

Meeting of the Cabinet – 11th February 2019

Report of the Strategic Director People

School Organisation, Place Planning and updated Place Planning Strategic Plan

Purpose

1. To advise the Cabinet with regards to work that is undertaken to ensure that school places keep up with demand with regards to residential developments and demographic pressures, and to advise of the plans in process.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that:-
 - Cabinet note the contents of this report and approve the School Place Planning Strategic Plan.

Background

3. The 'Education and Inspections Act 2006' places a duty on local authorities to act as commissioners, rather than providers of school places. Local authorities are under a statutory duty to;
 - Ensure there are sufficient school places in their area
 - Promote high educational standards
 - Ensure fair access and equal opportunity
 - Promote the fulfilment of every child's educational potential
 - Promote diversity in provision
 - Expand popular and successful schools
 - Increase opportunities for parents to access schools of their choice
4. The White Paper 'The importance of teaching' states that the local authority has a key role to support parents and families through promoting a good supply of strong schools and should focus on supplying enough good school places rather than reducing surplus places.
5. The Academies Act 2010 enabled more schools to convert to Academy status without the need for a sponsor. The Education Act 2011 expands the programme to allow the establishment of 16 – 19 Academies and alternative provision (PRU) Academies.

6. The Education Act 2011 made changes to the arrangements for the establishment of new schools by introducing a presumption that when local authorities set up new schools they will be Academies or Free Schools. (Academy is the legal term which also includes Free Schools of all types, University Technical Colleges (UTC's) and some Studio Schools, including 16 to 19 and alternative provision (PRU) establishments.)
7. In Dudley, the introduction of the white paper "Education Excellence Everywhere", which suggested that all schools should be academies by 2021, caused a significant increase in the rate of academy conversions. Whilst the pace of academisation in Dudley appears to have slowed, it has changed the way in which place planning operates within the authority. An updated Place Planning Strategy has recently been written to reflect the changes in working practices as a result.
8. Academies are responsible for setting their own admission number, and thus capacity, with the agreement of the Secretary of State for Education.
9. It is important to ensure that investment in existing and new provision is planned according to projections in demographic change and that it is kept under constant review
10. Dudley's pupil place planning processes are robust and have been endorsed by the Education Funding Agency. The Team utilise a projection model that incorporates live birth data, new housing developments, cohort survival, cross border movement and admission preferences. The model averaged 99.8% accuracy across the Secondary and Primary phase derived from the October 2017 school census.
11. When undertaking school place planning the Place Planning team only incorporate housing developments into the projection model, where they have either outline or full planning approval. Other potential developments are not included and this is in line with Department for Education guidelines.
12. Place Planning analysts use information provided by colleagues in planning to predict the impact that any specific development may have on pupil numbers in a given area. If the size, location and make-up of units are known of a development then the number of pupils it will generate can be predicted and the schools identified that will typically draw from that location.
13. These predictions are used two-fold:
 - To increase the accuracy of our standard projection model that informs capital spend.
 - To notify planning colleagues of any Section 106 monies we believe will be required to maintain the status quo of the schools that will be affected by the development.

