

- Cabinet Member Cllr Izzi Seccombe
- Other Cabinet Members consulted
- Chief Executive
- Legal Victoria Gould and Diane Nation *"comments included"*
- Finance
- Other Strategic Directors
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police
- Other Bodies/Individuals

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

Stratford-on-Avon East Joint Committee

23rd January 2009

Admissions to Rugby Grammar Schools

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

Recommendation:

That Members consider the proposed admission arrangements for the selective schools in Rugby for September 2010 and comment on their impact on other areas of the County.

1. Background

- 1.1 Members of the Joint Committee may be aware of the concerns raised by Northamptonshire regarding the admission arrangements to the selective schools in Rugby; Lawrence Sheriff, Rugby High and Ashlawn. Lawrence Sheriff School is a Voluntary Aided school and Rugby High is a Foundation school therefore the admission authorities are the respective Governing Bodies. Ashlawn is a Community school and the County Council is the admission authority.
- 1.2 The Admissions Forum of Northamptonshire County Council has for some time been concerned about the impact of the 'Greenwich Circle' method of determining these schools' priority areas, which was adopted by Warwickshire, as it gives pupils from outside the County a similar priority when applying for places at the grammar schools in Rugby. The 'circle' was introduced in 1991 in response to the 1989 Greenwich Judgement which required local authorities not to give priority to children in their own area in preference to children from another area. The 'circle' was introduced in 1991 in response to a ruling in the Court of Appeal (the Greenwich judgment). This judgement outlawed admission criteria that gave priority to children in their own local authority area in preference to children living over the boundary. In recent years the apparent impact of the Greenwich judgement has been considered further by the courts and circular priority areas are no longer seen as the only lawful option.
- 1.3 In 2007 officers from Northamptonshire attended the Warwickshire Admissions Forum to discuss the concerns raised.

2. Objection

- 2.1 In July 2008, Northamptonshire County Council on behalf of their Admission Forum submitted an objection to the admissions arrangements which were being operated for the selective schools in Rugby. This objection was made to the Schools Adjudicator.
- 2.2 The Adjudicator requested a meeting with Officers, Headteachers and Governors of the three selective schools to discuss the issues involved. This meeting took place on 23rd September 2008, and also included three representatives from Northamptonshire.
- 2.3 While the Adjudicator recognised that the arrangements operated by Warwickshire were legal he also considered the issues raised by Northamptonshire regarding the apparent impact on comprehensive schools in Daventry.

3. Decision

- 3.1 In October 2008 the Adjudicator advised that he had decided to uphold Northamptonshire's objection. The Adjudicator acknowledged that it would cause too much disruption to parents and children to make any changes for admissions in September 2009 (the children in this year were due to take the 11+ the day after the decision was made) but advised that admission arrangements from September 2010 should be reviewed in the light of his comments.

4. Next steps

- 4.1 Since the decision has been made public there have been ongoing discussions with the Headteachers and Governing Bodies of the three schools. The high schools in Rugby and selective schools in South Warwickshire have also been made aware of the Adjudicator's decision.
- 4.2 Alternative admission arrangements are being considered by the schools concerned. The two grammar schools, who are their own Admission Authorities have indicated their support for the arrangements as set out below. The Rugby Area Committee also support the proposals.
- 4.3 There are no plans to change the admission arrangements to Southern Area schools for 2010. Once revised arrangements have been drawn up for the Rugby area in 2010 further discussion will then take place with schools in South Warwickshire regarding their admissions for 2011 and beyond.

5. Proposed admission arrangements

5.1 Following discussion with the Headteachers and Governors of the schools in Rugby the arrangements set out below have been proposed and are currently the subject of statutory consultation:

- i. Children in the care of, or provided with accommodation by, a local authority (under Section 22 of the Children Act 1989) who meet the qualifying standard for the school.
- ii. Children living in the Eastern Area* of Warwickshire (defined in the booklet) who meet the qualifying standard for the school.
- iii. Children living in the Eastern Area* of Warwickshire who have been considered by the Committee of Reference and placed as 'exceptions'.
- iv. Other children who meet the qualifying standard for the school.
- v. Other children who have been considered by the Committee of Reference as 'borderline candidates' and have been placed on the waiting list. Places will be offered in accordance with ranking set by the Committee of Reference.

Within all criteria first priority is given to those achieving the highest score in the 11+ test. Where there is a need to split any category or group of pupils, places will be offered by taking the pupil's score in the Numeracy section of the paper. Where there is a further need to split any category places will then be offered in accordance with distance between the child's home and school (shortest distance = highest priority). Distance will be calculated by the straight line measurement from the applicant's home address location to the centre point ("centroid") of the preferred school. (All measurements are subject to prepositional accuracy changes.) This applies equally to those living inside and outside the County's boundary.

* The Eastern Area of Warwickshire is described as the following (being the aggregated priority areas of Bilton, Ashlawn and Avon Valley Schools):

Rugby plus the parishes of Dunchurch, Thurlaston, Leamington Hastings, Birdingbury, Grandborough, Wolfhamcote, Willoughby, Binley Woods, Brinklow, Brandon and Bretford, Ryton-on-Dunsmore, Bubbenhall, Wolston, Church Lawford, Long Lawford, Stretton-on-Dunsmore, Princethorpe, Frankton, Marton, Bourton and Draycote, Churchover, Clifton-on-Dunsmore, Combe Fields, Cosford, Easenhall, Harborough Magna, Kings Newnham, Little Lawford, Monks Kirby, Newton and Biggin, Pailton, Stretton-under-Fosse, Wibtoft, Willey, Withybrook.

6. Implication for Warwickshire Pupils living outside the Rugby Area

- 6.1 Currently some pupils resident in areas of central and north Warwickshire live within the 'Greenwich circle' and consequently have access to apply for places at the Rugby Grammar schools. These areas include Southam, Napton, Long Itchington, Weston under Wetherley and villages to the south of Nuneaton.
- 6.2 The proposed arrangements would result in pupils living outside east Warwickshire no longer being considered 'within the area' when applying for a place at the schools. Pupils could take the 11+ test but they would only be considered in priority group iv) of the arrangements set out in paragraph 5.1.
- 6.3 Members will note that in Rugby, and the south of the county, there is a system based on grammar schools and 'high schools' which are formally secondary modern schools. In Nuneaton and Bedworth, North Warwickshire and the Central area of the county the Authority has comprehensive schools which provide for students of all abilities other than those who require a special school placement.
- 6.4 A map is attached as **Appendix A** indicating the current 'circle' and the proposed new area.

7. Implication for Selective Schools in the South of the County

- 7.1 The Adjudicator made clear that his judgement relates to Rugby and not to the south of the county. However, clearly his judgement does have implications which the Authority needs to consider in consultation with the three selective schools as well as the high schools in the south. It is important to note that, as in Rugby, the Council is the Admission Authority for only one of the three grammar schools in this area. Further discussions will be held with the Governors of all three schools. Consultation on changes to admission arrangements for 2010 are required to be consulted on for an eight week period ending at the beginning of March 2009. Consultation has already begun with the proposed admission criteria for the grammar schools in the south of the county remaining unchanged for the September 2010 admissions.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 That Members consider the proposed admission arrangements for the selective schools in Rugby for September 2010 and comment on their impact on other areas of the County.

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