

SCHOOL PLACES WORKING GROUP

Minutes of the meeting held at 6.30 pm on 4 November 2015

Present:

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

Mylene Williams and Tony Wright-Jones

Also Present:

Councillor Tom Philpott, Executive Support Assistant to Portfolio
Holder for Education
Councillor Stephen Wells
Jane Bailey, Director: Education
Robert Bollen, Head of Strategic Pupil Place Planning
Andrea Butcher, Co-ordinated Admissions Officer
Kerry Nicholls, Democratic Services Officer
Gill Slater, Planner (Planning Strategy)
Max Winters, Principal Research and Statistics Officer (ECHS)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were absence were received from Councillor Peter Fortune.

Apologies for absence were also received from Joan McConnell.

2 LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

Gill Slater, Planner (Planning Strategy) gave an update on the development of the Local Plan.

The Local Development Framework Advisory Panel was overseeing the production of the Bromley Local Plan, which would involve bringing forward planning policies, land designations and site allocations to steer development and support infrastructure in the Borough up to 2030, including draft policies and designations to facilitate the provision of increased education infrastructure.

In February 2014, the 'Draft Policies and Designations' consultation had set out a range of draft policies including new education policies and 'education land' designation, and an alteration to the existing Urban Open Space policy to facilitate necessary expansion of existing education infrastructure, as approximately one third of school sites were based on sites designated as either Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land for which schools were considered 'inappropriate' development.

Further 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 and the consultation responses were being assessed. The results of the consultation with any update to the Schools Development Plans, would be reported to Members later in 2015. The emerging policies and the outcome of the consultation on sites and designations would be combined with the updated evidence base and changes to the Schools Development Plans to produce the draft Local Plan which would be consulted on during 2016 prior to submission to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. It was expected that the Local Plan would be adopted in late 2016, following an Examination in Public.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Planner (Planning Strategy) confirmed that potential education sites could be added to the Local Plan until it was adopted. It would still be possible to bring forward development on sites not identified in the Local Plan through the planning application process, but it could be difficult for any proposed education development on sites designated as either Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land that were not identified in the Local Plan to demonstrate the 'very special circumstances' required to obtain planning permission if alternate education sites identified in the Local Plan were still available.

In considering the former All Saints Catholic School site, Members were advised that a planning enquiry would be held later in 2015 around whether a housing development could be built on the site, which had an established education use and was identified as an 'education site' in the emerging Local Plan. In discussion, Members generally agreed that the former All Saints Catholic School site was not suited to education use as it was in a poor location and two previous schools based on the site had failed. There was concern that if the Planning Inspector did not agree the housing development, it might make it difficult to develop new schools on other sites within Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land, or other potential sites that had not yet been proposed or identified in the Local Plan.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

3 REVIEW OF PRIMARY SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Members considered projected demand for primary school places across the Borough.

There had been a total of 3989 reception mainstream primary applications received for 2015/16 (not including in-year admissions), of which 83% received their first choice preference and 8% received their second choice preference, which was an improvement on previous years. To ensure that the Local Authority was able to meet its duty to offer all Bromley children a place on National Offer day on 16th April 2015, it had been necessary to add bulge classes at three

schools in the Beckenham and Penge areas and one bulge class at a school in the Farnborough area. Applications continued to be submitted and over 300 further in-year applications had been received since National Offer day.

Significant progress had now been made in securing sufficient school capacity to meet the increased demand for primary places. Applications for primary places had been stable for the 2015/16 academic year, and the Local Authority's approach had moved from providing bulge classes to delivering permanent expansions in areas of need. A 5% margin above the Greater London Authority projection for primary place planning continued to be provided to meet local variations in need and parental preferences, and also assisted with the high number of in-year admissions.

