

## **CABINET**

**22 OCTOBER 2019**

### **ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING STRATEGY 2018-22**

Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Mrs Josie Iles, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (Lead Member) Councillor Martin Potter, Portfolio Holder for Education and Schools
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#### **Summary**

This annual summary report provides an update on the progress made against the School Place Planning Strategy 2018-22. It highlights areas of emerging demand for school places and makes recommendations to ensure that a sufficient supply of good quality school places is maintained.

This report was considered by the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3 October 2019. The comments of this Committee are set out in section 4 of the report.

#### **1. Budget and Policy Framework**

- 1.1 Medway Council, as the local authority, has a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places. In 2011, Medway's Cabinet decided that there should be a strategic plan for school organisation to guide decisions to make sure there are enough good school places. Previously the School Organisation Plan provided that framework. That was replaced in 2018 with the School Place Planning Strategy, which describes the principles, methods, and challenges of this duty.
- 1.2 The proposals put forward in this annual review of the Place Planning Strategy are consistent with the School Place Planning Strategy Principles, the Council Plan Priority of 'Supporting Medway's people to realise their potential', and the outcome of 'All children achieving their potential in schools'. The proposals, if approved, will be delivered through available funding from the Education Capital Programme, therefore this is a matter for Cabinet.

## **2. Background**

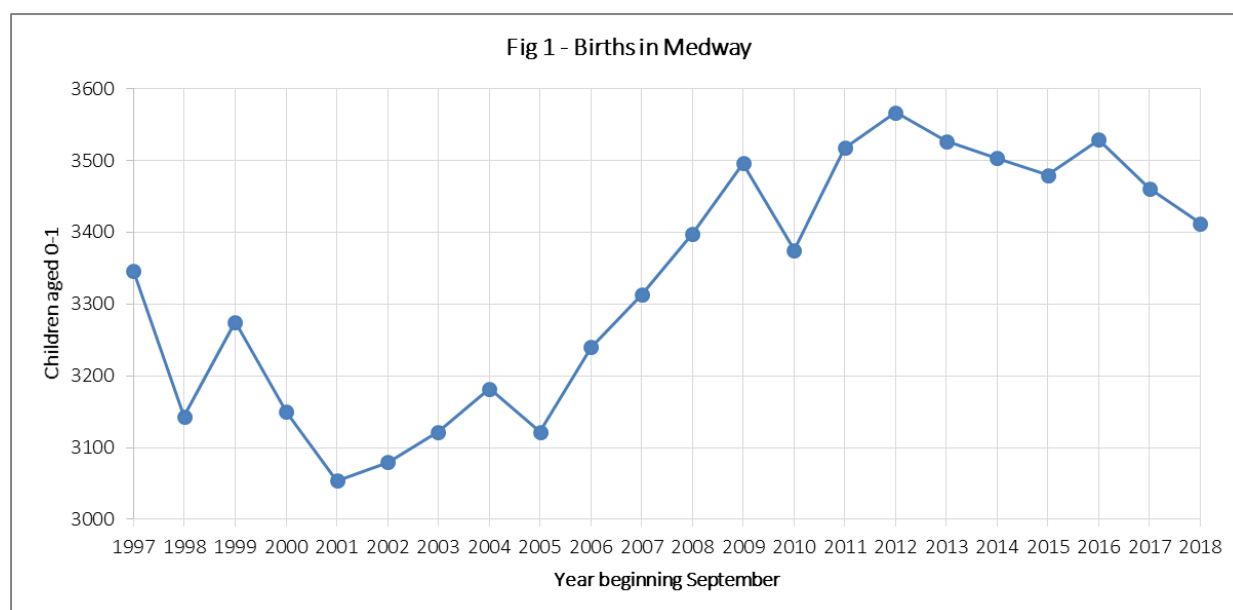
- 2.1 In July 2018, as part of the School Place Planning Strategy, Cabinet approved the School Place Planning Strategy Principles. These are guidelines to make sure decisions are consistent with the overall strategy. These principles ensure that any changes are based upon improving schools and raising standards, so that the Council complies with its statutory duty to provide sufficient good school places.
- 2.2 Annual updates to the School Place Planning Strategy will highlight specific proposals for maintaining the appropriate level of school places in Medway. These proposals will be based on the most up-to-date information and data, as well as an analysis of local and national policy and strategy.
- 2.3 This annual review report, and the recommendations in it, are based upon the latest annual round of forecasting undertaken in April 2019.
- 2.4 A number of factors must be taken into consideration when deciding which schools to expand. These include the OFSTED rating of the school, its current performance, and its popularity with parents. Medway's forecasts have proven to be accurate in the past, meeting the Department for Education (DFE)'s benchmarks, therefore Members can be confident that the recommendations made in the School Place Planning Strategy reviews are based upon accurate, robust evidence and analysis.
- 2.5 Birth rates peaked in 2012, but the current level remains high compared to pre-2008. The inward movement of families with pre-school age children peaked in 2013 but remains larger than pre-2010. This, combined with the number of approved and proposed housing schemes, means that increasing demand for school places is expected to continue into the foreseeable future.
- 2.6 Medway's Local Plan, which is due to be published in 2020, highlights the need for an additional 29,000 homes across Medway up until 2035. A number of these are already under construction, and the publication of the Local Plan will accelerate the level of housebuilding. It is expected that the total population will increase from 278,000 to 317,500 in that time. Therefore, demand for school places is likely to continue to rise.
- 2.7 School place planning officers are working closely with planning and development colleagues on the Local Plan, looking at where new schools and expansions would be required across Medway as and when housing starts, exploring potential locations for new schools. This will continue during the development of the Plan.
- 2.8 The forecasts upon which this report is based include all housing developments with planning permission. Schemes under consideration or at appeal will only be included in the forecasts when formally approved. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that as more housing schemes gain approval future forecasts will reflect this and demand for places will rise further.
- 2.9 The number of pupils expected from housing developments is based upon research by MORI. On average, for every 775 new houses with 2 or more bedrooms, 210 primary pupils will be produced. This is enough to fill a one form entry primary school.
- 2.10 Surplus places are planned into the system to ensure that sufficient places are available to cater for in-year demand (casual admissions) and any sudden influx of pupils into new housing schemes. It is nationally accepted that a 5% surplus is a

reasonable level to ensure places are available without the endangering the viability of schools. However, given the high number of families with children of varying ages moving to Medway, a 5% surplus has proven to be insufficient in some areas in the longer term. To ensure sufficient places, it is recommended that for the reception year group Medway works to an 8% surplus level at planning area level, which will naturally reduce as in year admissions occur and increasing cohorts move through the school. This may be a little higher than the average surplus levels but will ensure a sufficiency of places in areas of demand. It will also avoid the need and costs for emergency bulge classes and schools admitting over number which can prove difficult for schools to organise at short notice. Working to 8% surplus should not endanger the financial viability of schools generally, however, in certain circumstances, where all or most of the surplus is at one school in an area, the local authority will work in partnership with the Schools Forum to help mitigate the potential financial impact.

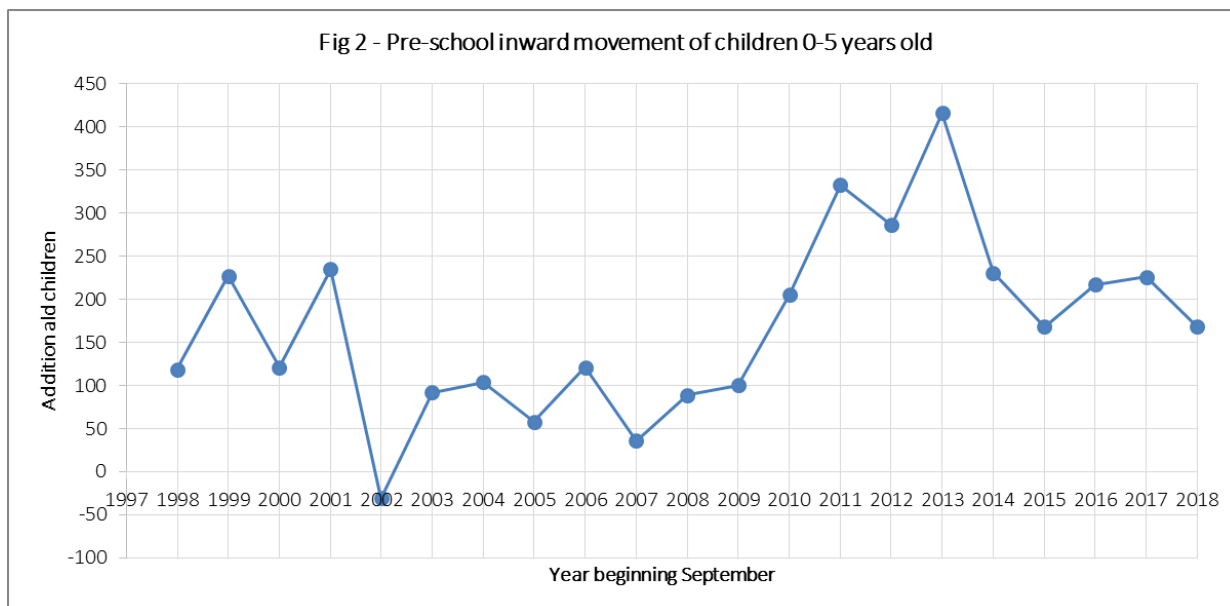
### 3. Analysis of latest data and information

