

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee North Warwickshire Area Committee

Date of Committee 31st May 2006

Report Title **Change to the Indicated Admission Number of Nathaniel Newton Infant School**

Summary The Area Committee is asked to consider any comments it wishes to make to Cabinet concerning the proposal to reduce the Indicated Admission Number of Nathaniel Newton Infant School in Hartshill.

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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

- Cabinet report 12.1.06
- Consultation document, March 2006

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- Details to be specified

Other Committees Nuneaton and Bedworth Area Committee 24.5.06

Local Member(s) Cllr Richard Grant – Hartshill – *“Members should consider these issues extremely carefully. This school serves deprived communities and to ‘get it wrong’ would be a serious matter.”*

Other Elected Members Spokespersons for information:
Cllr Richard Grant – *“noted”*
Cllr John Whitehouse

- Cabinet Member Cllr John Burton
- Other Cabinet Members consulted Cllr Izzi Seccombe
Cllr Peter Fowler
- Chief Executive
- Legal Richard Freeth – *“fine”*
- Finance
- Other Strategic Directors
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police
- Other Bodies/Individuals All local schools; parents of pupils at Nathaniel Newton Infant School, Michael Drayton Junior School, Galley Common Infant School and Camp Hill Primary School; neighbouring Local Authorities; Diocesan Authorities

FINAL DECISION **NO**

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee
- To Council
- To Cabinet Cabinet 15.6.06 for final decision
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee
- Further Consultation

Nuneaton and Bedworth Area Committee – 24th May 2006

Change to the Indicated Admission Number of Nathaniel Newton Infant School

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

Recommendation:

That the Area Committee consider any comments it wishes to make to Cabinet concerning the proposal to reduce the Indicated Admission Number of Nathaniel Newton Infant School in Hartshill.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In January 2006, Cabinet agreed to consult stakeholders on a proposal to reduce the Indicated admission Number of Nathaniel Newton Infant School from 90 to 60 pupils per year with effect from September 2007 admissions.
- 1.2 Following the decision of Cabinet formal consultations took place between 1st February and 24th April. A consultation paper was sent to all local schools, the parents of pupils at Nathaniel Newton Infant School, Michael Drayton Junior School, Galley Common Infant School and Camp Hill Primary School, neighbouring Local Authorities and the Diocesan Authorities. The purpose of this report is to outline the response to the consultation and seek the views of the Area Committee for forwarding to Cabinet for a final decision. Given the location of the schools concerned, the matter was also referred to the meeting of the Nuneaton and Bedworth Area Committee on 24th May and their comments will be reported orally.
- 1.3 A copy of the consultation document is attached as **Appendix A** to this report.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Governing Body of Nathaniel Newton Infant School has asked to reduce its admission number from 90 to 60 pupils per year with effect from September 2007 admissions. The school's actual intake of pupils falls well below its published admission number and this together with Infant Class Size Regulations, requiring that no infant class may exceed 30 pupils, is presenting

severe organisational and financial problems. Table 1 below sets out the current year group and class organisation at the school:

Table 1
Number of pupils on roll as at April 2006

Rec	Year 1	Year 2	Total
56	75	61	192

Table 2
Class organisation

Rec	Y1	Y1 / Y2	Y2	Total
27	26	27	28	192
29	27		28	

Current Net Capacity	290
Proposed Net Capacity	180
Current Indicated Admission Number	90
Proposed Indicated Admission Number	60

3. The proposal

- 3.1 The current admission number for Nathaniel Newton Infant School of 90 pupils means that if more than 60 pupils apply for admission, it must organise its Reception year group into three classes. School budgets are based mainly on the number of pupils it has. If Nathaniel Newton Infant School were admitting 90 pupils it would have enough funding to provide three classes per year group. However, the school has only been receiving in the region of 56 to 75 applicants and this does not provide enough finance to appoint an additional teacher so that the third class, e.g. in the Reception Year Group, could be created. An alternative to organising an extra class is to create mixed-aged classes. A forecast of future pupil numbers is given in Table 3 below. This forecast suggests that future pupil numbers are unlikely to reach 90 per year. As a result of several years where the school has needed to create an extra class to organise in classes of not more than 30 pupils, it has a significant budget deficit and the continuation of this situation would make a long-term resolution of the problem extremely difficult.
- 3.2 An admission number of 60 pupils year would enable the school to plan future intake groups into classes of not more than 30. This greater certainty about pupil numbers would help with the long-term planning of school finances and resources.

