

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

18 SEPTEMBER 2014

2014 REVIEW AND UPDATE OF THE SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN 2011-16

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Summary

This annual summary briefing report updates on the progress made to the revised action plan of the School Organisation Plan 2011-16, highlights areas of emerging need and makes initial recommendations for consideration to ensure that a sufficient supply of good quality school places is maintained.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 The proposals, which flow from the updated School Organisation Plan, are consistent with the provisions of the School Organisation Plan Principles, and with the Council Plan Priority of 'Children and young people having the best start in life'.

2. Background

- 2.1 In January 2008 Cabinet approved the School Organisation Plan Principles, which contained a set of planning principles to guide decision-making in a clear and consistent way so that the Council complies with its statutory duty to provide school places. The core of these principles ensures that any changes to schools are based upon improving schools and raising standards. In November 2011, the Cabinet approved the School Organisation Plan 2011-16 (SOP).
- 2.2 The SOP included an action plan, which highlighted specific proposals for developing provision in Medway over the lifetime of the plan. These proposals were informed by an analysis of local and national policy and strategy, as well as the most up-to-date available information and data, which were used to forecast the future need for places in Medway schools.
- 2.3 In July 2013 Cabinet approved a review of the plan. The report outlined the positive progress made against the action plan and highlighted areas of emerging need where additional provision was expected to be required. The action plan was updated to reflect this.
- 2.4 This report highlights progress against the updated action plan and identifies new areas of emerging need based upon the latest annual round of forecasting undertaken in April 2014.

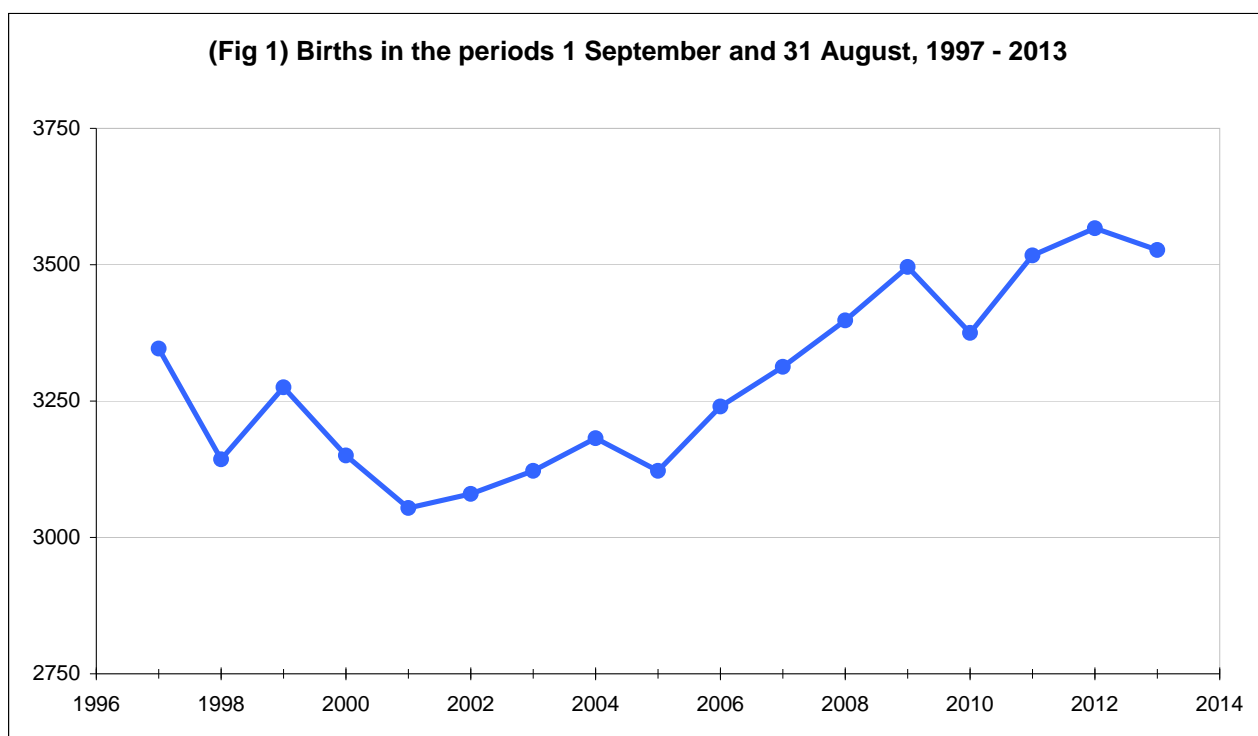
- 2.5 It is intended to report on progress against the action plan and highlight emerging need to the Cabinet on 30 September 2014.

