

## **Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**2<sup>nd</sup> September 2014**

### **School Admissions Super Priority Area Task and Finish Group Report**

#### **Recommendation**

That the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1) Approves the final report and recommendations of the Super Priority Areas Task and Finish Group; and
- 2) Agrees to forward the report and recommendations to Cabinet for approval on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2014.

#### **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 At the meeting of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2014, members were consulted on the proposed admissions arrangements for 2015/16. Pending the outcome of the consultation, it was proposed that a Super Priority Area (SPA) be implemented as it could provide a solution with regard to siblings' admissions.
- 1.2 A further report on the SPA proposal was considered by the Committee on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2014 who remained supportive of the proposal but had concerns regarding the timescale and communication in relation to the consultation and recognised that it would not be possible for Cabinet, given the time constraints, to introduce this on a countywide basis.
- 1.3 The Committee concluded that a Task and Finish Group be established to examine the principle and feasibility of the establishment of SPA's across the urban areas of Warwickshire with the initial focus on Warwick and Leamington and to submit recommendations to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2014.

#### **2.0 School Admissions Super Priority Area Task and Finish Group**

- 2.1 The first meeting of the Task and Finish Group was held on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2014 with a subsequent six meetings to consider a wide range of information to establish whether a SPA would address the issue of sibling displacement.

Information was provided by the following sources:

- Officers from Learning and Achievement, People Group;
- Officers from Transport and Highways, Communities Group;
- 48 responses to the admission arrangements 2015/16;
- 'Siblings at the Same School'
- Two members of the public; and
- Views of education professionals.

2.2 During the evidence gathering process, the following themes were identified and provided the basis for the Group's conclusion.

- Local children and families;
- Schools;
- The Application Process;
- Transport; and
- Local issues

### **3.0 Recommendations of the School Admissions Super Priority Area Task and Finish Group**

3.1 On the basis of its work, the Task and Finish Group has developed the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1 – That Cabinet does not pursue the previously proposed Super Priority Area for Warwick.

Recommendation 2 – That Cabinet consider consulting on the running of a two year pilot in Warwick and Leamington during the academic year 2016/17 on the basis of the following criteria:

- (1) Children with a statement of Special Educational Needs that names a school will be admitted and then children in the care of, or provided with accommodation by, a local authority and children who are looked after, but ceased to do so because they are adopted (or became subject to a residence order of special guardianship order);
- (2) Children who have a brother or sister at the school at the time of admission;
- (3) Children who have a brother or sister at the partner junior school at the time of admission;
- (4) Other children living within the priority area;
- (5) Other children living outside of the priority area.

Recommendation 3 – That Cabinet request that officers review the annual school admission booklet for schools outside of the pilot area, with a view to make it more explicit that where parents choose schools out of their priority area there is a chance that there will not be a place for siblings in future years and that parent's enter a choice of up to six schools because entering only one choice will not guarantee a place at that school.

#### **4.0 Comments from Learning and Achievement**

- 4.1 In response to the 3 recommendations agreed by the task and finish group comments were made by officers from Learning and Achievement in the People Group. These are attached at Appendix B for the committee's consideration.

#### **Appendices**

Appendix A – Report of the Super Priority Area Task and Finish Group

Appendix B – Comments of Learning and Achievement

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## **APPENDIX A**

# **SCHOOL ADMISSIONS SUPER PRIORITY AREA DRAFT REPORT**

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## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Executive Summary

Warwickshire County Council is the Admissions Authority for all community and controlled schools. Governing bodies are the admission authorities for voluntary aided, trust and academy schools. Every year the council is required to consult on its admission policy. In recent years, a pressure for places has grown and in light of this, concerns have been expressed that the policy discriminates against certain children and families. These include those families where a place is sought for a younger sibling.

The County Council undertook a consultation which commenced on 6 January 2014 for a period of 8 weeks until 1 March 2014 on school admission arrangements for 2015. Consultation included a proposal to merge the current priority areas of the six primary schools in Warwick into one Super Priority Area (SPA).

The Council's Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee consulted on the proposed primary school admission arrangements at a meeting on 22 January 2014 and at this point indicated support for the proposed SPA as it could provide a solution with regard to siblings' admissions.

A further report on the SPA proposal was considered by the Committee on 2 April 2014 who remained supportive of the proposal but had concerns regarding the timescale and communication in relation to the consultation and recognised that it would not be possible for Cabinet, given the time constraints, to introduce the SPA.

