

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee held on Monday 3 July 2017 at 6.00pm in Meeting Room G3/4, Addenbrook House, Ironmasters Way, Telford, TF3 4NT 7

Present: Councillors S Barnes, E A Clare, J A Francis, E J Greenaway, K Guy (Chair), J Pinter, and co-optees and Mrs C Healy and Mrs L Fowler

Also Present: Cllr Shirley Reynolds, Cabinet Member for Education & Skills; J Collins, Assistant Director Education and Corporate Parenting; E Smith, Service Delivery Manager – School Organisation and Traded Services, J Tangye, Democratic & Scrutiny Services Officer.

CYPSC-01 Apologies for Absence

Cllrs J Jones, H Rhodes, and K Tomlinson and co-optees Mrs S Fikeis, Mrs C Morgan, Mrs S Osman, Mrs M Ward.

CYPSC-02 Declarations of Interest

None

CYPSC-03 SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN 2017-2022

The Chair welcomed the Assistant Director: Education and Corporate Parenting and asked him to introduce the item on school organisation. The Assistant Director provided an overview of how the plan had been developed, noting that the process was not new; the Council continually anticipated where there was demand for provision; projections were sent to Department for Education (DfE) to ensure funding was based on accurate projections. He commented that planning for school places was an inexact science and a difficult process but that Telford & Wrekin had a good record of producing accurate forecasts.

The Service Delivery Manager (SDM) for School Organisation presented a detailed update on the process involved in school planning and reported that the plan was strategic and sat within the vision that TWC will ensure a good standard of educational provision across the Borough. She stated that they worked within a rapidly changing landscape with the advancement of Academies and Free schools and meeting central government policies such as provision of sufficient places for the 30 hour childcare offer. One of the key objectives was to close the attainment gap for disadvantaged children.

The SDM outlined the principles by which the Council proposed to meet future demand

- Ensuring flexibility in design to allow for curriculum development and delivery;
- Future proofing by allowing for population growth in future years. This could take the form of ensuring a minimum of 2FE primary school site on new developments where relevant;

- Working collaboratively with other organisations, such as Free Schools, Academy Trusts and other education providers, who operated good and outstanding schools to provide sufficient education accommodation
- Being supportive of collaborative arrangements to deliver provision with developers, subject to agreed specifications;
- Seeking to maximise education contributions from developments in order to invest in education infrastructure. Delivering permanent buildings of good quality and not seek quick fixes, only using mobile classrooms in exceptional circumstances or on a temporary basis
- Ensuring that, wherever possible, new school places were provided within a 'good' or 'outstanding' setting;
- Managing the implications of new school places on existing schools;
- Working closely with parents and local communities, responding to demand and local feedback;
- Co-locating schools and other community facilities on the same site on new housing development;
- Providing value for money school briefs that minimised future liabilities for suitability and maintenance and were flexible with regard to future adaptation;
- Achieving efficiencies in both design and procurement;
- Creating school buildings that would serve local children and be a focus for communities for several generations, using architecture sympathetic to the area in which they were located.

Funding

It was noted that the provision of school places was funded by capital receipts, DfE annual formulaic Basic Need funding and Housing development section 106 contributions. Capital receipts resulted from mergers or relocations of schools and the sale of any excess land; the DfE Formulaic Basic Need was an allocation made bi-annually to all Local Authorities to target pupil place priorities. For Telford & Wrekin the allocation for 2017-2020 was £23.8m; broken down into £9,242,464 for primary school places and £14,609,513 for secondary. The s.106 contribution from developers was always secured where possible.

It was reported that it was approximately 300,000 to build a new classroom and therefore expansion of established schools was normally prioritised over new building. Thomas Telford was potentially putting forward a Free School proposal for the centrally funded Free Schools programme.

The Officer detailed the methodology underpinning the forecast which included overall projections for primary, secondary and special schools including data from the primary and secondary schools census, borough wide projections, housing projections and data on completed new housing developments. The projections for the Borough were a snapshot of pupils taken twice within the school year accompanied by a look at the number of homes that were being developed. However it was noted that the information fluctuated because for example, permission could be granted for a development of new homes but these could remain unbuilt for years; families could move into/out of the area.

Overall, a projected rise in pupil numbers was shown in primary age children of over 400 pupils by 2022. Members noted that this was a result of the inclusion of predicted housing development over the period totalling 4,727 dwellings (spread over the 5 year period), and

also the increases indicated from the Primary Care Trust records of known children aged 0-5 years. North Telford was highlighted as a pressure point.

Overall a projected rise in pupil numbers was shown for secondary age children of over 2,000 pupils by 2022. This was as a result of larger primary numbers filtering through to the secondary schools. Members noted that this, coupled with housing projections showed a potential shortfall of school places by 2018/19 although currently there was sufficient capacity. Members noted that it may be necessary to explore the possibility of free school places in the future to help relieve the pressure.

For Special School places, the Officer reported that the number of school age pupils was set to increase due to a combination of an increase in the birth rate and continuing housing development. If the proportion of children requiring special school places to meet their needs remained the same, then the number of special school places needed would increase. At present special schools within the Borough were largely full with very few surplus places available. It was noted that s.106 developer contributions were not easy to secure for special schools due to admittance of pupils from across the Borough rather than local to any particular housing development. Members were informed that it was likely that the Council would have to submit a business case for special school expansion to try and gain funding from the Education Funding Agency.