3. Achievements against the Action Plan

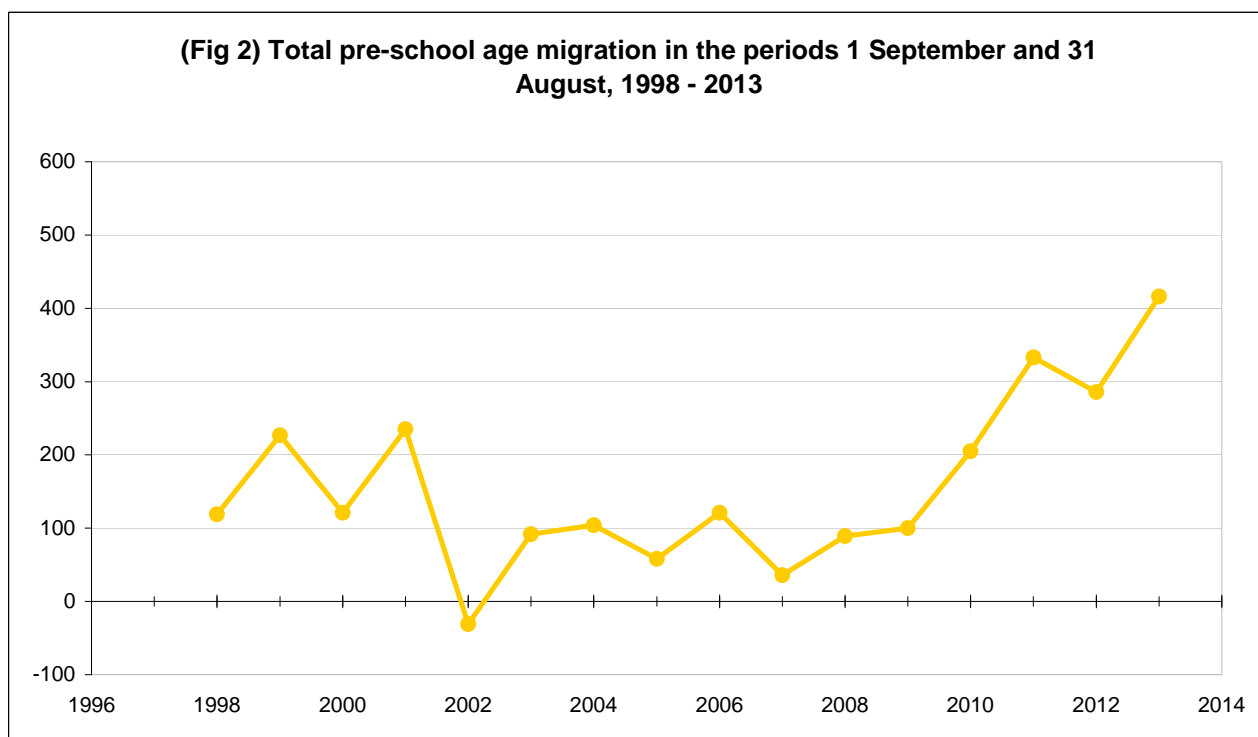
- 3.1 Items 1-10 from the original action plan in 2011 are either completed or ongoing as part of medium to long-term proposals.
- Items 11 and 12 in the 2013 revised action plan highlighted emerging need in Hoo St Werburgh and Cuxton/Halling and provided solutions. Action to address these items is underway.
 - Item 13 (additional primary places in Gillingham) is now expected to require action by 2016/17 and is discussed in more detail in section 4.3 of this report. However, the option to utilise Thames View Primary School is now one of a number of options being explored.
 - Item 14 (additional places in Chatham and Rochester) is now unlikely to be required during the lifetime of the plan, although forecasts will be carefully monitored every six months to ensure proposals are in place in good time to provide sufficient places should demand dictate.
- 3.2 For the reception intake in September 2014 there were 226 more places available than in September 2012. This is due to the successful expansion programme that has taken place in that time, which includes expansions at Wainscott, Napier Primary, Brompton Westbrook, Saxon Way and Cuxton; the creation of New Horizons Children's Academy; increases in PANs where no additional physical capacity was required as well as schools agreeing to admit over number where capacity allowed.
- 3.3 Excluding the remotest schools on the Hoo Peninsula, there are 126 spare places across the 63 schools that admit reception age children, meaning that without the creation of these additional places there would be a shortage of at least 100 places, with no capacity for any additional in-year casual admission applications received throughout the year.
- 3.4 Forecasts suggest that that numbers of pupils are likely to continue to rise (see section 4) and as a consequence additional capacity will be required in the near future. This report identifies where this is required and offers options for ensuring a sufficiency of available places.

