fall within the Avon Valley priority area.
- 2.4 The number of secondary school places available each year in Rugby total 1,162. It should be noted, however, that although the admission policies of Bishop Wulstan Catholic School and Harris School allow for the consideration for admission of children without church links, where parents do not express a preference for a denominational school the LEA cannot offer places at these schools as a 'suitable alternative'. This means that the actual places available may be effectively lower than the aggregated PANs would indicate and probably closer to 1,122 places per year.
- 2.5 This analysis indicates that in order to cope with forecast secondary school cohorts up to at least 2010 further secondary school capacity is needed in Rugby.

Table 3 : Compares forecast pupil numbers up to 2010 with secondary school capacity per year

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Total cohort	1,184	1,173	1,133	1,190	1,130	1,154
Estimated effective capacity	1,122	1,122	1,122	1,122	1,122	1,122
Potential shortfall	62	51	11	68	8	32

- 2.6 In considering the options for increasing secondary capacity in Rugby several options have been considered and it is concluded that an increase in Avon Valley School's PAN to 220 places should enable the school to meet the rising demand for school places in Rugby.
- 2.7 An extended consultation with stakeholders, including parents of children at Avon Valley, other schools in the area, other admission authorities, diocesan authorities and neighbouring local education authorities, took place between 10th March and 3rd May. The proposal was considered by Rugby Area Committee at its meeting on 16th March.
- 2.8 All of the responses to the joint consultation have also been forwarded to the Governing Body of Avon Valley School for consideration. As a Foundation school it is intended that the Governing Body will make a determination on this matter on 23rd May and this will be reported verbally to Cabinet. In this instance it would also be a matter for the Governors to issue the necessary statutory notices if the determination is made.

3. Feedback from the consultation

3.1 Copies of the consultation documents and all written responses have been placed for viewing in the Members' group rooms.

3.2 A summary of the responses and comments on the points raised is set out below.

3.2.1 Meeting of Rugby Area Committee on 16th March

The meeting resolved that "the Cabinet be informed that Rugby Area Committee are fully supportive of the proposals to increase the Indicated Admission Number of Avon Valley School".

3.2.2 Chair of Governors and Headteacher of Harris School – letter dated 18th March

Issue

The planned admission number shown for Lawrence Sheriff should be 113 and not 94 as stated. This underestimates the capacity of existing secondary schools in Rugby.

Comment

Although Lawrence Sheriff Grammar School did admit 113 pupils into the September 2004 Year 7, following successful appeals, the Planned Admission Number of 94 stated in Table 1 of the document is correct. Only 94 places were offered originally. A significant number of places continue to be offered to out-of-area pupils.

Issue

The proposal will produce over capacity. The 2005 cohort has been accommodated easily within existing capacities and the demographic trends indicate that pupil numbers will fall.

Comment

While demographic trends in Rugby indicate that pupil numbers are generally declining, 2005 was the first time in several years that schools in the town did not need to provide extra places in order to accommodate demand. However, the crucial factor is the scale of new housing in Rugby that it is estimated will account for an additional 73 secondary pupils per year by 2010. Forecasts clearly indicate that there will be a shortage of appropriate school places in Rugby before 2010 unless additional capacity is provided.

Issue

Previous over-subscription at Bilton High School was managed by reducing its priority area. The over-subscription of Avon Valley School should be dealt with in the same way.

Comment

The medium- to long-term issue regarding secondary school places in Rugby is one of capacity rather than the distribution of pupil places. While changes in priority areas can be effective in dealing with distribution issues, it cannot as easily address capacity issues. Frequent changes to priority areas can lead to uncertainty for parents and for schools in their planning. The impact of new housing is also important here, with some 700 new houses to be added in the Cawston estate part of the Bilton High School priority area alone.

Issue

It is not true to say that places at denominational schools cannot be offered to families with no church links.