The Committee concluded that a task and finish group be established to examine the principle and feasibility of the establishment of SPA's across the urban areas of Warwickshire with the initial focus on Warwick and Leamington areas and to submit recommendations to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 2 September 2014. The Cabinet on 10 April considered the recommendations from the Committee and decided to defer proceeding with the Warwick SPA proposal pending the outcome of the Task and Finish Group.

The timescale has been tight but the Task and Finish Group has considered the implications of the introduction of SPAs, looking at evidence, including that provided in relation to the specific proposal for an SPA for Warwick. The principal conclusion from the Group is that an SPA for Warwick be not pursued (section 3.0, Part A) and that the

model deriving from the evidence is explored further (section 3.0, Part B).

## **1.2 Members and Contributors**

Members of the Task and Finish Group were Councillors Maggie O'Rourke, Wallace Redford, Clive Rickhards (Chair) and John Whitehouse. Chris Smart MBE was co-opted to the group.

Officers from Warwickshire County Council's Learning and Achievement Service met with the group to provide knowledge of the background to the review and the public consultation. They also provided guidance on the legal framework such as the school admissions criteria and information which had been considered during and following the consultation on the proposed Super Priority Area in Warwick. Officers from the Transport and Highways Service also provided evidence with regard to the impact on travel routes and mode of travel of any changes to the admissions policy.

The group was also supported by members of the Democratic Services Team.

## **1.3 Evidence**

The following evidence was considered:

### Primary

- Verbal evidence provided by two members of the public in support of adopting the Proposed Super Priority Area in Warwick with a view to give priority to siblings.
- Verbal evidence from the co-head teacher of Coten End Primary School.
- Verbal evidence from Siblings at the Same School.
- Maps and statistical data generated regarding the current situation and assess the impact of the Super Priority Area in Warwick and North Leamington.

### Secondary

- Background information regarding the school admission code, key elements of the School Adjudicators Annual Report, the original proposal and the consultation document that was considered by Cabinet.
- Warwickshire County Council Admission Arrangements 2015/16.
- Information regarding other authorities' oversubscription criteria.

- All responses (48) to the public consultation that were considered by Cabinet earlier in 2014.
- Views and opinions of officers working within the Learning and Achievement Service.
- Information from Transport and Highways on the potential impact on traffic and transport.
- Written submission with supporting evidence from the ‘Siblings at the Same School’.

#### **1.4 Dates and Timescales**

- 02 April 2014 – Task and Finish Group established by the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 10 April 2014 – Consultation responses considered by Cabinet.
- 12 May 2014 – Initial meeting of the Task and Finish Group with officers from Learning and Achievement and Supporting officers from Democratic Services to agree the scope of the review.
- 02 June 2014 – Presentation provided by Learning and Achievement on the Schools Admissions Code and the Annual Office of the Schools Adjudicators Report. Data was distributed providing a comparison of school place offers for both in/out area children with or without a sibling for reception intake in 2014. Further information was distributed after the meeting at the request of the Task and Finish Group.
- 16 June 2014 – Verbal evidence provided by a Co-Head Teacher of Coten End Primary School. The full list of responses to the consultation was distributed to the group after the meeting.
- 17 July 2014 – Verbal evidence and consideration of written evidence by ‘Siblings at the Same School’. Evidence including maps and data with regard to mode of transport of the 6 primary schools within the proposed Super Priority Area and the potential effects on the mode of transport and traffic levels. Further evidence was distributed after the meeting by Transport and Highways at the request of the Task and Finish Group.
- 23 July 2014 – Verbal evidence provided by parents that have experienced the displacement of their children.
- 30 July 2014 – Meeting of the Task and Finish Group to discuss the evidence provided and identify potential recommendations.
- 06 August 2014 – Report drafted for Task and Finish Group consideration.
- 15 August 2014 – Meeting of the Task and Finish Group to discuss and amend the first draft report.



## **2.0 Overview**

### **2.1 Background**

Warwickshire County Council is responsible for determining school admission arrangements in line with statutory guidance (Schools Admission Code 2012) for all community and controlled schools within the county. The number of applications for school places can exceed the number of available places. In this instance, oversubscription criteria are used to determine how the school places are allocated.

The Learning and Achievement Service is responsible for the administration of the Warwickshire County Council School Admissions Arrangements. They are the first point of contact for parents that are applying for school places both at intake and during ('in year') the academic year.

### **2.2 Rationale**

The Task and Finish Group was established by the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee to inform further consultation on the primary school admission arrangements by exploring the theory and practice of Super Priority Areas for urban areas.

Members of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed the consultation and produced a response in support of the proposed Super Priority Area. In addition, a report consisting of a request and a recommendation was considered at Cabinet held on 10 April 2014 detailing their concern with the timeliness of the consultation and opportunity for elected members to challenge and scrutinise decisions.