4. Advice and analysis

- 4.1 Latest headline data:
- The birth rate in Medway for 1 September 2012 – 31 August 2013 is the second highest since Medway was formed (Fig 1). This means that the three highest years for births have been the last three years.

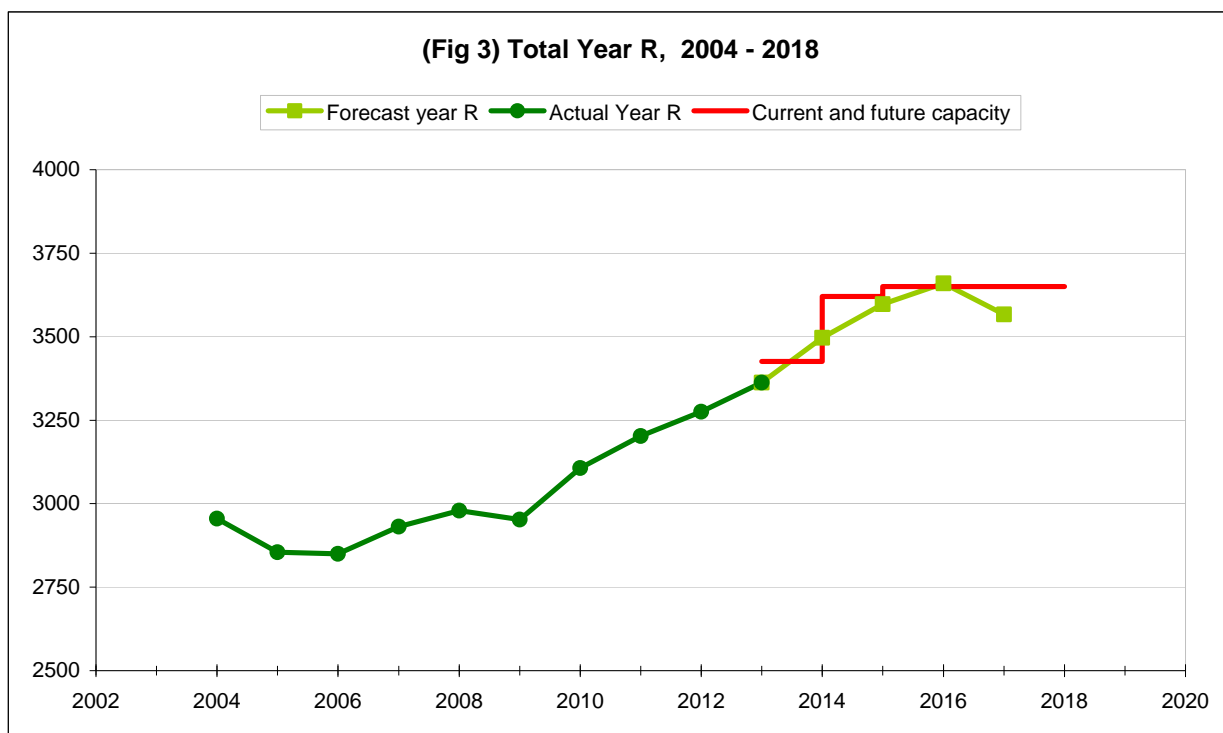


- Weekly monitoring of births from registry office data suggests that births for the academic year 2013/14 are similar to the past two years, indicating no easing in the numbers of children being born in Medway.
- Net inward migration of pre-school age children for the same period shows a gain of 416 (fig 2), the equivalent of a 2FE primary school, but across only 5 age groups. This is the highest on record, meaning that the past four years have been the highest since 2001.



- It is expected, therefore, that the demand for reception places will continue to rise.
- The number of reception children at 2014 January Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) was 3,363, the highest on record; forecasts suggest that this

number will increase year on year until 2016/17 when it will reach 3,660. At the time of writing this report applications for September 2014 were already in excess of 3,470 (forecast 3,497) with two weeks still to go before the start of term. Forecasts indicate that there will then be a small drop in 2017/18 (fig 3). However, if inward migration continues at similar levels to this year then that figure could rise.



- Overall pupil numbers in primary schools are increasing; currently there are 22,252 pupils in primary schools, the highest it has been since 2004. Officers expect numbers to continue to rise year on year until at least 2018/19 when forecasts indicate that there could be 25,040 pupils on roll, the highest on record.
- The impact of these rises in pupil numbers will be felt in the primary phase initially, but the Council needs to be mindful of the future need for additional secondary places as the larger cohorts currently in primary, and due to start over the coming years, progress into secondary education.

4.2 New Housing Schemes planned

- Significant housing development has taken place in recent years across Medway, which has exacerbated the inward migration effect.
- More developments are underway and planned for the future, which will inevitably lead to further inward migration, in turn leading to increased demand for school places.
- Using approved pupil yield figures, should all planned developments be completed, there could be demand, over time, for 1,230 additional primary places, the equivalent of three 2FE primary schools. This does not include the potential 5,000 home Lodge Hill or the 1,400 dwelling Rochester Riverside developments which are intended to be educationally self sufficient.
- The main school place planning areas affected by proposed housing developments are Strood and Gillingham West.
- The Council will continue to claim contributions from developers where possible to assist with mitigating the impact of these new housing schemes.

