

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

6 OCTOBER 2011

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Children and Young People – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor McCoy

SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN 2011-2016

1. Summary

Although the statutory requirement to publish an annual School Organisation Plan was abolished in 2004, the Council has continued to publish an updated plan each year for the information of schools, parents and the general public. The Plan gives information about the number, types and sizes of schools maintained by the Council. It records the number of places available in those schools and it includes forecasts of pupil numbers over the next five years. This information is an important resource to support the Council in carrying out its statutory duty to ensure a sufficient supply of school places to meet the needs of children and young people in the borough.

When taken together with documents relating to the condition of school buildings and their suitability for purpose, the information in this plan may help to inform decisions about capital investment in existing or new school buildings.

The 2011-16 plan describes three specific issues to be confronted over the next five years:

- rising numbers of four-year-olds starting school
- falling numbers in our secondary schools
- uncertainty over the impact of Academies and possible Free Schools.

The draft plan is attached as the **Appendix** to this report.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to:

1. note the information in the attached draft plan
2. agree that the School Organisation Plan 2011-2016 be published on the Council website and made available to partner organisations.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

The Council as Local Education Authority is under a statutory duty to ensure a sufficient supply of primary and secondary school places to meet the needs of children and young people resident in the borough. The School Organisation Plan brings together relevant information about the number, types and sizes of schools in the borough, the number of pupils on roll and projections of future pupil numbers. The projections can point out trends that may lead to a need to increase or reduce the pupil capacity of schools in particular areas of the borough.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (**paragraph 8**) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;
- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

and must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (**paragraph 12 of the Code**).

Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.

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SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN 2011-2016

SUMMARY

Although the statutory requirement to publish an annual School Organisation Plan was abolished in 2004, the Council has continued to publish an updated plan each year for the information of schools, parents and the general public. The Plan gives information about the number, types and sizes of schools maintained by the Council. It records the number of places available in those schools and it includes forecasts of pupil numbers over the next five years. This information is an important resource to support the Council in carrying out its statutory duty to ensure a sufficient supply of school places to meet the needs of children and young people in the borough.

When taken together with other documents relating to the condition of school buildings and their suitability for purpose, the information in this plan may help to inform decisions about capital investment in existing or new school buildings.

The 2011-16 plan describes three specific issues to be confronted over the next five years:

- rising numbers of four-year-olds starting school
- falling numbers in our secondary schools
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The draft plan is attached as the **Appendix** to this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is asked to:

1. note the information in the attached draft plan
2. agree that the School Organisation Plan 2011-2016 be published on the Council website and made available to partner organisations.

DETAIL

1. The Education Act 1944 first gave Local Education Authorities a duty to ensure sufficient school places to meet the needs of the children of statutory school age (5 to 16) resident in the area. That duty remains in force and is generally referred to as pupil place planning. School Organisation Plans were introduced as a statutory requirement by The School Standards and Framework Act 1998. The purpose of the plan was to provide information about the number, type and sizes of schools in the area, the number of pupils on roll, and projected pupil numbers for the next five years. This information, in particular the pupil number projections, would point out trends that might lead to a need to increase or reduce school capacity. The duty to publish a School Organisation Plan was abolished by The Children Act 2004 but the Council has continued to publish an updated plan each year because it provides important information relevant to pupil place planning.

