

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee **Stratford-on-Avon Area Committee**
Date of Committee **23rd January 2008**
Report Title **Proposed changes to the Admission
Number of Stratford-upon-Avon High
School**

Summary This paper seeks to inform Members of the response to the consultation with stakeholders on proposals to increase the admission number of Stratford High School. It also asks for any comments that the Area Committee wishes to make to Cabinet.

**For further information
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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 18.10.07
- School Organisation Framework Document 2005/10

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- Details to be specified

Other Committees

Local Member(s) Cllr Mike Perry – Stratford South
Cllr Richard Hyde – Stratford South
Cllr Jill Dill-Russell – Stratford Avenue & New
Town

- Other Elected Members Spokespersons for information:
Cllr Heather Timms
Cllr Richard Grant – “noted”
Cllr John Whitehouse – “noted”
- Cabinet Member Cllr John Burton
- Other Cabinet Members consulted Cllr Izzi Seccombe
- Chief Executive
- Legal Diane Nation – no comments to make
- Finance
- Other Strategic Directors
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police
- Other Bodies/Individuals All stakeholders

FINAL DECISION **NO**

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee
- To Council
- To Cabinet 31st January 2008
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee
- Further Consultation

Stratford-on-Avon Area Committee – 23rd January 2008

Proposed changes to the Admission Number of
Stratford-upon-Avon High School

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

Recommendations:

- (1) That the Area Committee consider:
 - (a) the proposal to increase the admission number of Stratford High School and the responses to the consultation received from stakeholders, and
 - (b) any comments it wishes to make to Cabinet.
- (2) That, at a future date, informal discussions are held with schools concerning secondary school priority areas in South Warwickshire.

1. Background

- 1.1 At its meeting on 28th October 2007, Cabinet agreed to carry out formal consultation on proposals to increase the admission number of Stratford High School from 240 to 265 pupils per year with effect from September 2009.
- 1.2 Stratford High School is an 11-18 community secondary school serving the town of Stratford-upon-Avon and a large area outside the town including a number of villages. A map showing the school priority area is attached as **Appendix A** to this report. The school currently has an admission limit of 240 pupils per year, a capacity of 1,481 pupils. In September 2007 the school had a total of 1,300 pupils on roll. The town of Stratford has grown significantly in recent years and with the increased population resulting from this new housing, combined with an increase in the school's popularity with parents, there has been a higher demand for places at the school. In 2005 Cabinet agreed to increase the admission number of Stratford High School from 203 to 240 places per year in line with the capacity of the school building. With the exception of September 2007 where there was a smaller Year 6 cohort transferring, the school is already close to capacity in year groups 8, 9 and 10 (the previous admission number of 203 still applies to Year 11).

- 1.3 With a further 590 housing units to be built in the town, it is forecast that the Year 7 numbers could rise to 257 pupils per year by 2009/10.
- 1.4 Table 1 below shows current numbers on roll at this school and the forecast pupil numbers up to the year 2011:

Table 1
Actual pupils on roll at Stratford High School – September 2007

	Number on roll							Total
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	
Pupils on roll	224	235	230	237	202	112	60	1,300

Source: School

Table 2
Spring 2007 Forecast of Year 7 places 2007/08 – 2011/12

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Pupil forecast	224	246	245	239	246
Housing units to be built (cumulative) in developments each of 25 or more	148	295	443	590	590?
Demand from new housing @ 2.5	4	8	12	16	16
Demand including housing factor @ 2.5	228	254	257	255	262

Source: WCC KIMS and Stratford District Council.

- 1.5 These forecasts suggest that from 2008/09 applications for places at Stratford High School will be higher than the admission number of 240.

2. The proposal

- 2.1 The proposed change to the admission number of Stratford High School would cater for priority area pupils and should have little impact on admissions to other local secondary schools. An admission number of 265 pupils per year would enable the school to meet demand from all pupils in the school's priority area, from the younger siblings of existing pupils and its sixth form year groups up to at least 2011. If required the accommodation would provide for a further increase in the admission number to 290 pupils subject to demand from within the priority area and further consultation.
- 2.2 The new extension block would enable the school to suite its sixth form area. The overall cost, estimated at £4.5 million, includes funding for the necessary internal re-modelling to enable the school to suite accommodation. The design would include a number of sustainable features. The Cabinet at its meeting in

June 2007 made £4.5 million available for the project within the capital programme for extending the accommodation at the school.