4.3 Emerging primary need

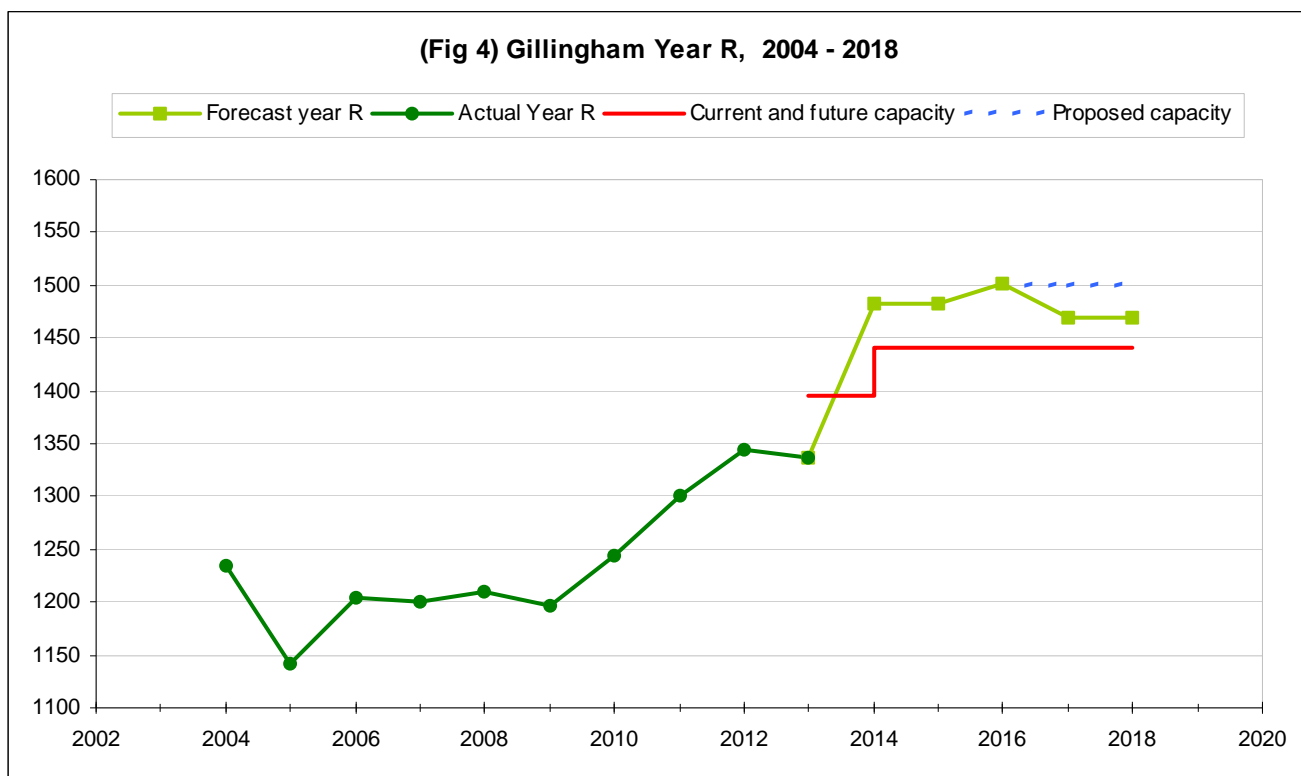
Using the latest birth, migration and housing data, 2014's forecasts have highlighted two areas as likely to require additional capacity to ensure sufficient primary places are

available to meet demand. These are Gillingham (fig 4) and Strood (fig 5). Officers have explored a number of options in these areas to address this issue.

In line with national policy, officers will explore options based upon good or outstanding schools expanding. Other principles taken into consideration are the capacity and practicality of the school site to support expansion, the popularity of each school and the geographical location of the school in relation to demand centres.

Gillingham

The options for creating the additional places in Gillingham would require the expansion of two schools by 1FE each. Expansion by 2FE overall would provide sufficient spaces to meet expected short-term demand whilst giving some flexibility for future growth.



