

CABINET

15 JANUARY 2013

PROPOSALS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ADDITIONAL PRIMARY AGE PROVISION IN GILLINGHAM

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Les Wicks, Children's Services

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Summary

This report sets out the need for additional primary age provision in the Gillingham area. The report updates the needs identified in the School Organisation Plan 2011-2016, using the latest school census and health data, and highlights actions already in place and those required in the future to ensure the Council complies with its Statutory Duty to provide sufficient good school places.

1. Budget and policy framework

- 1.1 In January 2008, Medway Council's Cabinet approved the School Organisation Plan Principles, which contained a set of guidelines to be used when considering school organisational issues, thereby ensuring that decision-making is clear and consistent. The core of these principles ensures that any changes to schools organisation are based upon improving schools and raising standards.
- 1.2 Within the primary phase Medway's School Organisation Plan principles are:
 - To review the future of schools with low standards;
 - All Infant and Junior schools should be amalgamated over time;
 - To review the future of schools that are at risk of becoming unviable;
 - To enable popular and successful schools to expand.
- 1.3 Medway Council's School Organisation Principles, alongside other strategies, have provided a framework for significant organisational change in Medway in recent years.
- 1.4 The School Organisation Plan 2011-16 and the related action plan, approved by Cabinet on 1 November 2011 (Decision 142/2011), following a period of consultation sets out Medway's plans for implementation of the principles in Medway Schools over the next five years. This will ensure the council meets

its statutory responsibility to provide sufficient good school places, and includes priorities for capital investment based upon an analysis of need.

2. Background

- 2.1 The School Organisation Plan 2011-16 highlighted that in some areas of Medway pressure on pupil places was expected, initially in Key Stage 1. The specific problem areas were the Chatham and Gillingham West areas.
- 2.2 The issues being experienced in Medway appear to be similar to other areas in the South East. An analysis of primary age need in the South East region undertaken by Southampton City Council in 2009, shows that all 18 local authorities in the South East region are expecting an increase in year R numbers over the next 5 years, and that this pressure is much more significant in some other authorities than in Medway.
- 2.3 A recent report (refer: School Place Mapping: April 2012) for the Local Government Association, based on pupil planning information obtained from local authorities proposes that the total national need for additional primary places by 2015/16 will be approximately 397,000.
- 2.4 Forecasts updated from the January 2012 school census, together with the latest pre-school age data (source: Health Service), indicate that the pressure on primary school places is likely to be more severe than had initially been highlighted in the School Organisation Plan. On 12 June 2012, a paper was presented to the Cabinet highlighting the severity of the need in Chatham, and the steps recommended to address this, which has resulted in the proposal to establish a 3 form entry primary academy on the site of the former Chatham South buildings. The table in section 4.11 of that report also highlighted the need to take action in Gillingham.
- 2.5 The School Organisation Plan also highlighted the need to expand Wainscott Primary School, due to expected increased demand in the eastern part of Strood, caused by increased birth rates along with inward movement of families into the new developments at Liberty Park and Sandacres at Upnor. This project is currently underway with completion targeted for September 2013.
- 2.6 Sections 2.27, and 4.18- 4.23 of the School Organisation Plan highlighted the issue of pressure on primary school places in Gillingham, and item 2 of the Action Plan set out the initial steps required to address the potential shortage of places. This paper highlights the need and presents options for the creation of sufficient provision to meet this further additional demand in Gillingham.
- 2.7 The main reason behind the increased pressure on school places in Gillingham is a continued increase in the birth rate, together with some unforeseen numbers of families with children choosing to move into the Medway Towns.
- 2.8 The main drivers for the movement into Central Gillingham are likely to be economic. Central Gillingham is one of Medway's most deprived areas, and

whilst the majority of residents are owner-occupiers, private housing tends to be much less expensive than other areas of Medway. There is also a higher than average rental population in private and social housing; rental values also tend to be lower here than in other areas.