The GLA School Roll Projections 2015 had slightly reduced the forecast for future school places in Bromley after 2017 when compared with 2014 projections, however when considering a range of data sets including live births and migrations, it was expected that the growth in school rolls between 2010 and 2015 was a substantial long term shift in Bromley's school population with a forecast Reception intake of between 3800 and 4000 pupil places per annum up to 2031. The Local Authority had employed a consultant who had been working with Officers to strengthen pupil place planning data, and individual ward updates would be made available to Members shortly.

In discussion, a Member emphasised that a range of data was used to forecast demand for school places which included the GLA 2015 Pupil Roll Projections and other information such as on live births and migration levels, and it was this collated data that was used to develop an accurate projection of future demand. In considering future demand for school places, there was also a need to identify demand and availability of school places in neighbouring boroughs. In response to a question from a Member, the Principal Research and Statistics Officer (ECHS) confirmed that the Department for Education was proposing to collect a range of nationality and country of birth data for pupils from 2018 which would make additional data on the level of migration available to support pupil place planning. The Greater London Authority had also commissioned the development of a new model for school place planning which was expected to be launched in 2016.

Members went on to analyse the future demand for primary places by planning area.

Planning Area 1 had seen the greatest percentage increase in residents with a child in a Bromley school in recent years. Although historically anecdotal evidence had suggested there was significant cross-border migration, residents were most likely to attend a local Bromley school, with out-of-Borough residents only making up 5% of the reception age school population. In January 2015 there had been a small deficit when comparing the number of residents with a child at Reception in a Bromley school and the number of places available at schools in the planning area, and following a slight reduction in the projected rolls of local schools after 2016/17 in the GLA 2015 Pupil Roll Projections and when considered with other data sets, it was identified that only 1 FE (form of entry) of permanent expansion was required to meet forecast future demand. To meet the demand for places for

the 2015/16 academic year, bulge classes had been added at James Dixon Primary School and The Pioneer Academy, Stewart Fleming Primary School for a second year. Churchfields Primary School and Harris Primary Academy Crystal Palace had both recently been permanently expanded from 1 FE to 2 FE, and planning permission had been granted for the permanent expansion of Stewart Fleming Primary School from 2 FE to 3 FE. In considering future expansions, conversations continued with James Dixon Primary School around the potential to increase capacity on a permanent basis from 2 FE to 3 FE if there was sufficient demand. Conversations had also taken place with St John's C.E. Primary School around regularising the school's admissions number to 60, and it was recommended that feasibility work be undertaken to consider this proposal. It had recently been announced that Crystal Palace Free School would not be opening due to difficulty with identifying a suitable site and falling primary rolls in neighbouring London boroughs.

Members discussed a range of options and agreed to investigate, with Governors, the feasibility of increasing capacity on a permanent basis by 1 FE to 3 FE at James Dixon Primary School. It was also agreed to investigate, with Governors, the feasibility of increasing capacity on a permanent basis by 0.5 FE to 2 FE at St John's C.E. Primary School.

Planning Area 2 had been impacted by the significant increase in demand for pupil places in Beckenham, with much of the growth in Copers Cope ward. There had been a small surplus of places for the 2015/16 academic year which had been accessed by residents in surrounding planning areas. The GLA 2015 Pupil Roll Projections had reduced the forecast future school rolls in Planning Area 2 by 0.5 FE. Taking the 2015 GLA pupil roll projections alone, the data supporting the recently approved Langley Primary Academy School proposed to open in September 2016 was less strong, but these projections need to be considered alongside increasing live births, migration and the growth in need in the neighbouring Planning Area 3. To meet the demand for places for the 2015/16 academic year, work had been undertaken to rebuild Clare House Primary School to facilitate the schools' expansion from 1 FE to 2 FE and expand Worsley Bridge Primary School from 2 to 3 FE, and works were also underway to deliver additional permanent accommodation at Unicorn Primary School to house the bulge class admitted in September 2014 and ensure that hall facilities were compliant with the requirements of a 2 FE school. Harris Beckenham Primary Academy had opened in temporary accommodation as a 2 FE school and, as the school was outside of co-ordinated admissions in its first year, a bulge class had been added at Marian Vian Primary School to ensure that sufficient school places were available on National Offer Day.