#### Pre-school and primary phase

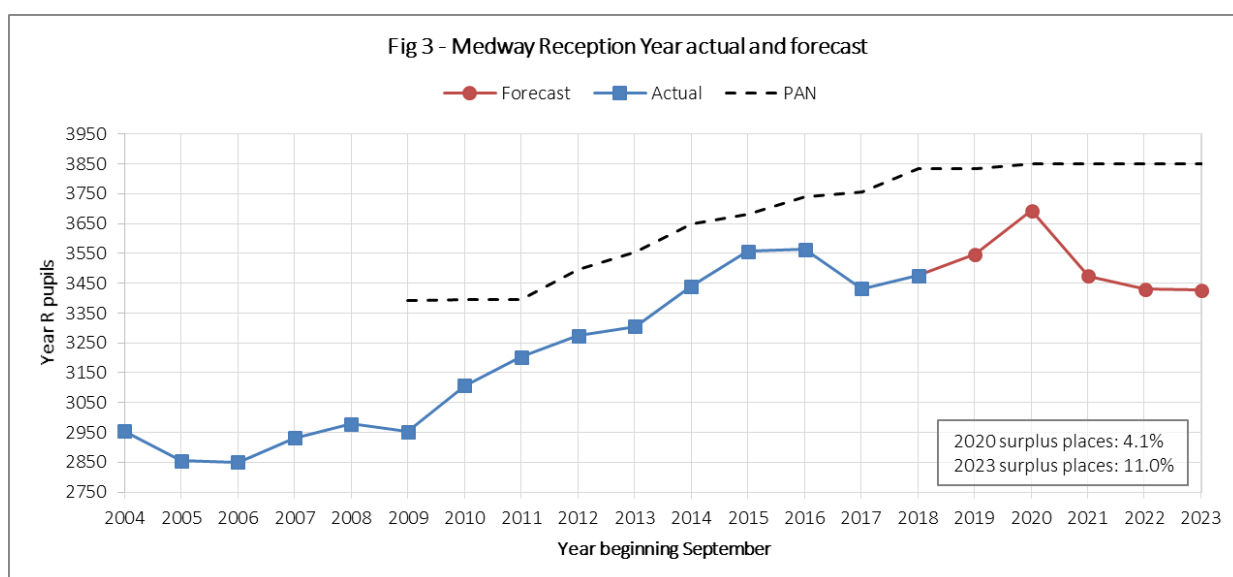
- 3.1 Fig 1 below shows that births have been reducing from the peak in 2012, but remain high compared to pre-2008. As new housing is completed, it is likely that new families and people planning to start families will move in, increasing the birth rate in the future. It is reasonable to predict that although there will be rises and falls in the future birth rate, the general trend will be upwards.



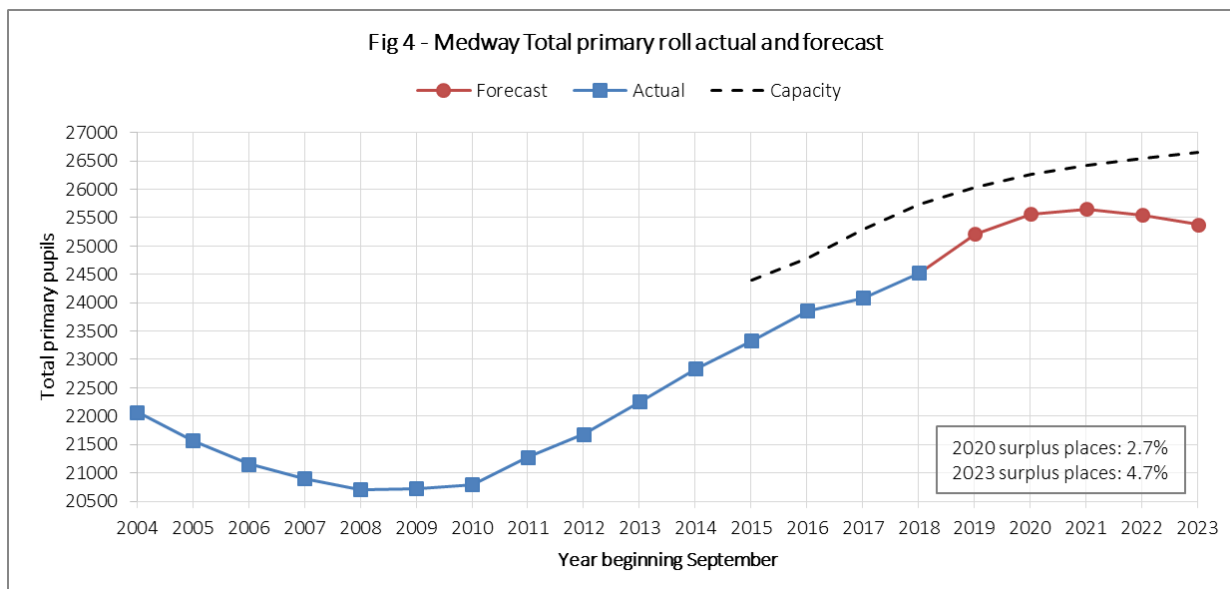
- 3.2 The number of families moving to Medway with pre-school age children in 2018 has decreased to the same level as 2015 (fig 2). The level, while not as high as 2013, still remains larger than pre-2010, and is the equivalent of three quarters of a whole one form entry school. As the Local Plan progresses, an increasing number of housing schemes will come forward. Inward movement of pre-school age children can be reasonably expected to increase again in the future. This will add to demand for reception places in the future and forecasts will be regularly monitored to ensure the Council is in a position to react accordingly. Working to 8% surplus in the reception year should mitigate the need for emergency action to be taken to meet demand.



3.3 The demand for reception places is forecast to rise to 2020, as the larger birth cohort from 2016 works its way towards school age, and then ease again (fig 3). It is reasonable to expect that the forecasts for four and five years ahead will increase as new housing schemes are approved. The graph shows that the total Published Admission Number (PAN) of all reception places in Medway is above the expected numbers of pupils. This difference is 4.1% of the total for 2020 and 11.0% for 2023. While spare capacity is low in 2020, beyond then it is expected to generally align with the flexibility levels suggested in paragraph 2.10 and ensures sufficient places for that cohort as it progresses through the year groups.



3.4 Overall pupil numbers in primary schools have increased to 24,530, up by 440 children compared to last year, the highest level since 2002. They are predicted to continue to rise to 25,038 by 2020 (fig 4). The expansion and new build work carried out as part of the capital programme up to September 2018 has enabled the Council to meet demand. This additional capacity is also expected to meet the forecast demand. However, some further primary capacity in some areas is likely to be required in future years as housing development accelerates. There may be some areas with more surplus capacity than others, but this is because parental preference can change year on year. This makes it challenging to determine in advance which schools will be popular, and which will fill more than others.



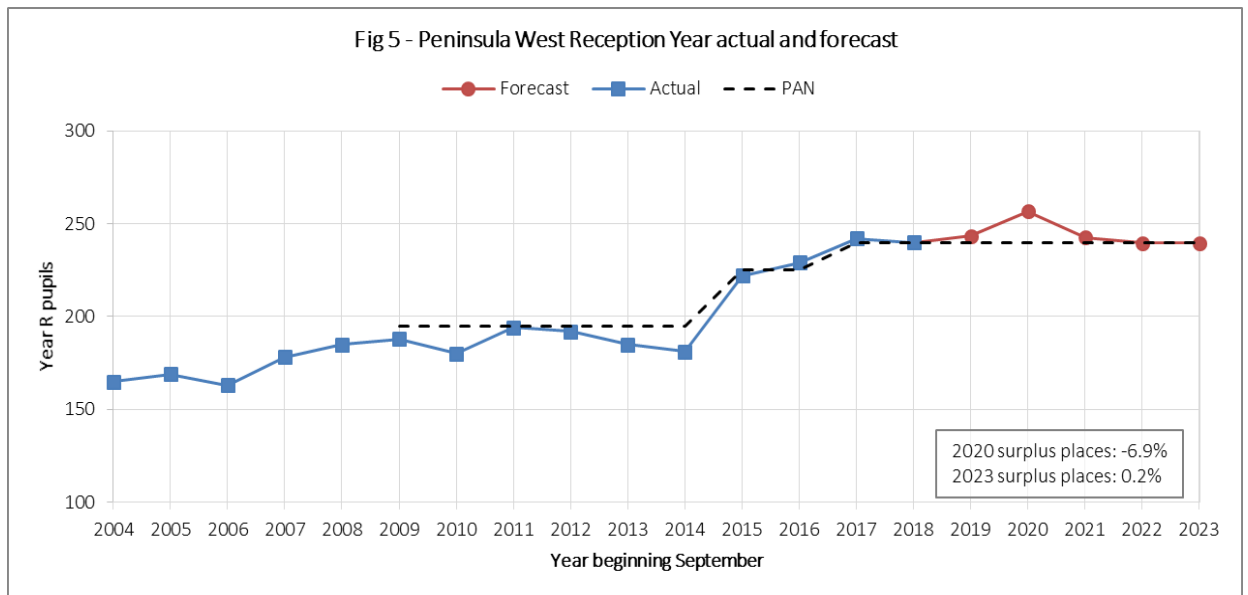
3.5 Medway operates ten primary pupil place planning areas based on local geography. Generally, pupils who live in a planning area go to school in the same area, although in certain areas there is noticeable cross boundary movement. Previously, there were nine planning areas but having Peninsula as a single area masked the differences in school rolls in the east and west of the area. Therefore, it was split into Peninsula West and Peninsula East.

3.5.1 When planning school places, it is necessary to consider movement between neighbouring areas. The following sections outline the forecasts for each planning area, some individually and others grouped due to movement between them.

