

Decision Maker: EDUCATION PORTFOLIO HOLDER

Date: For Pre-Decision Scrutiny by the Education Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 27 January 2015

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Executive Non-Key

Title: PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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Chief Officer: Executive Director of Education, Care & Health Services

Ward: All Wards

1. Reason for report

This report asks Members to consider the Council's strategy to meet the forecast increase in pupils numbers in primary and secondary schools to 2031 and to endorse the recommendations of the School Places Working Party of 13 November 2014.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That Members of the Education PDS Committee consider the comments of the School Places Working Group following its meeting on 13 November 2014 (Appendix 1)

2.2 That, in consideration of the reports attached as Annex 1 (Review of Primary School Development Plan) and 2 (Planning of Secondary School Places) :

i) The projections for primary need be noted;

ii) A margin of 5% be agreed above the Greater London Authority projection for primary place planning to provide for local variations in need and to meet parental preferences;

iii) That discussions be undertaken with primary schools identified for expansion with a view to reporting the outcome to a future meeting of Education PDS Committee;

iv) That feasibility studies be undertaken in consultation with identified primary schools to assess the scope and cost of school enlargement;

- v) Where primary school expansion is agreed, implementation be funded through the Education Capital Programme, subject to the availability of funds;
- vi) That the Secondary School Place Planning report be recommended to the Education PDS Committee as the basis for secondary school place planning to 2031; and,
- vii) That the proposals for the expansion of existing secondary schools be brought forward to the Executive for approval.

2.3 That the Education Portfolio Holder endorse the recommendations of the School Places Working Group, taking into account the views of the Education PDS Committee.

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy: statutory provision of school places
 2. BBB Priority: Children and Young People
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Estimated Cost
 2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable:
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Education Capital Programme
 4. Total current budget for this head: £
 5. Source of funding: DfE Basic Need, Capital Maintenance Fund, DSG, S106.
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Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional):
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours:
-

Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory Requirement
 2. Call-in: Applicable
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current) 46,953 (projected) 58,213
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: Not Applicable

3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 The local authority has statutory responsibility for ensuring that there are sufficient school places to meet demand in the borough. While almost 95% of borough residents choose a Bromley primary school, that reduces to just under 84% at secondary level. Bromley remains a net importer of students in the secondary phase, with almost 22% from outside the borough, most from neighbouring London authorities.
- 3.2 In common with most London authorities, Bromley uses roll projections provided by the GLA. These are based on the latest ONS population data, and take into account school rolls and dwelling stock changes. For primary schools they are broken down into eight planning areas whilst for secondary they are given for the borough as a whole. The development of the strategy for school place planning is based on this data, informed by knowledge on the ground from the school admissions team and other local sources.
- 3.3 The most immediate issue facing the authority has been the significant year on year increase in the demand for primary school places. Indeed, the numbers seeking admission in September 2014 exceeded the forecasts and it was necessary to add some 225 places in the course of the year. By their very nature, the forecasts are based on data collected a year ago, and need to be informed by local considerations. There is every indication that the level of demand remains high although at this stage only headline figures are available for 2015.
- 3.4 The Council's strategy to meet the additional demand is a combination of bulge classes, permanent expansion of existing schools and new free schools. This provides the necessary flexibility to ensure that the demand can be met whilst remaining sensitive to the preferences expressed by parents. Although forecasts are given to 2031, these long term projections are based on assumptions about birth rates being sustained and increases in dwelling stock numbers being delivered. To some extent, as children forecast to come into the system beyond 2020 are not yet born, and given that further changes in population may be driven by external factors, there has to be continuous review of this strategy.
- 3.5 For primary schools, the immediate increase in demand was met mostly by additional classes in existing schools. The Council is grateful to governors and school leaders for the co-operation which they have shown to ensure that these places were made available on time. During the year, planned additional places also came on stream at two new Free Schools, Harris Shortlands and La Fontaine, both opening in temporary arrangements. In 2015 two further Free Schools are also likely to open, Harris Beckenham and Crystal Palace and there is a further application submitted by Langley Park secondary schools, which may open in 2016.
- 3.6 Members asked for a summary showing on a school by school basis the existing roll numbers, capacity and proposals. This is attached at Annex 4 and demonstrates that the schools are in effect full at the moment, with total rolls equivalent to capacity on both measures - net capacity (which measures actual space in the school according to a DfE formula), and year group capacity (a multiple of the school's planned intake). Schools shown as over capacity have often taken one or more bulge classes in recent years. Net capacities have not been reviewed since the current programme of school extensions has commenced and will in some cases be out of date and therefore underestimate the amount of accommodation available. In each case, where additional places are provided there is always consideration of non teaching requirements such as toilets, dining and play. Schools may also have made their own changes.
- 3.7 The previous report in January 2014 of the School Places Working Party highlighted the imminent need for additional secondary places, as the higher primary rolls move forward from 2016 onwards. Further consideration has been given to the provision of additional places and

in the past year a new free secondary school, the Beckenham Academy, has been approved as well as a University Technical College for 14-19 year olds, and a further application for a new Bullers Wood Boys School pending ministerial decision. The Council will also consider the scope to provide additional places within the existing secondary school estate, from its own resources.

