

8 March 2016		ITEM: 7
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Pupil Place Plan (2016-2020)		
Report of: Janet Clark, Strategic Lead - Operations, Resources and Libraries Unit		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key	
Accountable Head of Service: David Archibald, Interim Director of Children's Services		
Accountable Director: David Archibald, Interim Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

The Authority has undertaken to publish an annual Pupil Place Plan (PPP) and the 2016 to 2020 version is available as a draft for discussion.

The Pupil Place Plan gives information about the supply of school places in the Authority and forecasts pupil numbers for the next five years, setting the context of the provision of school places in the Authority.

The Pupil Place Planning Sub Group, which is made up of head teachers, governors and Local Authority representatives requested for the PPP document to remain in its current format because it provides a clear and concise picture of pupil place planning across the Authority.

1. Recommendations:

1.1 That the comments of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Pupil Place Plan and the draft forecasts be noted.

2. Introduction and Background:

2.1 Thurrock Council has a statutory duty to provide a school place for every child living in its area of responsibility, who is of school age and whose parents want their child educated in the state funded sector.

2.2 To aid meeting this statutory duty, the Authority undertook to publish an annual PPP. This document is used by many interested parties, including potential school sponsors and developers of new dwellings.

- 2.3 As population demographics are dynamic, it is necessary to continually review and update pupil place forecasts. Pupil place requirements are reviewed several times during the year and an annual report is published with the latest forecasts.
- 2.4 The latest draft PPP for the period 2016 to 2020 is attached for comment. The PPP gives information about the supply of school places in the Authority and forecasts pupil numbers for the next five years, with information on the changing context within which planning takes place.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The context within which the Council is required to plan school places is becoming increasingly complex and Thurrock Council has robust processes in place. We have a PPP team in place that meets every 2 weeks. The group is made up of officers from the PPP team, Finance, Admissions, Awards & Benefits, Transport & Early Years. This group reviews current positions, issues and forecasts. This allows the Authority to take the necessary action at the earliest opportunity to increase school places when required.
- 3.2 When schools become academies they are able to increase their numbers without agreement from the Authority within proscribed limits. The Authority is not permitted to open a new school without a competitive competition and the presumption is in favour of Free Schools, which take on average 3 years to bring to fruition.
- 3.3 During the last few years the Council has experienced a significant increase in the number of in - year applications from families moving into the Borough. The unprecedented number of applications for places in all year groups made during the academic year from families unknown to the Borough is very difficult to manage. Many of these families are arriving in Thurrock from London and abroad.
- 3.4 Thurrock Council is in a good position by having built strong working relationships with its schools and academies, to accommodate these large increases through carrying out a number of school expansions and the building of our first 5FE primary school (Harris Mayflower Academy) in conjunction with Harris Federation and the Education Funding Agency (EFA) in West Thurrock.
- 3.5 Thurrock is made up of a number of school planning areas, five for the primary sector: Aveley, Ockendon and Purfleet, Grays, Tilbury, Corringham and Stanford-Le-Hope and the Rural area. There are three in the secondary sector: West, Central and East, these larger planning areas provide more flexibility when considering pupil placement.
- 3.6 The Harris Primary Academy Mayflower new build will be ready for occupation in September 2016. This will be our first 5 forms of entry primary school in Thurrock. The school opened in September 2014 in temporary accommodation.

- 3.7 The primary phase forecasts in the 5 year plan are calculated on the basis of known data regarding live births in Thurrock, the number of children already on roll in schools and the anticipated child yield from proposed housing developments in the planning system. However, our experience over the last three years of the scale of demand from families arriving in the Borough throughout the academic year has resulted in the need to include an element of additional places to meet this demand. In the 2014/15 academic year a further 5.6% of the total school population has arrived in the Thurrock from elsewhere. As at January 2016 the percentage of in year admissions from September 2015 is already 3.2%.
- 3.8 There is currently surplus capacity in the secondary phase and therefore the projections are based on known data of how many children there are in Thurrock schools and historic patterns of transfer. We anticipate that the surplus capacity in secondary schools will be required as the increased primary population moves through the system. The number of children the Borough retains between Year 6 and Year 7 is also likely to increase as neighbouring Boroughs schools fill up with their own increased primary population due to the general rise in pupil population. The need for secondary places will also be closely monitored with regards the impact of inward migration.
- 3.9 Due to high numbers of in year admissions in 2014/15 we have opened up a number of bulge classes in year groups across the Authority. In the main we have placed these where we are in the process of permanently expanding and are commencing building works. This reduces the need for temporary accommodation to be on the school's site for long periods of time. The scale of inward migration is difficult to manage, as we cannot know before they apply how many children need to be accommodated in which year groups. The situation is under constant review.
- 3.10 As part of the Council's drive to ensure a strategic and proactive approach to pupil place planning, a PPP Sub Group was set up with representatives from headteachers, governors and local authority representatives.
- 3.11 The sub group of the Schools' Forum set up to work with officers in reviewing and discussing PPP data is operating extremely well. Having the data open and transparent to all and with the authority promoting open dialogue has been welcomed. Schools and academies now feel more integral to the process and are happy to make recommendations for the Authority to consider. This has further strengthened relationships and trust between the Authority, academies and schools.
- 3.12 When comparing our forecasts for September 2015 in the previous version of the PPP document, to actual numbers admitted has proven to be accurate, and robust, which gives confidence in the projection methodology being used.

3.13 It is prudent to build in a number of surplus places to forecasts to allow the Authority to manage the demand for children entering Thurrock outside the normal admission rounds.

4. Reasons for Recommendation:

4.1 Section 14(1) of the Education Act 1996 places a legal duty on local authorities to secure sufficient primary and secondary school places for children in their area.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 The Schools' Forum Sub Group was consulted on the format of the new Pupil Place Planning Document. The draft Pupil Place Plan will be sent to governors, maintained schools, academies and the Free schools for consultation.

6. Impact on Corporate Polices, Priorities, Performance and Community Impact

6.1 The issues in this paper support one of the five strategic priorities in the vision of the Authority: *To create a great place for learning and opportunity* - by supporting families to give children the best possible start in life; and raising levels of aspirations and attainment so that local residents can take advantage of job opportunities in the local area.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: Kay Goodacre

Finance Manager

School places are funded through allocations of the ring fenced Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), and the levels of funding received by the Local Authority is determined on the basis of lagged pupil numbers from the proceeding October school census. Any in-year growths therefore have to be met from top slicing the individual schools budgets, which can put some short term pressure on school finances. To ensure optimal use of resources, the Local Authority will need to ensure that the numbers of unfilled in-year places are constantly kept under review.

The Capital costs of providing the infrastructure to provide more School places are generally funded through Basic Needs Capital Grants, although there is continual pressure on these costs and in some cases there would be the need to borrow to support further development. These costs would be detailed within the Schools Capital plan

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: Lucinda Bell
Education Lawyer

S14 of the Education Act 1996 requires that a Local Authority secures sufficient schools in its area.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: Natalie Warren
Community Development and Equalities Manager

The Pupil Place Plan aims to inform the Thurrock Capital Programme to improve learning environments for young people, support improvements in standards, raise aspirations and give all children the best possible start in life.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental

None

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Pupil Place Plan (2015-2019)

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 – Draft Pupil Place Plan (2016-2020)

Report Author:

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Commissioning, Policy, Performance & Support