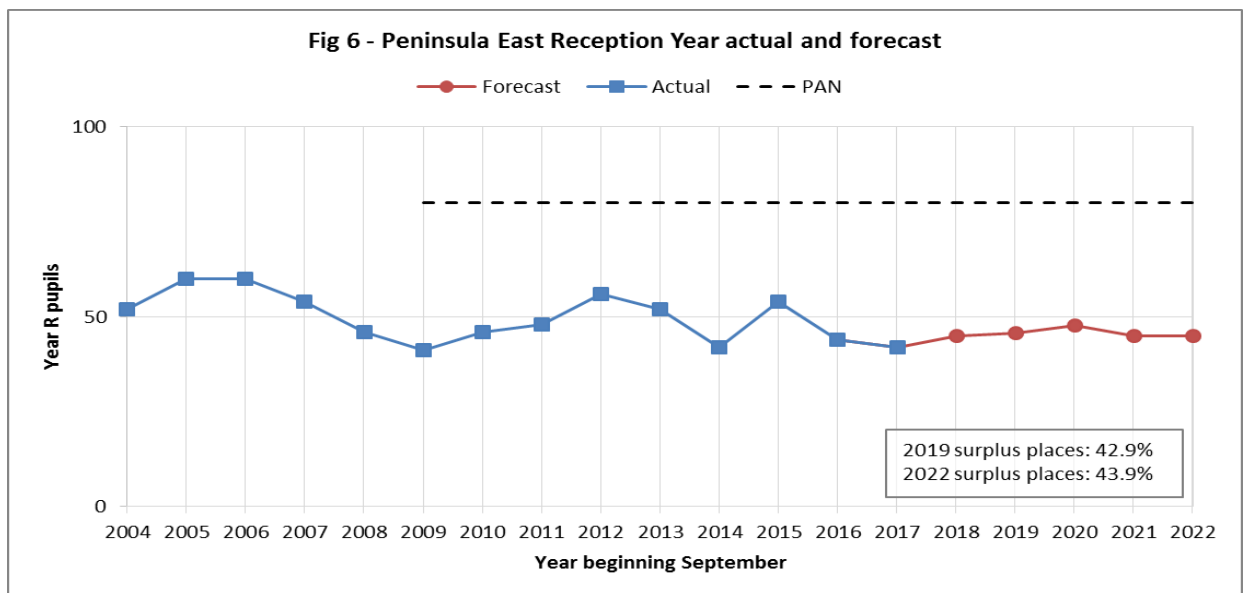
### 3.6 Peninsula East and West

3.6.1 This place planning area originally covered the whole of the Hoo Peninsula. It was split into two in 2018, because the two halves had very different levels of demand. Peninsula West covers the area from Four Elms Hill to High Halstow, including Hoo St Werburgh, Cliffe, and Cliffe Woods. Peninsula East covers the remaining area to the east of High Halstow, including the villages of Grain, Stoke, and Allhallows.

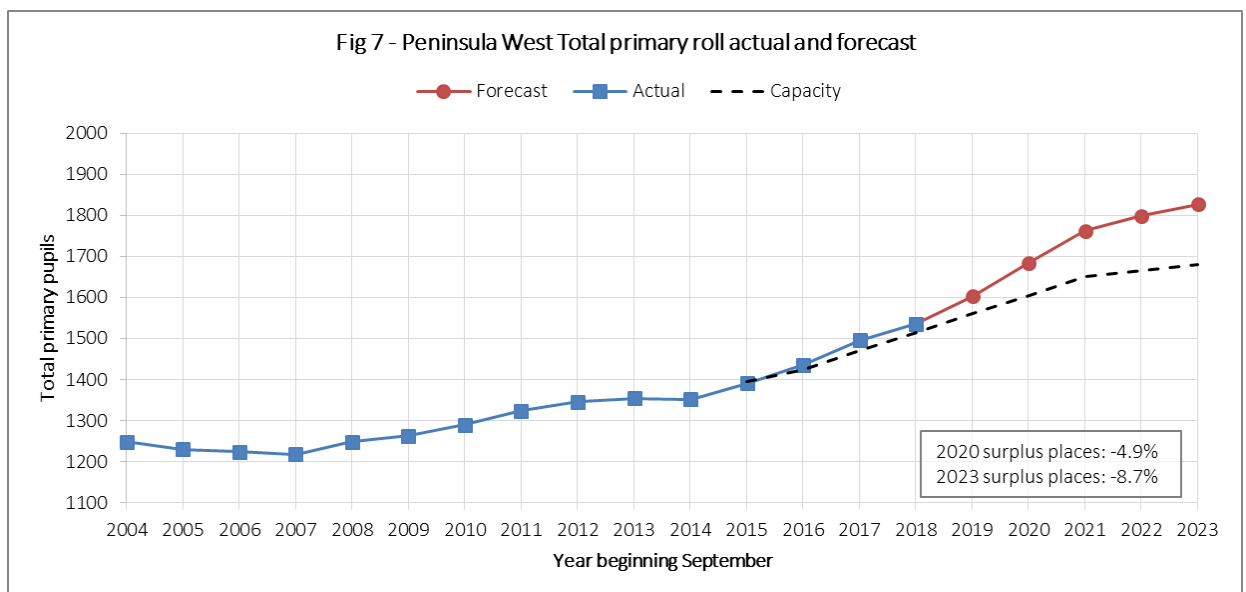
3.6.2 Peninsula West covers six primary schools. This includes the primary phase at The Hundred of Hoo Academy, which was established in 2015 to cater for demand from Hoo village due to the number of housing developments. The graph below shows the forecast for reception in the Peninsula West (fig 5).



- 3.6.3 In 2016, Cabinet approved proposals to expand Cliffe Woods Primary Academy from 45 to 60 places per year group. This project was completed in September 2017, providing an additional 105 places in total.
- 3.6.4 These projects at Hundred of Hoo and Cliffe Woods have added 315 primary school places into the western peninsula area. Forecasts indicate that further additional capacity is likely to be required as more housing developments gain approval in the area. The new primary phase at The Hundred of Hoo Academy was built as a 1FE school to meet the known demand at the time, but was designed to enable efficient expansion to 2FE. The Cabinet has previously approved, under decision no. 119/2018, the feasibility and detailed costing for this. The feasibility study has indicated that around £2m will be required, but at this time no funding is available and alternative options to expanding the school are being explored. As fig 7 below shows, this expansion is necessary to ensure sufficient places are available in the Peninsula West area.
- 3.6.5 Feasibility studies have also been undertaken at Chattenden Primary Academy and Hoo St Werburgh Primary School to assess the viability of future expansion there.
- 3.6.6 Peninsula East has three primary schools, all of which are small rural schools and all have low roll numbers. The graph below shows the forecast for the Peninsula East (fig 6) area, with high numbers of surplus places.

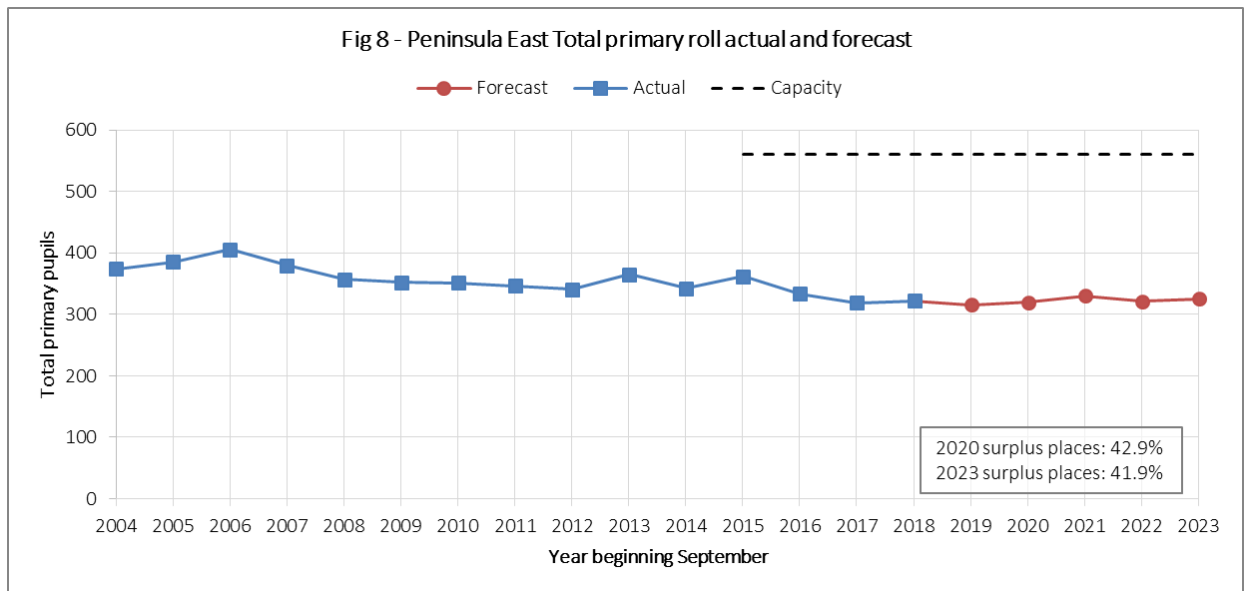


3.6.7 The schools in Peninsula West are generally full and forecasted to remain so (fig 7). Currently, the only spare capacity on the peninsula is in the schools in Peninsula East (fig 8). However, the distances involved between the areas means that travel to the schools where spaces are available is difficult and it should not be assumed that these spaces are appropriate for children in Peninsula West, indeed schools in central Strood are closer to Hoo than the three schools in Peninsula East.



3.6.8 The position in the Peninsula West area should continue to be monitored closely to ensure a good supply of places remains as the population increases. Unless funding can be identified for the expansion of Hundred of Hoo School, alternative places will be required. Some surplus capacity exists in Strood, which can accommodate some of the shortfall of places in Peninsula West, but this means pupils spending time travelling, increases traffic on the Four Elms roundabout and this option is unsustainable over the long term as numbers in Strood itself increase over the coming years through housing developments (see section 3.8). However, it is one of the options being explored over the short term.

3.6.9 In the eastern peninsula, the number of surplus places will be monitored to ensure schools in this area with continuing small numbers remain viable.

