

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee Warwick Area Committee

Date of Committee 23rd January 2007

Report Title Changes to the Indicated Admission Number of Southam College

Summary This paper seeks to inform Members of the proposals to increase the admission number of Southam College. It also asks for any comments that the Area Committee wishes to make to Cabinet.

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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

- School Organisation Framework Document 2005/10
- Cabinet reports 25.5.06 and 23.11.06
- Consultation document

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- Details to be specified

Other Committees

Local Member(s) Cllr John Appleton – Southam – *“I am supportive of the College’s ambitions, particularly following its good academic results and a favourable inspection. The College is also planning an expansion of its sporting facilities with the provision of an all-weather football surface.”*

Other Elected Members Spokespersons for information:
Cllr Richard Grant – *“agree that the view of the Area Committee be sought”*

Cllr Jill Dill-Russell – “noted”
Cllr John Whitehouse

- Cabinet Member Cllr John Burton – “agree for consideration”
- Other Cabinet Members consulted Cllr Izzi Seccombe
- Chief Executive
- Legal Richard Freeth – “fine”
- Finance
- Other Strategic Directors
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police
- Other Bodies/Individuals Parents of pupils at Southam College, the governing body and all staff at Southam College, governing bodies of primary schools in Central Warwickshire and secondary schools in Central, South and East Warwickshire, Diocesan Education Authorities, the local Learning and Skills Council, admission authorities and neighbouring local authorities

FINAL DECISION

NO

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee
- To Council
- To Cabinet For final decision
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee Stratford Area Committee – 24th January 2007
- Further Consultation

Warwick Area Committee – 23rd January 2007

**Changes to the Indicated Admission Number –
Southam College**

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

Recommendation:

That the Area Committee consider:

- (1) the proposal to increase the admission number of Southam College and the responses to the consultation received from stakeholders, and
- (2) any comments it wishes to make to Cabinet.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting on 23rd November 2006, Cabinet agreed to carry out formal consultation on proposals to increase the admission number of Southam College from 200 to 221 pupils per year with effect from September 2008.
- 1.2 Formal consultations with stakeholders were conducted from 11th December 2006 to 19th January 2007.

2. Background

- 2.1 Southam College is an 11 to 18 community secondary school serving the town of Southam and surrounding villages. When the capacity of the school was previously assessed in 2002, the Indicated Admission Number was 186 pupils per year but it was agreed to set the published admission number at 200 to take into account changes to the accommodation, which were in progress but not completed at the time of the calculation.
- 2.2 The capacity and admission number of Southam College has now been reassessed following further improvements to the school's accommodation including a new teaching block and the extensive re-modelling of a second teaching block.

- 2.3 An assessment of the school's capacity, according to the Department of Education and Skills' Net Capacity guidance, indicates that the number of pupils the school could accommodate has risen from 1,077, at the 2002 assessment, to a maximum of 1,288 for the current school. The formula indicates that the new capacity should give a new admission number of between 198 and 221 pupils per year. The school has indicated that it wishes the admission limit to be set at 221.
- 2.4 In September 2006 the school had 1,123 pupils on roll. Tables 1 and 2 give a detailed breakdown of pupil numbers at Southam College:

Table 1
Year 7 intake and total number on roll 2002/06

	Jan 2002	Jan 2003	Jan 2004	Jan 2005	Jan 2006	Sep 2006
Year 7	202	208	187	202	193	216
Total	941	991	1,046	1,080	1,102	1,123

- 2.5 The total number of pupils in the school has increased in this period largely because the Year 7 entry has been higher than the numbers of pupils progressing through Year 11 at the school:

Table 2
Number of pupils on roll – September 2006*

Year Group	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Total
NOR	216	198	202	191	202	65	49	1,123

** Statistics based upon the September 2006 PLASC return*

Table 3
Year 7 Pupil Forecast

September	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Number of pupils	207	213	213	211	214

- 2.6 Table 3 above is a forecast for numbers at Southam College up to 2011. It needs to be viewed, like any forecast, with some caution. This forecast is based on current patterns of admissions and primary-age pupil numbers inside and outside the school's priority area. However, it is likely that future pupil numbers could be higher at Southam College if its admission number is increased to 221 per year. There are currently no plans for significant new housing developments in the Southam area.

3. The proposal

- 3.1 The proposal is to increase the admission number of Southam College from 200 to 221 pupils per year with effect from September 2008 admissions. The proposal has been made following a request of the governing body of Southam College.
- 3.2 An increase in the admission number of Southam College to 221 pupils per year could maximise the use of its accommodation and enable the school to meet the likely demand for places from its priority area and also admit additional pupils from outside its priority area even if they do not have an older brother or sister at the school. It is likely that the increase in admissions to the school will result in some reduction in pupil numbers in other secondary schools.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 A consultation paper setting out the proposals was sent to all parents of pupils at Southam College, the governing body and all staff at Southam College, the governing bodies of primary schools in Central Warwickshire and secondary schools in Central, South and East Warwickshire, local Diocesan Education Authorities, the local Learning and Skills Council, admission authorities and neighbouring local authorities.
- 4.2 Due to early deadline dates for reports over the Christmas period, few written responses have been received at the time of drafting this report. The responses received at the time of drafting the report are summarised below:

4.2.1 Three parents of pupils at Southam College

- Confident school can cope with additional numbers.
- Impressed with way in which school has coped with larger Year 7 in 2006/07.
- Important to offer families just outside the priority area opportunity to choose a rural school rather than an urban school.
- Growth in numbers reflects the popularity of the schools and the hard work of staff.
- Extra pupil numbers should be organised in an additional class group to prevent an increase in class sizes.

