



Buckinghamshire County Council

Report

Cabinet Member for Schools

Decision to be taken on or after [date]

Cab Member Report No. [number]

Date 4 April 2002

Title CONSULTATION ON :
1. RELEVANT AREAS FOR SEPTEMBER 2004
2. ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR SEPTEMBER 2003

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Electoral Divisions Affected All electoral divisions

Summary

The annual consultation on relevant areas and admission arrangements was undertaken in the period between November 2001 and February 2002. The paper summarises some of the feedback to that consultation and confirms any changes to the arrangements to be made with effect from September 2003. The attached document "Relevant Areas with Effect from September 2003 and Admission Arrangements for September 2003" sets out in detail the arrangements.

Recommendation

To determine the Relevant Areas for September 2004 and the Admission Arrangements for September 2003 by 15 April 2002 with the following major changes incorporated:

- To implement the discontinuation of 13+ entry to Dr Challoner's Grammar School for Boys with effect from September 2005 and to increase the intake at 11+ from September 2003.
- To amend the oversubscription criteria to afford a greater priority for admission to children with statements of SEN which name a particular school.
- To amend the oversubscription criteria to afford a greater priority for admission to children in public care.

In addition and as will be seen in the attached document there are minor modifications to the detail of the administrative procedures and timings of the

secondary schools allocation procedure. It should be noted that no changes whatsoever are proposed in respect of the relevant area arrangements.

A. The decision required, and why it is needed

The consultation on Relevant Areas 2004 and School Admission Arrangements 2003 was undertaken during the period November 2001– February 2002.

The major area of consultation related to a review of secondary school catchment areas. An initial phase of consultation on these matters dealing largely with principles and framework was undertaken in the second half of the Autumn Term 2001. The second phase of consultation after Christmas dealt in detail with catchment area proposals relating to each and every one of the mainstream secondary schools in Buckinghamshire.

In addition the Authority proposed to make other significant changes to admission arrangements to take effect from September 2003 as follows:

1. **Oversubscription criteria:** Specifically an amendment to the last oversubscription criterion for grammar schools which would have referred simply to distance from the school rather than using both verbal reasoning test scores and then distance.
2. **Children in Public Care:** To include specific reference to children in public care and to give them priority for admission to particular schools under certain circumstances.
3. **Children with Statements of SEN:** As required by regulation, to afford such children priority for admission to a particular school where the Statement names the school.
4. **13+ Entry at Dr Challoner's Grammar School for Boys:** To discontinue 13+ entry to Dr Challoner's Grammar School for Boys and to increase the intake at 11+.

There has been considerable feedback on these proposals, particularly those relating to grammar schools, from the schools themselves, local members and parents from certain parts of the County.

The feedback has been overwhelmingly from Grammar schools in the south of the County and about the proposals for changes in their catchment areas and, to a lesser extent about the removal of the VRT score from the last over-subscription criterion.

There has been a significantly smaller response from Upper schools and about Upper school arrangements.

The major issues which have been identified by respondents include:

- Too short a timescale with considerable difficulties for governing bodies to consider proposals
- The consultation has not directly involved parents

- Application (or misapplication?) of the principles set out in the initial phase of consultation as they relate to a particular school's catchment area
- Challenges that the stated aims of the consultation (reduction in travel times and distances, local schools, fairness etc) could not be achieved by the proposals
- Requests for additional information, specifically underlying statistics and how the match between potential demand and school capacity is improved
- Requests for information and an analysis of likely future transport costs and any easing of travel times and distances
- Requests from the Grammar Schools that any changes should be deferred for one year pending the provision of further information and the opportunity for wider discussion
- The choice of Grammar schools, particularly with respect to single sex and co-educational.
- The need for 'transitional' arrangements to safeguard the position of younger siblings of children already attending a particular secondary school
- Potential disruption to established links and arrangements between particular schools and the communities they serve.
- Splitting of primary school cohorts because of the new catchment area boundaries (eg Gt Kimble, Speen, Naphill and Walters Ash).
- Out-County arrangements and the need to reduce or even eliminate out-County areas from grammar school catchments.
- The effect of the change on the last over-subscription criterion for grammar schools could disadvantage children in areas a long way from the preferred grammar school (Denham, Gerrards Cross, villages to the far west of Wycombe).
- "The system (for grammar schools) works well and to the satisfaction both of the schools and parents. Why change something that is working so well?"
- Some repetition of the points which came through from the initial phase of consultation to do with parental choice, inequalities in parental choice between the grammar school and upper school sector, single sex and co-educational education, cross-border issues, alignment of primary and secondary catchment areas.
- Seer Green – transfer solely to the Wycombe group of Grammar schools from the combination of the Amersham/Chiltern group and the Wycombe group and the co-ordination of Grammar school and Upper school areas.
- Sir William Borlase's – specifically the exclusion of the area to the east of the A404 along with the effect of changing the last over-subscription criterion for children living in rural areas of the proposed catchment.

