

SCHOOL PLACES WORKING GROUP

Minutes of the meeting held at 6.00 pm on 9 December 2015

Present:

Councillor Judi Ellis (Chairman)
Councillors Kathy Bance MBE, Nicholas Bennett J.P. and Neil Reddin FCCA

Joan McConnell and Mylene Williams

Also Present:

Councillor Tom Philpott, Executive Support Assistant to Portfolio Holder for Education
Jane Bailey, Director: Education
Robert Bollen, Head of Strategic Place Planning
Helena Macaskill, Graduate Intern: Strategic Pupil Place Planning
Kerry Nicholls, Democratic Services Officer
Gill Slater, Planner (Planning Strategy)
Max Winters, Principal Research and Statistics Officer (ECHS)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mary Cooke and Councillor Peter Fortune.

2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 4th November 2015 be agreed.

3 UPDATE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

Rob Bollen, Head of Strategic Place Planning gave an update on secondary school development across the Borough.

Bromley was forecast to experience significant growth in the demand for secondary school places to 2018 and beyond following an increase in live births and migration of families into the Borough. The Greater London Authority School Roll Projections 2015 had slightly reduced downwards the long term forecast for future school places compared with the 2014 projections, but still projected demand for an additional 34 secondary forms of entry across the Borough by 2022/23. Current proposals to meet this demand included the expansion of existing secondary schools and the opening of two free schools in the Borough which was expected to deliver 17 FE by 2018/19, after which an additional 17 FE would need to be identified.

To meet demand for the 2015/16 academic year, three secondary bulge classes

had been introduced at secondary schools in the north west of the Borough, with some applicants directed to schools in the London Borough of Croydon. It was likely that there would be similar demand for secondary pupil places for the 2016/17 academic year with insufficient places to meet the level of demand in the north west of the Borough, although spaces remained at schools in the east of the Borough. A site, which remains subject to planning, had now been announced for the proposed Beckenham Academy which was expected to open for the 2016/17 academic year, however as the funding agreement was yet to be signed between the sponsoring Trust and the Education Funding Agency, the Local Authority would not be able to offer these places through co-ordinated admissions for 2016/17 and would therefore need to consider opening further bulge classes at secondary schools with a 'reasonable' travel distance that were already operating above their capacity, or directing pupils to schools in the east of the Borough which might not constitute a 'reasonable' offer on the basis of travel distance and time.

The Head of Strategic Place Planning advised Members that conversations would continue to be undertaken with existing secondary schools around the potential for temporary or permanent expansion where needed, and other options to deliver the required pupil places would also be considered, such as potential Free School and University Technical College applications and the proposal for a new Catholic Secondary School to be established in the Borough.

In considering the expansion of existing secondary schools and the establishment of new schools, Members were concerned that it would be difficult for planning applications relating to some proposals for school expansion or new schools to be approved. Members generally discussed the need to consult with communities around any proposed school developments to allow concerns around traffic management and loss of amenity to be addressed at an early stage. The Chairman noted the impact of increased traffic on communities and underlined the importance of ensuring that necessary traffic management measures were put in place prior to any school expansion or new school opening, including improved public transport provision. Members considered whether 'no car' zones could be introduced around secondary schools where appropriate, and agreed that secondary school pupils should be encouraged to walk or take public transport to school where appropriate.

The Planner (Planning Strategy) reported that consultation on a number of specific site allocations and changes in open space designations in the 'Draft Allocations, Further Policies and Designations' document, including the identification of potential education sites had recently been undertaken as part of the production of the Bromley Local Plan. It had been useful for schools to consider their development needs as part of this process and how the impact of any future development could be mitigated.

In response to a question from a Member on the increasing demand for secondary pupil places in the north west of the Borough, the Head of Strategic Place Planning confirmed that measures were being put in place to meet the demand for secondary pupil places which included a proposal to introduce a nodal point for The Beckenham Academy in the Clock House area to ensure that additional

places were provided to the area where there was greatest demand.

A Co-opted Member was concerned that Bromley was the only London Borough that did not have a Roman Catholic secondary school. The Head of Strategic Place Planning confirmed that the Local Authority continued to work with the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark around the potential to establish a Roman Catholic secondary school in the Borough. There was a need to identify how this would be funded as sufficient funding would not be available through the Basic Need Capital Grant, and a new faith school funded via the free school route would be required to adopt admission criteria that would ensure that at least 50% of the intake was admitted without reference to faith if the school was oversubscribed, which was not acceptable to the Roman Catholic church at the present time.

The Chairman requested that updates on school place planning and proposed school expansions and new schools be provided to Ward Members when available.

The Chairman led Members in thanking the Head of Strategic Place Planning for an excellent presentation.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Members summarised the Working Party's initial recommendations, the feasibility of which would be considered in partnership with school representatives:

RESOLVED that it be recommended that:

- 1) The pupil roll projections for future secondary need and other trend data set out in the report be noted;**
- 2) A margin of 5% continue to be provided above the Greater London Authority projection for secondary place planning to provide for local variations in need and to meet parental preferences;**
- 3) Discussions be undertaken with schools identified for expansion;**
- 4) Where not already in hand and in consultation with schools, feasibility studies be undertaken to assess the scope and cost of school enlargement;**
- 5) Where secondary school expansion is agreed, implementation be funded through the Education Capital Programme, subject to the availability of funds; and,**
- 6) Local Councillors be involved with any planning proposals for the expansion or establishment of schools at the pre-planning application stage.**

5 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

No future meeting date was set.

The Meeting ended at 7.09 pm

Chairman