Early Years Provision

There were currently two Council maintained nursery schools operating within the Borough and a further 25 nurseries operating as part of the Telford & Wrekin primary school. It was noted that the Council was committed to maintaining sufficient places of good quality early years provision. In June 2017 a 'Childcare Sufficiency Assessment' was carried out to assess provision of the 30 hour childcare offer across the Borough. The sufficiency survey would be regularly repeated to enable the Council to encourage provision in areas of identified need.

77% of eligible disadvantaged 2-year olds currently accessed free childcare. The Council would be working to encourage more eligible parents to access this offer in order to ensure as many parents as possible accessed the provision they were entitled to.

Members noted that the new Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme had been successful in delivering increases in school places. Schools had been designed with the potential to expand by 10% as and when the need arose.

Members raised the following points:

- It had been shown that there was an increase in school places right across the Borough, as detailed in the report, however, with expansion in schools like Burton Borough and Hadley Learning Community, the Committee wanted to know how the additional places aligned with the localities. Furthermore, the Committee was interested to know how the vision 'local places for local children' would be managed with families from outside of Telford & Wrekin – the Officer informed the Committee that the catchment areas were drawn along Telford & Wrekin boundaries to give first priority to pupils living within the borough.
- There had been ongoing concerns raised by residents in Lawley about Lawley Village Primary Academy and Lawley Primary School which were both heavily oversubscribed. At Lawley Village Primary Academy, children who had a sibling in the school had been

allocated places elsewhere because the Academy was full. The Academy had announced it was changing its oversubscription criteria for the academic year 2018/19 to raise the rank of children with a sibling in the Academy. However, the Council had advised against this change as it would allow additional pupils into the school who were out of the catchment area. The Council had negotiated with Lawley Village Primary Academy about the opening of a Year 3/4 class ahead of the original timescale to ease pressure on demand for school places in the area to add 15 additional places in each of these year groups for September. The Officer confirmed that there were still places available in this class for September 2017.

- It was noted that there were three planning areas in Telford on which school organisation was based, which meant that there should be a place for all children within 2 miles for primary age children and 3 miles for secondary age children within that area. The Committee queried whether having planning areas was the best way of allocating school places and suggested that where parents worked was also an important factor.
- The Committee asked whether housing developers were meeting their obligations under s.106 where contributions had been agreed. It was noted that the contributions were not index-linked and that the developments could take years to be built and therefore the value of the contribution was often diminished. Furthermore there was a question of whether s.106 money was being used for its original purpose, for the particular locality rather than being used in a different area.
- Members asked about parent engagement in School Organisation and it was noted that engagement and consultation with parent groups was undertaken where significant changes to catchment areas were proposed.
- Members raised a concern about the demand for Special School places and whether the Council had a solution. It was noted that the Bridge School was a highly popular provision and that there were proposals to reconfigure the school to make it more cost effective. The new Group Manager for SEND had been developing plans to upskill staff in mainstream schools to enable support for children with special educational needs.

See Appendix 1: for questions and answers raised following the committee meeting.

CYPSC-04 Work programme

The Committee reviewed the Terms of Reference as delegated by Full Council on 25 May 2017 and endorsed by the Scrutiny Management Board.

The Work Programme suggestions for 2017/18 had been considered by the Scrutiny Management Board on 20 June 2017 and referred to the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee to decide which issues should be included in the Committee's Work Programme. It was acknowledged that four formal meetings had been allocated for the municipal year, although this did not include any informal or sub-group meetings which could be held to gather evidence as part of a review, briefing meetings or regional/external scrutiny meetings.

It was noted that there should be some flexibility in the work programme to allow for important issues that emerged during the year. The Committee agreed to:

- Consider youth unemployment and NEETS via email and to raise concerns if Members identified issues from the information/ data that would be collated and

circulated.

- That it was important to hear a progress update on the in-depth review of Multi-agency working against CSE that was completed in May 2016.
- Ofsted Improvement Plan – following Ofsted’s Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers 2016. An annual update was agreed for February 6th meeting.
- Education attainment would be monitored on an ongoing basis.

The meeting ended at 7.15pm

Chairman:

Date:

Appendix 1

Further to the meeting; the following questions were raised by Members and a response received from the Officer:

A concern was raised about the 150 extra places at Burton Borough which would raise expectations for the residents of Muxton and put pressure on places especially with all the new building in and around Newport.

Confirmation was sought on what class sizes the extra places at Burton Borough School would mean and also assurance that the 150 places would only go to pupils in Newport. There was a concern that more pupils from outside of the area would only increase the major traffic issues.

In answer to the point raised, it was noted that the planned additional 150 places at Burton Borough would add 30 pupil places to each of the five year groups. As the catchment area changed from September 2018 priority for these places would then be given to pupils in the Newport area. It was anticipated that as the new housing developments were built and sold Burton Borough School would fill with pupils from this area. In the meantime any remaining places at the school would be available to any pupil who expressed a preference for a place, in line with the school's admissions criteria. Residents of Muxton would still be able to apply for places at any school in the borough for their children, although their catchment school would be Telford Priory from September 2018.