Cabinet accepted the recommendation and would await the outcome of the review to be undertaken by the Task and Finish Group.

### **2.3 Objectives**

A short-life Task and Finish Review was undertaken to gather evidence from a variety of sources to inform a report regarding the proposed Super Priority Area. The report will be considered at the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting scheduled for 2 September 2014 with a view to these being conveyed to Cabinet.

A copy of the full scope for the review is attached at Appendix A.

### 3.0 Evidence leading to conclusions and recommendations

The Task and Finish Group held seven meetings to evaluate information from a variety of sources including the oversubscription criteria for 24 local authorities in England and the 48 responses to the consultation. A detailed list of the information is contained in Appendix B.

A wide range of information was considered in order to establish whether a Super Priority Area would address the issue of sibling displacement. The focus would be to address issues of the moment however, the Task and Finish Group was mindful that circumstances may change in the future. Initial work concentrated on gathering information on the existing Rugby Super Priority Area, the admission arrangements in operation and the regulations (School Admissions Code) that the authority is required to comply with.

A range of internal and external representatives were invited to share their expertise and evidence regarding the practical implication of a Super Priority Area. This enabled the Task and Finish Group to determine the feasibility and appropriateness of the approach in Warwickshire's urban areas.

During its consideration of the evidence, the Task and Finish Group examined the impact of the Super Priority Area against five key themes:

1. Local children and Families;
2. Schools;
3. The Application Process;
4. Transport; and
5. Local Issues.

Detail of the evidence examined and conclusions reached in respect of the above four areas as detailed.

#### Local children and Families

Evidence provided by 'Siblings at the Same School' and members of the public, highlighted both the national and local problem with regard to the lack of school places and this was acknowledged throughout the review.

'Siblings at the Same School' stated that where siblings are unable to attend the same school this can have a detrimental effect for the following reasons:

- Families and children not being able to take an active part in the school community due to conflicting demands of having children attending different schools.
- Difficulties in managing day to day tasks such as transporting the children to different schools which could be some distance apart.

- Families feeling ‘punished’ by the school admissions arrangements for not choosing the school within their local area when it was acknowledged that parents did not always choose the local school for reasons such as:
  1. The local school is oversubscribed;
  2. Another school is chosen because it is closer to where they live;
  3. Another school is chosen based on Ofsted reports, school facilities, school ethos etc and;
  4. Another school is chosen to better facilitate family life such as proximity to the parents workplace/ other childcare arrangements.

A statistical analysis (see below table) was produced by Learning and Achievement Service, to give a context to the numbers of children adversely impacted by the school admission arrangements and the displacement of siblings, based on the number of applications for 2014 reception year intake.

School Name	PAN	Total applicants	Total applicants offered places with a sibling		Total not offered places with a sibling	
			In Area	Out Area	In Area	Out Area
Coten End Primary School	90	213	30	9	0	0
Emscote Infant School	75	144	7 (8 with Jnr)	5 (8 with Jnr)	0	0
Newburgh Primary School	60	100	22	0	0	0
Woodloes Primary School	60	83	12	13	0	0
Westgate Primary School	30	67	3	4	0	0
Warwick SPA Total	315	607	75	45	0	0
Warwickshire Total (LA criteria)			1144 (1259 with Jnr)	493 (577 with Jnr)	0	46
All Saints' C of E Junior School	60	58	6 (11 with Inf)	8 (0 with Inf)	0	0

It was acknowledged that whilst only a small number of families were adversely affected by the oversubscription criteria (46), the impact on those families can be significant.

The School Adjudicator’s Report reiterated the issue of displacement for first born children, or not being able to provide a place for children new to the area, if siblings in or out of area, were given priority. It also comments upon the disadvantages for families when a younger sibling retains priority at an oversubscribed school when a family moves out of the area and the situation in ‘bulge’ classes where the overall effect in some schools is that sibling priority reduces the number of places available for children living near the school. However, it concluded that “there is no easy solution to any of the sibling related objections”.

The effect on displaced children within a locality was also considered as this would be an issue if the Super Priority Area was adopted because it was possible that out of area siblings could be allocated a school place over a local child that lived geographically closer to the particular school. This would be especially problematic for children living on the outer areas of Warwick e.g.

Myton Road, who wouldn't live close enough to the centre of the Super Priority Area therefore, may have to travel greater distances to attend school.