Forecasting pupil numbers

- 2.9 A range of statistics, data and information are used to forecast pupil numbers at Medway Schools including:
- health authority records of the number of Medway children of pre-school age including recent birth data;
 - historical and current migratory numbers and trends;
 - historical and current pupil roll numbers from the January Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC);
 - projected pupil numbers from planned housing developments.
 - Population estimates ONS
- 2.10 Forecasts of pupil numbers are calculated for the next five years for primary school places and ten years for secondary school places. These forecasts show the expected number of pupils by school, by year group, by planning area and for Medway as a whole. These forecasts are reviewed and updated using the latest data on a regular basis as new data becomes available. The forecasts are reconciled on an annual basis to take into account any changes and these are the forecasts used for planning purposes.
- 2.11 For the primary phase it is only possible to predict the numbers of pupils who will join schools in reception year up to five years in advance, which can make long term planning very difficult. It is more straightforward to produce robust and accurate forecasts of secondary pupils, because pupils are already in the school system, although other factors, such as the raising of the participation age, and the impact of unexpected inward migration, will mean that our forecasts for secondary places, could also be subject to change, and should also therefore be kept under regular review.
- 2.12 Whilst this approach has provided a reasonable indication of the likely future trends in the past, the more significant demographic changes recently experienced both nationally and in Medway, including the substantial increase in inward migration are not predictable, and officers in Medway, in common with many other local authorities, face shorter planning period than previously experienced. The school place planning team is considering alternative ways to better predict this movement in liaison with peers in other authorities. This includes making better use of data, such as in-year admissions data and other demographic data, to monitor in-year trends, and to indicate likely changes in forecasts.
- 2.13 The latest forecasts using the data received in Spring 2012 indicate that the pressure on primary school places is likely to be even more severe than initially highlighted in the School Organisation Plan 2011-2016. This pressure is primarily a result of significant unforeseen inward movement of families with children. There have also been further increases in the birth rate, which has particularly impacted on the Gillingham area (as set out in more detail in section 4). This paper highlights the emerging need for schools places in

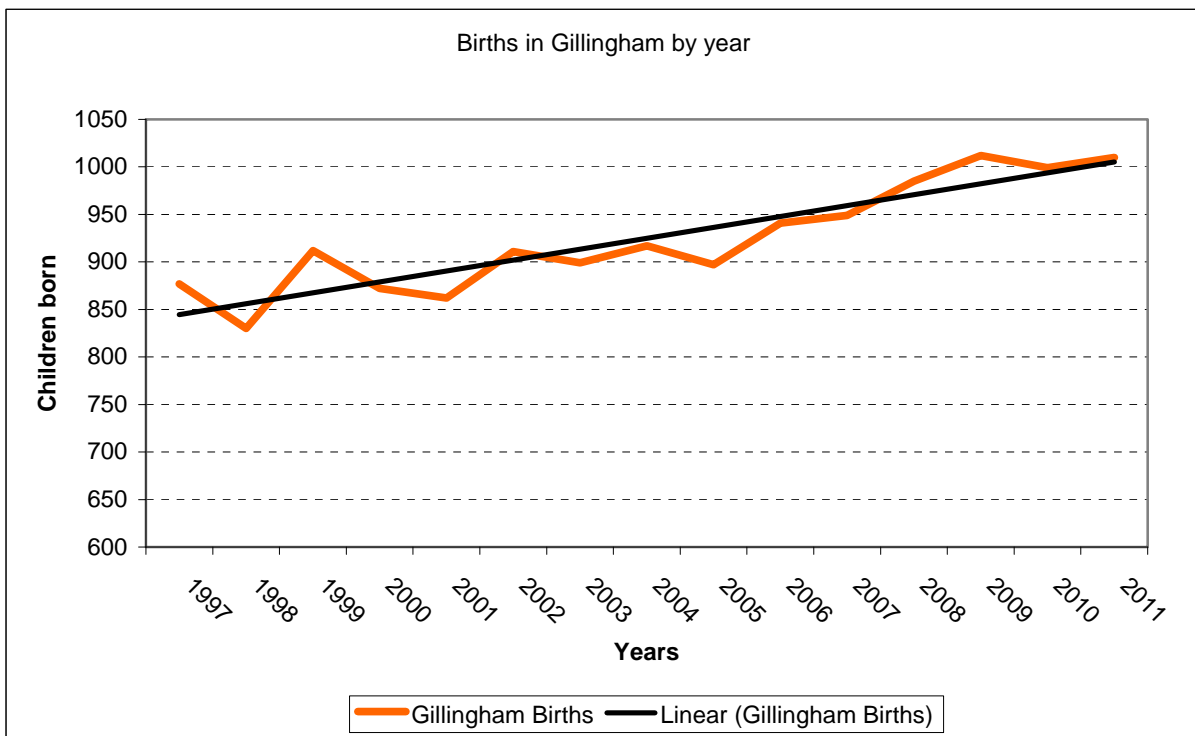
Gillingham and presents options for the creation of sufficient provision to meet this further additional demand in the future.

