

**AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET**

**Name of Committee**

**The Cabinet**

**Date of Committee**

**27<sup>th</sup> June 2006**

**Report Title**

**Admissions to Stratford-upon-Avon Grammar Schools**

**Summary**

This report summarises the outcome of consultation on proposed changes to the admission arrangements to the Stratford grammar schools.

**For further information please contact:**

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

No

**Background papers**

Consultation responses

**CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:-**

Details to be specified

Other Committees

.....

Local Member(s)

Cllr Mike Perry – Stratford South  
Cllr Richard Hyde – Stratford South

Other Elected Members

Cllr John Whitehouse – *“I support the recommendation”*  
C&YP O&S Spokespersons for information:  
Cllr Helen McCarthy – *“These two schools should be in the same position re admissions as other grammar schools in the county i.e. the top 75 (in these cases) should be offered places. I note the objections of High School heads, but*

*schools are there for pupils – pupils are not there for schools.”*

CLlr Richard Grant – *“supports the Adjudicator’s original decision”*

CLlr Jill Dill-Russell – no comments to make

- Cabinet Member  Cllr John Burton
- Other Cabinet Members consulted  Cllr Izzi Seccombe
- Chief Executive  .....
- Legal  Richard Freeth – comments incorporated in the report
- Finance  David Clarke, Strategic Director of Resources
- Other Strategic Directors  .....
- District Councils  .....
- Health Authority  .....
- Police  .....
- Other Bodies/Individuals  Admissions Forum 24.4.06

**FINAL DECISION** **YES**

**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  .....

**The Cabinet – 27<sup>th</sup> June 2006**

**Admissions to Stratford-upon-Avon Grammar Schools**

**Report of the Strategic Director for Children,  
Young People and Families**

**Recommendations:**

- (1) That the administrative changes to the selection process outlined in para. 3.1.1 of this report be agreed but that the changes proposed under 3.1.2, 3.1.3 and 3.1.4 not be pursued.
- (2) That admission arrangements to Stratford Girls' Grammar School remain as now with an 'automatic' qualifying score as set by the Adjudicator and a maximum of 22 further places offered as vacancies become available and that the governors of King Edward VI School are advised to in the same terms.

**1. Background**

- 1.1 Members will recall that a consultation process has been carried out to consider reviewing the arrangements for admissions to Stratford Girls' Grammar School and King Edward VI School.
- 1.2 Following the re-assessment of school capacities and a decision by the Adjudicator in 2003 the planned admission number for Stratford Girls' Grammar School and King Edward VI School was increased from 60 to 75. The Adjudicator's decision was binding for entry in 2004 and has been followed since by the Admission Authorities for the schools (Warwickshire County Council for Stratford Girls' Grammar School and the Governing Body for King Edward VI School respectively).
- 1.3 The Adjudicator determined that the admission number for both schools should be 75 and made changes to the way the places were to be allocated to seek to ensure that the standard for admission to the grammar schools did not fall below the standard in previous years. This means that the schools may not necessarily fill to 75 unless there are sufficient applicants of the requisite standard.

- 1.4 Other local headteachers raised concerns with the Adjudicator and, in discussion with officers in relation to the current proposals, expressed great concern about any increase in admissions to the grammar schools and the potential effect on the ethos of their own schools of losing even a small number of more able pupils.
- 1.5 In reaching his decision the Adjudicator sought to balance those concerns with the principle that where schools have places they should be filled to meet parental preference, as long as there were sufficient pupils of the requisite standard.
- 1.6 In his decision, the Adjudicator sought to maintain the standard for admission to the grammar schools by fixing the 'automatic score' for entry by reference to the average score over the previous two years, and by similarly limiting the number of offers which could be made in the 'second round' (after initial refusals) to fill up any available places.
- 1.7 The effect of the decision is that:
- 75 places are offered at each of the two schools.
  - The test score for automatic qualification for places is set at a level no lower than the average automatic test scores in the verbal reasoning tests which automatically qualified pupils for admission in 2002 and 2003, i.e. 260.
  - There is a limit on the number of boys and girls scoring below the automatic standard who could be offered selective places. The Adjudicator used the average number in 2002 and 2003, which is 22, as a maximum number of places offered to boys and girls scoring below the automatic standard. The Adjudicator noted that this could mean that the two grammar schools do not fill to their admission number.
- 1.8 The system in place prior to the judgement of the Adjudicator fixed the automatic score for entry in order to fill all the available places, and offered more places than there were available in the certain knowledge that not all of them would be taken up as parents also applied for places in other areas and sometimes in the independent sector. Places were then offered at both schools from a waiting list of pupils agreed by a Committee of Reference until the admission number was reached. This system had the advantage of filling places earlier in the process, thus giving more parents and pupils an earlier decision and avoiding to a greater extent the situation of pupils being offered places in a high school and then subsequently being offered a place at a grammar school.