A counter argument to the locality issue was put forward which suggested that the education provision at a school could be enhanced by having children from a different area as opposed to the local area. This diversification would enrich the culture of the school but it was identified that as a result, local children could be displaced. It was accepted that the Task and Finish Group was focussing on the urban area of Warwick, but there was an expectation that any recommendation could potentially be applied county wide and the impact of displacing local children in a rural area, would need to be considered.

The displacement of local children and the importance of retaining locality were highlighted in the responses to the consultation. Parents wanted their children to attend the 'local' school to establish a community; a support network within the area they lived e.g. taking children to school. This sense of community also promoted social development for their children who were educated amongst their friends within the locality and build strong links with the area. The sense of local community would be diluted by the implementation of a Super Priority Area with children attending any of the six schools within it.

### Schools

During verbal evidence from one of the Co-Head Teachers of Coten End Primary School, it was asserted that although they supported the principle that siblings should be educated together, the school still did not support the Super Priority Area as they believed that the proposed model would be disproportionately at the expense of children within the priority area.

In addition to this concern, the issue was raised that some schools within the area would see their admission numbers negatively impacted with parents' choice being driven by Ofsted ratings. Instead, the issue could be addressed by creating an 'urban area of Warwick' which gave priority to siblings, but retain the schools' individual priority areas as this would still serve the local community.

The issue of the application process was raised during the verbal evidence received from a primary school teacher and parent. She stated that she was aware of the application process and the criteria applied for oversubscribed schools but did not fully comprehend or appreciate the impact of the oversubscription criteria. She said it was not easy to understand and may lead to parents misunderstanding that they may not be allocated the place they want for their child.

Furthermore, when stating their choices, they do not follow the instructions and advice of the Admissions Team and the publications regarding the application process. Many only stated one choice, rather than up to the maximum six, in the belief that they will be allocated that place because it is the only school they have listed. She asserted that the process was complex and, at times, misleading for parents.

Support for a 'simple' model of admission arrangements was provided by 'Siblings at the Same School'. The information contained the opinion of the Warwickshire Teacher Representative Panel, which stated:

"We support the simplest model. This three part process is already practiced in many Local Authorities and comprises:

\*Vulnerable children (those in care, looked after, those with health issues and those with SEN);

\*Siblings;

\* Proximity to the school (Proximity also used as criteria if school is oversubscribed by children from the first two elements)".

This led the Task and Finish Group to conclude that a Super Priority Area and its relating oversubscription criteria would exacerbate the application process further for parents and children by removing the individual priority area for schools in Warwick. Parents may choose and do, to state only one place for their child in the belief they will be allocated that place when in fact, they may be allocated a place at any school within the Super Priority Area, in the case of oversubscription.

### The Application Process

During discussions with officers and independent witnesses consideration was given to the literature produced by the County Council for the use of parents and carers when applying for a primary, infant or junior school place. Each year a detailed colour booklet is produced and distributed to parents. In 2014 – for the 2015 intake - the booklet extended to 48 pages. This contains a wealth of information regarding the application process and the criteria by which admissions are regulated. In addition it contains a list of primary, infant and junior schools in Warwickshire along with an indication of the number of places available at them.

Within the introduction to the current booklet (page 4) it is stated that where a parent selects a school that is out of area for their first child they run a risk that there will be no place at that school for any subsequent children (siblings). However, this is contained in the general body of text and is not highlighted in any way.

In addition, officers and independent witnesses discussed the issues associated with parents entering only one choice for a school place. Parents

were given the opportunity to list up to six choices, in order of preference, on the application form. Some parents entered only one choice and this did not guarantee a place at that school and may result in offer of a school some distance away after other parents have had their choice based on their expressed choices in preference order.

### Transport

With displacement of children as an issue, this would also increase the financial implications for the admission authority in so far, School Transport may be required to transport children that live over 2 miles from their allocated school and qualify for assistance.

The Learning and Achievement Service have provided an estimated analysis of the likely cost to the authority, based on 2014 data but applying it to give siblings priority after the statutory requirements (Looked after Children). It is reported that 39 in area children in addition to the 46 in area children, across Warwickshire, that were not offered a place within their priority area on National Offer Day for September 2014 entry, would also be displaced.

At least a third of the additional 39 displaced in area children would qualify for free transport via School Transport. The estimated financial impact for the authority is difficult to calculate but the authority currently charges un-entitled students £660 per year to use its bus services, in order to cover the operating costs of the service. In areas where a bus service is not operated, the average mainstream taxi cost is £22 per day, per student.

In light of this, if siblings were to be given priority, the long-term impact could produce a greater number of in area children being displaced with the potential to increase demand of School Transport. If displaced children are entitled to School Transport, this may increase pressures on the School Transport budget.