Comment

It is accepted that denominational schools make provision in their admission criteria for the admission of families with no church links and this is perfectly correct. However, the point made in the consultation paper was about how we best ensure that the Local Education Authority meets its responsibility to provide secondary school places in Rugby in the medium to long term. With the exception of September 2005, when Harris School is full to its admission limit in Year 7, all pupils in Rugby seeking a place at a denominational school could have been offered a place but the LEA is unable to offer a denominational school as a 'suitable alternative' to those pupils not seeking such a place. Unless, therefore, as stated in the consultation document, the demand for denominational places increases, the best option would be to expand a non-denominational school. Consideration of additional places at Harris School at some future point is specifically not ruled out in the document.

Issue

The expansion of Avon Valley School would be counter to County Council policy, as it would effectively reduce the proportion of denominational to non-denominational places.

Comment

The Warwickshire County Council School Organisation Plan confirms its commitment to maintaining the balance of denomination places. The net effect of the proposal would be that the percentage of secondary school denomination place would change by 0.46% (from 20.65% to 20.19%) of all places in Rugby and less than a tenth of 1% across the County.

3.2.3 **The Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham – letter dated 27th April – and the Governing Body and Headteacher of Bishop Wulstan Catholic School – letter dated May 2005**

Issue

There are surplus places in some Rugby schools and to enlarge Avon Valley School would have a negative impact on these schools including Bishop Wulstan Catholic School.

Comment

There are very few surplus secondary school places in the town and those which do exist are overwhelmingly in the denominational schools. For September 2005 only Bilton High School and Bishop Wulstan School have some surplus places in Year 7. As the Cawston estate develops and matures, it is likely those places will be needed. Pupil numbers at Harris School have risen significantly in the last three years and with the impact of new housing the forecast indicates that additional capacity is required in the town if the LEA is to meet its commitments.

Issue

It is not true to say that places at denominational schools cannot be offered to families with no church links.

Comment

It is appreciated that the Governing Body of Bishop Wulstan School would consider applications from non-Catholics once the demand for admission by Catholic pupils is met. Any Catholic or non-Catholic pupils seeking a place at Bishop Wulstan School are referred to the school by the LEA as a matter of course. Unfortunately, however, relatively few have taken up this option. The fact remains that for those applicants not seeking a place at a Catholic school, the LEA cannot offer such a place as a 'suitable alternative'. It is clear that to add further places to Bishop Wulstan School or manage any predicted increase in the demand for places by relying on being able to place non-Catholic pupils at the school would give considerably less flexibility.

Issue

In making the case the LEA should quote actual Planned Admission Numbers (PANs) and not refer to 'effectively' lower PANs for some schools.

Comment

It is correct that the consultation paper should quote the actual Planned Admission Number of schools. The paper does quote all of the schools' PANs but in doing so points out that this could be a misleading basis for future pupil place planning given the access issues mentioned earlier in this report.

Issue

Bishop Wulstan School has also specifically asked if the presence of the two larger Independent schools, Rugby School and Princethorpe College, has been taken into account.

Comment

The Independent schools provide no information to the LEA in respect of pupil data. However, it is known that many pupils attending these schools come from a wider area than Rugby itself. The pupil forecasts used in this report capture pupil data for those children who are already attending primary and secondary schools in Rugby and the surrounding area, and have provided a reliable basis for forecasting overall pupil numbers in Rugby in the past.

3.2.4 The Church of England Diocesan Board of Education – letter dated 3rd May

Issue

Why is the LEA unable to confirm the capacity of Avon Valley School at the time of the fire?

Comment

At the time of the general re-assessment of school capacities in 2003, a new Mathematics block was under construction and the future of temporary classrooms leased by the school was under consideration. It is estimated that at the time of the fire the capacity of Avon Valley School was approximately 968 pupils (193 per year).

Issue

Did Avon Valley School follow the correct procedures in those years when it admitted more pupils than its published admission limit and what response did the LEA make?

Comment

Avon Valley is a Foundation school and therefore responsible for its own admissions policy. The LEA was consulted in those years when its admission limit was exceeded. It is clear that the school had more capacity than the published admission limit indicated and that the demand for non-denominational secondary school places in Rugby could not have been met without Avon Valley taking above its published number.