3 Steps already taken

- 3.1 Consultation has already taken place as part of the normal round of admissions changes to increase the PAN at Napier Primary School from 60 to 90, which will mean an additional 30 places will be available in reception with effect from September 2013. Initially no additional accommodation will be required to facilitate this move, and as it will take seven years for the school to fill to capacity, it allows time for the council to assess when any additional accommodation will be required here. Current forecasts indicate that an additional classroom will be required for the academic year 2015-16, and it is likely that this will evolve from a re-configuration within the site's current buildings.
- 3.2 Currently Brompton Westbrook Primary School operates with a PAN of 45 (1.5FE), and would be able to accommodate additional pupils from reception class initially. They have agreed to take an additional five pupils into reception class for this academic year. Expansion from September 2013 to a permanent 2FE intake would alleviate some pressure and add flexibility in the short term. Future expansion has been discussed with the head teacher, who is supportive, as are the governing body, subject to sufficient accommodation being available as required. Minimal works will be required to facilitate this expansion initially, with some additional toilet facilities and adaptations to circulation in the foundation stage area required for September 2013. Additional classrooms will be required as the children progress through the school and a feasibility study will be undertaken to assess the phasing around the appropriate works.

4 Analysis of the need

- 4.1 We cannot predict with any certainty whether the birth rates will continue to rise, level out or fall in the coming years. However, 2010/11 had the highest birth numbers on record across Medway. In Gillingham, as the graph below shows, the past four years have been the highest on record and the trend overall is increasing. These children will filter into reception classes over the next four years. Our weekly monitoring of registry office figures show that in Medway from 1 September 2011 to 31 August 2012 there were approximately an additional 50 children born compared to the previous years record high of 3517. In Gillingham, there were an additional 20 births against last year.



- 4.2 Our 5-year forecasts for the Gillingham area as a whole, allowing for the agreed increase at Napier, indicate that there will be a deficit of places of 41 pupils in reception from September 2014. The forecasts are based on school age census returns from schools, pre-school age pupil numbers, and forecasts of inward movement (based on the average migration from the last 3 years, weighted towards the last year).
- 4.3 As these increased numbers then progress through the schools, they will replace the current smaller year groups in the older primary years, and it is anticipated there will be an overall shortfall of 98 places across all year groups in Gillingham from September 2016.
- 4.4 Some spare capacity is expected in the neighbouring area of Rainham and some of the excess demand could be catered for here, however the distances involved between central Gillingham and Rainham would make the use of Rainham less practical, and admissions arrangements difficult.
- 4.5 The uncertainty surrounding future births and inward movement means that the council needs to be cautious when deciding how much, and when, additional provision is required. However the recent ongoing trend of higher birth rates, together with continued new housing developments in the area, does suggest that the increases in children requiring a reception place will continue for the foreseeable future, with a potential shortfall of 51 places by 2016.