Further evidence provided a strong correlation with increased traffic when children had a greater distance journeys to travel. It was reported that during the peak period Warwick has the lowest speed journeys in the county and this could be exacerbated with parents opting to use vehicular transport the further away their child's school is located from their home. This also raises health implications for children because they will not be able to walk to school. The table below provides an analysis of children walking to school and the impact the greater the distance is on this mode of transport provided by information gathered at the 2011 School Census.

<b>School</b>	<b>Walk (within 1 mile)</b>	<b>Walk (within 1-2 miles)</b>	<b>Car (within 1 mile)</b>	<b>Car (within 1-2 miles)</b>
All Saints C of E School	87%	71%	10%	14%
Coten End	77%	16%	18%	68%

Primary School				
Emscote Infant and Junior School	74%	33%	24%	50%
Newburgh Primary School	88%	10%	13%	90%
Westgate Primary School	68%	67%	22%	33%
Woodloes Primary School	77%	30%	21%	70%

### Local Issues

In consideration of financial implications for the authority, it was reported that in addition to potential increases in School Transport costs for those children displaced, due regard must be given to the Warwick District Council Local Plan. New residential development will create additional demand for education facilities and place pressure on existing facilities. Developer contributions towards educational facilities are calculated on the need for expenditure which is based on the number of pupils expected to come from a development and the number of pupils that are already or expected to be in the local school and where they come from.

The Warwickshire Observatory produces an analysis of "Who goes where"; that is the number of pupils in each group who live in the school's priority area and the number from other schools' priority areas. As discussed earlier in the report (page 8, Local children and Families), some children already attend schools that are not within their priority area for a number of reasons including the oversubscription of the school, parental choice, closer proximity to another school or another school is more compatible to assist with family life.

Developers and their agents can, and routinely do, access this information, scrutinise it and, where there are children from other priority areas, challenge any case for need, by making the case that the school is not meeting local demand and that demand coming from the development can be met by not admitting children from outside the priority area in future years, therefore not requiring financial contributions.

A potential impact of moving to sibling priority would be to increase the potential number of pupils coming from outside the priority area, which could result in a reduction of developer financial contributions (which currently stand at (per pupil) at Primary school, £11,687 and £13,079 for early years and Primary SEN).

As the Council's capital budget is already very limited, any measure which potentially reduces it further runs the risk of the Council not being able to fulfil its statutory duty to provide sufficient places. It also runs the risk that pupils from the developments (as well as existing homes) would not be able to go to

their priority area school, thus incurring additional costs to a transport budget which is already significantly overspent.

With regard to school priority areas, it was accepted the areas were based on historical information and these areas would need to be reviewed to incorporate any development included in the final Local Plans.

The Task and Finish Group highlighted the importance that the admission arrangements for the Super Priority Area would only be applicable to community controlled schools and with more schools exploring academy status, the arrangements may not be fit for purpose. Academies, voluntary aided schools and foundation schools had their own individual admission arrangements and were less likely to adopt any criteria that supported a complicated model for primary school admission arrangements.

During the process the Task and Finish Group considered other authorities Admission Arrangements and the list of priority children contained in the oversubscription criteria. Surrey County Council and Birmingham City Council give priority to siblings, after those that each authority was required to give priority, without any in/out of area distinction. The Task and Finish Group discussed this approach and believed that this would address the sibling displacement issue without implementing a complex admission system which could be the case if the Super Priority Area was implemented.

### Conclusions Derived from the Evidence presented to the Task and Finish Group

This section is divided into two parts (A&B). Part A concerns the consideration of a Super Priority Area for Warwick. Part B concerns an alternative admissions model that the authority may wish to consider.

#### Part A

It was evident that after considering the information, the Rugby Super Priority Area was established to ensure that children from the local area had the choice to apply for a place at a local school and was not linked to the issue of sibling displacement. For this reason the Task and Finish Group did not pursue this line of inquiry but turned instead to the effect of an SPA in Warwick and Leamington.

It became evident that the proposed Super Priority Area in Warwick did not guarantee that siblings would be educated together, a point that was raised by officers in Learning and Achievement Service and concluded by the Task and Finish Group when looking at the maps and receiving advice as to how it would operate.