- 3.8 Following the previous year's report, the decision was taken to uplift the GLA projections by 5% to provide a margin for growth and to enhance parental preference. A similar recommendation is now being made to apply the same uplift to primary school projections. That said, the number of applicants in 2014 reached the numbers forecast for 2021/2, and in some areas the trends shown ran counter to the evidence coming from local schools. Whilst there is input into the GLA forecasting process, the methodology is London wide and takes is sensitive to a wide range of relevant factors.
- 3.9 Elsewhere on this agenda is an update to the Basic Need Capital Programme which sets out all projects being planned or delivered in support of the primary schools development programme. This includes an annex as requested showing a timeline for each project with the current stage reached and the estimated completion date.
- 3.10 The minutes attached set out a record of the discussion and recommendations of the Working Party.
- 3.11 Highlights of the primary capital programme include proposed major extensions to James Dixon and Stewart Fleming primary schools increasing them to 3FE and at Worsley Bridge, completing the conversion of a 2FE junior school to a 3FE primary. Clare House is being completely rebuilt and enlarged to 2FE, replacing a life expired and unsuitable building. Proposals have been approved for the extension of Parish CE and Scotts Park to 3FE, and for Princes Plain to move from 2 to 4FE by incorporating and converting the former Education Development Centre. Planning permission has been secured for an enlargement of Edgebury and there is a proposal for a complete rebuilding of Chislehurst St.Nicholas CE on a new site, with expansion. Enlargement of St Paul's Cray has been approved along with Midfield subject to planning and consultation and conversations about expansion are taking place with a number of other schools in planning areas 7 and 8. A programme of minor alteration, improvement and extension is underway to ensure that each school is able to meet the requirements of the additional planned numbers.
- 3.12 Planning permission has been secured for Harris Primary Academy Shortlands on a site made available by the Council, and proposals are under consideration for the permanent location of the other Free Schools. There is considerable land use pressure in the borough, and a need to strike a balance on one hand with the demands of homes and schools and on the other to protect the environment, with many potential sites covered by Green Belt, Metropolitan Open Land or Borough Open Space designations.
- 3.13 The School Places Working Group accepted the main recommendations of the review and accepted Planning for Growth: Review of Secondary Education as the basis for pupil place planning at secondary age. It also recommended that a further review of the existing secondary school estate be undertaken, in line with the Department for Education's current funding and space standards, in order to validate the options for growth at existing schools.
- 3.14 Although the roll forecast indicates that existing capacity might be exceeded in the short term before the opening of the Beckenham Academy (currently scheduled for 2016), there is some flexibility in current capacities to absorb additional numbers. In some cases schools may have made recent changes to their accommodation not yet reflected in the net capacity figures. There is likely to be some surplus capacity in upper year groups which enables

schools to manage group sizes as well as generate greater efficiencies in the use of accommodation through timetabling. As demand from Bromley residents increases, it may become more difficult for out of borough residents to secure a place at some schools under current admission criteria.

- 3.15 There is an expectation that some 4FE of additional capacity can be generated by 2016 within the existing estate by enlargement, subject to funding decisions. Two further free school applications are also in train and awaiting decision, i.e. a 4 FE proposal for a Boys School at Bullers Wood, and a 5FE Technical School by Bromley College. There is also scope for further expansion of existing schools subject to the availability of capital resources without altering the broad balance of school sizes, gender balance or geographical accessibility. Longer term proposals for a Catholic school are also under discussion. Taken together, if approved these may provide sufficient accommodation to meet planned needs up to 2020.
- 3.16 Although a 5% margin has been applied from 2016/17, this needs to be kept under review. The autumn term figures now available for year 7 admissions in 2014 (shown in Appendix 4 of the Working Party's Secondary report) showing a figure of 3,438 compared to the forecast of 3,508 suggest that short term numbers are rising slower than forecast and there is some scope to consider the timing of further additional places.
- 3.17 The Working Party asked for further work to be done to map details of new school and expansion proposals against the existing pattern of secondary school admissions. A presentation is shown at Annex 5 which illustrates the proximity distances achieved for each school in the 2014 admissions round, as shown in the published admissions booklet. The chart shows the distance within which applicants were successful, where that criterion had to be applied. Where schools were able to make offers to all applicants no circle is shown. The same applies to Bishop Justus, where the admission criteria includes both a church and a distance element, and to the two selective schools. It should be emphasised that the distances shown will vary from year to year according to the demand for places.
- 3.18 Until a site has been determined for the Beckenham Academy it is not possible to estimate the impact it may have locally, not least as there is a proposal to give priority to applicants in receipt of the Pupil Premium. However, the Beckenham area is currently reasonably well served with secondary schools, and when the additional places come on stream it may well have the effect, at least initially, of reducing the demand for other schools and thus increasing their proximity distances. Where an area might appear to be well served with places, if these are at single sex, faith or selective schools these may not be realistic choices for many parents.
- 3.19 Each change in the pattern of schools will have a knock on effect on others, and the impact of additional free schools cannot easily be modelled especially when the borough has little control over potential sites. However, when recommendations are being made for school expansions, consideration will be given to the impact upon admissions locally to ensure that, so far as possible additional places meet local needs.
- 3.20 Additional demand continues to be felt in both primary and secondary phases for in-year admissions. The numbers affecting each school are still relatively small but increasingly will cause pressure on class sizes. Schools are understandably reluctant to reorganise class groups in mid-year but this may become necessary if in year admissions continue to grow.
- 3.21 The requirement for places will continue to be kept under review and further reports will be made on a regular basis with an update of forecasts, actual rolls, financing and decisions

about the opening and enlargement of schools. In this way it is hope not only to secure sufficient places but to meet parental preferences so far as is possible.

4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The need to ensure sufficient places and the efficiency of school organisation is a priority within the Council’s Strategy “Building a Better Bromley” and contributes to the strategy to achieve the status of an Excellent Council.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 These are set out in the accompanying report on the Basic Need Capital Programme.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Council has a statutory duty to secure sufficient school places to meet demand in its area. This report demonstrates how that will be addressed.

Non-Applicable Sections:	
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	These are all attached as appendices