Table 3
Forecast Reception Year pupil numbers

September 2006	September 2007	September 2008	September 2009
59	68	67	65

- 3.3 There is a new housing estate called 'The Shires' comprising 265 housing units which has recently been completed. As the development is completed and occupied, the additional pupils resulting from the estate are already included in the current and projected pupil numbers for the schools. The development is in an area which is not currently designated to a school but it is located between Nathaniel Newton Infant School and Galley Common Infant School. Given the need to reduce the admission number of Nathaniel Newton Infant School it was proposed that this estate be designated as part of the priority area of Galley Common Infant School and Michael Drayton Junior School. A map showing the location of schools and priority their priority areas is included in the consultation document as part of Appendix A to this report.
- 3.4 As the lower intake numbers pass through Nathaniel Newton Infant School, the classrooms that would no longer be needed for teaching purposes would be available for community and possible development for 'extended schools' purposes. The proposed use of existing rooms would allow a reduction in the school capacity to be considered under the Net Capacity Regulations. It is proposed that the Education Department enter into formal consultation with local schools concerning this request from the Governing Body of Nathaniel Newton Infant School.

4. Feedback from the consultation

- 4.1 Despite the wide scope of the consultation the proposal has raised few responses. A summary of the responses received is set out below and a copy of the full papers is available for Members in the respective group rooms.

4.2 Galley Common Infant School

The school has no objections to the proposal.

4.3 Nathaniel Newton Infant School

The school supports the proposal and the analysis of the significant financial and organisational difficulties it will face if its Admission Number is not reduced to 60 pupils per year.

4.4 Letters from the Chair and Headteacher of Michael Drayton Junior School

- 4.4.1 In addition to the comments made by other respondents and covered elsewhere in this summary, the school is concerned that primary priority areas in the locality are not logical and asks that they be re-drawn prior to any decision on the admission Number of Nathaniel Newton. It is also suggested that increasing the priority area of Nathaniel Newton Infant School would lead to an increase in its pupil numbers.

Comment

There is an issue about the clarity and logic of priority areas in this part of Nuneaton. As a result of the consultation and the comments received, the Area Committee may wish to consider recommending a review of the priority areas included in the report. However, experience in these matters shows that while reducing a priority area can reduce admissions, increasing the size of the priority area of Nathaniel Newton would not result in an increase in applications. Nathaniel Newton has surplus places each year under its present admission number and already attracts half of its intake from outside its priority area. Such a review need not delay a decision on the admission number of Nathaniel Newton Infant school as the priority areas should be organised to fit the lower admission number.

- 4.4.2 Secondly, it is suggested that Nathaniel Newton Infant School considers 'alternative management arrangements' to reducing its number which it believes should be a last resort.

Comment

As mentioned above, in order to comply with the infant class size legislation the school has to make difficult choices each year about creating extra classes or forming mixed age classes and, given the fact that there are too few pupils, the school is incurring significant deficits. Also the situation makes it impossible for the school to plan its class organisation ahead. No one knows the school's problems better than the school itself and Nathaniel Newton Infant School feels it has no choice other than reduce its admission number.

- 4.4.3 Michael Drayton Junior School argues that a reduction in pupil intakes to Nathaniel Newton Infant School, one of its key feeder schools, will result in a reduction in pupil numbers being admitted to Michael Drayton School over time and leading to a substantial financial loss, a reduction in the number of classes and 'potentially a loss of employment'. It is suggested that impact of the proposed change on Michael Drayton Junior School would be greater than the impact would be on Nathaniel Newton Infant School if it retained its higher admission number.

