

**CABINET – 8th APRIL 2008**

**RE-ORGANISATION OF SCHOOLS IN MELTON MOWBRAY AND THE VALE OF  
BELVOIR; CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS TO CHANGE SECONDARY  
CATCHMENT AREAS**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE**

**PART A**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To inform the Cabinet of the results of the consultation on proposals to develop a single catchment area for the three secondary schools in Melton Mowbray.

**Recommendations**

2. The Cabinet is recommended to:
  - a) Note the responses received to the consultation on proposals to establish a single catchment area for the three secondary schools in Melton Mowbray;
  - b) Give approval to merge the existing catchment areas for King Edward VII, John Ferneley High School and The Long Field High School, to establish one common catchment area for the three schools, to take effect for pupil admissions for the Autumn term 2009 and onwards;
  - c) Agree that pupil admissions to any of the three secondary schools referred to in b) above should continue to be guided by the current admissions policy (without amendment) for all Leicestershire maintained schools; and
  - d) Note the agreement of the Governing Body of The Long Field High School, as its own admission authority, to the above recommendations.

**Reasons for Recommendations**

3. The establishment of a common catchment area in Melton Mowbray to serve the three secondary schools provides the best opportunity to maximise choice, enabling access for pupils to both their nearest school and the others locally that offer specialisms.
4. Managing pupil admissions to the three secondary schools in Melton Mowbray, in accordance with the Local Authority's current admissions policy and criteria for the management of parental preferences, ensures continued equity with all other Leicestershire maintained schools.

5. Keeping the admissions policy for The Long Field High School aligned to that of the Local Authority also supports the fair and equitable treatment of all pupils.

#### **Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)**

6. The organisational changes previously agreed for the Melton schools take effect from September 2009. The admissions cycle for 2009 will commence later in the autumn, however current legislation places a duty on the Council to have completed consultation and to have agreed any subsequent changes by 15<sup>th</sup> April 2008. A decision to implement any changes is therefore required at this meeting.

#### **Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

7. The Cabinet at its meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2007 gave approval to the proposals to re-organise schools in Melton Mowbray and the Vale of Belvoir. This will include the development of three 800 place 11-19 schools (to provide for 11-16 year olds) in Melton Mowbray, supported by a separate 600 place Post -16 Centre also to be located within the town, and jointly managed by the three secondary schools and Belvoir High School.
8. The proposals for re-organisation were subsequently agreed by the County Council on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2007.
9. The Cabinet at its meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2008 considered the options for catchment areas and gave approval to the Director of Children and Young People's Service to commence consultation on proposals to establish a common catchment area for the three Melton secondary schools, specifically excluding Belvoir High School in Bottesford from this arrangement.
10. The proposals to establish a common catchment area were considered by the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2008.

#### **Resource Implications**

11. The Director of Highways, Transportation and Waste Management has been invited to comment on the potential impact of any changes to catchment areas to the provision of school transport. At this stage it is considered that the proposed common catchment area would not increase overall demand for transport, and the effects upon the school transport budget would therefore be minimal. Further details are provided within paragraph 31 of this report.
12. The Director of Corporate Resources has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

