

Subject:	Brighton & Hove School Organisation Plan 2013 - 2017		
Date of Meeting:	10 March 2014		
Report of:	Executive Director of Children's Services		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Michael Nix	Tel: 29-0732
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

Note: The special circumstances for non-compliance with Council Procedure Rule 3, Access to Information Procedure Rule 5 and Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), (items not considered unless the agenda is open to inspection at least five days in advance of the meeting) were that in the light of information in this report about the allocation of secondary school places it would have been inappropriate to publish this information in advance of 3 March 2014, which was the national offer day in 2014 for all secondary school place offers as set out in the statutory School Admissions Code.

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the School Organisation Plan 2013 – 2017. The Committee is required to consider the Plan and make recommendations to the full Council, which has the authority to approve it.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Committee considers and comments upon the School Organisation Plan 2013 – 2017.
- 2.2 That the Committee recommends the Council at its meeting on 27 March 2014 to approve the Plan subject to any comments the Committee wishes to make.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The City Council has a statutory duty to secure sufficient, suitable school places for children of compulsory school age within its area. These places may be in any type of school, including local authority maintained schools, academies and free schools. With the introduction of Raising the Participation Age legislation, the Council also has a duty to secure sufficient suitable education and training provision for all young people aged 16 -19 and for those aged 20 - 24 with a Learning Difficulty Assessment in its area.
- 3.2 The School Organisation Plan focuses mainly on the duty to secure sufficient, suitable school places for children of compulsory school age. It includes forecasts of future pupil numbers in the primary and secondary school sectors,

the accommodation requirements arising from these forecasts, a broad outline of how these requirements might be met and the funding implications. The Plan also includes some consideration of other related issues.

3.3 The key messages of this School Organisation Plan include:

- The increase in new primary age pupils experienced over the last ten years appears to be reaching a peak and these numbers may begin to decline from 2016 onwards
- However, there will continue to be pressure on places in some parts of the city, most notably South Hove and Saltdean
- While there are sufficient primary places in the city overall, there continues to be a 'centre and periphery' issue with spare places occurring mainly in some schools around the edge of the city
- The numbers of new secondary age pupils begin to increase this year and will continue to increase throughout the rest of this decade and into the early part of the next
- As a result, in spite of additional places gained from the opening of King's School in September, it is estimated that before the end of this decade around 300 additional Year 7 places will be required across the city, or 1500 11 – 16 places in total, which is equivalent to another large secondary school
- As for the primary sector, there is a similar 'centre and periphery' issue and as a result there will be pressure on securing sufficient places in some secondary school catchment areas

3.4 Discussions are being held with school heads and governors to identify the best means of addressing the remaining primary places issues and the challenge to secure sufficient secondary school places. Because of the difficulties in identifying sites for new schools in the city, these are most likely to be met through a mixture of programmes including increasing the size of existing schools, although there is provision in the draft City Plan for a new six form entry secondary school at Toads Hole Valley. Under current government policy the Council would need to seek Academy or Free School sponsors for any new school.

3.5 Substantial funding will be required to meet the needs identified in this Plan. On 18 December 2013 the Secretary of State announced capital allocations to local authorities for the three year period 2014/15 to 2016/17. The allocations for Brighton & Hove are £3.9m for 2014/15, £12.0m for 2015/16 and £12.6m for 2016/17. This welcome recognition of the city's need for new school places provides a good basis for planning and securing new provision. However, similar allocations will be needed in the later years of this decade if we are to secure sufficient secondary school places for the growing number of secondary age students.

3.6 The Cross Party School Organisation Working Group considered and commented on the Plan in draft at its meeting on 4 February 2014.

3.7 The application of the secondary admissions procedures for 2014 has revealed significant pressures on the present admissions arrangements, based as they are on catchment areas and a system of random allocation. It is clear that these pressures will grow as the number of pupils reaching secondary age increases.

There is therefore an urgent need to review the current arrangements so that they may continue to offer high levels of certainty for children and families and the standards of clarity and transparency that are required by the statutory School Admissions Code. It is proposed to commence this review this year, although given the statutory requirements for consultation and determination (which would need to be completed by April 2015 i.e. eighteen months before any changes could be implemented), the earliest a change could take place would be for the academic year 2016/17. Based on the experience of previous such reviews it may not be possible to introduce new arrangements until 2017.