Comment

Both Nathaniel Newton and Galley Common Infant Schools are 'feeder schools' to Michael Drayton Junior School at Key Stage 2. Informal discussions revealed the concern that lower numbers at Nathaniel Newton Infant School could reduce the number of pupils admitted to Michael Drayton Junior School. If those pupils not gaining a place at Nathaniel Newton Infant School were to attend a 'through' primary school at Key Stage 1 it is possible that they would not transfer to Michael Drayton Junior School at Key Stage 2. A reduction of six or eight pupils per year would have budgetary implications for Michael Drayton Junior School. Michael Drayton Junior School fears that changes in the pattern of admissions caused by the change could increase that figure. This is difficult to substantiate and any change is likely to be mitigated by the

popularity of Michael Drayton School. A review of the priority areas may assist in preventing any knock-on effects. It is accepted that there may be a reduction in pupil numbers at the junior school and the greater flexibility junior schools have in organising in larger classes means that more than 30 pupils per class is a cash windfall. Michael Drayton School have not provided any details on the financial impact. Nathaniel Newton Infant School states that for 2007 they could have a budget shortfall of £65,000. It could be argued that the financial impact on one school has to be balanced against budgetary and organisational impact of the other.

- 4.4.4 The school suggests that a reduction from 90 to 60 places per year is a significant change and asks if this will reduce parental choice in the area? It also makes the point that is important to ensure that there remains sufficient pupil places in the area and asks how the accurate forecasts of pupil numbers can be given the confused priority areas.

Comment

While there may be a very small impact on parental choice, the flow of pupils between schools in this area of Nuneaton is and will continue to be substantial with many children attending schools outside their priority area. Around half of the pupils in Nathaniel Newton Infant School come from outside its area and this will not reduce significantly. Similar situations exist in most of the other schools in the area.

On the basis of current patterns of admissions to primary schools in the area, it is considered that there would be sufficient Infant places in the locality. Both Nathaniel Newton Infant School and Galley Common Infant School are able to meet demand from their own priority areas and have places available for pupils living outside their areas. Of the 55 children Nathaniel Newton Infant school admitted to its Reception Year Group in September 2005, 32 were from outside its priority area. It is considered that a reduction in the pupil intake at Nathaniel Newton Infant School may have a positive effect on pupil numbers at Camp Hill Primary School while if Galley Common Infant School needed to take additional pupils from closer to its school, there would be sufficient places in other local schools.

4.5 Letter from a teacher at Michael Drayton Junior School

This letter picks up many of the issues raised by the Headteacher and Governors and also the issue outlined below re the priority area for 'The Shires'. In addition, it is suggested that the classrooms that would be 'freed up' at Nathaniel Newton could be used for a local authority nursery so that parents do not have to pay.

Comment

The spare accommodation made available could indeed be used for pre-school provision but this would not be a local authority provision because of the availability of good local and established private provision.

4.6 Letter from parent of pupil at Michael Drayton Junior School

The parent states that she lives on 'The Shires', has two children at Michael Drayton Junior School and another child below school age and that if the estate were to be included in the priority area of Galley Common, she would face the prospect of taking pupils in two different directions.

Comment

The new 'Shires' housing development near Plough Hill Road does not currently belong to the priority area of any school. Although the estate is closer to Nathaniel Newton an analysis, only available in the last few days, of schools attended shows that approximately two-thirds of infant aged pupils attend Nathaniel Newton Infant School and approximately one-third Galley Common Infant School. It is suggested that a decision on the priority area designation of 'The Shires' be deferred for inclusion in a broader review of priority areas to be commenced in the Autumn Term.

3. Summary

Any comments that the Area Committee wishes to make will be reported to Cabinet when it considers the proposal.

MARION DAVIS
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17th May 2006