

## **Cabinet - 8 February 2017**

### **Proposed implementation of the Five-year Sufficiency Strategy Plan**

**Portfolio:** Councillor R Burley

**Service:** Children's Services

**Wards:** All

**Key decision:** Yes

**Forward plan:** Yes

#### **1. Summary**

- 1.1 The Five-Year Sufficiency Strategy Plan sets out the context and approach to Pupil Place Planning in Walsall over the forthcoming years and provides data on current and projected pupil numbers to inform the future pattern and configuration of school places and identify where school expansion and additional places are required.
- 1.2 The document details the demand for pupil places and how places are predicted. It outlines the principles and criteria by which additional places and school expansions are managed, highlighting how the Council will use capital resources to meet future demand for school places.
- 1.3 This document will be reviewed in its entirety on an annual basis and at the end of each school term. It is intended to be a working document and relevant data will therefore be amended as it changes throughout the year.
- 1.4 Cabinet members have already received a copy of the Plan. A copy is also available on the Committee information pages of the Council's website and have been deposited in political group rooms.

#### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That Cabinet approve and adopt the Five-Year Sufficiency Strategy Plan as a working document detailing the approach to Pupil Place Planning in Walsall.

#### **3. Report Details**

- 3.1 To meet its statutory responsibilities Walsall Council needs to ensure it has an understanding of where the pressures on school places will come from; these pressures include changes in the population, housing developments and cross border migration.

- 3.2 The projections of future demand outlined in this report are based on birth data sourced from the Office of National Statistics, historical pupil retention data from the School Census, pupil yield from housing developments obtained from the Council's Planning Department and inward and outward migration data.
- 3.3 In order to plan pupil places effectively the Council must be open and transparent and communicate the details on the pressures on school places in each planning area to schools, parents and the community as a whole. The Council must also manage expectations and avoid any adverse impact on schools regarding school development proposals.

#### **4. Council Priorities**

- 4.1 The Local Authority has a statutory duty to assess the local need for primary and secondary school places and to ensure that sufficient places are available for children and young people in the area. Despite an increasingly diverse range of school governance arrangements this remains a Local Authority responsibility. Local Authorities are tasked with having transparent and robust processes in place to forecast pupil numbers and ensure that there will be sufficient school places in the right areas to meet these forecasts.
- 4.2 The proposal supports the Council's corporate priorities, which are:
- Lifelong health, wealth and happiness – we are an efficient and effective council.
  - Sustainable change and improvement for all – our communities are engaged and sustainable.
  - Safe, resilient and prospering communities, staff are empowered and quick to adapt.

#### **5. Risk Management**

- 5.1 The adoption of the Five Year Sufficiency Strategy will enable Walsall Council to predict the demand for pupil places and manage school expansions in the Borough.

#### **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1 There are no immediate or specific financial implications linked with the strategy however where additional places are required at schools in the borough, costs will need to be determined to meet Walsall Council's duty to provide sufficient school places.
- 6.2 The Local Authority is allocated a ring-fenced capital grant, via the Department for Education (DfE) to provide additional places in schools. Funding is allocated based on the LA's annual School Capacity Return which details the forecast number of school places required.
- 6.3 A further funding stream available to Local Authorities to support the provision of additional school places is Section 106 capital funding received via housing

developers. Where there is a need for additional school places arising from new housing developments, the planning process can be used to ask the developer to make a capital contribution towards the additional school place provision.

## **7. Legal Implications**

- 7.1 The statutory process for expanding a maintained school is set out in the School Organisation (Prescribed Alternations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013, which came into force in January 2014.

## **8. Property Implications**

- 8.1 There are currently no specific property implications arising from this report, however should a school selected for expansion require it there may be some alteration or building work. This will need to be managed on a school by school basis.

## **9. Staffing Implications**

- 9.1 Additional teaching and support staff may be required should a school require expansion to provide for any additional spaces and pupils.