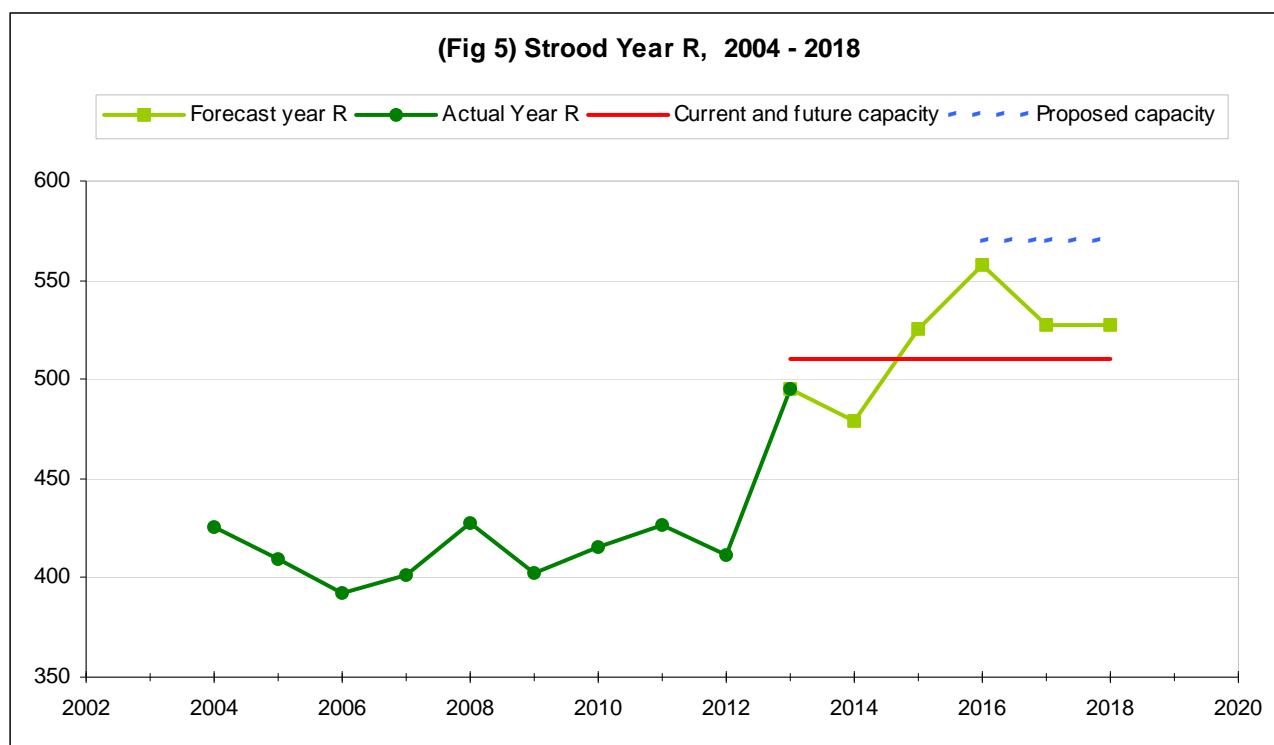
A number of schools in Gillingham and Rainham were considered amongst initial options explored to expand primary capacity by up to 2FE from September 2016. Three schools provide a short list due to their geographical location to meet demand, as well as site size and suitability. Discussions with these schools are ongoing.

Cabinet will be requested to approve detailed feasibility studies for the three options to ascertain the optimum two.

Strood

Strood is more complex; schools with available land or space are either away from the areas of demand or are requiring improvement.

The chart below shows that one form of entry would probably be sufficient initially to cater for the majority of demand arising from current forecasts in Strood, however 2FE would give some flexibility by providing spare capacity to allow for additional growth due to those housing projects which are yet to be formally approved and as such do not figure in official forecasts. These include Strood Riverside (500 homes) and Temple Waterfront (620 homes).



Initial options being explored to expand primary capacity by up to 2FE in Strood from September 2016 include;

- Expansion at Elaine Primary Academy, utilising the Elaine Centre buildings, which until recently have been occupied by social services, but are now vacant. These buildings are attached to Elaine Primary Academy. This school is rated as requires improvement by Ofsted but is considered to be on an upward trajectory. The centre would provide for an additional 1FE but it may also support some of the 2nd FE required in Strood, which should provide a cost effective solution and remove the need for any alternative
- Expansion at Bligh Infant and Junior School; however these schools are located away from the centre of expected demand
- A new 2 FE school (academy) on a site to be identified
- An expanded St Nicholas on its present site; however the site is not of sufficient size, topography and location to practically support the expansion of the school to 2FE and creating a 1FE primary school to replace the infant school would not provide additional places
- Temple Mill Primary School identified for future development subject to improvement in standards (currently rated as requires improvement by Ofsted)

Cabinet will be asked to approve further investigations and feasibility studies where required to ascertain the optimum way of providing the required 2FE.