- Aylesbury Vale – the exclusion of Great Missenden from the Aylesbury Town Grammar Schools area in the light of falling qualification rates in Aylesbury.
- Stokenchurch and the possible removal of the area from the catchment areas of Wycombe town grammar schools.
- Towards the latter part of the consultation period, considerable correspondence was received from parents, largely from Gerrards Cross, Seer Green, Farnham Common, Fulmer, Hedgerley, Little Marlow/Bourne End/Flackwell Heath (in relation to Grammar School Catchment Areas) and from Downley (in relation to Upper School Areas).

The issues raised in relation to the Grammar Schools by parents include:

- Choice of Grammar School both including choice of more than one school and unfairness between different areas
- Convenience of travel – distances, times and travel costs
- Choice of single sex schools
- The nature of the consultation process
- The possible effect on siblings
- The issues raised in relation to the Downley area are to do with the request from the school and a number of its parents to be relocated from the catchment area of Cressex to that of Princes Risborough School or Holmer Green/Sir William Ramsay.
- There has also been some correspondence from the Headteachers of private schools in Buckinghamshire who have wished to be involved in the consultation process.

Since the close of consultation on 28 February, there has been a continuing debate about the arrangements and it has now been decided that the proposed changes relating to catchment areas and to the grammar school oversubscription criterion, should be deferred pending further consideration of these matters. It is anticipated that they will be brought forward for further consultation with a view to implementing any changes with effect from September 2004.

B. Recommended action, and the reasons for this

Accordingly, in determining the Relevant Area for 2004 and the School Admission Arrangements for 2003, it is recommended that the following major changes are incorporated:

- **To implement the discontinuation of 13+ entry to Dr Challoner's Grammar School for Boys with effect from September 2005 and to increase the intake at 11+ from September 2003.**
- **To amend the oversubscription criteria to afford a greater priority for admission to children with statements of SEN which name a particular**

school.

- To amend the oversubscription criteria to afford a greater priority for admission to children in public care.

In addition, and as will be seen in the attached document, there are minor modifications to the detail of the administrative procedures and timings of the secondary schools allocation procedure. It should be noted that no changes whatsoever are proposed in respect of the relevant area arrangements.

C. Other options available, and their pros and cons

To retain the status quo. However, the three major changes have not proved to be contentious. The Headteacher and Governing Body of Dr Challoner's Grammar School fully support the proposals which directly relates to the School's admission arrangements.

The changes relating to children with statements of SEN are required by the Law. The Children in Public Care arrangements reflect an aspect of the Local Public Service Agreement and will assist the Council to attain the relevant stretched target.

D. Resource implications

There are no immediate resource implications arising directly as a consequence of this report other than in relation to the changes relating to children in public care where there may be associated costs (which are accounted for under the local public service arrangements) in relation to providing home to school transport to a particular school or maintaining a placement at a particular school.

E. Other implications

Further work on the review of secondary school catchment areas along with associated matters (over subscription criteria) will be required.

F. Feedback from consultation and Local Member views

A number of members have expressed considerable concern and disquiet about the set of proposals originally put forward in the consultation. Those concerns have been listened to and proposals deferred pending further work.

G. Communication issues

Lessons learned from the consultation-about the mode of consultation, the range of consultees, timing etc will inform future consultations.

Background Papers

Review of Secondary School Catchments Areas : November 2002
Consultation on relevant areas 2004
School Admission Arrangements 2003 : January 2002

Copies may be obtained from the Contact Officer

Your questions and views

If you have any questions about the matters contained in this paper please get in touch with the Contact Officer whose telephone number is given at the head of the paper.

*If you have any views on this paper which you would like the Cabinet to consider, or if you wish to object to the proposed decision, please inform the Head of Cabinet Support by **[Date]**. This can be done by telephone (to 01296 382966), Fax (to 01296 383441), or e-mail to cabinet@buckscc.gov.uk*