Members discussed a range of options and agreed to investigate, with Governors, the feasibility of increasing capacity on a temporary or permanent basis at Marian Vian Primary School by 1 FE to 4 FE should additional places be required in the future.

The GLA 2015 Pupil Roll Projections for Planning Area 3 had increased in comparison to 2014 and when considered with other data sets, it was projected an additional 1 to 2.5 FE would be required over the next ten years which would lead

to a shortfall of places in 2016/17 and in certain years during the next decade. To meet the demand for places for the 2015/16 academic year, work had been undertaken to deliver additional accommodation at Hawes Down Primary School to house the bulge class transferring from Hawes Down Infants School, which would allow Hawes Down Infants School to take a further bulge class in 2016/17 without the need for additional accommodation. Harris Primary Academy Shortlands would relocate to its permanent site from September 2015.

Members discussed a range of options and agreed to investigate, with Governors, the feasibility of increasing capacity on a permanent basis at Hawes Down Infants School and Hawes Down Junior School by 1 FE to 3 FE. Information around the number of children resident in Bromley who attended schools in the London Borough of Croydon would be provided to Members following the meeting.

With regard to Planning Area 4, the GLA 2015 Pupil Roll Projections considered with other data sets had reduced the forecast future school rolls by 0.5 to 1 FE from 2017/18. In the north of Planning Area 4, a significant number of out-of-Borough residents (in excess of 1 FE) attended Bromley schools. To meet the demand for places for the 2015/16 academic year, the expansion of Parish Primary School from 2 FE to 3 FE was now complete, and schemes to permanently expand St George's Bickley C.E. School from 1.5 to 2 FE and Scotts Park Primary School from 2 to 3 FE would assist in ensuring sufficient primary places into the future. Pupil roll projections further evidenced the need for La Fontaine Primary Academy to locate permanently in the planning area and to expand from 2 FE to 3 FE to make sufficient school places available to 2031.

Members discussed a range of options and agreed to keep school organisation and size in the area under review.

The GLA 2015 Pupil Roll Projections for Planning Area 5 had reduced in comparison to 2014 when considered with other data sets, and projected future forecast pupil rolls in the planning area would decrease by 0.5 FE between 2018 and 2021, reducing a further 3 FE by 2031. Based on current development, this could lead to a surplus of places in excess of 2 FE, but did not account for the significant in-flow of pupils from Planning Area 8. To meet the demand for places for the 2015/16 academic year, a bulge class had been added at Farnborough Primary School due to local demand, and proposals were being developed to permanently expand Farnborough Primary School. Trinity C.E. Primary School had continued to expand, but at a slower rate than expected whilst La Fontaine Primary Academy remained on its temporary site at the former Education Development Centre. Trinity C.E. Primary School would admit 90 at Reception from 2016/17 until demand justified expansion to the proposed 4 FE and work was being undertaken with the Education Funding Agency to fund a multi-use games area on the site to increase the usability of outside space.

Members discussed a range of options and agreed to continue discussions about permanent expansion with Farnborough Primary School and Trinity C.E. Primary School. It was noted that the Bromley Youth Music Centre site might become available from 2018 which could provide additional capacity if it was required within the planning area.

The GLA 2015 Pupil Roll Projections had slightly reduced the forecast future school rolls for Planning Area 6 by 0.5 from 2018/19 when considered with other data sets, which did not significantly change the future need for additional pupil places in the planning area. A small deficit of places was forecast in 2016/17 and 2017/18. To meet the demand for places for the 2015/16 academic year, Edgebury Primary School had consulted on expansion during 2015 and would expand from 1 FE to 2 FE from the 2016/17 academic year. The Local Authority was still in discussions with Chislehurst St Nicholas C.E. School, the Aquinas Trust and Diocese of Rochester about the expansion of Chislehurst St Nicholas C.E. School from 1 FE to 2 FE, although there were still significant issues to be overcome with regards to location and funding before the project proceeded. The Local Authority was also continuing to work with Dorset Road and Mead Road Infants Schools along with other local schools to ensure that satisfactory arrangements were in place for transition from Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in the planning area.

