

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>School Placements Sufficiency</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5 November 2020
<b>WARD</b>	None Specific;
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Director, Children's Services - Carol Cammiss

## **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

That there will be sufficient school places to meet statutory need.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the report and attached paper are noted and the committee makes any recommendations that it sees as appropriate.

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

The report and attached place sufficiency analysis paper considers the sufficiency of primary and secondary (including post 16) mainstream school places. A brief summary of the current SEND provision position is also provided.

The key primary education phase points are:

- There were sufficient places in the borough and all planning areas to meet Reception place needs in 2020.
- In Shinfield the new Alder Grove primary was necessary, and all local school places were allocated, to meet rising needs reflecting the impact of new housing development. Demand had risen in other areas where new housing developments are being built out (Arborfield, Wokingham Town West and Woodley).
- There are significant numbers of unfilled Reception places in other areas (the north of the borough, Earley, the South East, and Wokingham Town East) most of these areas have seen little recent house building.
- In the longer term there is a tension between the underlying population trend (decreasing) and the impact of new housing development (increasing numbers of children around major development locations). If this adjustment does not occur, children will need to travel further to access schools increasing traffic and congestion, working against climate change objectives and increasing pressure on the home to school budget with the council required to provide free transport for distances over 2 miles.
- There are continuing pressures in Key Stage 2 (Years 4 to 6), due to children moving into the borough, but sufficient capacity exists to meet current needs.
- The impact of Covid-19 on future rolls (through its impact on housebuilding and house sales) is unknown, but is expected (based on what we know about the impact on the housing market) to depress future demand compared to projected requirements.

The key secondary (11 to 16) points are:

- On offer day 2020 it was necessary to offer 25 additional places at the Emmbrook School, to ensure that all children with “on time” applications received offers, with one school having surplus places (the boys only Forest School).
- By the start of the academic year in September 2020 the number of children requiring secondary school places had fallen compared to the number on offer day. Parents had withdrawn sufficient children from the admissions process (many to independent schools) for there to be three schools with available places, Emmbrook School, Waingels College and the Forest School. Emmbrook and Waingels had 10 places each, while the Forest had over 130 unfilled places. Clearly this concentration of surplus capacity in one all boys school has potential consequences for that school and the availability of places for girls in future.
- Projections indicate that additional Year 7 places will be required in the near future, and it may be necessary to create additional capacity in other year groups, if projected numbers materialise. Year 7 demand will then fall, in line with fall in primary roll numbers from 2024 onwards, back to current levels after 2026/27.
- In the longer term the ONS 2018 base population projections indicate growth until the middle of the next decade, and falling demand after that point.
- New housebuilding will continue to be a key driver in the demand for school places. This influence could be increased by the government's plans to increase housebuilding.

#### On Post 16:

- The immediate challenge relates to the presence of two 11 to 16 schools, in a borough where 11 to 18 education is the norm.
- Projections indicate there will be a need for additional capacity in the near future (possibly from 2022/23).
- Capacity could be provided at:
  - Existing school sixth forms
  - Local Colleges
  - By opening a new sixth form
- Any new provision should work with existing provision to help:
  - Promote higher standards with an increased proportion of students moving to Level 3 courses (e.g. A and T levels).
  - Be deliverable within the national funding arrangements for 11 to 16 education.
  - Meet students’ preferences.
  - Promote wider Council objectives, including for reduced traffic congestion and carbon neutrality.
- It must be noted that while the Council has leverage, other bodies (school trusts and local colleges in particular) are independent of the Council and may create sufficient provision, without reference to the Council or other local stakeholders.

#### Special Education Needs and Disabilities:

- Numbers of children with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) have increased above the rate of change in the underlying population. Much of this growth has been in the 16 to 25 age group.
- Particularly strong growth has been seen in the number of children with EHCPs for Autism (ASD) and Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH).

- A particular issue is the number of children and young people placed out of the borough in expensive independent and non-maintained special schools and specialist post 16 institutions.
- The Council is working to reduce this reliance on out of borough provision through the expansion of the Addington School and a new special school in partnership with Reading BC and the DfE in Winnersh.
- Further provision may be required, to reduce further the reliance on out of borough provision. However, the range of needs and the degree of specialism commonly seen in Special Schools points to a need for a full provision analysis before agreeing additional capacity.