Issue

Why did the Department for Education and Skills place a condition on its £5.5m contribution that the new building must have 1,100 places?

Comment

The Department for Education and Skills is convinced of the case for a larger school and this has enabled the LEA to access the 'expanding popular schools' funding stream. Withdrawal of this funding would have serious implications for the re-building of Avon Valley School.

Issue

Why is it desirable for the three non-denominational secondary schools in Rugby to be of a similar size?

Comment

The consultation document does state that if the proposal were approved, Avon Valley would be similar in size (though still smaller) at 1,100 pupils to Ashlawn School's 1,200 and Bilton High School at 1,426. The observation was intended as a contextual point.

Issue

It is not true to say that places at denominational schools cannot be offered to families with no church links.

Comment

See response to the same issue raised by Harris School (paragraph 3.2.2 above).

Issue

Given the increase in demand for places at Harris School over the last two years and its over-subscription for 2005, on what basis would the LEA consider adding additional capacity at that school?

Comment

The consultation document indicates that it may be possible to increase capacity at Harris School in the future. Harris School currently has some 17% surplus places and strong admission numbers for September 2005 suggest this may come down to approximately 10% in the Autumn Term 2005 with the majority of spare places in Years 10 and 11. Harris School has no priority area so any future expansion would be dependent upon the overall demand for places in Rugby and a view about the future level of demand for the school.

3.2.5 Northamptonshire County Council – letter dated 1st April

Considers that the proposed expansion of Avon Valley School would have the least impact on Northamptonshire schools and would be its preferred option. It would be concerned if admission numbers in schools in the south of Rugby or the grammar schools were increased.

3.2.6 Oxfordshire County Council – letter dated 14th April

No comment

3.2.7 Newton and Biggin Parish Council – letter dated 24th March

The Parish Council supports the proposed increase in the admission number of Avon Valley School.

3.2.8 Headteacher of Dunchurch Boughton C of E Junior School – e-mail dated 18th March

The headteacher expresses concern that smaller secondary schools in Rugby, such as Bishop Wulston Catholic School may be adversely affected by the proposal.

3.2.9 Two parents of pupils at Avon Valley School – letters dated 19th and 23rd March

One parent supports the expansion of Avon Valley School on the basis of her happiness with all aspects of the school and its location out of the centre of Rugby.

Issue

Another parent asks for vehicle and pedestrian access to the site to be addressed to enable the smooth and safe movement of pupils and staff.

Comment

This matter has been referred to the Director of Property Services to be addressed in designing site layout and the traffic management scheme.

Issue

That behaviour may deteriorate with a larger school requiring more supervision and encouragement of responsible behaviour.

Comment

There is no simple relationship between the size of a school and pupil behaviour. Discipline is of a very high standard at Avon Valley School but this will be a matter for consideration by the Governing Body.

4. Summary

- 4.1 In determining the size of the new building for Avon Valley School it is important to take into account the best estimates of secondary school pupil forecast figures. While the aim should be to ensure that there are sufficient school places to meet demand, it would be undesirable to have too many places because of the potential impact on Avon Valley School and other schools in Rugby. The recent history of secondary school place provision in Rugby has been one of a tight fit between the demand and supply of places in its non-denominational schools. While the demographic trends indicate a general decline in secondary school pupil numbers, this may be more than offset by significant new housing developments, many of which are in the priority area of Avon Valley School.
- 4.2 In providing for this forecast demand it is considered that the rebuilding of Avon Valley School to a capacity of 1,100 places would provide the greatest flexibility at this point, though the future expansion of Harris School may need to be considered if there is evidence of still further demand for denominational places.
- 4.3 The early construction of a new Avon Valley School building is important to allow the school to move from its temporary accommodation as soon as possible. The securing of a £5.5m contribution from the DfES is dependent on the construction of an 1,100 place school and this funding is also crucial to the project.

ERIC WOOD
County Education Officer

22 Northgate Street
Warwick

12th May 2005