Members discussed a range of options and agreed to continue discussions with Chislehurst St Nicholas C.E. Primary School around the options for expansion.

Planning Area 7 had seen the greatest volatility in growth in demand for pupil places year to year against a general trend of growth. The number of residents had consistently outstripped the supply of places within the planning area. The GLA 2015 Pupil Roll Projections had reduced the forecast future school rolls by between 1 FE and 2 FE when considered with other data sets, although by 2031 any interim reduction in pupil numbers would be made up. To meet the demand for places for the 2015/16 academic year, works had been undertaken to enable Midfield Primary School and St Paul's Cray Primary School to permanently expand from 1 FE to 2 FE. Following the admission of bulge classes for 2014/15 and 2015/16, detailed design work was being undertaken on proposals to allow Leasons Primary School and Poverest Primary School to expand permanently from 1 FE to 2 FE. Feasibility work continued with St Mary Cray Primary School should further expansion in the planning area be required in future.

Members discussed a range of options and agreed to investigate, with Governors, the feasibility of increasing capacity on a temporary or permanent basis at St Mary Cray Primary School should additional places be required in the future.

The GLA 2015 Pupil Roll Projections for Planning Area 8 did not identify a need for additional school places when considered with other data sets, although it was suggested that there would a reduction of between 1 and 3 FE from 2021/22 compared to the 2014 data. Admissions data had indicated demand around certain schools in the planning area as a number of residents were attending schools in neighbouring planning areas. To meet the demand for places for the 2015/16 academic year, discussions had continued with Blenheim Primary School and Green Street Green Primary School about the feasibility of expansion, should additional places be required in future.

Members discussed a range of options and agreed to investigate, with Governors, the feasibility of increasing capacity on a temporary or permanent basis at

Blenheim Primary School should additional places be required in the future. It was also agreed to investigate, with Governors, the feasibility of increasing capacity on a temporary or permanent basis at Green Street Green Primary School should additional places be required in the future.

The GLA 2015 Pupil Roll Projections for Planning Area 9 were broadly in line with the 2014 data when considered with other data sets. Although there had been an increase in demand for school places in the planning area, there was sufficient surplus capacity to meet this need in the medium term, with no extra capacity required until towards the end of the decade. To meet the demand for places for the 2015/16 academic year, it had been identified that Oaklands Primary School had insufficient accommodation to provide three classes across each year group, although it was a 3 FE school. A scheme to address this was being submitted for planning permission for development when funding was available.

Members discussed a range of options and agreed to investigate, with Governors, the feasibility of bringing forward development of Oaklands Primary School once sufficient funding is available.

In considering the overall projected demand for school places in the Borough, Councillor Nicholas Bennett JP highlighted the need to identify if there was a demand for additional school places in faith schools. The potential to convert a primary school on a large site to a secondary school if alternate education sites could not be identified was also discussed, and Members noted that secondary place planning would be considered at the next meeting of the School Places Working Group.

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

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

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

Planning Area 1 To investigate, with Governors, the feasibility of increasing capacity on a permanent basis by 1 FE to 3 FE at James Dixon Primary School.

To investigate, with Governors, the feasibility of increasing capacity on a permanent basis by 0.5 FE to 2 FE at St John's C.E. Primary School.

Planning Area 2 To investigate, with Governors, the feasibility of increasing capacity on a temporary or permanent basis at Marian Vian Primary School should additional places be required in the future.

Planning Area 3 To investigate, with Governors, the feasibility of increasing

capacity on a permanent basis at Hawes Down Infants School and Hawes Down Junior School by 1 FE to 3 FE.