Whole of Gillingham by year group; actual and forecast spring rolls.

Gillingham	Year R	Surp	Year 1	Surp	Year 2	Surp	Year 3	Surp	Year 4	Surp	Year 5	Surp	Year 6	Surp
2011/12 Act	876	9	796	89	805	80	792	93	764	121	784	101	734	151
2012/13 F/C	908	-23	871	14	801	84	801	84	794	91	766	119	786	99
2013/14 F/C	944	-29	903	-18	873	12	790	95	800	85	794	91	766	119
2014/15 F/C	956	-41	938	-23	905	-20	868	17	795	90	800	85	795	90
2015/16 F/C	966	-51	950	-35	940	-25	901	-16	867	18	797	88	803	82
2016/17 F/C	966	-51	960	-45	951	-36	937	-22	901	-16	870	15	801	84
PAN 915 (includes Napier expansion to PAN 90)									Pan 885 (prior to Napier expansion)					

The above table shows how the larger cohorts entering the primary system will filter through the year groups, taking into account migratory trends, birth rates and current rolls. It highlights that by 2016/17 year groups R to 3 will be oversubscribed, and by how many, including taking the expansion at Napier into consideration.

5 Options for addressing the issue of a shortage of places

- 5.1 Unlike Chatham, some of the schools in Gillingham enjoy larger sites, and therefore expansion at one or more schools to provide for the additional pupils is both possible and preferential against the building of a new school. Initially it is proposed that temporary accommodation be utilised, which would give the council additional time to confirm trends, and also to gauge the wider effects on pupil distribution as a result of the changes already proposed and underway in Chatham and Wainscott.
- 5.2 **Saxon Way Primary School** is currently a 1FE primary school, enjoys a larger than average site, and is close to the major developments at Grange Farm and Victory Pier, as well as a number of smaller schemes. Expanding Saxon Way to a 2FE Primary school would be in accordance with Medway's preferred primary school size. From a geographical and capacity aspect, Saxon Way would be a good solution.

Unfortunately, Ofsted placed the school into Special Measures in May 2012, which usually would not fit with the policy of good schools expanding. However, an interim head teacher and an Interim Executive Board are in place to drive standards forward and a recent monitoring inspection by Ofsted in December 2012 highlighted that the school is making reasonable progress. Colleagues from School Improvement do not think in this case that Saxon Way should be dismissed from considerations as improvement in standards is evident, and expansion could help the school's progress and viability.

Saxon Way is also at the early stages of the process to convert to academy status under the sponsorship of a successful Academy Trust, a move that has been brokered by the LA and which is subject to Secretary of State's (SoS) approval. It is expected that conversion will have taken place before September 2014 when the first additional places will be required. This in itself does not need to affect the expansion; the LA are the commissioner of places and as this is a basic need expansion the funding responsibility falls to the council. The council would however, need the cooperation of the sponsor in any expansion project. Early indications are that the sponsor would be supportive of an expansion at the school.

Considering all of the above factors and implications for expanding Saxon Way, an underperforming school, it remains officers preferred option. Permanent expansion at this school is likely to require funding of £3-4m, but could be phased in line with demand, as the school would expand from reception upwards one year at a time, and could initially make use of temporary accommodation.