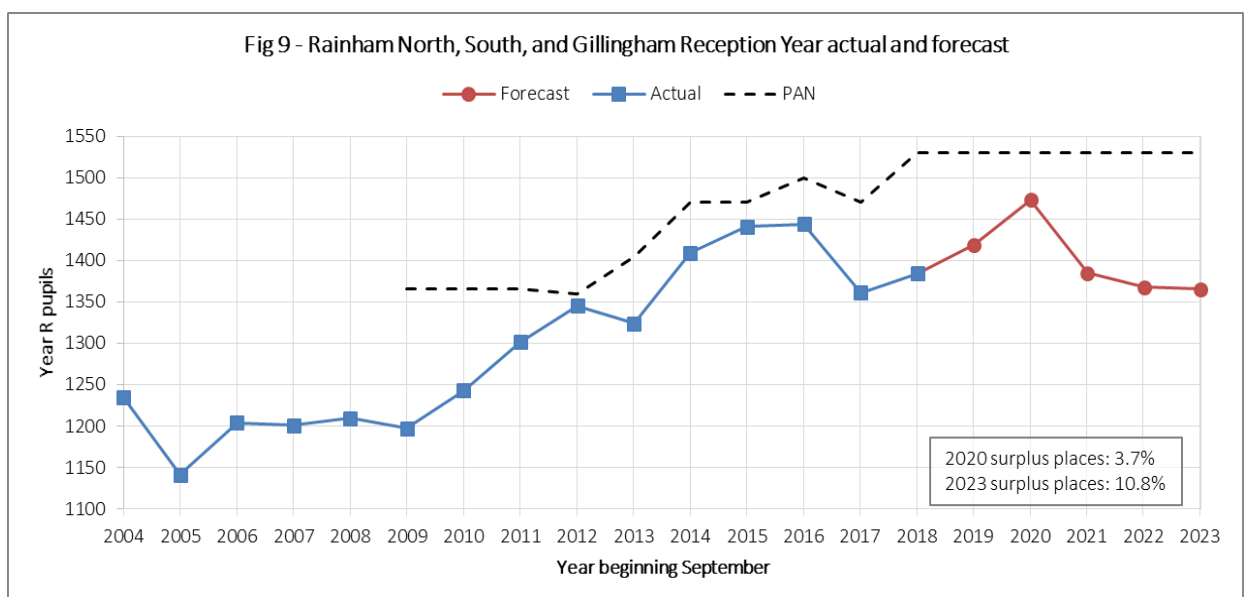


### 3.7 Gillingham, Rainham North and Rainham South

3.7.1 The levels of pupil movement between these three place planning areas makes it sensible to review the Gillingham and Rainham areas as a whole.

3.7.2 Expansions between 2013 and 2017 at Brompton Westbrook, Woodlands Academy, Napier Primary, and Saxon Way, together with the bulge class at St Thomas of Canterbury for the 2016-17 academic year have ensured that sufficient places have been available. Forecasting in this area has proved to be particularly accurate in recent years with sufficient provision made available to meet increasing demand where and when required.

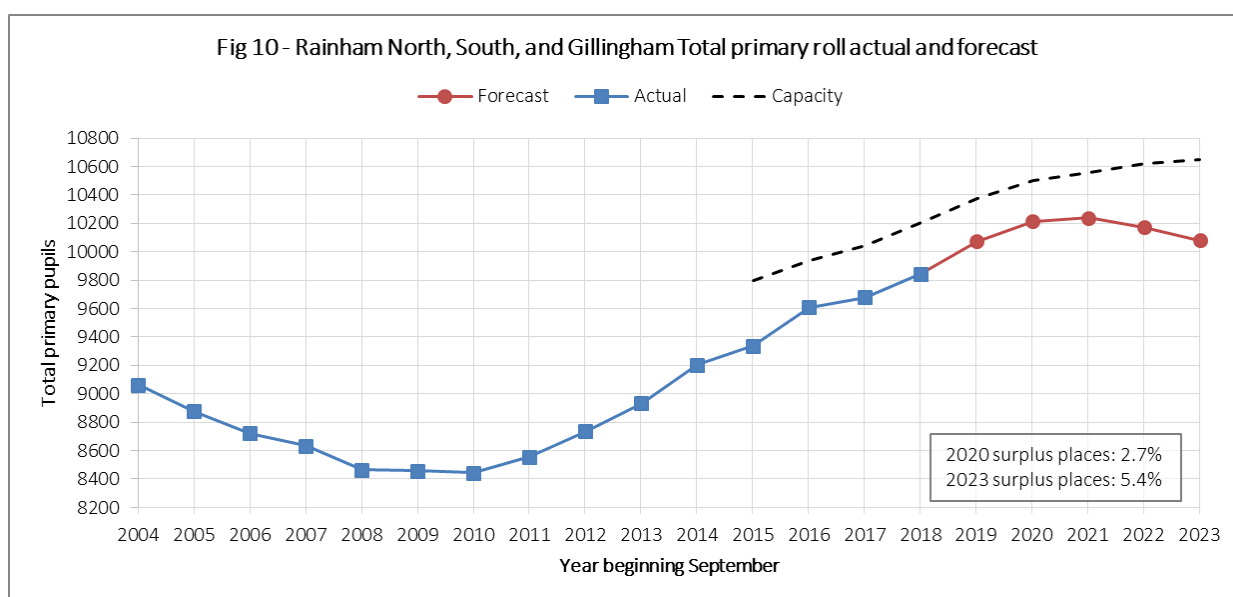
3.7.3 More recently, pressure is being experienced in two parts of the wider area; in the east around the Rainham boundary with Kent and in the west around St Mary's Island and the docks area. These are areas of significant housing developments, with some underway or due to start, while others are maturing. To meet this demand Riverside and St Mary's Island Primary Schools were each expanded by 1FE with the schools admitting the first year of additional reception pupils in September 2018.





3.7.4 The graph above indicates that there is some spare capacity at reception intake (fig 9), although this drops to 3.7% in 2020. With further housing scheme proposals expected those surplus places could be filled quickly in the coming years. The surplus is forecast to rise to 10.8% in 2023 however, with the number of housing schemes planned in the area, it is reasonable to expect that this figure will reduce in line with the 8% surplus figure as that time approaches and will provide flexibility in the longer term.

3.7.5 When looking at overall primary roll forecasts (fig 10) the spare capacity is 2.7% in 2020 and 5.4% in 2023. The surplus capacity is forecasted to grow over time. This should ensure that sufficient places are available to meet demand from inward migration and new housing. Forecasts will be monitored to watch for any change to this situation, especially with more housing expected under the Local Plan together with the maturing of current schemes.



3.7.6 The actions taken in recent years to increase school capacity will provide the appropriate number of additional places to meet demand. No further expansion is recommended in the short term. As housing development in the area gathers pace this position will be reassessed to ensure a sufficient supply of places.

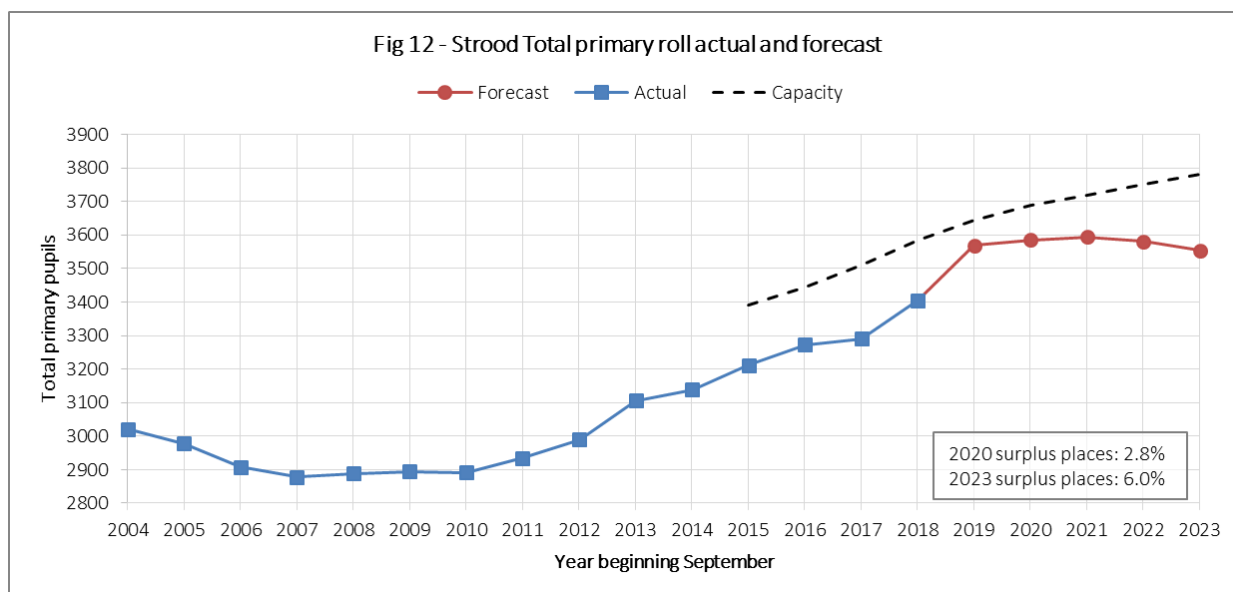
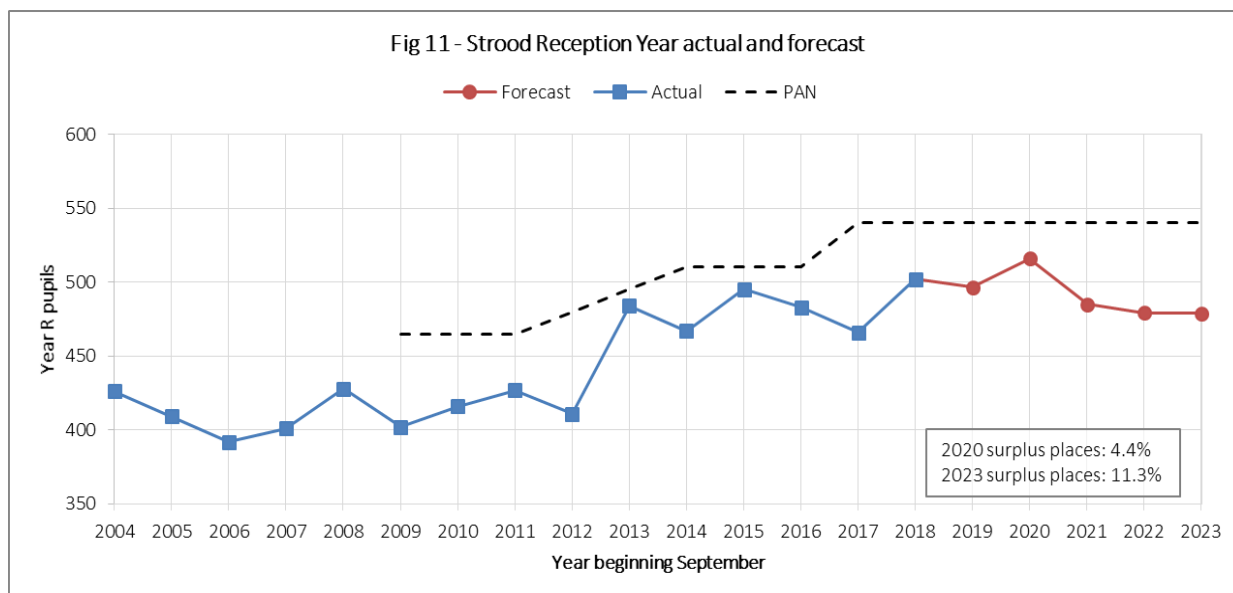
### 3.8 **Strood**