Comment

Southam is a successful school.

It has not been the policy of the County Council to provide additional school places for pupils living outside the school's priority area, especially where those areas are provided for by a local school.

4.2.2 Chair of Governors of Southam College

The Chair states that governors are unanimously in favour of increasing the admission number to 221. This is because:

- The school has shown over time a consistent delivery of quality education, being judged by OfSTED in October 2006 as 'outstanding'.
- Governors have worked hard with staff to develop the school, including major capital improvements costing nearly £2.5m that involved the development of two new teaching blocks, obtaining three specialisms (technology, humanities and vocational), and a policy on special needs involving work with other schools and Round Oak Special School.
- Governors are so confident in the ability of the school to accommodate further numbers that some considered seeking an admission number of 240.
- The development of at least 80 new houses is planned for Southam later this year.

Comment

By all of the measures Southam is a successful school. The school accommodation has been added to significantly, prompting the review of its admission number. Outline planning permission has been given for an additional 80 housing units at the former sewage works site. While the precise nature of the units are not known at this stage, it is calculated that, on average, developments of this size would produce in the region of two pupils per year group.

4.2.3 Southam College

The Headteacher supports the proposal stating that:

- By maximising our intake within available capacity we make the most efficient and cost-effective use of our premises and of the recent investments in them.
- It allows the Local Authority to operate within the spirit of the law and of its own stated policy. The Strategic Director's message at the front of the booklet sent to parents states that: "Your nearest school may be the one you feel is best for your son or daughter. Or you may want to apply for a place at a school further from home. However you make this important decision, we will do everything possible to support you and your child in this stage of their education."
- By cutting down on unnecessary appeals it allows the LA to operate more efficiently and cost-effectively. I understand that the LA has an unusually high number of admissions appeals. In 2006 the dozen or more parents who appealed for a place at Southam were all successful.
- Cutting down on unnecessary appeals reduces the anxiety and distress caused to parents and their children who otherwise may have to wait until well into the summer term before finding out whether they will be getting the school of their choice.

- An increase in the admission number of Southam College to 221 would be compatible with the proposed admission number for North Leamington School.
- Southam College takes a lower percentage of out-of-area pupils (24%) than North Leamington (41%) and therefore a small increase in admissions from outside its priority area should not be a concern.

Comment

The strength of the proposal is that it would widen parental choice in that it would enable more pupils to access Southam College. The proposal may result in less admission appeals to Southam College but, as mentioned in the paper, this will depend on the level of pupil demand following the change in admission number. There is clearly, and always has been, an interchange of pupils between schools and the LA has significantly improved its sharing of this information with schools. It is always necessary to examine the impact of proposals which change an existing situation.

4.2.4 Champion School Board of Governors and Senior Leadership Team, Leamington Spa

The school opposes the proposal on the basis that:

- There are already surplus places in the Central Warwickshire Area.
- It will result in a reduction in pupil numbers in other secondary schools. An increase in admissions to Southam College in 2006 resulted in approximately half of the pupils from Radford Semele C of E Primary School opting to go to Southam. Champion's figures for first place choices have fallen from an already very low 82 to 71 this year, making it harder to offer a broad, balanced and inclusive curriculum. If Southam is allowed to expand, it is highly likely that the school will suffer further losses, with the long-term stability of Champion ultimately being severely compromised.
- This would actually reduce parental choice in one of the most deprived areas of Warwickshire, thereby militating directly against a key council policy, namely the commitment to reduce social inequality within the region.
- Champion School has recently been judged by OfSTED to be "outstanding" in the categories of pupil behaviour, self-evaluation, capacity to further improve and overall Leadership and Management. The effectiveness of the school was judged to be "good and rapidly improving", providing "very good value for money".
- The change threatens the long-term stability of a school that has improved so rapidly within three years.
- Instead of responding to "parental preference" in one small part of the county, the County Council should take a strategic view across the area.

Comment

There are already some 1,100 surplus secondary school places in Warwick and

Leamington and increasing the admission number of Southam is likely to add to these. The strongest case for increasing the admission number of Southam College is that of widening parental choice. The response raises the broader strategic dilemma as to whether parental choice is improved where expanding a “popular school” impairs the ability of another school to deliver the curriculum and affects its viability.

4.2.5 Stockton Parish Council

Has no objections provided college staff are happy with the proposals and academic standards are not affected.

Comment

There is no indication that the increase in pupil numbers would adversely affect academic standards. Staff at the school are also consultees and have the opportunity to signal their views.

- 4.3 Given the location of Southam College within Stratford District, this report is also being sent to Stratford Area Committee so that it too can forward any comments to Cabinet.

5. Summary

The admission number of Southam College needed to be reviewed following improvements to the school’s accommodation. The proposal, supported by the school, is to increase the admission number from 200 to 221, the highest figure indicated by its new capacity. The main argument for the proposal is in extending parental access to this successful school. The response of Campion School highlights the details of the potentially detrimental impact on itself, as another “outstanding school” and perhaps other schools as alluded to in the consultation document.

6. Recommendation

The Area Committee is asked to consider the proposal and the responses to the consultation and any comments it wishes to make to Cabinet.

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11th January 2007