- 5.3 **Brompton Westbrook Primary School** sits on a good size site and serves the army families from the Brompton Barracks area, and thereby can gain and lose children throughout the year as the army moves its personnel around. However, the school is popular and does attract parents from outside the military areas; this is coupled with the army's intention to dispose of some of their buildings and land for general redevelopment e.g. at Amherst Hill, which will attract additional non-military families. Brompton Westbrook would require some physical expansion, but it would not be necessary to build a whole form of entry (seven classrooms). Initially, for September 2013 additional toilet facilities and improved circulation for the foundation stage would be required. Subsequently three additional classrooms along with an extended dining area and staff facilities would enable the school to expand from a PAN of 45 to 60. It is recommended that Brompton Westbrook serve as a permanent phased expansion and that a feasibility study be undertaken to assess how best to phase the works required to ensure sufficient accommodation is available when required.
- 5.4 **Thames View Primary School** enjoys a good size site and is within close proximity to a number of smaller housing developments. Thames View is currently a 2FE primary school, which falls into the Gillingham East planning area, but records do show that a significant number of parents who live in the more central parts of Gillingham chose a Gillingham East school for their children. There is some additional class space available here, but extensive expansion would still be required to meet the needs of a 3FE school. Funding is likely to be required in the region of £3m. It is proposed that Thames View be approved as a back up option, should either of Saxon Way or Brompton Westbrook prove to be unviable, or indeed as a permanent solution should further additional need be required beyond that currently expected.
- 5.5 The feasibility studies would also ascertain exactly how much additional provision would be required, as it may be possible in some cases to re-commission rooms that have been taken out of use as classrooms during periods of lower pupil numbers. These may help to reduce the funding requirement and may provide further temporary solutions by enabling bulge classes in the interim as required.
- 5.6 Birth rates, movement into the area and health data will continue to be monitored regularly to ensure sufficient accommodation is available to meet demand, and should the numbers continue to rise in future years then it may become necessary to add further additional provision to the above requirements. Should that become the case then recommendations will be made at the time dependent upon circumstances and available funding.
- 5.7 Should regular monitoring show that numbers may start to fall, expansions could be stopped, slowed or modified as appropriate

6 Financial and legal implications

- 6.1 Any proposals brought forward to expand an existing primary school will be funded from the Children's Services Capital Programme using allocated basic need funding. £1.4m of capital grant funding has been allocated in the 2012/13 capital programme to address the need for additional primary age provision, although this funding will be used to fund the expansion at Wainscott Primary School currently underway (see section 2.5). If we were to receive the same level of funding in subsequent years then approximately £2.8m, would be available in the financial years 2013/14 and 2014/15 to fund the conversion of Chatham South to primary accommodation (see section 2.4). Assuming the same level of funding continues beyond 2014/15 then funds should be allocated towards the additional provision that is required in Gillingham.
- 6.2 In addition, approximately £4m of developer contributions have already been included in section 106 agreements for developments due to be undertaken in Medway which have not yet been received. Some of these contributions are for developments in the Gillingham area, and where appropriate these could be used to support development of additional primary provision in the area.

	Funding by year				
	Roll forward	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Funding source	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Basic need grant funding	180	1400	1400	1400	1400
DCs	1600	1300	0	0	0
Other funding sources/capital receipts	0	200	0	0	0
Total funding by year	1780	2900	1400	1400	1400
Cumulative funding	1780	4680	6080	7480	8880

	Cost of programme by year				
		2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Project		£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Greenvale temp expansion		365	365	0	0
Wainscott Primary School		400	2700	570	0
Chatham South Primary School		0	600	2000	2000
Gillingham Primary Need		10	100	2500	0
Total cost by year		765	3665	5570	2000
Cumulative cost		765	4530	9500	12000

Variance between cumulative funding and cost		3915	1550	-2020	-3120
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The table above shows the status of available funding. The shortfalls do not take account of future Developer Contributions which may be received from 2013 onwards; and assumes that only half of the basic need grant will be allocated for these projects, with the other half set aside for projects that come from the SEN Strategic Plan.

- 6.3 Work to develop the accommodation could be phased as required to accommodate new groups of pupils as they join the school and as capital funding becomes available.

- 6.4 The Education Act legislation changes the arrangements for the establishment of new schools by introducing a presumption that when local authorities set up new schools, they will be Academies or Free schools. For Gillingham however it is not expected that any new provision will be necessary, as long as the options as described in this paper are implemented.
- 6.5 In implementing the proposals to change arrangements for any individual school, it may be necessary to follow a statutory process. For example, the expansion of an existing primary school into new buildings would require statutory consultation. The statutory proposals would not be required from the outset, and would only become necessary when certain numbers of additional pupils in the schools were reached, as set out in the guidance “Expanding a Maintained Mainstream School by Enlargement or Adding a Sixth Form”. For Saxon Way that would be in readiness for September 2015, and Brompton Westbrook for Sept 2017, reports on the outcomes of the consultations will be presented to Cabinet at the appropriate times.
- 6.6 The council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places.

