

5 January, 2016

Proposed Primary School Expansions - School Capacity

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr Towe – Learning Skills & Apprenticeships

Executive Summary:

The report explains the purpose of the school estate in Walsall and sets out the principles that underpin the approach to managing the estate.

The report then provides detail on the process followed to identify and approve 4 school expansions in Walsall that are required to ensure the Council meets its statutory requirement to provide sufficient school places. These four schools are:

- Beacon
- Greenfields
- Kings Hill
- St Giles

The report also identifies the factors considered when progressing schools for enlargement and the subsequent decision-making process and related statutory consultation requirements.

Resources to support school expansions are provided by the Department for Education via Basic Need Capital funding and are calculated based on annual school capacity (SCAP) return.

£4.407m is available for 2016/17 and £4.101m for 2017/18 to support the required school enlargements.

The basic needs funding can also be used to support Special Education Needs and Pupil Referral Unit provision.

Reason for scrutiny:

To clearly set out the process followed to identify and approve school expansion schemes to provide additional capacity to cope with an increase in number of pupil places required.

Recommendations:**That:**

1. Scrutiny consider and comment on the process followed to identify and approve school expansion schemes to provide additional capacity to cope with an increase in number of pupil places required.

Background papers:

Cabinet report February 2014 – The School Estate

Resource and legal considerations:

The Council is required to meet its statutory obligations to provide sufficient school places for the children and young people of Walsall.

Citizen impact:

The proposals are intended to ensure that all children and young people in Walsall are able to secure a pupil place.

Environmental impact:

All the proposed enlargement will be subject to the required planning requirement including consideration of environmental impact.

Performance management:

All school enlargements will be subject to robust project and performance management.

Equality Implications:


The proposed enlargements are proposed on the primary planning areas assessed as work needing additional pupil places and will enable the Council to ensure places for all pupils.

Consultation:

The report outlines the consultation process for school enlargement with the consultation commencing on 7th December 2015 for school enlargement proposed for September 2016.

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1. Purpose of the report

To clearly set out the process followed to identify and approve school expansion schemes to provide additional capacity to cope with an increase in number of pupil places required.

2. The School Estate

The primary purpose of the school estate is to support the best possible educational outcomes for all children for all children and young people. An effective and efficient school estate is vital to ensure the Council and its partners can deliver on its vision 'better together for children' in Walsall, so that it is the very best place for children to live, learn and grow up and a place where children are safe, happy, healthy and with a bright future.

Central to our ambition is the desire that every child should go to a good or outstanding school, have access to the best teaching and benefit from schools and other providers working in partnership, knowing and sharing best practice within and across Walsall more widely.

The world is changing fast and expectations are rising rapidly, matched by an increasingly diverse education system. Nationally and internationally we have to achieve a more educated and skilled workforce and cannot afford to lose the potential of any young person. Our role is to be ambitious, focussed and strategic in championing the needs and priorities of children and young people living, learning and growing up in Walsall.

To support this ambition the Council has adopted a set of principles and an approach to ensure the most effective and efficient school estate possible in Walsall. The Council's approach to the school estate will be informed by:

- A robust partnership approach to changes and developments within the estate to build greater capacity in the system
- The raising of educational standards as a key driver for any changes to the school estate
- Supporting greater choice for parents and families
- A commitment to supporting vulnerable and children and reducing inequality
- Ensuring the estate and any changes make the most effective and efficient use of resources
- Ensuring every child has fair access to schools
- The desire for a system that delivers a range of options and programme pathways for all children and young people
- Ensuring sustainability and environmental concerns are considered including by helping reducing the overall distances that children and young people and families have to travel to school
- An approach that puts children and young people and their communities at the heart of related decision-making including for change to individual school
- That supports and is supported by the Council's developing admissions policy

In considering which schools to propose for enlargement a number of factors are considered, including;

- Location relevant to need
- Parental preference and popularity of schools
- Site related issues
- Cost efficiency
- Ofsted rating
- Reducing mixed age teaching
- Boundary issues
- Chosen schools appetite for increasing numbers
- Other relevant/contextual information

And decisions need to be considered within and meet the DfE set financial envelope.

3. The process for identifying the demand for school places and which schools to enlarge

School Census October 2014 and January/May 2015

- Completion of the School Census, which confirms the number of schools in Walsall and the number of children that are on roll at those schools and available places.