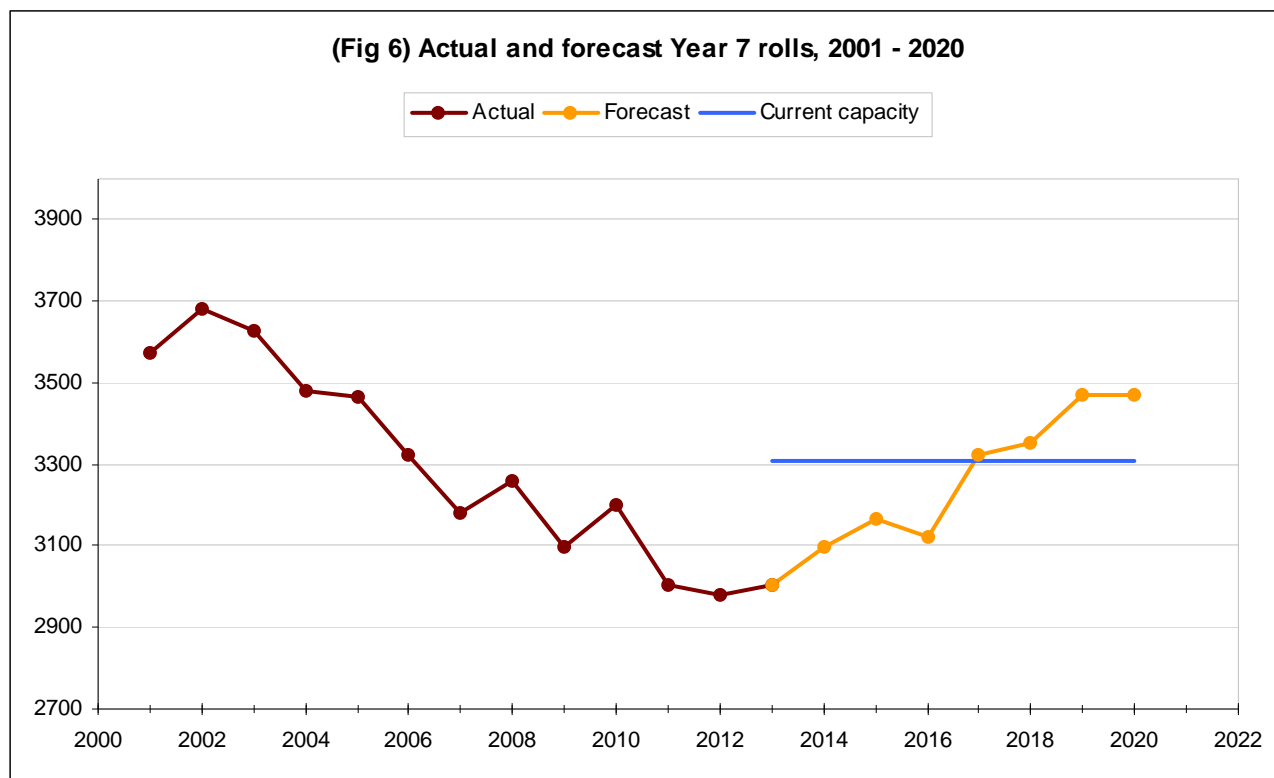
4.4 Expected demand for secondary places

Whilst under the current arrangements there are sufficient spaces available to meet forecast demand in secondary schools over the next 2-3 years, it is expected that demand for year 7 places will be oversubscribed from 2017/18 (fig 6). This will grow year on year until spaces in all year groups in schools are oversubscribed by 2022.

The chart below (fig 6) indicates the current capacity in blue. This takes no account of the proposed reductions in PAN at Robert Napier and Bishop of Rochester to which the Local Authority has submitted an objection to the schools' adjudicator. Nor does it take account of the 30 places capacity per year group at Brompton Academy, which is currently not being utilised.

Officers will investigate the opportunities for expanding good or outstanding secondary schools, however, this will require the cooperation of academies across Medway. Initial and positive discussions are underway with a number of secondary schools regarding potential expansion.