3.8.1 Strood has experienced significant housing development in recent years with Liberty Park, Medway Gate, Templars Rise, and a number of smaller schemes being completed. As these become established, births from these developments are increasing. Further development is ongoing, such as at Temple Waterfront with up to around 600 homes which will add to demand for school places. To meet this expected demand Bligh Infant and Junior Schools were expanded to add places for 30 pupils per year group from September 2017.

3.8.2 Reception class forecasts suggest that sufficient capacity is now in place to accommodate intakes over the next few years (fig 11). However, with further housing developments planned, such as 130 at Commissioners Road, and around 1000 proposed along Canal Road and the Civic Centre, additional primary phase capacity may be required over time. Feasibility studies have been undertaken at a number of schools in the area to provide options when required.

3.8.3 Proposals are underway to change St Nicholas Church of England Infant School into a primary school so that pupils can complete their primary education uninterrupted without the need to transfer at key stage 2. This also results in changes at The Gordon Federation Schools, which is where the pupils from St Nicholas would generally have transferred to. An outcome of these proposals is that by 2027 there will be an additional 20 places per year group available in Strood.

3.8.4 Similarly, total roll forecasts (fig 12) indicate that current capacity will cater for the forecast demand. The lack of current capacity in Peninsula West may also impact on Strood, as these are the nearest schools for many pupils (see section 3.6).



### 3.9 Chatham, Rochester and Walderslade

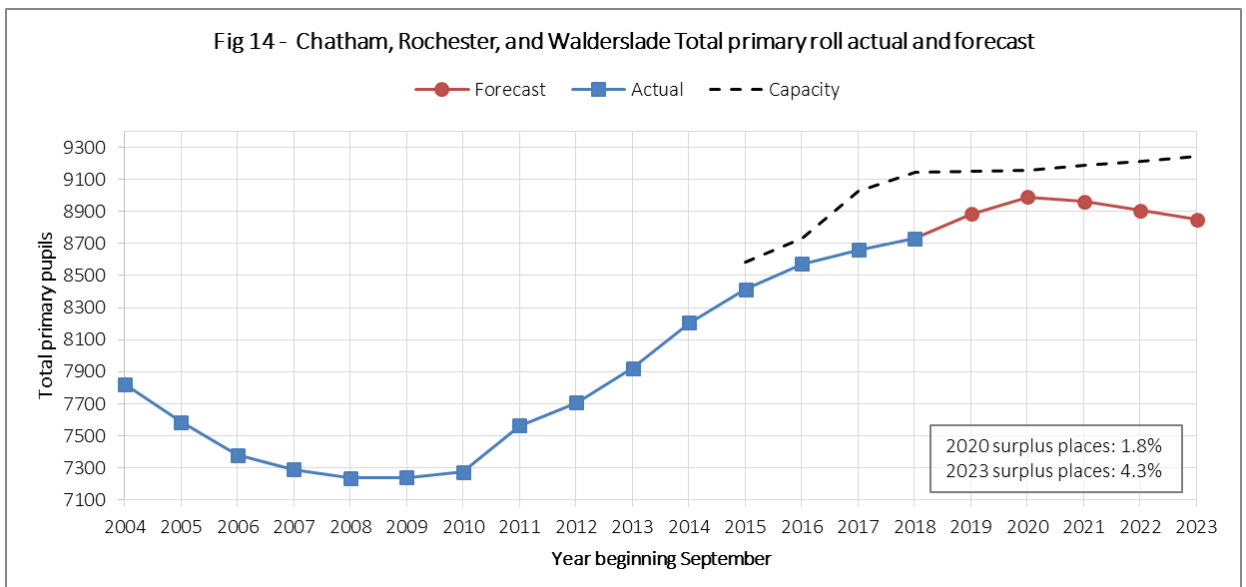
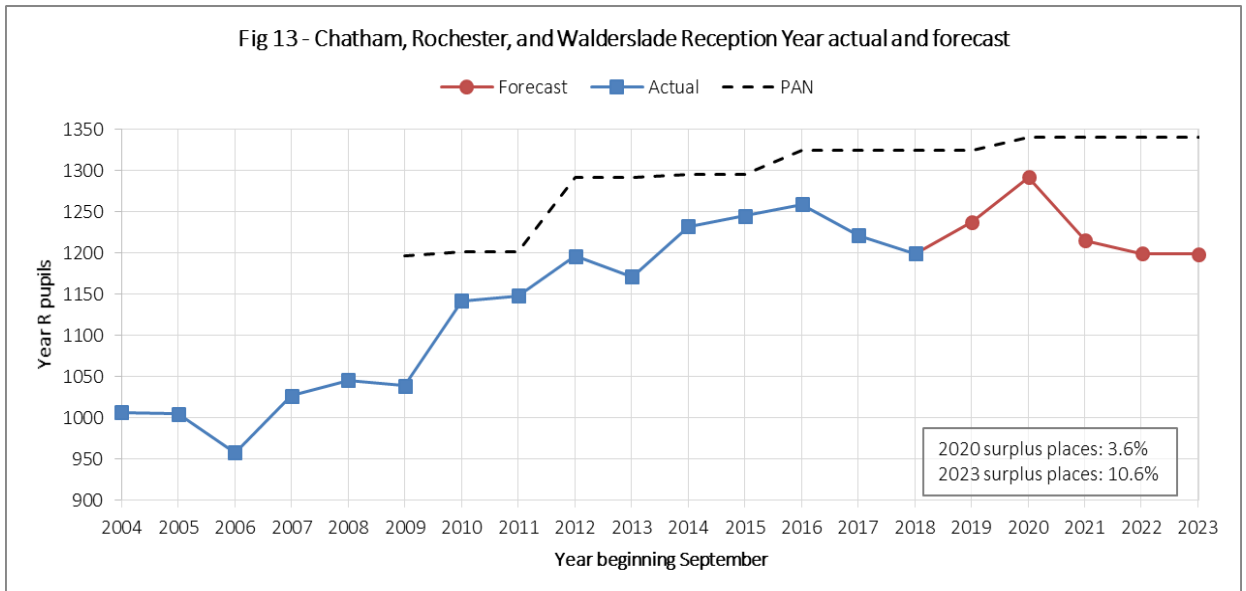
3.9.1 These three neighbouring planning areas experience some cross boundary movement of pupils to attend schools. Capacity was increased in 2014 with the creation of New Horizons Children’s Academy, which added 630 primary places. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) approved proposals by Delce Junior Academy to establish a 1FE infant stage from September 2016, adding another 30 places per year group (210 total). In 2020, Greenvale and Phoenix will change from

separate infant and junior schools to two primary schools which will result in an additional 15 places per year group over time.

3.9.2 However, despite this additional capacity which has successfully catered for increased demand, there remains some concern that proposed housing schemes in Chatham and Rochester will cause pressure on places in the future. This will be carefully monitored, and a feasibility study is underway at New Road Primary School to look at how best to increase places there.

3.9.3 The graph below (fig 13) shows that there is sufficient capacity for forecasted reception rolls, but the housing development at Rochester Riverside will generate additional pupils. This development will benefit from an on site school, but the timing of occupations in the development and the construction of the school will result in a mismatch of supply and demand of school places in the short term.

3.9.4 The total rolls graph (fig 14) indicates that spare capacity will be at its lowest in 2020, with 1.8% spare, only growing to 4.3% in 2023. This includes the school at Rochester Riverside growing at 30 places per year from 2021. However, at this time it is not certain when the school will be operational. Officers will monitor this closely to ensure that there is no shortfall in available places.