Based on the evidence considered the Task and Finish Group has agreed that the Super Priority Area in Warwick be not pursued for the following reasons:



- This model does not address the issue of siblings not being educated together because it was designed for a different purpose (Rugby Super Priority Area model).
- The implementation could potentially exacerbate reported problems with the application process and lead to misunderstanding.
- Children living on the periphery of popular/ oversubscribed schools priority areas could be disproportionately disadvantaged resulting in them being displaced and, having to potentially travel further distances to attend a school.
- Some schools could be negatively impacted by creating a Super Priority Area that provided the choice of six schools within it. This raises the issue of sustainability and financial implications for schools that had surplus places.
- Traffic would be increased by creating a Super Priority Area with children travelling greater distances by car to attend school. This does not support or promote the Health and Wellbeing strategy for children.
- The proposed Super Priority Area did not guarantee that out of area siblings would be allocated a place at the same school.
- Possible financial implications for Warwickshire County Council.
- Loss of 'local school community'.
- Academies and Voluntary aided schools would also need to adopt the oversubscription criteria for there to be a uniformed approach and, it was not guaranteed that this would be the case.

## Part B

In light of the recommendation not to pursue the Super Priority area in Warwick, information and evidence received during the review process, the Task and Finish Group has developed an alternative model for implementation in Warwick/Leamington, for the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet, to consider:

A pilot model that gave siblings greater priority in the Primary School Admission Arrangements for the defined area of Warwick/Leamington.

- This option would support evidence that siblings' educational, emotional and social development is enriched when they attend the same school (Section 3.0).
- Support evidence that a simple model would promote equality and mitigate against misunderstandings during the application process (Section 3.0).
- The pilot model would enable the demonstration and subsequent analysis, of the impact on some on the issues raised (see section 3.0, Transport and Local issues).

The current admission arrangements give children with siblings that live out of area, fifth priority out of a list of seven priorities. The current arrangements are as follows:

- (1) Children with a Statement of Special Educational Needs that names a school will be admitted and then Children in the care of, or provided with accommodation by, a local authority and children who are looked after, but ceased to do so because they are adopted (or became subject to a residence order or special guardianship order) ;
- (2) Children living in the priority area who have a brother or sister at the school at the time of admission;
- (3) Children living in the priority area who have a brother or sister at the partner junior school at the time of admission;
- (4) Other children living in the priority area;
- (5) Children living outside the priority area who have a brother or sister at the school at the time of admission;
- (6) Children living outside of the priority area who have a brother or sister at the partner junior school at the time of admission;
- (7) Other children living outside of the priority area.

The pilot model for Warwick/Leamington would increase priority for all siblings with no in/out of area distinction, to second priority, after the statutory prescribed first priority. Thus the priorities would be:

- (1) Children with a Statement of Special Educational Needs that names a school will be admitted and then Children in the care of, or provided with accommodation by, a local authority and children who are looked after, but ceased to do so because they are adopted (or became subject to a residence order or special guardianship order);
- (2) Children who have a brother or sister at the school at the time of admission;
- (3) Children who have a brother or sister at the partner junior school at the time of admission;
- (4) Other children living within the priority area;
- (5) Other children living outside of the priority area.

The pilot model could be implemented for a period of two years to enable officers to assess its effectiveness and impact on issues with the focus of the impact on children. Cabinet could consider a countywide introduction of the model, to be achieved by an identified target date. However, if, after the two year time frame, the pilot model was to be demonstrated to disadvantage more children than it benefited, or to be causing a noticeable financial impact to the authority, it could be terminated and arrangements return to those applying elsewhere in the county.

### The Application Process

The task and finish group commended officers for the content of the booklet (and was interested to hear that some local authorities no longer produce such printed information) but was of the opinion that it would benefit from a clearer statement of the implications for parents of selecting an out of area school. That this review has been undertaken indicates the strength of feeling regarding the need to ensure the needs of the child are placed first and to this end the group concluded that every effort should be made to ensure that parents make an informed choice. This may involve placing greater emphasis in the booklet on the possible implications for siblings of choosing an out of area school. Parents should also be encouraged to enter a choice of schools, up to six, in order of preference. In exploring this further members wondered whether the use of (fictional) case studies in the document would help parents in their understanding.

## **4.0 Recommendations**

- (1) That Cabinet does not pursue the previously proposed Super Priority Area for Warwick.
- (2) That Cabinet consider consulting on the running of a two year pilot in Warwick and Leamington during the academic year 2016/17 on the basis of the following criteria:
  - (1) Children with a Statement of Special Educational Needs that names a school will be admitted and then Children in the care of, or provided with accommodation by, a local authority and children who are looked after, but ceased to do so because they are adopted (or became subject to a residence order or special guardianship order);
  - (2) Children who have a brother or sister at the school at the time of admission;
  - (3) Children who have a brother or sister at the partner junior school at the time of admission;
  - (4) Other children living within the priority area;
  - (5) Other children living outside of the priority area.
- (3) That Cabinet request that officers review the annual school admission booklet with a view to make it more explicit that where parents choose schools out of their priority area there is a chance that there will not be a place for siblings in future years and that parent's be encouraged to enter a choice of up to six schools because entering only one choice will not guarantee a place at that school.