Planning Area 4 To keep school organisation and size in the area under review.

Planning Area 5 To investigate, with Governors, the feasibility of permanently expanding Farnborough Primary School from 1 to 2 FE and Trinity C.E. Primary School from 2 to 3 FE with future expansion to 4 FE.

Planning Area 6 To continue to investigate with Governors, the feasibility of increasing the capacity at Chislehurst St Nicholas C.E. Primary School from 1 to 2 FE.

Planning Area 7 To investigate, with Governors, the feasibility of increasing capacity on a temporary or permanent basis at St Mary Cray Primary School should additional places be required in the future.

Planning Area 8 To investigate, with Governors, the feasibility of increasing capacity on a temporary or permanent basis at Blenheim Primary School should additional places be required in the future.

To investigate, with Governors, the feasibility of increasing capacity on a temporary or permanent basis at Green Street Green Primary School should additional places be required in the future.

Planning Area 9 To investigate, with Governors, the feasibility of bringing forward development of Oaklands Primary School once sufficient funding is available.

RESOLVED that it be recommended that:

- 1) The projections for future primary 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 primary place planning to provide for local variations in need and to meet parental preferences;**
- 3) That discussions be undertaken with primary schools identified for expansion;**
- 4) That, where not already in hand and in consultation with schools, feasibility studies be undertaken to assess the scope and cost of school enlargement; and**

- 5) Where primary school expansion is agreed, implementation be funded through the Education Capital Programme, subject to the availability of funds.**

5 UPDATE ON SCHOOL ADMISSIONS FRAUD

Andrea Butcher, Co-ordinated Admissions Officer gave a presentation on school admissions fraud in the Borough.

The School Admissions team worked proactively as part of the Pan-London Coordinated Scheme to minimise school admissions fraud through a robust pre-checking process for all applications received. The application process for primary schools required an extensive range of documentation to be provided as proof of address. The application process for secondary schools started at the end of Year 5 with information requested from both the family and the school which allowed cross-checking to be undertaken.

The School Admissions team was experienced in recognising potential fraud, such as families leaving the family home to live in a rental property or with other family members. The School Admissions code did allow rental rental properties to be used as an address for a school admissions application, although it was expected that there be a reasonable period of assured tenancy.

Where there were concerns of fraud, a comprehensive investigation was undertaken which could include council tax and child benefit checks, although home visits were not undertaken as they were considered ineffective. Parents and carers would be requested to provide evidence that the child was living at the new address. If there continued to be doubts about a child's place of residence, parents and carers were required to sign a Declaration of Residence which had been drawn up by the Legal Service and which committed them to residing at their stated place of residence for their child's first full year at school. This information was then provided to schools to allow appropriate checks to be made. Six primary offers at Bromley schools had been rescinded for the 2015/16 academic year due to families failing to declare a change of address.

The School Admissions team had built a good relationship with schools and families who understood the need to ensure that children who genuinely lived near a school were not displaced by fraudulent applications, and the team also received a number of 'tip offs' each year by local residents relating to potentially fraudulent applications. Where it was confirmed that a place had been fraudulently obtained but a child remained on the school roll, any future applications to the school for the child's siblings through the sibling criteria would not be considered. Some local authorities pursued prosecutions in response to fraudulent applications, but it was felt that the current system of checks and the Declaration of Residence with the potential rescinding of school places acted as an effective deterrent in Bromley.

In considering the Declaration of Residence, Councillor Nicholas Bennett JP suggested that it be amended to state that misrepresentation of residence in a school admissions application was an act of fraud and this was generally agreed

by Members.

A Member noted that the Government regularly undertook a data matching exercise to identify fraud and suggested that school admissions might be included as part of this process.

The Chairman led Members in thanking Andrea Butcher, Co-ordinated Admissions Officer for her excellent presentation.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

6 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the School Places Working Group would be held at 6.00pm on Wednesday 9th December 2015.

The Meeting ended at 8.16 pm

Chairman