#### **Circulation Under Sensitive Issues Procedure**

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## **PART B**

### **Background**

13. In March 2007 the Cabinet (and subsequently full Council) agreed proposals for the re-organisation of secondary schools in Melton Mowbray and the Vale of Belvoir, to enable:
  - The re-modelling of the Belvoir High School to provide a 600 place 11-19 school;
  - The development of three 11-19 schools in Melton Mowbray each of 800 places (for 11- 16 year olds) on the existing sites;
  - The provision of a new jointly managed Post -16 Centre of 600 places; and
  - A change to the age range of primary schools in the Vale of Belvoir to accommodate pupils to Year 6 (age 11).
14. The proposals were predicated on the total number of secondary age pupils in the Melton Mowbray and Vale of Belvoir area remaining relatively stable for the next 10 years, and sufficient to support 20 forms of entry (a single form of entry comprises 30 pupils); 4 at Belvoir High School, and 16 spread across the three Melton secondary schools. For the Melton schools this would generate over time expected year groups of circa 480 pupils, taking account of anticipated housing gain and growth in future years, and a Year 7 admission number of 160 pupils for each school.
15. More detailed work completed by officers to examine the position for future years suggests that it would be prudent to assume a lesser figure of circa 410 pupils. The actual figure will be dependent on the success of reversing increased out of catchment trends to Rutland, De Lisle (Loughborough) and other County schools, as well as the effects of new housing expected in the area, and other population movement.
16. Representatives of each of the four secondary schools in the area (including Belvoir High School) and officers, considered a number of options for adjustments to catchment areas, as a means of maximising choice and opportunity for pupils, but also giving coherence and sustainability to the agreed organisational model for the Melton secondary schools. The group gave consideration to a number of options largely predicated on the significant redrawing of existing catchment boundaries, but concluded that such widespread change could lead to significant instability to both primary and secondary schools in the area, and considerable disruption for the pupils within them. The group concluded that the Council's objectives would be best met by the establishment of a common catchment area to serve all three Melton secondary schools. This would: enable equal access for pupils to both their local schools and others within the town offering particular specialisms; best support the development of a strong and equitable partnership; maximise the availability of the three school sites to respond to future growth; and avoid disruption to any primary catchment areas. However it was noted that the proposals could further highlight school popularity issues.

17. The Cabinet considered the options for changes to the catchment areas at its meeting of 15<sup>th</sup> January 2008, and subsequently gave approval to commence consultation on the establishment of a common catchment area.

### **The consultation process**

18. The consultation commenced on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2008. The consultation invited views on the proposals to establish a common catchment area, or alternative arrangements to be put forward by respondents who might not be in favour of the proposals.
19. The consultation has involved;
- the distribution of approx 10,000 consultation booklets to all stakeholders in the Melton and Vale of Belvoir area;
  - the publication of detailed information on the dedicated website for the Melton Mowbray and Vale of Belvoir schools re-organisation [www.leics.gov.uk/meltonvob](http://www.leics.gov.uk/meltonvob)
  - meetings with local headteachers of secondary and primary schools, and the Area Special School;
  - a number of discussion groups with pupils in primary and secondary schools;
  - attendance by officers at several formal and informal meetings with parents;
  - the consideration of the proposals by the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2008; and
  - discussions with representatives of trade unions and teachers professional associations

### **Findings of Consultation**

20. The consultation ended on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2008. By this date 80 respondents had submitted their comments online or through the post, representing a 0.8% return. Analysis of the responses received show that 18.75% of respondents are in favour of the proposals, and 81.25% against, however the relatively low level of responses should be noted.  
In addition a petition containing 89 new signatures (but approx 115 overall – certain individuals had already responded) was received from parents representing Asfordby Captains Close Primary, which taken into account increases the number of respondents to 169 overall.  
Approximately 150 persons attended the various meetings with parents and pupils.
21. Appendix A provides a summary of the responses received indicating the schools represented by respondents. This indicates that there has been a very limited response from secondary schools, with most responses representing the primary sector, and one school in particular.

### **Issues arising**

22. The consultation process has been generally well received. However a number of issues/concerns have been put forward by those responding (and not supportive of the proposals). Appendix B provides an analysis of the principle comments put forward by respondents, and serves to outline the issues of concern.

23. The issues/concerns raised during the consultation include;

- Restrictions to choice

Under the current admissions policy, pupils attending a feeder primary school for a particular secondary school will have priority of access (over pupils attending non feeder primary schools) in the event of that secondary school being over-subscribed.

A number of respondents considered that maintaining the established primary to secondary feeder school links in Melton, would, in the event of a school being oversubscribed, disadvantage pupils in non-feeder schools. The consideration of feeder schools, which are a means of developing progression routes for pupils, forms one of the eight criteria used to determine parental preferences under the current admissions policy. Removal of the feeder links could potentially open up further choice, but create a local policy amendment out of step with other parts of Leicestershire. However in a situation where a school becomes very popular and potentially oversubscribed, this change would still not guarantee a place, and would place greater emphasis on deciding parental preferences on the lower order admissions criteria, for instance the distance of a pupil from the desired school. In Melton this could in practice disadvantage those living in outlying villages. This latter point was recognised by a number of respondents.