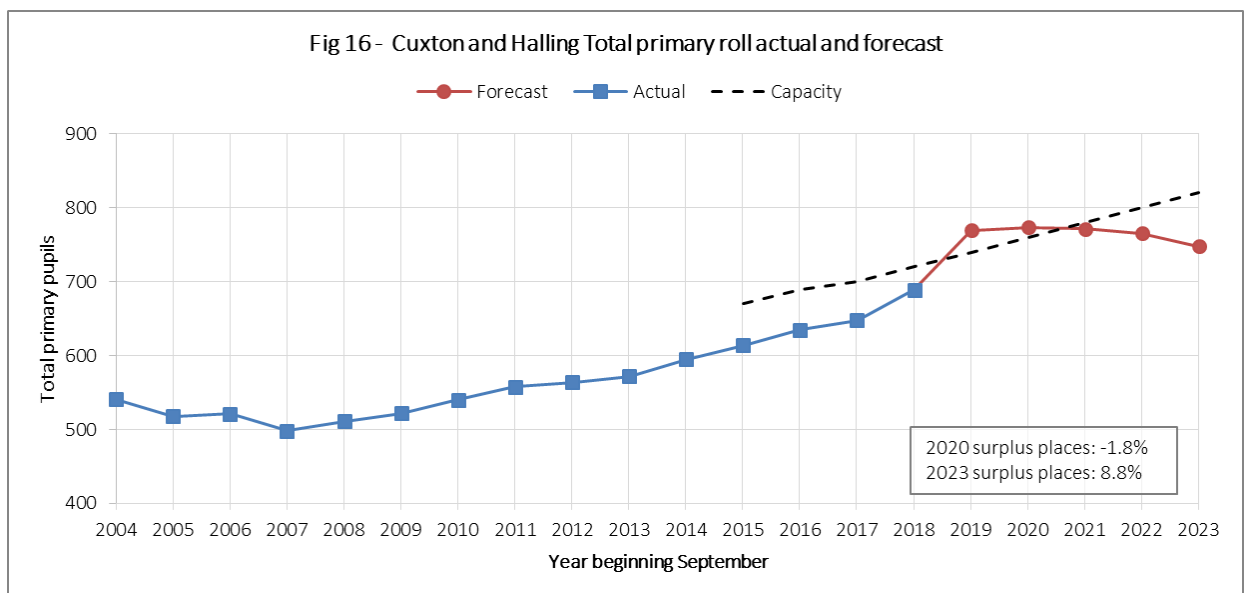
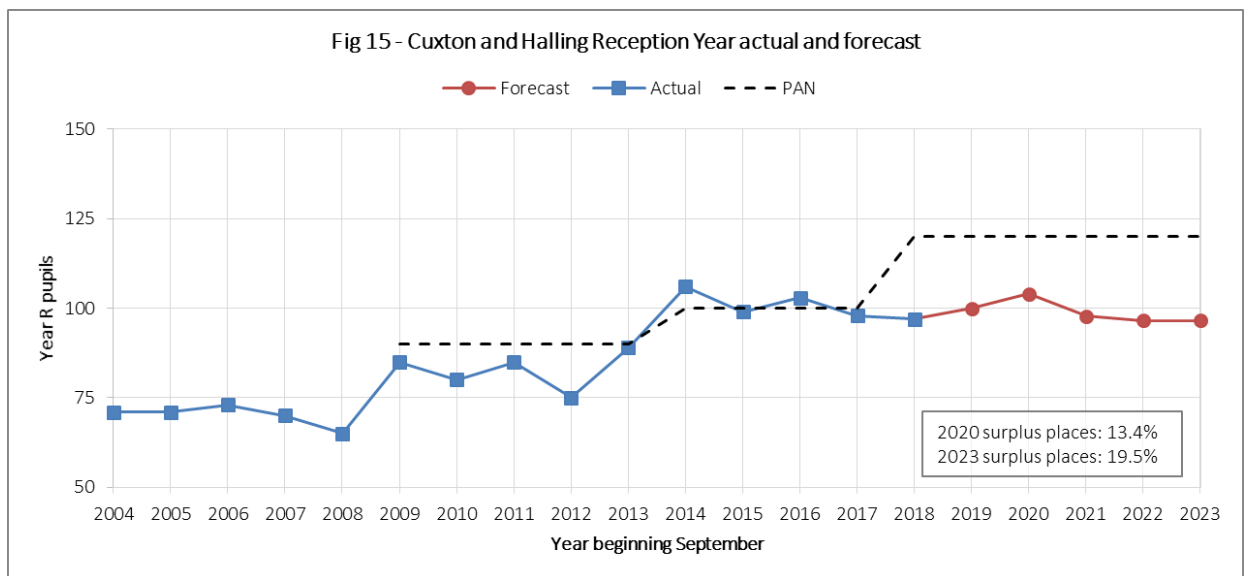
### 3.10 Cuxton and Halling

3.10.1 This mostly rural area extends south-westwards from the M2 motorway bridge to the border with Kent County Council at Snodland and is covered by two primary schools. One of them, Cuxton, has been expanded recently to increase its capacity by 70 pupils, which has helped ensure sufficient places are available in the short term.

3.10.2 Previous forecasts suggested that, with the number of housing developments in the area on both sides of the boundary, further capacity was required. Therefore, the expansion of Halling Primary School was approved as part of 2016's review.

3.10.3 This has provided an additional 20 places per year group, 140 in total. Fig 15 below highlights the reception position, with the Cuxton and Halling expansions included, and indicates that sufficient capacity is expected to be available to meet demand from 2018.

3.10.4 The total roll forecast (fig 16) shows that there may be pressure on overall rolls in 2019 and 2020, but this is due to the phasing in of the additional capacity.



### 3.11 Primary summary

3.11.1 The table below highlights the significant number of additional primary school places provided between 2013 and 2018. These expansions and new schools have provided capacity to ensure that the Council continues to meet its duty to provide sufficient school places over the period of the strategy. These places have been successfully provided when and where required.

School	Planning Area	Number of additional places	Year implemented
Wainscott Primary School	Strood	210	2013
Brompton Westbrook	Gillingham	105	2013
Napier Primary School	Gillingham	210	2013
Saxon Way Primary	Gillingham	210	2014
Cedar Primary School	Strood	105	2014
New Horizons Academy	Chatham	630	2014
Woodlands Primary	Gillingham	210	2014
Cuxton Infant and Junior	Cuxton	70	2014
Hundred of Hoo	Peninsula	210	2015
St Thomas of Canterbury	Gillingham	30 (Bulge Class)	2016
Delce Academy Infant Phase	Rochester	210	2016
Bligh Infant and Junior	Strood	210	2017
Cliffe Woods	Peninsula	105	2017
St Mary's Island Primary	Gillingham	210	2018
Riverside Primary	Rainham	210	2018
Halling Primary	Cuxton	140	2018
<b>Total</b>		<b>3075</b>	

3.11.2 The additional capacity built into the system should ensure demand is met for the foreseeable future, with the exception of Peninsula West as discussed in section 3.6. Forecasts will continue to be monitored and updated twice each year, together with weekly birth numbers and inward migration, and the position will be assessed accordingly.

3.11.3 Feasibility studies in West Peninsula, Chatham, and Strood have identified options to provide additional capacity should it be required in the future so that the Council are able to react quickly. Development put forward through the Local Plan will be monitored, and any requirements for additional places to best meet overall need determined.

**Key areas of concern in the primary sector are the lack of capacity in Peninsula West and school viability in Peninsula East.**

### 3.12 Secondary

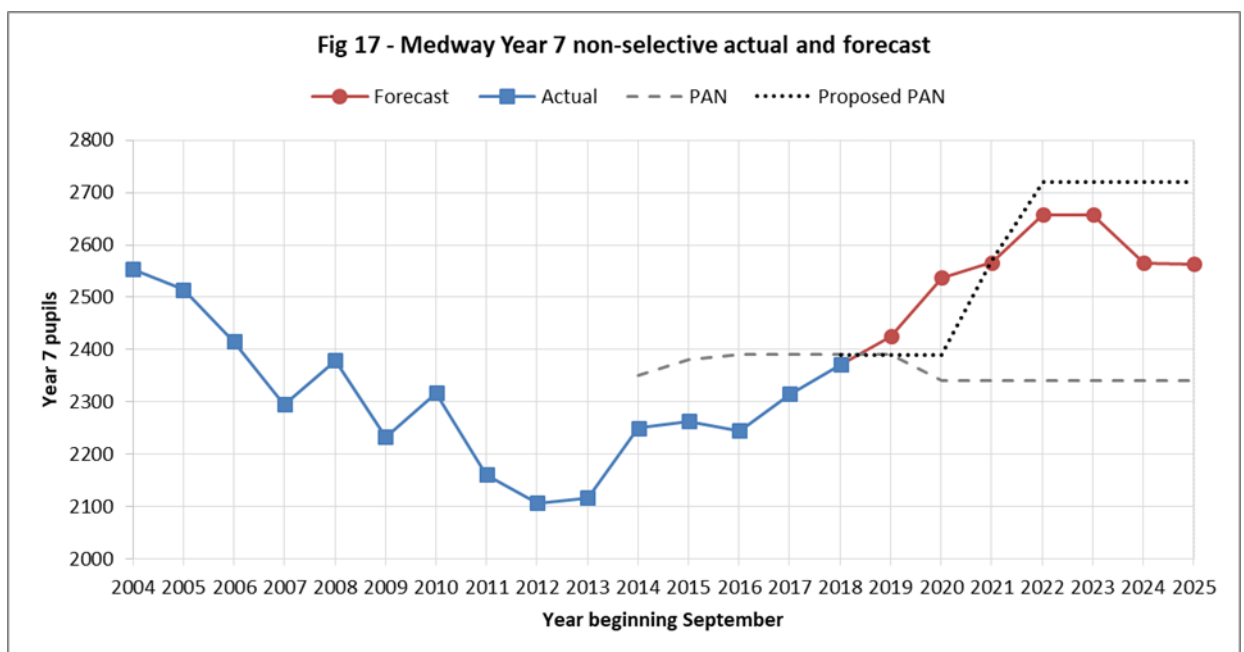
3.12.1 There are two secondary planning areas, one for the six selective schools, and one for the 12 non-selective schools. Both cover the whole of Medway, as secondary age pupils can travel much further than primary pupils.

3.12.2 The increasing number of primary pupils have started to transfer to secondary schools with overall numbers expected to rise from 19,207 in 2018-19 to 21,985 in 2025-26. The pressure on places has begun to increase in year 7 as the larger

numbers of primary cohorts feed into secondary education. This will extend through all year groups over time.