**Scoping Document**

**Appendix A**

<b>Review Topic</b> (Name of review)	Super Priority Areas
<b>Task and Finish Group Members</b>	Cllrs John Whitehouse, Cllr Clive Rickhards, Cllr Wallace Redford, Cllr Maggie O'Rourke
<b>Co-option of District and Borough members (where relevant)</b>	Chris Smart
<b>Key Officers / Departments</b>	Nigel Minns, Craig Pratt, June Maw, Colette Naven-Jones
<b>Lead Scrutiny Officer</b>	Sally Baxter
<b>Relevant Portfolio Holder(s)</b>	Cllr Heather Timms
<b>Relevant Corporate Ambitions</b>	<p>From the One Organisational Plan:</p> <p>Our economy is vibrant, residents have access to jobs, training and skills development.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">- Our young people are supported to meet their needs and aspirations</p>
<b>Type of Review</b>	Short-life task and finish review
<b>Timescales</b>	Commence 12 <sup>th</sup> May 2014 Complete 2 <sup>nd</sup> September 2014 – Meeting of Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee
<b>Rationale</b> (Key issues and/or reason for doing the review)	Requested by the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee to inform consultation on school admission arrangements for 2015/16
<b>Aim</b>	To undertake a task and finish review to examine the principle and feasibility of the establishment of super priority areas across the urban areas of Warwickshire with an initial focus on the Warwick and Leamington Areas.

<p><b>Objectives of Review</b> (Specify exactly what the review should achieve)</p>	<p>1. To gather evidence from a range of sources. 2. To produce a report based on the group’s findings 3. To develop recommendations for consideration by the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a view to these being conveyed to Cabinet.</p>
<p><b>Scope of the Topic</b> (What is specifically to be included/excluded)</p>	<p><u>Include</u> The following is included in the scope of the review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local authority maintained primary schools (Junior and Primary)</li> </ul> <p><u>Excluded</u> The following falls outside the scope of the review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Secondary schools</li> <li>- Schools in rural areas</li> <li>- Schools not under local authority control</li> <li>- Special schools</li> </ul>
<p><b>How will the public be involved?</b> (See Public Engagement Toolkit / Flowchart)</p>	<p>Ellie Costello, Siblings at the Same School School Governors Schools and parents</p>
<p><b>What site visits will be undertaken?</b></p>	<p>None</p>
<p><b>How will our partners be involved?</b> (consultation with relevant stakeholders, District / Borough reps)</p>	<p>Partners to be invited to evidence gathering meetings. If appropriate members will visit partners.</p> <p>Partners include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Headteachers either individually or via Consortium Chairs</li> <li>- Consultation of statutory consultees.</li> </ul> <p>WCC invitees include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- School Admissions Team</li> <li>- Portfolio Holder</li> <li>- Senior management (Nigel Minns and Wendy Fabbro)</li> <li>- Transport and Highways (Margaret Smith)</li> </ul> <p>Public Invitees include:</p> <p>Siblings at the Same School Parents</p>

<p><b>How will the scrutiny achieve value for money for the Council / Council Tax payers?</b></p>	<p>By examining the principle behind the establishment of super priority areas a clear decision can be made whether this approach should be implemented.</p>
<p><b>What primary / new evidence is needed for the scrutiny?</b> (What information needs to be identified / is not already available?)</p>	<p>Meetings/interviews with witnesses</p>
<p><b>What secondary / existing information will be needed?</b> (i.e. risk register, background information, performance indicators, complaints, existing reports, legislation, central government information and reports)</p>	<p>School Admissions Code Adjudicators Report Briefing note on rationale behind Rugby SOA Statistics regarding:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sibling applicants</li> <li>- Levels of acceptance</li> <li>- Refusals (and in-area)</li> </ul> Modelling of the 50 unsuccessful siblings Pupil number forecasts Details of the appeals process Admissions criteria in other areas Policies of other admissions authorities</p>
<p><b>Indicators of Success –</b> (What factors would tell you what a good review should look like? What are the potential outcomes of the review e.g. service improvements, policy change, etc?)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Completion of report and development of recommendations that are agreed for implemented by Cabinet.</li> <li>2. Increased level of satisfaction by parents/carers and schools with admissions policy.</li> </ol>

<p><b>Other Work Being Undertaken</b> (What other work is currently being undertaken in relation to this topic, and any appropriate timescales and deadlines for that work)</p>	<p>Officers in School Admissions constantly managing process.</p>
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### Learning and Achievement

- School Admissions Code.
- School Adjudicators Report.
- Briefing note on the rationale behind the Rugby Super Priority Area.
- Statistics with regard to school admissions reception intake for 2014 for the six schools in the proposed Super Priority Area. The statistics focussed on sibling applicants, levels of acceptance and refusals (both in and out of area).
- Maps to illustrate the current priority areas for the six individual schools and how the one Super Priority Area would look if adopted.
- Additional maps were provided to include North Leamington to help the Task and Finish Group establish what area was considered North Leamington and primary schools within the area.