7 Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk
Reputational risk, due to being unable to provide school places	Failure to take action to develop additional provision could result in adverse publicity for the council	Implementation of proposals in this report
The pupil forecasts do not accurately predict future levels of need.	A recent increase in inward migration has resulted in significant additional need.	The report plans for a proportion of unplanned inward migration need and data will be kept under review.
Insufficient capital funding	The capital funding available to develop additional provision will be insufficient to address all of the need.	Detailed business cases for each proposal to set out the need and proposals to fund provision. Additional provision will be phased over time so that they are affordable.
Changes in popularity	Changes to the popularity of individual schools may also lead to unplanned changes, for example, if an Ofsted inspection places a school into a category.	To be kept under review during development of firm proposals
Lack of local authority control of new provision	Any new provision would need to be established as an Academy or Free School, which creates the risk of a lack of democratic control of new provision	Robust consultation process led by the local authority, which sets out clear values and educational aims for new providers
National policy states that ‘good’ schools should expand.	That a school proposed for expansion is placed into a category such as special measures.	Steps taken to improve school performance; and ensure ‘back-up’ options for expansions are available.

8 Diversity Impact Assessment

- 8.1 A Diversity Impact Assessment screening will be completed in relation to any specific proposals that are taken forward
- 8.2 It would not be expected that any changes made to the organisation of schools in Medway would have any adverse impact upon equality issues and Medway Council would follow its statutory duty to promote equality, and all schools in Medway are responsible for ensuring equality in their schools and for promoting community cohesion.

9 Impact of the proposal on arrangements for looked after children

- 9.1 The development of additional school provision in the Gillingham area will ensure that all children including Looked after children are able to access good local school provision. Looked after children and adopted children receive the highest priority for admission to schools. If necessary, the Admissions Code allows the council to place looked after and adopted children in schools that would otherwise be deemed to be full. This ensures that the council can secure appropriate provision for children that are looked after or adopted.

10 Recommendations

- 10.1 It is recommended that Saxon Way Primary School be expanded from 1 form of entry (FE) to 2FE, and that a feasibility study be undertaken to explore this option further to decide upon the accommodation and phasing requirements. These will be developed in consultation with the proposed academy sponsor; the conversion process to academy status is underway and is subject to Secretary of State approval.
- 10.2 It is recommended that Thames View Primary School be approved as a back up option should Saxon Way Primary School prove for any reason not to be a viable solution, or indeed should further additional accommodation be required in the future and discussions to this effect have been held with the head teacher at Thames View Primary School.
- 10.3 It is recommended that Brompton Westbrook Primary School be permanently expanded to enable a published admission number (PAN) of 60 to be accommodated, commencing from September 2013, and that a feasibility study be undertaken to assess how best to phase the building works in the most cost effective way and causing minimal disruption to the education of the children.
- 10.4 The Cabinet is requested to authorise the Director of Children and Adults to commence the statutory processes at the appropriate times required for the expansions of Saxon Way and Brompton Westbrook primary schools, as well as Thames View Primary School should it become necessary.

11. Suggested Reasons for decision

- 11.1 By approving the recommendations in 10.1 to 10.3, the Cabinet are ensuring that the council meets its statutory duty to ensure sufficient good school places.
- 11.2 Approval in advance to commence the necessary statutory processes will ensure the council complies with its statutory duty to follow the full consultation process when proposing changes to school organisation.

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Background papers

Expanding a Maintained Mainstream School by Enlargement or Adding a Sixth Form

<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/doc/e/so.doc>

The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2007.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/2007/1289/contents/made>