- Travel and traffic issues.

Several respondents welcomed the improved choice and opportunity but had concerns about issues of pupil movement in Melton, and the possible effects of increased traffic and its consequences for the local environment.

- Catholic schools

As faith schools, Catholic primary schools have their own feeder links to Catholic secondary schools agreed with their Diocese. In terms of Melton, St Francis Primary School, located in the town, is linked to De Lisle Secondary School in Loughborough, hence has no local secondary feeder links. A small number of respondents expressed the view that in a situation where a parent chose not to express a preference for De Lisle, or could not gain a place, the absence of a feeder school locally could mean they might be disadvantaged if that school was oversubscribed.

- Length of consultation

A view has been expressed, particularly within the petition received from Asfordby Captains Close that the consultation period should have been longer, and more information made available, particularly concerning the application of the admissions criteria used to manage parental preferences, and its impact to choice of school. This area of concern linked very closely with the feeder school issue, and stems from information circulated locally late in the consultation.

- School popularity

It should be noted that a number of respondents expressed concerns about the potential affects of a particular school increasing popularity, to the detriment of others within the town; and how the authority might address the situation to ensure school sustainability and balanced pupil numbers.

This issue seems to be the underlying catalyst for the majority of responses to the consultation, much of which focus inordinately on the current admissions policy and criteria used for managing parental preferences, rather than other aspects of the common catchment area proposal.

### **Discussions with Pupils/Students**

24. A view has emerged from the three consultation workshops held with primary and secondary pupils. Generally, pupils are very supportive of the proposals. They agree that the common catchment area should be limited to the three Melton secondary schools (and Belvoir High School should maintain its own discrete catchment area for the Vale), and welcome the opportunity for increased choice, but are concerned that schools offering a particular specialism should not seek to select pupils by ability/aptitude as this would give rise to inequities. Pupils also recognise that the consideration of feeder schools to manage parental preferences could be problematic and potentially unfair. Pupils demonstrated a good understanding of the environmental considerations but expressed little concern about their own necessity for increased travel to access specialist subjects, should the situation arise.

### **Comments from Governing Bodies**

25. Approval to the proposals has been received on behalf of the Governing Bodies of The Long Field High School and Belvoir High School.
26. The Governing Bodies of King Edward VII, St Francis Catholic Primary, and Old Dalby Primary do not support the proposals.
27. The Governors of John Ferneley High School are concerned about the proposals, based on their perception that village primary schools would be disadvantaged by distance, but otherwise support the aims of the re-organisation.

### **Comments of the Children and Young People's Service Scrutiny Committee**

28. The minutes of the Children and Young People's Service Scrutiny Committee of 25<sup>th</sup> February 2008 are attached to this report as Appendix C (minutes 60 and 65 refer).

### **Alternative proposals**

29. Very few individuals have commented on alternatives to the establishment of a common catchment area. Views range from suggestions that the catchment areas should stay as they are now, or be completely re-drawn to align primary schools and their feeder links, or that the proposals should encompass Belvoir High. It has also been suggested admissions to the Melton schools should be

managed by lottery, to either apply to all admissions, or resolve those after application of the main admissions criteria within the current policy.

### **September 2008 admissions**

30. The proposed 2008 Year 7 pupil admissions to the three Melton secondary schools are currently:

John Ferneley	194 (+ 15 not responded)	Admission number 220
Long Field	151 (+ 12 not responded)	Admission number 180
KEVII	40 (no further awaited)	Admission number 150

### **Impact to school transport**

31. There are currently 16 contract vehicles providing transport for 727 pupils attending the three Melton secondary schools. All 16 vehicles currently serve King Edward VII; 6 vehicles also serve John Ferneley High School and 5 vehicles serve Long Field High School. The proposed single catchment area should not increase the overall demand for transport. However, under the proposed arrangement, pupils from any community, could attend and be entitled to transport to all three secondary schools. In order to maintain efficient transport provision and ensure that costs do not increase, and journey times to any school do not become excessive, it may be necessary in a small number of cases, for some contract vehicles to serve all three schools. If this could not be mitigated for by the staggering of school start and finish times(as is unlikely to be the case as a common timetable is proposed), then the period at the start and end of the school day when schools receive/supervise pupils might need to be extended beyond the normal 10 minutes.