### Transport and Highways

- A presentation based on information gathered in 2013 from school survey's to illustrate the current mode of travel for children attending the six schools in Warwick including the impact on transport choice when children were allocated school places further distances from their homes.
- Maps highlighted the journeys for children to school from their homes within each of the areas for each school.
- Statistics to inform the review of the current situation and numbers of children travelling to school on foot and the impact of this mode when allocated places further away from their homes.
- Analyses of possible implications if the Super Priority Area was adopted in terms of children travelling further to attend school because parents have chosen a school further away than their existing priority school. This would have an impact on the mode of travel with parents opting to transport their children by vehicle as opposed to walking. It was also suggested that children living on the outer edge of the Super Priority Area may travel further distances to school due to children living within the Super Priority Area being displaced.

### Siblings at the Same School

- Verbal evidence.
- Written submission containing:
  1. Statistics for the years 2012 to 2016 in relation to admission numbers for primary schools in Warwick and Leamington North.
  2. A statement setting out the views of the group
  3. Research undertaken by the group including admission arrangements of other local authorities such as Surrey County Council and Birmingham City Council.



Service users and professionals working within an educational setting

- Verbal evidence from Mrs Dodsworth, Co-Head Teacher at Coten End Primary School.
- Verbal evidence from Holly Horton, a parent who has had experience of having her children displaced.
- Verbal evidence from Jill Manley, a primary school teacher and parent that had had experience of having her children displaced.

**Comments from Learning & Achievement on the OSC report on the work of the Task & Finish Group on a Super Priority area for Warwick**

Officers in Learning & Achievement support recommendations 1 and 3 of the OSC report: that the Cabinet does not pursue the Super Priority Area proposal for Warwick and that officers review the annual school admissions booklet as the Council reviews all its admission arrangements.

We have concerns about the proposal in recommendation 2 for the following reasons:

1. No pilot has been defined so we are unable to quantify the impact, positive or negative, of defining one;
2. No modelling has been carried out of this proposed pilot to quantify the impact on families living within or outside the area, or on schools inside and outside the area or on the council's financial resources;
3. There has been no consideration as to how the pilot area would operate in practice;
4. Adding a further layer to the current admissions arrangements will add further complexity to what parents said in evidence was a complex system;
5. There would be inconsistency in admission arrangements within the county;
6. The model could not be imposed upon schools which are their own admissions authority. The previously proposed SPA would only work in Warwick where all the schools were community schools. This position will change as Newburgh becomes an academy and Aylesford develops its primary provision;
7. Operating the proposed model as a pilot would add further confusion for parents: some may find themselves advantaged only to be disadvantaged at the end of the pilot.

We would reiterate the comments and advice given during the task and finish group:

1. It is unfortunate, but perhaps understandable, that the group did not hear evidence for parents of lone or first born children to weigh up their experiences;
2. "Out of area" parents choosing have the opportunity to make that choice, although it is acknowledged that some have compelling reasons for doing so, and are advised of the consequences for second and subsequent siblings. Families with lone or first born children or those moving into an area would not be able to exercise the choice of their local school and may have to travel some distance;

3. The One Organisation Plan requires the council to reduce its spending on home to school transport. This proposal is likely to increase transport spend;
4. Revised arrangements could not be imposed on own admission authority schools, leading to a confusing mix of arrangements with no coherence for parents who already find the system difficult to navigate;
5. The council could lose out on valuable developer contributions towards education infrastructure as the council would not be able to demonstrate that schools are filled with local children. Their argument would be to displace out of area children in future years, leaving sufficient places for pupils from development and therefore no need to provide financial contributions to additional infrastructure;
6. Significant change to school organisation is occurring across Warwickshire with planning applications for housing and imminent local plans which will require review of priority areas anyway. For instance, housing applications within and in advance of Warwick District's local plan are likely to require an additional 5 forms of entry, which will require revisions to current priority areas anyway.

Learning and Achievement

20 August 2014