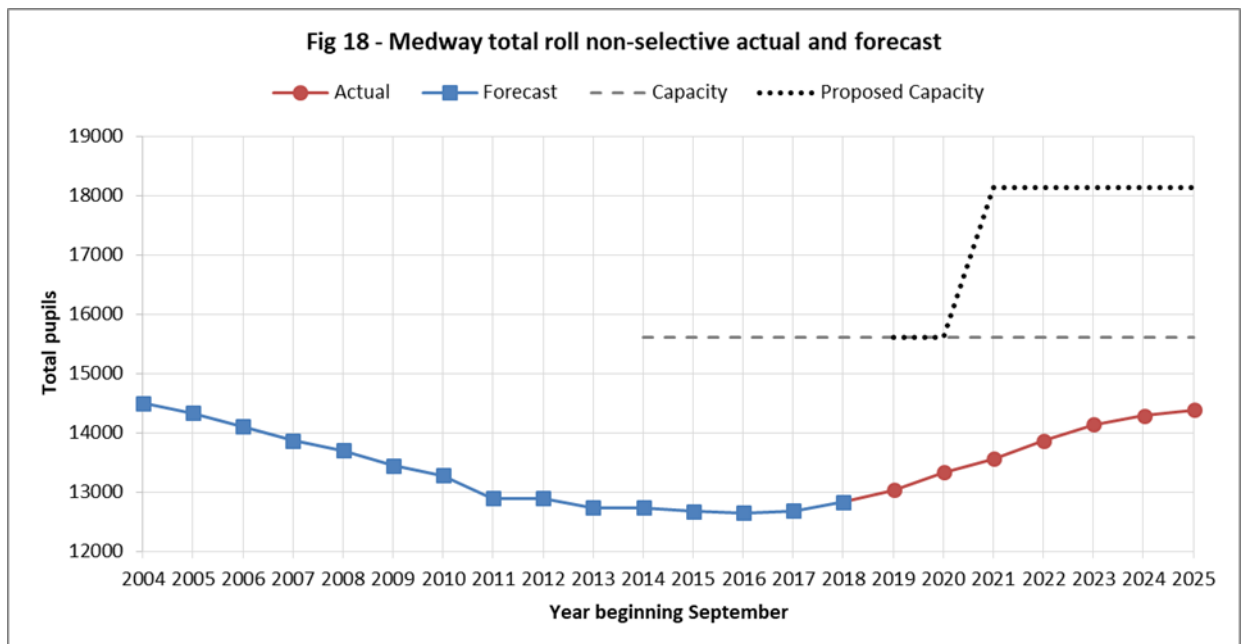
### 3.13 Non-Selective

- 3.13.1 Fig 17 below shows how the demand for year 7 non-selective places has been rising steeply from 2016 and is forecasted to continue until at least 2023. Sufficient capacity in year 7 is available in 2019 due to spare capacity in older year groups. Rolls were lower in the past, and so current older year groups are smaller. From this point additional capacity will be necessary to avoid a widespread shortage of places. For example, in 2020 there could be a shortfall of 197 places which equates to the need for 7 forms of entry and by 2022 the need for 9 forms of entry.
- 3.13.2 This shortfall is planned to be met through the provision of the two new Free Schools (Leigh Academy Rainham and The Maritime Academy in Strood) awarded to Medway. These would be delivered and funded through the Government's Free School programme. Free schools are new academies, rather than academies which have converted from an existing school. It is anticipated that these schools will be operational from 2021 and 2022. The extra capacity from these are shown on the graph as the proposed Published Admission Number (PAN) dotted line.
- 3.13.3 The Department for Education planned to provide one of the free schools for September 2020, but due to slippage in their timetable this target date will be missed. This does mean that for September 2020, there is expected to be a significant shortfall in available places. The Council is working with partners to ensure sufficient school places are available.

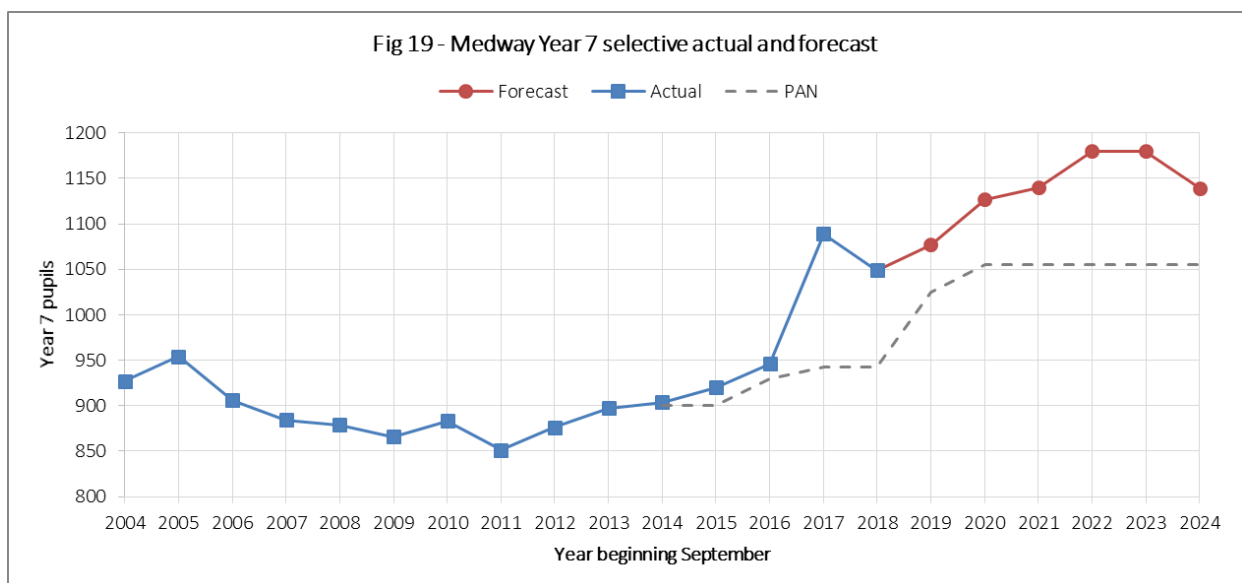


- 3.13.4 Fig 18 below shows the total non-selective school forecasts against capacity and shows that sufficient places will be available as a result of the new free schools. While there appears to be significant surplus places, these will be filled year on year as the larger numbers progress through, providing flexibility and certainty of places into the mid-twenties. These figures are based upon the current primary school rolls and approved housing. As further housing developments come forward under the Local Plan, there is likely to be a corresponding increase in secondary numbers.

3.13.5 The estimated cost of a new 6 form of entry secondary school would be approximately £25-30m. The Council is not in a position to fund either sufficient expansions or the new schools required without the Free Schools Programme. The biggest risk to Council's ability to meet its obligation to provide sufficient school spaces is the Free Schools not materialising. Sites have been identified in both Rainham and Strood for these schools.



### 3.14 Selective



3.14.1 Fig 19 highlights that the selective sector is experiencing similar issues as the non-selective. Year 7 intakes follow the same pattern; by 2020 there will be a shortfall of 72 places and by 2022 a deficit of 125 places. The deficit of places in 2017 and 2018 were absorbed into the current capacity with schools agreeing to admit over their PAN.

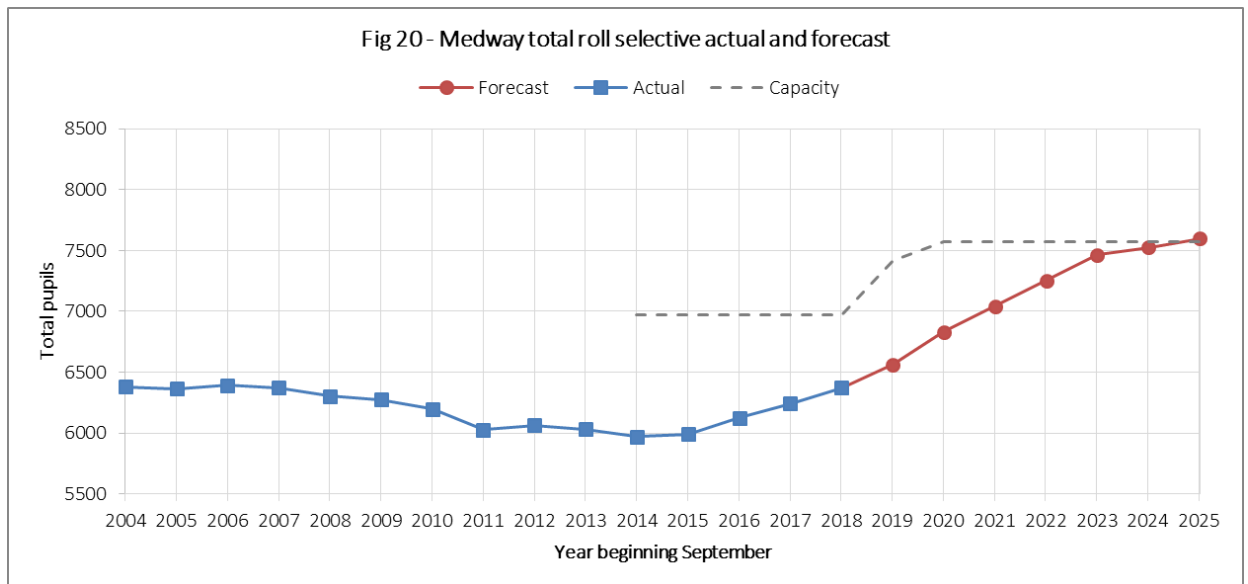
3.14.2 A formal study was undertaken to identify where the largest number of places could be provided cost-effectively in order to meet demand when necessary. The schools selected are shown in the table below. These were expanded to admit additional pupils formally from 2019, but to assist the council meet demand the schools

admitted over number for 2018. The impact of the expansions is included in Figures 19 and 20 in the PAN and capacity lines.

