

CABINET

12 JUNE 2012

PROPOSALS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ADDITIONAL PRIMARY AGE PROVISION IN CHATHAM

ADDENDUM REPORT

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Les Wicks, Children's Services

Report from: Rose Collinson, Director of Children and Adults

Author: Teri Reynolds, Democratic Services Officer

Summary

To set out the views of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee which considered this matter on 31 May 2012.

1. Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Discussion

- 1.1 The Head of School Organisation and Student Services introduced the report, explaining that: -
- there had been a significant change in forecasts with 2011 seeing the highest birth rate for Medway along with significant inward migration, and both impacting highly in Chatham in particular;
 - this increase was similar to those being experienced across the South East region and nationally
 - all families that applied for primary places for September 2012 had been allocated a place.
- 1.2 Members asked a number of questions, which included: -
- Could ongoing information on numbers of children in Medway be provided to Members to enable them to keep informed outside of the committee;
 - How was the data collated and did the type of data being used need to be reviewed;
 - Concern about managing the priorities of meeting the needs of general primary age provision and special educational need provision;
 - Consultation relating to the use of the White Road Community Centre;
 - Clarification on costs;

- What support was there for parents that had to travel across Medway due to lack of local provision;
 - Impact on spaces by looked after children placed in Medway by other local authorities.
- 1.3 In response officers explained that the significant changes in numbers of young children that had occurred over the last 12 months demonstrated the need to regularly review forecasts and keep figures updated. Reviews of figures were reported to the Children and Adults Capital Cabinet Advisory Group on a regular basis and it was suggested that officers look into including information in a tabular form within the quarterly monitoring reports. In terms of where data was sought, officers confirmed that registry office data was used along with monitoring casual admission information for inward migration trends.
- 1.4 Officers confirmed that meeting the demand for primary places generally would be a priority as it was a legal obligation to provide sufficient school places for school age children but that providing a range of SEN provision was also a priority for the Council.
- 1.5 In relation to the White Road Community Centre Officers confirmed that this was owned by the Council and that they were communicating with the Ward Councillors regarding the use of the land prior to consultation with residents.
- 1.6 Officers confirmed that the £9 million quoted in the report did not include costs relating to SEN provision and it was estimated that the renovation of the Chatham South site would be £3.5 - £4.5 million and the cost of the additional temporary accommodation at Greenvale Infant School would be £600,000.
- 1.7 Officers confirmed that some families were travelling some distance to school due to their own preferences and so it was hoped that the number of families who were needing to travel, not through parental choice, would be minimal. However, priority would be given to ensure, as much as possible, families who were not able to travel far had access to local provision.
- 1.8 Officers also confirmed that Medway did have nearly as many looked after children (LAC) placed in the area by other local authorities as it did its own LAC and that this added to the pressure on school places.

Decision

- 1.9 The committee noted the report and recommended it be forwarded to the Cabinet, along with the comments of the committee, for the Cabinet's consideration.
- 1.10 The committee also requested that officers include in quarterly Council Plan Monitoring reports, information on pupil number forecasts in a tabular format.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet is asked to consider the comments from the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee as set out in section 1 above.

Lead officer contact

Teri Reynolds,
Democratic Services Officer
Business Support Department
EXT 2104.

teri.reynolds@medway.gov.uk