Demand for secondary school places is not only focused upon intakes at year 7; there is also the impact of the Raising of the Participation Age initiative, which means that demand for sixth form places has and will continue to increase. This means that capacity within schools is being squeezed at both ends and this could put pressure sooner upon schools whose capacity is already tight. However, the UTC may mitigate this to some degree.



4.5 Special Educational Needs

Item 5 of the action plan within the School Organisation Plan sets out options for providing SEN provision to address the increasing demand. As a result there are projects underway to expand Abbey Court and Danecourt, which will provide an additional 108 places for children with MLD, SLD and PMLD. The Danecourt project and phase one of the project to relocate Abbey Court primary provision are expected to complete in September 2015. Cabinet approved a report on 15 July 2014, outlining the proposals to expand and relocate Rivermead Special School into the premises vacated by Abbey Court at Rainham, which will provide 60 additional primary ASD places. It is also intended to explore the options for providing secondary Hearing Impaired provision, and primary EBD provision.

5. Risk management

- 5.1 There are no risks resulting directly from this report, however the following would be assessed as risks should recommendations from individual proposals flowing from this report not be implemented.

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk
The Council's statutory duty to provide sufficient good quality school places	If insufficient school places are made available to meet demand, the council would be failing to meet its obligations	Implement proposals to provide additional good quality places in the areas of demand
That insufficient funding is available to fund proposals to provide sufficient places	Basic need funding is limited and the extent of the emerging need may mean that unless additional funding can be sourced projects to provide places may not be able to be implemented	Explore options to fund projects including bidding for funding initiatives. Look at cost effective ways to supply places.
That the level of forecast pupils fails to materialise.	Should the expected numbers of pupils fail to materialise then any funding committed could have been better spent elsewhere	Continue to monitor births, migration and housing developments and accuracy of forecasting

6. Consultation

- 6.1 No consultation is required for this report, however, any specific proposals that are presented as a result of this report will include consultation as appropriate.

7. Financial and legal implications

- 7.1 All projects approved and undertaken as a result of the 2014 review of the School Organisation Plan 2011-16 will be funded through the Children and Adults' Capital Programme. Funding implications for proposed projects will be included in subsequent reports requesting approval for each individual project.
- 7.2 Where appropriate Developer Contributions will be sought from new housing schemes to assist with the provision of school places in areas of demographic growth.
- 7.3 Occasionally, additional funding sources and initiatives become available. Where possible the Council will seek to make use of these opportunities to reduce the demands upon the funding currently available.
- 7.4 It would not be unreasonable to assume that from 2017/18 onwards, Medway could expect further Basic Needs allocations of at least £2.0 million per annum and, at a national level, the Department for Education is likely to offer further opportunities to bid for targeted funds to deliver the basic need for school places, although there is no guarantee that bids will be successful.
- 7.5 Whilst all opportunities for future funding will be explored and every opportunity will be taken to seek cost effective solutions there is a potential shortfall in available funding to provide sufficient school places. As recent press coverage and television have highlighted, Medway's situation is consistent with the national picture with many authorities in similar or worse positions.
- 7.6 The Council has the power under sections 18 and 19 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to make "prescribed alterations" to a maintained school. The procedure for making prescribed alterations is set out in 'School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.

- 7.7 From 24 January 2014 there is no longer a prescribed 'pre-publication' (informal) consultation period for prescribed alterations, there is however a strong expectation on Local Authorities to consult interested parties in developing their proposals prior to publication of the formal proposals as part of their duty under public law to act rationally and take into account all relevant considerations. Specific proposals brought forward from this report will be subject to these consultation processes.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the report and to make comment for inclusion into the report to be presented to Cabinet on 30 September.

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Background papers

School Organisation Plan 2011-15/Review of School Organisation Plan 2013
<http://democracy.medway.gov.uk/mgconvert2pdf.aspx?id=20666>

Appendix 1 Updated Action Plan 2014.