2. A draft School Organisation Plan was last brought before Cabinet in 2006 following a review of school organisation policy that changed the content of the plan. The latest draft plan also differs in content from previous plans to reflect changing demographic trends and a different focus by government. Between 1999 and 2010 the main focus of government policy towards pupil place planning was on monitoring the level of empty places in schools. Authorities were required to submit an annual report to government listing the pupil capacity of every school, the number of pupils on roll and the number of empty places. If vacant places at any school reached 25% of the school's capacity the Authority had to explain why that school should not be closed. In that climate of falling pupil numbers the Council set itself the target of keeping the level of empty places at around 10% of capacity.
3. The schools census taken in January 2011 showed a total of 14,705 children attending primary schools in Stockton-on-Tees with total capacity of 16,253 places (9.5% vacant places). The total of 1,548 empty places suggests that there will be enough places to accommodate more children in the coming years, but that is not in fact the case. Most of these empty places are in classes for children aged 9 to 11 but the growing demand will be from children of age 4 and 5. Next September (2012) we expect 2,448 4 year-olds will start school in the borough. Four years ago the number was exactly 2,100. The overall level of empty places in our schools does not tell us whether there will be places for all those children. We need to be able to assess the capacity of the Reception year group to cope with the number of children needing places.
4. The main reason for these higher numbers is that the number of children born in the borough increased quite sharply in 2005-06 and again in 2007-08. Since then the number of births has remained stable at the higher level without showing any sign of decreasing significantly. For this reason the draft School Organisation Plan 2011-2016 includes tables that show the number of 4 year-olds expected at each school each September up to 2015. At this stage we cannot predict beyond the 2015-16 school year because accurate figures are not yet available for the number of births in 2010-11.
5. Previous School Organisation Plans have included projected pupil numbers for each area of the borough but have not given forecasts for every school. Parents may choose to apply for a place at any school regardless of where they live, and many parents opt for a school that is not the nearest to their home. These choices may be influenced by different factors including perceptions of the nature of the schools or the location of employment or childcare support. The projections are prepared for the Council by professional statisticians at Tee Valley Unlimited (TVU). The projections have proved to be extremely accurate at borough and area level, but school-level forecasts are less reliable as they have to assume that previous patterns of parental preference will continue unchanged. All school-level projections should therefore be read with some caution, but they may contribute valuable information if decisions need to be made to invest in enlarging schools.
6. The school-level projections and area totals included in the plan make it clear that almost every area of the borough is likely to need additional primary school places between 2012 and 2016. It is suggested that a margin of at least 5% spare capacity should be maintained in each area to allow scope for parental preference. A separate report to Cabinet will include specific recommendations for changes at particular schools.
7. The schools census taken in January 2011 recorded a total of 11, 216 students attending our secondary schools, which have capacity for 12,431 (9.8% empty places). The number of students in our secondary schools will continue to fall for another four years before rising again as the higher numbers of children start to leave primary school from 2016 onwards. It is more difficult to make accurate school-level forecasts for secondary schools than for primary schools, partly because students are able and willing to travel greater distances to preferred schools, and partly because the impact of recent changes has not yet become clear. It is possible that the two Academies that opened in the borough in September 2010 will increase their student numbers at the expense of other schools. North Shore Health Academy intends to relocate from Roseworth to the site of the former Tilery Sports Centre.

This may affect the choices made by some parents. The outcome of a proposal to establish a new Free School in Ingleby Barwick is still unknown. It is possible that other Free School or Academy proposals might come forward in the future. At present it seems unlikely that any further changes to secondary schools will be necessary in the next five years for reasons to do with student numbers, but that situation could change.

8. Pupil place planning within the Authority is carried out in partnership with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Middlesbrough, the Anglican Diocese of Durham, the Anglican Diocese of York, and the sponsors of the two Academies in the borough. Subject to the agreement of Cabinet the attached School Organisation Plan 2011-2016 will be shared with those partners.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9. None.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10. The Council as Local Education Authority has a duty under The Education Act 1944 to ensure a sufficient supply of school places to meet the needs of the children and young people resident in the borough.

RISK ASSESSMENT

11. The maintenance of a School Organisation Plan is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

12. No implications.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

13. This report is not subject to an Equality Impact Assessment because it is for information only.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

14. Corporate Management Team and Lead Cabinet Member.

Name of Contact Officer: John Hegarty

Post Title: Planning and Policy Development Officer, CESC

Telephone No. 01642 526477

Email Address: john.hegarty@stockton.gov.uk

Education related? Yes

Background Papers None.

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors: not Ward-specific

Property No implications at this stage.