- 3.8 Our current analysis, drawing on the October 2013 schools' census of the number of Y5 children living in the Dorothy Stringer and Varndean Schools catchment area, shows there may be applicants living within the catchment in excess of the places currently available at the two schools in 2015. The current projection is that fewer than ten children are in excess of the current published admission numbers for the schools in this catchment. This analysis may change over time as different factors can affect the number of children seeking admission to secondary schools - such as the popularity of other schools out of catchment, the numbers joining the private sector, or families leaving or moving into catchment. The projected numbers for pupils requiring the availability of a place within catchment will be kept under close review. To address this issue the authority will consult with the two schools (Dorothy Stringer and Varndean) and, subject to this, in year variations to Published Admission Numbers for 2015, may be proposed in order to secure the number of places needed for pupils within catchment, if this remains necessary.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 The statutory duty means that the Council must ensure that arrangements are in place to secure sufficient school places. The Plan describes the steps being taken to consult with schools and others about options for securing sufficient places and progress with this will be overseen by the Cross Party Working Group and reported to Committee at future meetings. Alongside this the Council will need to consider whether the present secondary school admissions arrangements need to be changed in any way to ensure that available places are fully taken up. There is also regular dialogue with Department for Education (DfE) officials about the provision made through existing and potential new academies and free schools.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 This Plan has been drafted in consultation with the Cross Party School Organisation Working Group and with schools and this consultation will continue in order to identify specific projects to be included in future capital programmes.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Council is faced with significant challenges in securing sufficient school places for children of compulsory school age in the city. There remain some issues to be addressed in the primary sector and there are major challenges to be addressed in the secondary sector in the next five years and beyond. These challenges are intensified by the lack of suitable sites in the city and the fact that

many schools are already very large. Close dialogue and partnership working with schools and their governing bodies and the DfE will be essential to identify how the necessary new places can be provided.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The capital funding has been announced for 2014/15 to 2016/17 at £3.9m for 2014/15, £12.0m for 2015/16 for 2015/16 and £12.6m for 2016/17, and any proposed expansions to schools will have to be met from within these allocations.
- 7.2 The revenue funding implications will be that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) will include the funding for 3 -16 year old pupils based on the October pupil count preceding the relevant financial year i.e. October 2013 for 2014/15 funding, therefore when planning the schools' budgets, the funding for any expansion to a particular school will have to be calculated and identified in advance, in order that we can give schools the appropriate level of funding. This methodology is shared with the Schools Forum to ensure consistency of funding across schools.

Finance Officer Consulted: Name Andy Moore

Date: 31/01/14

Legal Implications:

- 7.3 There is no longer a statutory requirement that Local Authorities publish a School Organisation Plan. However as a matter of good practice the Council can continue to produce a plan, using it as a tool for the strategic planning of school places, thus helping to ensure that its statutory duty under section 14 of the Education Act 1996 to secure that there are sufficient and suitable places available for pupils in its area is fulfilled.
- 7.4 Any review of the Council's school admission arrangements would need to be carried out in accordance with the statutory processes set out in section 88 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and the School Admissions (Admissions Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) Regulations 2012. Proposed new arrangements would need to be determined by the Council eighteen months before the admission year to which they relate, having been out to full consultation with prescribed parties. Any proposed changes for the 2016/17 admission year would therefore need to be determined by 15 April 2015.
- 7.5 Paragraph 3.7 above refers to the possible need for in year variations to the Published Admission Numbers for individual schools. Once admission arrangements have been determined for a particular academic year they cannot be revised unless the admission authority considers there to have been a major change in circumstance (section 88E School Standards and Framework Act). Unlike most proposed variations there is no statutory requirement to refer a proposal to increase a school's PAN to the Schools Adjudicator for agreement, although the governing bodies of affected schools do have the right to object to any determined increase if this cannot be negotiated.

Lawyer Consulted:

Serena Kynaston

Date: 280214

Equalities Implications:

- 7.6 No Equality Impact Assessment has been completed in respect of this Plan. The Plan applies to all school age residents of the city and the Council's admissions policies, in accordance with the national Admissions Code, make specific provision for children with special educational needs and exceptional medical needs to ensure that their needs are met.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.7 Sustainable travel to school is most likely to be met if there is an appropriate spread of schools across the city so that as many children as possible can attend a local school and this is an aim of this Plan.
- 7.8 All new school buildings are required to meet high standards of energy efficiency and sustainability in their construction.

Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.9 School places planning is a high profile issue with significant reputational risk implications for the Council if members of the community feel that their expectations are not being met.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Draft School Organisation Plan 2013 - 2017

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

None