14. Any development that is expected to impact significantly on the availability of school places in the area is noted and a request from People Directorate is sent to colleagues in planning as a request for Section 106 money.
15. Liaison between the place planning team and planning colleagues takes place on a regular basis to ensure that we are aware of future plans of projects. Thus ensuring that new housing developments are fully reflected in our strategic planning.
16. In addition to Section 106 monies, additional school places are created using Basic Need Funding. Dudley receives a capital grant from the DfE known as Basic Need that supports the capital requirement for providing new pupil places both in new or expanded maintained schools and in Free Schools or Academies and across both the primary and secondary school estate.
17. The authority provides data to the DfE in July of each year which explains the authority's current position, plan and projections for the future. (SCAP) The DfE use this data to determine the level of funding that the authority should be allocated to procure additional school places.
18. Under the direction of the Cabinet member and the Director of Children's Services, the responsibility for secondary sufficiency sits with the Strategic Place Planning Board.
19. The Strategic Place Planning Board meets on a regular basis and provides strategic direction to place planning and school organisation. A number of data streams are monitored on a regular basis by the board that in turn informs proposed action plans. These data streams include the number of pupils on roll at individual schools, admissions data, PAN's, the capacity available at schools, other school site information (for example, information about external play areas and car parking) and the future projections of pupils forecast to attend all schools.
20. Dudley uses the evidence available to determine the current capacity of schools, where hot-spots are going to occur and as a consequence where additional school places are required. Equally, the local authority also monitors where there is surplus space and where practical and possible will assist a school to reduce it.
21. The new School Place Planning Strategy is intended to move forward the way in which the LA engages with our schools and academies and to provide a way through the place planning challenges which we face over the next 5 years.
22. It is intended that the appendices will become a working plan that will be updated on an at least annual basis running in sync with the Place planning cycle and can form the basis of an update to People Leadership[p Team and elected members accordingly.

23. Dudley has seen a surge in birth rate in the past decade, this has primarily impacted on primary numbers. As a result of this increase a primary increase plan was implemented.
24. The peak of this bulge impacted on the 2016/17 admissions, and we are now seeing a decrease in primary places required. However, hitting the peak and then a decline has been a delicate balancing act. Putting too much permanent increase into the system would have resulted in a surplus of places at a primary level. Too much Surplus places have an impact on school budgets and in some cases on educational outcomes. To mitigate this we have added temporary bulge classes and additional places in areas where required, and will continue to do so.
25. In Dudley, and nationally there has also been an increase in in-year admissions to the authority which means that surplus places in non-admissions years are reaching saturation in some areas.
26. The working group and admissions are working hard to look at options for this issue, however we are restricted by infant class size legislation in key stage 1. As the bulge starts to pass through into key stage 2 this is less of an issue as class sizes are able to increase.
27. This is an issue that is not restricted to Dudley, but regionally and nationally too, and we regularly liaise with neighbouring authorities to look at how other authorities are dealing with the similar issues.
28. At a secondary level the bulge has impacted first upon the Brierley Hill Township. Plans are in place to increase places in this area by 600 places across two schools, The Wordsley School and the Crestwood School. Funding has been received through basic need funding in order to meet this demand in the Brierley Hill area. As the need increases in other townships the basic need funding will follow and plans considered as to how best to meet continuing demand.
29. In the Dudley North area the need for school places at a secondary level is hoped to be met by free school proposals, although these are still at an early planning stage.
30. Appendix 1 and 2 of the School Place Planning Strategic Plan detail the current plans for primary and secondary place planning in detail.

Finance

31. School places are funded through Basic Need Funding and Section 106 monies as detailed above.

Law

32. The 'Education and Inspections Act 2006' places a duty on local authorities to act as commissioners, rather than providers of school places. Local authorities are under a statutory duty to;

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33. The White paper 'The importance of teaching' states that the local authority has a key role to support parents and families through promoting a good supply of strong schools and should focus on supplying enough good school places rather than reducing surplus places.
34. The Academies Act 2010 enabled more schools to convert to Academy status without the need for a sponsor. The Education Act 2011 expands the programme to allow the establishment of 16 – 19 Academies and alternative provision (PRU) Academies.
35. The Education Act 2011 made changes to the arrangements for the establishment of new schools by introducing a presumption that when local authorities set up new schools they will be Academies or Free Schools. (Academy is the legal term which also includes Free Schools of all types, University Technical Colleges (UTC's) and some Studio Schools, including 16 to 19 and alternative provision (PRU) establishments.)

Equality Impact

36. This report does not conflict with the Council's Policy on equality.

Human Resources/Transformation

37. There are no direct implications as a result of this report.

Commercial Implications

38. There are no direct implications as a result of this report.

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List of Background Papers

Appendix 1: primary action plan

Appendix 2: secondary action plan

School Place Planning Strategic Plan (available on CMIS)