School Capacity (SCAP) Report June/July 2015

- The School Capacity (SCAP) Report is completed for the Department of Education. From the SCAP return potential shortfalls of places can be highlighted and potential solutions identified to ensure the local authority meets its statutory duty to provide sufficient pupil places for all Walsall resident children.

September 2015

- Report to Children's Services Capital Asset Programme Board (29/09/15) – identifying pupil pressures and relevant planning areas.
- Following further review of the SCAP return a long list of schools was developed which detailed every school in the planning areas requiring additional pupil places, these schools were then reviewed jointly by colleagues from school admissions and integrated facilities management to determine whether they would be viable for a school expansion. Schools were removed from the long list for a range of reasons including current size of the schools, (if already with a PAN of 90 or more) popularity of the schools, schools with waiting lists, building sizes. The short list of schools then fell out of the process.
- Schools on the short list were then contacted and a meeting arranged with the head teacher to discuss the possibility of expansion and undertake a site visit.
- Report to Children's Services Capital Asset Programme Board (20/10/15) – report identifying the ten schools that were going to be subject of further consideration.

School meetings and site visits October/November 2015

- Meetings were held with the short list school head teachers to assess the school interest in the option to expand the school.
- Discussions were then held with Integrated Facilities Management (IFM) who visited the site to determine approximate costs for expansion and the capabilities of the site at present.

Report to Children Services Capital Asset Programme Board

- A further report (26.11.15) was tabled detailing all the schools on the shortlist along with comments from IFM and the relevant head teacher.

Costs developed - December

- A meeting was held between the School Organisation Manager and the Customer Programme Officer from Integrated Facilities Management to discuss approximate costings for each of the schools that were on the shortlist. These costs were based on a desktop exercise and are tentative estimates which provide a guide for the amount that would be required for each school to expand and increase their PAN by 15.
- A final list of the four schools Beacon, Greenfields, Kings Hill and St Giles was agreed that considerate feedback from the school, size of the school, costs to enlarge, work required, potential disruption to the education offer and time required to complete the work.

Consultations begin December 2015

- A consultation on the proposed admission arrangements commenced on Monday 7 December 2015. The consultation will run for a total of 8 weeks, giving six full weeks of term time consultation and propose the enlargement of four schools across the borough.

January/February 2016

- The formal statutory consultation process (required for significant changes to schools) has four stages, which are detailed in the table below:

Stage 1	Publications Monday 4 January 2016	Statutory proposal published – 1 day
Stage 2	Representation (formal consultation) Tuesday 5 – Friday 29 January 2016	Must be 4 weeks, as prescribed in regulations.
Stage 3	Decision Thursday 4 February 2016	The decision maker (usually the LA) must decide proposals within 2 months of the end of the representation period or decision defaults to School Adjudicator (OSA) Any appeal to the adjudicator must be made within 4 weeks of the decision.
Stage 4	Implementation March – August 2016	No prescribed timescale, but must be as specified in the published statutory notice, subject to any modifications agreed by the decision maker.

- Although there is no longer a prescribed 'pre-publication' consultation period for school enlargements there is a strong expectation on LA's to consult interested parties in developing their proposal prior to publication as part of their duty under public law to act rationally and take into account all relevant considerations. Schools will also need to ensure that they have the consent of the site trustees and other relevant religious authorities. The representation period starts on the date of publication of the proposal and must last four weeks; during this period, any person or organisation can submit comments on the proposal to the LA, which will be taken into account by the decision maker.
- In order to permanently expand these schools from 2017, the council will need to consult on the proposed admission numbers and cabinet will need to determine the admission arrangements. The final decision on the proposal to expand the schools will be made at the Cabinet Meeting on 4 February 2016, where the item entitled September 2017 Primary School Expansion Scheme will be discussed.
- In previous years related consultation reports have been to cabinet on multiple occasions, however this is no longer a requirement and therefore it is intended to only take to cabinet when required on 3 February 2016 following the formal four-week consultation process.

4. Financial Information

The Basic Need Capital Grant is allocated to the Local Authority by the Department of Education and is a calculation based on the SCAP return.

£4.407m is available for 2016/17 and £4.101m for 2017/18 to support required school enlargement. The Basic Need funding can also be used to support both SEN and PRU provision.

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