## **10. Equality implications**

- 10.1 It is of crucial importance to the achievement of the Council's strategic objectives that the young people of Walsall are able to access the right provision to meet their needs in order to achieve appropriate qualifications, progressing to employment, and/or training and make a positive contribution within the Borough in the future. The strategy document sets out the Local Authority's plans to enable it to meet its statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places for every child who is resident within the borough. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed.

## **11. Consultation**

- 11.1 A period of formal consultation (in accordance with the requirements of the School Organisation "Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools - England Regulations - 2013"), on the Strategy document commenced on Monday 12 December 2016. The original end date for the consultation was 9 January 2017. In response to a request from Headteachers the consultation period was extended to 5.00pm Friday 13 January 2017.

- 11.2 Summary of Consultation Responses – 5 Year Sufficiency Strategy Plan.

There were 9 responses received by the close of the consultation period: 7 from Walsall Secondary School Headteachers and Principals (1 in their capacity as Chair of the Walsall Association of Secondary Heads), 1 from a Chair of Governors of a Walsall secondary school and 1 combined response

made by the Headteacher and 2 members of the Governing Body of a Walsall Primary School.

The points raised in the consultation responses are summarised below:

All of the responses received from secondary schools express concerns about the proposal by an independent sponsor to locate a 950 place secondary free school in the Blakenall area, including:

- Whether there is sufficient demand in the Blakenall area of Walsall for an additional 950 place school.
- The potential negative impact on existing Walsall secondary schools in terms of funding, pupil numbers and teaching standards.
- 1 respondent commented that the opening of a new school in the area would adversely affect the sustainability of their own school.
- That in recent years there have been school closures in Walsall due to surplus capacity.
- That it would be more cost effective to fully utilise current capacity (including former school buildings) or expand existing secondary schools if necessary.

Several responses raised points relating to the 5 Year Strategy Sufficiency Plan document and consultation process:

- Some respondents believe that the consultation process was too short and poorly timed, giving them insufficient time to digest the document and respond adequately.
- 2 responses highlight a small number of inaccuracies and typographical errors in the document.

A detailed response was received from the Headteacher and 2 members of the Governing Body of a Walsall Voluntary Controlled primary school. The main points of the response are summarised below:

- The school believes that there is sufficient local demand for school places to justify the school expanding from a 1-5 to 2 FE school, highlighting the close proximity of a new 170 home housing development and the number of families new to the UK who are locating to the area.
- The school is a popular school, with a waiting list, who received over 100 applications for 45 places in the reception 2016 admission round.
- The school believes that it is popular with parents and in a survey conducted by the school, 99% of respondents stated their satisfaction with the school.
- The school has made several adjustments to the site to help facilitate an increase in capacity.

- It is the school's view that an increase in PAN could be achieved in a cost effective manner and provide value for money.
- The school is rated "Good" by OFSTED.
- Moving to a PAN of 60 would eliminate mixed age teaching at the school

The response also raised concerns surrounding the consultation process; communication, timing and transparency.

The response concludes with a proposal on how the school believes the Council could move forward with their request.

- 11.3 In response to the respondent's feedback about the consultation process including its timing and length, the Council will commence a further 5 week (4 week in term time) formal consultation on 31 January 2017.

### **Background papers**

- School Admissions Code (2014)
- Information for Parents about admissions to Primary Schools in September 2017
- Information for Parents about admissions to Secondary Schools in September 2017
- Parents Guide to Online Admissions – A Step-by-step Guide
- Advice on the Admission of Summer Born Children
- Statutory Guidance for School Expansions
- Primary Fair Access Protocol
- Secondary Fair Access Protocol
- SEND Code of Practice
- Home to School Transport Policy

### **Author**

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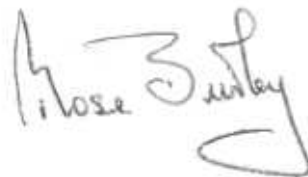
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Signed:  
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Executive Director



Councillor R Burley  
Portfolio Holder

Date: 17 January 2017

Date: 30 January 2017