3. Consultation

- 3.1 Formal consultations with stakeholders ran from 19th November to 21st December 2007. A consultation paper was sent to all parents and carers of existing and prospective pupils of Stratford High School, the governing body, all staff, the School Council, the governing bodies of schools in South Warwickshire, local Diocesan Education Authorities, the local Learning and Skills Council, Parish Councils in Stratford District Council, Stratford District Council, neighbouring local authorities and the Local Member of Parliament.
- 3.2 Informal discussions have taken place with Stratford High School, The Willows Primary School which occupies the adjoining site, the private pre-school that is situated on The Willows site, and representatives of the Air Training Corps that have a temporary building on the High School site.
- 3.3 An admission number of 265 and a net capacity of approximately 1,550 would be sufficient to meet forecast demand for pupil places and still provide an important degree of flexibility in the town.
- 3.4 At a future date it would also be appropriate to discuss secondary school priority areas with schools in South Warwickshire.
- 3.5 Copies of all the responses received have been placed in the Members' Group Rooms and a summary of all the responses, with comments, is set out below:

3.5.1 Stratford-upon-Avon High School

The governors and staff of Stratford High School fully support the proposed extension to the existing building, which opened in 2002 to accommodate 1,177 pupils. The extension is necessary to cope with the additional pupils the school currently takes into Year 7 each year, and to facilitate the further planned increase in pupil numbers to a maximum of 290 over the next few years, as required by the Local Authority.

Without the new build extension, the school would be unable to offer places to all Stratford area pupils who wish and expect to attend.

Comment

Officers have been working with the school to consider how the forecast increase in the demand for places could best be managed in the short, medium and longer term. In 2005 Cabinet agreed to increase the admission number of Stratford High School from 203 to 240 places per year in line with the capacity of the school building. The school understands that any future increase in the admission number, beyond the 265 consulted upon, would be subject to evidence of pupil demand and subject to full and formal consultation with stakeholders, the Area Committee and the approval of Cabinet.

3.5.2 Stratford-upon-Avon Grammar School for Girls

The headteacher and governing body understand the perceived need to expand provision in the town but make three observations:

- The cost seems high for the provision of just 25 school places per year.
- Could the funding have been provided by the Learning and Skills Council given that the accommodation is for sixth form pupils?
- If the concern is to provide adequate accommodation, its pupils are working in cramped and unsuitable conditions

Comment

As stated in the proposals, the £4.5 million cost of the project could eventually provide for up to 290 places per year, if required, and includes the cost of necessary internal re-modeling as a consequence of the impact of any changes on the site or adjoining sites such as The Willows Primary School.

The driver for the project is to accommodate the rise in pupil numbers in Years 7 to 11 although the additional accommodation proposed would allow the school to suite its sixth form in the new block.

It is accepted that there are a number of issues concerning the suitability of accommodation in schools in the Stratford area and the county as a whole. This project is intended to address a potentially chronic sufficiency issue within Stratford which can best and most cost effectively be dealt with by increasing the capacity of Stratford High School.

3.5.3 Kineton High School

The headteacher and chair of governors raise a number of issues including:

- Why expand Stratford High School when Kineton High School has spare capacity? Pupils are currently transported from outlying villages such as Loxley, Charlecote, Hampton Lucy, Barford, Sherbourne and Snitterfield to Stratford and could as easily be transported to Kineton.
- It seems unfair to invest more in Stratford High School when Kineton High School needs to be replaced.
- Pupils do better in small to medium schools. Could increasing the size of Stratford High have a detrimental effect on learners?
- Are the pupil forecasts for the impact of new housing accurate?
- Any expansion should be delayed until other options to relieve pressure have been explored.

Comment

The difficulty here is that pupil numbers in the town have grown and are forecast to continue to do so. Forecasts are only forecasts but the school is already filling to around its current admission number. While the priority area of the school is large, including the villages named, there are no significant centres of population in the priority area, outside of the town itself. It is not considered acceptable for pupils living in Stratford town to have to be bussed to

schools several miles away because there are no places available where they live. There is also the question of the impact this would have not only on the environment if more pupils are transported distances across the county but also on the cost of free bus passes when this budget is already under severe strain. However, taking only a slightly longer view, the Regional Spatial Strategy is likely to result in yet a further 2,000 houses being planned for the town after 2011. A review of priority areas will be undertaken in the future.

The investment in Stratford High is significant at £4.5 million but funding for a replacement secondary school would exceed £20 million and require a completely separate funding source. The issues involved are also quite different, with the proposals at Stratford driven by guaranteeing the supply of places rather than improving the suitability of its buildings.

In terms of the impact on the size of a school on the performance of pupils, it is not clear which research is being quoted. There is some recent research from New York that schools organised in smaller communities of around 1,000 pupils is more suitable in cities.

3.5.4 Kineton C of E (Controlled) Primary School

The acting headteacher objects to this proposal and makes the same points as Kineton High School.