## **Background**

The Council has a statutory duty under Section 13 the Education Act 1996 to ensure there are sufficient school places for children of statutory school age. It has additional duties under Sections 15ZA and 18A of the Education Act 1996 and Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 to ensure there are sufficient places for students age 16 to 18.

Under the Children and Families Act 2014 the council has duties to arrange education for children and young people with Special Education Needs aged up to 25 years old.

The initial admission into schools is managed by the Council through a co-ordinated process. This is for Reception, Year 3 (for Junior schools) and Year 7. The co-ordinated process works to a statutory timetable culminating in a national offer (16<sup>th</sup> April 2020 for primary Reception classes and 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020 for Year 7 admissions in 2020). However, the Council only sets admissions arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools. Voluntary Aided schools and Academies (including Free Schools) set their own admissions arrangements (including the oversubscription criteria).

The council has no duty to plan to ensure that there are sufficient places, but planning is a practical necessity to avoid the risks associated with reactive provision. The Council has strategies in place for the Primary and Secondary school phases.

The current primary school strategy was approved by the Council's Executive in June 2018 for the period 2018 to 2028. It noted that it was likely that there would be static or declining rolls in some parts of the borough and increasing demand in areas of housing growth.

The current secondary strategy was agreed by the Council's Executive in July 2017 for the period 2017 to 2020. This strategy is due to be replaced this year, and this report and attached paper gives the Overview and Scrutiny Committee an opportunity to comment on matters that will be raised in the new strategy.

## **Analysis of Issues**

### **Demographic change**

After a period of increasing growth in the primary school age population, the number of children admitted to primary school Reception classes has declined since 2017. This reflects a fall in the number of children born to borough resident mothers since the 2012/13 academic year. Births in 2018/19 recovered to the numbers seen in 2011/12, but until 2019/20 data is available, it is not possible to see if this is an anomaly or the beginning of a new period of growth.

Population projections by single year of age are provided for the Borough by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The latest version is based on 2018 data and extends to 2043. This projects continued low birth numbers throughout the period. As a consequence the projections shows falling numbers of primary school age children throughout the period, with an increased number of secondary age children (until the

middle of the next decade) with declining numbers from that point until (and beyond) the end of the decade.

### **Housing numbers**

New homes are primarily family housing. While the population projection underpins the justification for around 500 per year of these new homes, expected housebuilding rates are currently over twice that rate at 1,200 homes per year (a figure derived from recent surveys of developers). Consequently, while the population projection points to a falling demand for schools, the delivery programme points to additional children (at least in development areas) on top of the ONS projections.

### **Planning policy**

Currently new schools are being delivered in line with the Council’s commitments made under the existing Local Plan adopted in 2010. The Local Plan is currently subject to an ongoing update programme. This will be critical in establishing where new homes will go. The number of new homes is set in accordance with a national housing need formula, which the Council has limited discretion to amend. Currently the Council is compelled to allow the construction of homes both because of shortfalls derived from the ONS household projection and because homes are judged to be relatively unaffordable. A revised version of this formula is being consulted on, which could raise the target number of homes to approximately three times the figure derived from the ONS household projection. A more wide ranging consultation on fundamental reforms to the planning system is also underway. Again, it is likely this would increase the level of development in the borough, if implemented.

### **Admissions specific factors.**

Cross border movement is important for Wokingham schools, with significant numbers of children entering certain Wokingham schools (in the secondary sector in Earley, Woodley and Shinfield) and Wokingham resident children being admitted to schools in other areas (in the secondary sector to non-selective schools in Bracknell and selective schools in Reading and Slough).

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION**

***The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	N/A	N/A	N/A

Following Financial Year (Year 3)	N/A	N/A	N/A
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<b>Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision</b>
This report and attached paper are concerned with current place sufficiency.  Recommended actions will be developed and financial implications assessed, taking account of any recommendations the Overview and Scrutiny Committee choose to make.

<b>Cross-Council Implications</b>
N/A

<b>Public Sector Equality Duty</b>
Please confirm that due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty has been taken and if an equalities assessment has been completed or explain why an equalities assessment is not required.

<b>List of Background Papers</b>
N/A

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