

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

12 November 2015

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Children and Young People – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor McCoy

SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN 2015 to 2019

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 to inform schools, parents and the general public. The Plan gives information about the number, types and sizes of schools maintained by the Council, Academies and Free Schools. 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 'School Organisation Plan 2015 to 2019' describes three specific issues to be confronted over the next five years:

- rising numbers of four-year-olds starting school
- the beginning of the end of 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. note pressure in demand for additional primary and secondary school places.
3. agree that the 'School Organisation Plan 2015 to 2019' 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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CABINET DECISION

SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN 2015 to 2019

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 to inform schools, parents and the general public. The Plan gives information about the number, types and sizes of schools maintained by the Council, Academies and Free Schools. 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 'School Organisation Plan 2015 to 2019' describes three specific issues to be confronted over the next five years:

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

The draft plan is attached as **Appendix 1** to this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is asked to:

1. note the information in the attached draft plan
2. note pressure in demand for additional primary and secondary school places
3. agree that the 'School Organisation Plan 2015 to 2019' 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 because it provides important information relevant to pupil place planning.

2. A draft School Organisation Plan was last brought before Cabinet in 2013. The latest draft plan reflects 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 primary schools census taken in January 2015 showed a total of 16,264 children attending primary schools in Stockton-on-Tees with total capacity of 17,599 places (7.6% vacant places). The total of 1,335 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. For September 2015 there were in excess of 2,500 four year-olds that started school in the borough. 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 2007-08. Since then the number of births has remained stable at the higher level, although in the 2013 admission round there was a slight drop but in 2014 the number of pupils applying and attending Reception increased again. For this reason the draft 'School Organisation Plan 2015' includes tables that show the number of 4 year-olds expected in each school planning area for September entry up to 2019. At this stage we cannot predict beyond the 2019-20 school year because accurate figures are not yet available for the number of births.
5. 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. Previously the projections were prepared for the Council by professional statisticians at Tees Valley Unlimited (TVU). The projections have proved to be accurate at borough level, but at planning area level and school-level the forecasts are less reliable as they assume that previous patterns of parental preference will continue unchanged.
6. Historically, projections were based on figures provided by TVU each July. However, those calculations impacted on the local authority's ability to understand where children lived and where parents preferred to send them to school. This coupled with the approach of 'smoothing' each planning area based on trend information resulted in a lack of understanding about Stockton as a whole. Therefore the pupil projections submitted in this year's SCAP return to DfE were produced using a different methodology. (See Section 3 of the School Organisation Plan.)
7. For admissions into primary in 2015 there was an unprecedented shift in the demand for places from the south of the borough to north/central Stockton and Thornaby than was previously forecasted. In response to this the Council agreed to make some temporary expansions across a number of schools. This decision was made in order to meet the Council's policy for ensuring that wherever possible and if requested, a primary aged child is educated within 2 miles of their home address.

8. At a borough level it appears we have sufficient primary places, however they are not necessarily in the right planning area to support the Council in meeting its above '2 mile' commitment. The projections for each individual planning area make it clear that the Council will need additional primary school places in high demand areas over the next few years. It is suggested that a margin of at least 5% spare capacity should be maintained in each planning area to allow scope for parental preference.
9. Work has been undertaken to assess whether the shift in demand for places was peculiar to admissions for 2015. It is anticipated that this trend will continue and that the Council will need to ensure that there are sufficient places in a number of planning areas in order to meet current and future demand. A feasibility study was completed to identify suitable schools for capital investment alongside some interrogation of primary census data which would ensure that at least 5% surplus was created in the following priority areas:
 - North Stockton
 - Central Stockton
 - Thornaby

Further detail is available within the attached School Organisation Plan at section 3.

10. Without this capital investment in the identified priority areas detailed in paragraph 9, it is likely that the Council will not be able to meet its 2 mile commitment as detailed in paragraph 7. (See section 2 in the School Organisation Plan.)
11. The secondary schools census taken in January 2015 recorded a total of 9,883 students (Y7 – Y11) attending our secondary schools, which have capacity for 12,323 (19.8% empty places). A further 515 pupils attended the two school sixth forms increasing pupil numbers to 10,398. The number of students entering our secondary schools has begun to rise as higher numbers of children leave primary school and will continue to do so. 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. There are now ten Academies plus one free school that have opened in the borough. It is possible that other Free Schools or further Academy proposals might come forward in the future.
12. The projections suggest that there should be sufficient places in our secondary schools for the coming next few years only. However as higher numbers of primary pupils begin to move up into secondary schools the LA will need to increase capacity in some schools as demand for places exceeds supply from 2018 onwards. Further work will be undertaken to identify priority areas and local solutions.
13. 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, the Academy Trusts and Free Schools in the borough. Subject to the agreement of Cabinet the attached 'School Organisation Plan 2015 to 2019' will be shared with those partners.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

14. None.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

15. 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

16. 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

17. No implications.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

19. Corporate Management Team and Lead Cabinet Member.

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Education related? Yes

Background Papers None.

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

Property No implications at this stage.