The acting headteacher adds that her own school is currently experiencing falling numbers and feels that some prospective parents are put off by the “dilapidated, uncared for learning environment” at the High School, despite all the efforts of the High School headteacher and her staff

3.5.5 Shipston High School

The headteacher and governing body of Shipston High School submitted the following comments for consideration:

- Recent research indicates clearly that large secondary comprehensive schools have a number of important disadvantages compared to smaller schools. Elsewhere the shift has been very much towards downsizing rather than enlarging schools. This proposal appears to be based on 'quick fix' pragmatism rather than on any educational principle.
- The proposal may encourage parents to choose Shipston High School's advantage in that an increasing number of parents are making it clear that they are deliberately choosing this school because of its small size and distinctive ethos.
- However the school is concerned that the proposal will have an indirect impact on its intake because of the change in rules governing the provision of bus passes. Parents who live within the expanded Stratford High catchment area who wish their children to come to Shipston High School will be disadvantaged because the County Council will only provide a bus pass to the nearest school with a vacancy. Students wishing to attend Shipston High School, and at present are able to

obtain a bus pass, would not be able to if the proposal goes ahead unchanged. Will this issue be addressed if the proposal goes ahead?

Comment

The observations in relation to small schools is dealt with elsewhere in the commentary. While the proposal may be seen as pragmatic, it reflects the present realities and future forecasts as well as the practical need to secure the County Council's legal requirement to ensure the supply of school places.

In their interests of eliminating all doubt, there is no proposal to expand the priority area of Stratford High School. Shipston High's priority area will also be unchanged and pupils in the school's priority area and living over the statutory walking distance will receive free transport to Shipston.

The only new regulation that may impact on the situation could be where a child from a low income family would be entitled to free transport to up to three schools between two and six miles away. However, given the distances involved in this area of the County, this impact is likely to be very limited indeed.

3.5.6 Studley High School

The headteacher comments that the proposals are unlikely to have an impact on Studley High School. However, she feels that other schools are being asked to pay the price for not building Stratford High School large enough in the first instance.

Comment

The arguments concerning the size of the original new building at Stratford High School are well rehearsed. The original building has, in the event, been able to take 240 pupils per year, more than originally planned for. What previous forecasts could not allow for was that the number of new houses would be higher than could be known at the time the new school was planned and what it did not allow sufficiently for was that the school, in its new home, would be more popular than previously.

3.5.7 Parish Councils

The Parish Councils of Fulbrook, Welford-on-Avon, Bidford-on-Avon, Tanworth-in-Arden, Wootton Wawen and Charlecote support the proposals.

Langley Parish Council states that it had insufficient information to make a meaningful comment and would have liked more information on the impact of the proposals on quality, standard of achievement and some details of similar cases in the region.

Clifford Chambers and Milcote Parish Council has no objection.

3.5.8 Responses from individuals

Five parents or residents responded to the consultation. Four were against the proposal and the other raised a number of issues but understood the reasoning behind the expansion of the school's capacity. Issues raised included:

- The school is already too big causing issues of group identity, discipline and general logistics such as dining.
- There is a problem with traffic at the end of a school day.
- There are perfectly good schools nearby at Kineton and Henley that need refurbishing. Pupils living south of the River Avon could be bussed to Kineton.
- One school should not receive all of the resources.
- How will special needs pupils be provided for and how will they cope with a larger building?
- It is understood demand for places has risen as a result of new housing. Can anything be done to stop further houses being built in the town?
- The catchment area for the two Grammar schools in the town should be restricted entirely to the town of Stratford-upon-Avon.
- The developer should fund the building of more schools.

Comment

Issues relating to transport to, or refurbishment of, other schools are addressed elsewhere in this paper. If the proposals are approved, Stratford High School will be one of the largest schools, though not the largest school, in the county. Nationally, there are many significantly larger schools, albeit mainly in large urban areas. It is accepted that, beyond the current project, further building on the site would also be prohibitive. The larger size school does pose different management challenges but the school is confident it can more than meet them and the development is being made with close co-operation between the County Council and the school. The school already supports the education of pupils with a diverse range of special educational needs and will continue to manage their support and the control of the school environment to meet the needs of all pupils but specially those more vulnerable pupils.

As mentioned, it is intended that a review of school priority areas across the Southern Area of the county will take place in the future. While the County Council is consulted upon the site of new housing developments and has and will continue to raise concerns on the impact of major schemes on the availability of school places, planning decisions are made by the District Council and individual developers.

It is the policy of the County Council to obtain developer contributions towards meeting the infrastructure cost, including additional school places, and all school improvements in the town over recent years have been partly funded from these contributions.

4. Summary

The demand for school places within Stratford-upon-Avon has grown as the town has expanded. Additional capacity is needed to meet forecast demand from within the school's priority in the town and the funding is available to provide the additional places for September 2009. It is acknowledged that a review of secondary school priority areas in South Warwickshire will be necessary in the future.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 That the Area Committee consider:
- (a) the proposal to increase the admission number of Stratford High School and the responses to the consultation received from stakeholders, and
 - (b) any comments it wishes to make to Cabinet.
- 5.2 That, at a future date, informal discussions are held with schools concerning secondary school priority areas in South Warwickshire.

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14th January 2008