## **2. Current position**

- 2.1 Places have been offered using the process set by the Adjudicator's decision for admissions in 2004 and 2005. The impact of this is set out below:

School	2004 Admissions	2005 Admissions
Stratford Girls' Grammar	71	70
King Edward VI	75	70

- 2.2 The governing bodies of both Stratford Girls' Grammar School and King Edward VI School have expressed their concern about the current position. They are concerned that holding vacancies impacts on their budget and their ability to plan and manage staffing and accommodation. The governors also feel that the current arrangements deprive some children of a grammar school place as the schools have vacancies which could be taken up.

### 3. Consultation

- 3.1 The governing bodies of the two grammar schools in Stratford requested that the admissions process for the schools be reviewed in light of two years' experience of following the arrangements put in place by the Schools Adjudicator. A meeting of the Council's Cabinet determined that consultation should take place with regard to proposed changes to admissions to Stratford Girls' Grammar School in September 2007. The governors of King Edward VI School carried out a similar process regarding admissions to that school. The proposed changes are as follows:

3.1.1 In order to reduce movement after offers have been made, to offer 75 places initially still following the advice of the Adjudicator in using the qualifying score set previously and limiting the number of those falling below the automatic standard to a maximum of 22 places.

3.1.2 To adjust the automatic score by one or two marks, as appropriate for the number of applicants, to maintain the standards of the grammar schools and reduce pressure on the non-selective schools while recognising the need not to minimise the adverse impact on them.

3.1.3 To increase the number of non-qualifiers from 22 as this was based on an overall admission number of 60. As the admission number is now 75, to increase this number to 27.

3.1.4 That the Authority writes to parents of 'near miss' candidates advising them of their child's performance in the 11+ test and of their right of appeal.

### 4. Responses to the consultation process

There were three responses to the consultation from three High schools in South Warwickshire. A summary of the responses is given below:

School	Comments
Kineton High	Objects to proposals. Considers that the Adjudicator's original decision should stand.
Henley High	Objects to the proposals. Feels that Adjudicator's decision was a fair attempt at a solution and should stand. Considers that sending letters to parents of 'borderline' candidates is unhelpful and may raise expectations.
Stratford High	Objects to the proposals. Feels that Adjudicator's initial decision was well judged and should stand. Considers that sending letters to parents of 'borderline' candidates is unhelpful and puts added pressure on the appeal process. Does not agree that the grammar schools should have their numbers 'safeguarded' when other schools do not have that opportunity.

## 5. Consideration by the Admissions Forum

The Admissions Forum (which consists of three elected Members and representatives of both headteachers and governors of schools) considered this matter. The Forum did not achieve consensus on the advice to be offered to the Cabinet although a number of members of the Forum took the view that there was no strong case for moving away from the approach taken by the Adjudicator. They supported, however, the changes to the process proposed in paragraph 3.1.1 above which could be implemented without reference to the Adjudicator and which makes the process he put in place easier to operate and reduces the period of uncertainty for parents and children and the schools.

## 6. The view of the governing bodies

### 6.1 King Edward VI School

As already noted the governing body of King Edward VI School are the admissions authority for the school. The governors are disappointed with the responses to the consultation exercise but will take no action prior to the matter being considered by the Cabinet.

### 6.2 Stratford Girls' Grammar School

The County Council is the admission authority for this school. Stratford Girls' Grammar School are similarly disappointed with the responses to the consultation exercise but do not wish to pursue objections with the Adjudicator.

## **7. Recommendation**

- 7.1 In the light of the comments of the Admissions Forum and the objections from three of the High schools, the Cabinet may not at this stage wish for this matter to be referred again to the Adjudicator. It could be argued that there are no material changes to the situation in relation to admissions to the Grammar schools in Stratford since his ruling and therefore he is unlikely to agree the changes proposed. The Cabinet may wish, however, to agree the change set out in para. 3.1.1 and ask the governors of King Edward VI School to agree a similar approach.
- 7.2 It is recommended that only the change to the admission process set out in para. 3.1.1 be agreed and recommended to the governors of King Edward VI School.

MARION DAVIS  
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13<sup>th</sup> June 2006