### **Equal Opportunities Implications**

32. The establishment of a common catchment area will ensure that all pupils entitled to attend Melton schools are treated as fairly and equitably as possible, and maximises their choices.

### **Conclusion**

33. The programme of re-organisation for schools in Melton Mowbray represents a long term commitment by the County Council to transform its schools and to raise standards for the pupils within them. Although there have been relatively few responses in comparison to the other consultations for the re-organisation, the views of those that have chosen to respond should be considered carefully.
34. The consultation has shown that there is not widespread concern or confusion about the proposals, but has highlighted the issues of school popularity in Melton, and this has clearly influenced the majority of responses. The consultation has further shown that it is not possible to identify a solution to satisfy all parents, and in an environment of oversubscribed schools some parental requests may have to be refused. This demonstrates the importance of maintaining the existing admissions criteria to manage applications for school places – adjustments to suit certain groups of individuals could only exacerbate the situation. On balance the proposal to establish a common catchment area offers the best way forward for the Melton secondary schools

as a means of managing the transition, achieving balanced pupil intakes and supporting the longer term development of the schools partnership.

### **Appendices**

Appendix A – Summary of responses received

Appendix B – Analysis of reasons given by respondents.

Appendix C – Minutes of the Children and Young People's Service Scrutiny Committee 25<sup>th</sup> February 2008

### **Background Papers**

Reports to the Cabinet - 5<sup>th</sup> March 2007 and 15<sup>th</sup> January 2008

Report to the Children and Young People's Service Scrutiny Committee – 25<sup>th</sup> February 2008

**PROPOSALS FOR SINGLE CATCHMENT AREA FOR MELTON  
SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

**Summary of Responses**

<u>SCHOOL</u>	<u>RESPONSES RECEIVED</u>	
	No.	%
King Edward VII	6	3.5
Long Field High	3	1.8
John Ferneley	10	5.9
Belvoir High	2	1.2
De Lisle RC	1	0.6
St Mary's CE Primary	3	1.8
Ab Kettleby Primary	2	1.2
Brownlow Primary	7	4.1
Sherard Primary	2	1.2
Asfordby Captain's Close Primary	24 replies + 89 (new) signatures in petition	66.7
The Grove Primary	2	1.2
Asfordby Hill Primary	3	1.8
St Francis RC Primary	4	2.4
Somerby Primary	1	0.6
Old Dalby CE Primary	2	1.2
Scalford CE Primary	1	0.6
Bottesford CE Primary	2	1.2
Not Specified	4	2.4
Melton Primary School Heads Group	1	0.6
	169	100

**PROPOSALS FOR SINGLE CATCHMENT AREA FOR MELTON SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

**Analysis of Reasons**

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
Better choice, opportunity and continuity for pupils	7	
Fully supports re-organisation	1	
School popularity and concerns regarding admissions		9
Some concerns of school popularity but otherwise supportive	1	
Supports established links with Vale primaries	1	
Lack of evidence for educational improvement		1
Wish to retain existing catchments		3
Discriminates against siblings		1
Unfair to pupils in villages		3
Concerns about admissions criteria and inequities		1
Concerns of imbalanced pupil numbers		3
Insufficient information – require longer to consider		16
Lack of choice – feeder school issue		14
No feeder link for Catholic primary school		6
No support for re-organisation		1
Various		1
Not Stated	5	1
Concerns regarding oversubscription of popular school.		1
Concerns regarding travel issues and traffic impact		4
<b>Totals</b>	<b>15 (18.75%)</b>	<b>65 (81.25%)</b>

In addition to the above a petition containing 89 (new) signatures has been received from parents representing Asfordby Captains Close Primary, which taken into account increases the number of respondents to 168 overall.