School	Additional places	Year from
Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School	150	2018
Rainham Mark Grammar School	150	2018
Holcombe Grammar School	150	2018

- 3.14.3 Rochester Grammar School was also successful in applying for funding under the government's Selective Schools Expansion Fund (SSEF) and will provide an additional 1FE from 2020.
- 3.14.4 This expansion programme will provide places for the next few years. However, in the longer term, with more housing coming forward under the Local Plan, additional physical capacity will likely be required beyond 2019-20.
- 3.14.5 The Government's Free School programme will not include new grammar schools and therefore the responsibility for ensuring sufficient spaces in this sector will fall to the Council. As funding becomes available, potential projects will be assessed for their viability, value for money and cost per pupil. It is likely that over time all six Grammar Schools will require some additional capacity to meet demand.
- 3.14.6 Demand for grammar school places from pupils living on the Hoo Peninsula is growing. Currently 405 pupils from the peninsula area and 662 from Strood travel daily into Rochester, Chatham, and Gillingham to attend a grammar school. With housing numbers expected to grow in future years, demand for places is likely to increase further. Therefore, it is recommended that the opportunity for providing selective education on the peninsula is explored, and a feasibility study undertaken.
- 3.14.7 This will need to be in the form of an annexe to one of the current grammar schools that serve the area. This is a difficult and lengthy process with no guarantee of success and would be dependent upon a site and sufficient funding becoming available.
- 3.14.8 Having grammar school provision on the peninsula area will significantly reduce travel patterns through Medway and in turn pupil time spent travelling. Over time this will free up places in the urban grammar schools for local children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- 3.14.9 Fig 20 below highlights the overall grammar school forecasts against actual and proposed capacity and indicates that when the current grammar school expansions are complete, then sufficient overall space should be available to 2025. However, it is important to note that the graph only takes approved housing schemes into consideration, and therefore it is reasonable to expect that as more housing schemes come forward following the adoption of the Local Plan, demand will increase beyond current capacity.





### 3.15 Special Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

- 3.15.1 In line with increasing pressure on mainstream places, demand for special school provision has also risen. In recent years the Council has taken action to provide appropriate additional provision and to reduce the numbers of pupils placed in expensive independent or out of area settings.
- 3.15.2 A project to expand capacity at Danecourt Special School by 40 children was completed in 2016. A project at Abbey Court resulting in relocation to provide new purpose-built accommodation and an expansion of 68 pupils and was completed in December 2016, with the school taking up occupation in April 2017.
- 3.15.3 There has also been additional secondary aged special capacity for pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health difficulties provided through the Inspire Free School.
- 3.15.4 The former Abbey Court primary building in Long Catliss Road, Rainham has been leased to the Rivermead Inclusive Trust for the purposes of providing provision for secondary aged pupils with mental health needs from September 2018. This will provide a reduction in costs in excess of £370,000 per year by providing local provision instead of placing children out of area when they are discharged from hospital. This will provide dedicated mental health provision, which is rare nationally. No capital investment was required from the Council as the provision is funded separately and benefits from having funding already in place to adapt the building for their needs.
- 3.15.5 The lease is for an initial period of 20 years at a peppercorn rent. The building is of sufficient size to enable a site share. The lease has been written so that the Council can place other associated and appropriate services in the building as necessary.
- This supports the SEND Strategy of increasing local provision for children with special educational need and disability.
  - The proposal offers a reduction on potential out of area placements of approximately £370,000 per annum based on current numbers and population projections.
  - Refurbishment of the building and maintenance and repair during the time of the lease would be the responsibility of the Rivermead Trust.

- 3.15.6 A Hearing Impaired Unit for secondary aged pupils has been created at Thomas Aveling Secondary School. This will provide places for up to 20 pupils over time and will provide a cost saving where these children would have previously been placed out of area away from their families.
- 3.15.7 The SEN Capital Programme, a central government initiative, has meant that a total of £2.3m will be allocated to Medway to provide additional places and facilities for pupils across Medway with Education Healthcare Plans. This will be received in equal instalments over three years from 2018.
- 3.15.8 The projects to benefit from this programme are:

School	Year	Benefits	Cost
Bradfields	1	Increase provision and improve facilities for ASD, MLD	£150,000
Thomas Aveling	1	Hearing Impaired Unit	£84,000
Hundred of Hoo	1	St Werburgh Centre for ASD	£ 225,000
Danecourt	2	Expansion of premises	£158,000
Hoo St Werburgh Primary School	2	Expansion of Marlborough Unit for primary age children with ASD	£360,000
Elaine Academy	2	Expansion of SEMH unit for primary children	£52,000
TBC	3	Contribution to Inspire Free School expansion and relocation	£1.3m

- 3.15.9 Despite the preceding actions, demand continues to increase and a needs analysis has been undertaken to assess future demand for SEND provision. The needs analysis has highlighted that significant additional SEND provision will be required and currently officers are exploring the options of when and where to provide this as well as seeking appropriate funding streams.
- 3.15.10 The main areas of need highlighted in the needs analysis are for Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Social Emotional and mental Health (SEMH) and Severe learning Difficulties (SLD)/ Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD).
- 3.15.11 Wherever possible, children with SEND will be placed within a mainstream setting with appropriate support packages in place. However, despite this there will continue to be demand for specialist places in special schools.
- 3.15.12 Officers are currently working with the DFE and the Parallel Learning Trust (PLT) to explore the option of relocating and expanding the Inspire Free School from its current restricted site to Cornwallis Avenue in Gillingham. This will provide 160 places for pupils with the range of needs highlighted in section 3.15.10 and create a 'learning village' environment. This will be funded via the DFE's free school programme, with the Council contributing the site. At this time a feasibility study is being undertaken and a more detailed update can be provided when that is completed. If successful, this will provide a significant increase in capacity to meet expected demand and make a major difference to Medway's young people by reducing the need for out of area placements. It is expected that subject to formal DFE approval that the school will be in place for the 2022-23 academic year.

3.15.13 It is recommended that the Council supports wider work to explore the opportunity of providing residential accommodation within Medway to reduce the reliance upon potentially expensive and distant out of area provision.

### **3.16 Alternative Provision**

3.16.1 In 2018 an exercise was undertaken by officers and headteachers to assess Alternative Provision in Medway. The review was undertaken in order to address the weaknesses in overall provision and reduce exclusions across schools. Thus, improving the life chances of those young people who, required additional support to help them with their educational needs and improve their life chances.

3.16.2 One recommendation from the review stated that the Local Authority should consider raising the number of commissioned secondary Alternative Provision places to around 120, which would bring Medway proportionately into line with other authorities.

3.16.3 In the short term this would reduce the need to spot purchase places in high cost, independent provision, but the review recommends that all additional places should be utilised for pupils with a reintegration plan.

3.16.4 The review recommended that by more reintegration taking place, there would be a natural increase in capacity and the outcomes of the pupils would improve. This work has begun and is being led by The Rowans, Inspiring Change Trust.

3.16.5 It recommended that the Local Authority should look to restructure the publicly funded Alternative Provision in Medway, establishing a single all through integrated service on a single site. This service would result in:

- a short stay provision for permanently excluded primary school children and secondary pupils in key stage 3;
- time limited behaviour modification places for referred primary school pupils and secondary in key stage 3;
- educational placements for students in key stage 4 for whom reintegration is not appropriate;
- outreach services to schools; and
- all primary and secondary pupils up to the end of year nine should be on a reintegration plan.

3.16.6 Delivery of these recommendations requires a restructure of the organisation, governance and capacity of Medway's Alternative Provision. The proposals are:

- to amalgamate Will Adams and The Rowans into an all-through provision, initially on a split site and over time to merge onto a single site at the Rowans; and
- This will be achieved by the technical closure of Will Adams and the expansion of The Rowans.

3.16.7 The Council will be the decision maker on the proposals to close Will Adams and the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) will be the decision maker on

the expansion of The Rowans. In August 2019, The Cabinet gave approval for the consultation to commence, and this is currently underway.

- 3.16.8 It is proposed, subject to the outcome of the period of consultation, to formally implement the changes during or after the summer term 2020, initially operating on a split site. Although, a final timeline will be dependent upon the outcomes of the consultation period.

#### **4. Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 3 October 2019**

- 4.1 This report was considered by the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3 October 2019. The comments of this Committee are as follows:

4.2 The Programme Lead, School Organisation and Capital Services, introduced the report which provided an update on the progress made against the School Place Planning Strategy 2018-22, highlighted areas of emerging demand for school places and made recommendations to ensure that a sufficient supply of good quality school places was maintained.

4.3 Members then raised a number of comments and questions which included:

4.3.1 **Grammar school places** – A Member raised concern about the pressure on grammar school places and how this was contributed to by children out of Medway taking up places at Medway grammar schools. Officers confirmed that there were children crossing the border both out of Medway and into Medway to attend grammar schools. It was explained that all but one Medway grammar school had amended their oversubscription criteria to ensure Medway children gained higher priority (i.e. they removed admission by test score and therefore more admissions were based on distance) and the last grammar school to do this would be removing the test score from its oversubscription criteria for the September 2020 intake. This would, overtime, reduce the amount of children from out of Medway gaining admission over Medway children.

4.3.2 **School places on the Peninsula** – In response to a question about how the number of children over and above the school places available on the Peninsula were being accommodated, officers explained that at the moment the numbers of children were not large enough to justify extra classes at Peninsula schools and therefore some children were being accommodated at schools in Strood, which was closer and potentially more accessible than schools with capacity in the East of the Peninsula.

4.3.3 **Shortfall of secondary non-selective places for September 2020** – A Member asked about the plan to accommodate the increase demand of secondary non-selective places in September 2020, before the opening of two free schools which were anticipated to be ready in the subsequent two years. Officers explained that they were still in discussion with the DfE and were working hard to determine a resolution for this issue as soon as possible. Comment was made that depending on the status at the time of the Cabinet report publication, the report may need adjusting to reflect this issue (Please note that currently demand for secondary non-selective places has been met. A further report will be presented to the Cabinet in November 2019 which will provide details on how the demand for September 2020 will be met).

4.3.4 **Supporting children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in mainstream schools** – a question was asked about whether school staff would be provided with Continuous Professional Development in order to appropriately support and accommodate children with SEND in mainstream schools. Officers confirmed that was part of the planning in ensuring this was a viable plan for the right children.

4.4 The Committee noted the report and recommended its comments to the Cabinet for consideration.

## 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.

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Action to avoid or mitigate risk</b>	<b>Risk rating</b>
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.	C1
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, which could mean that the council fails to meet its statutory obligation.	Explore options to fund projects including bidding for funding initiatives. Look at cost effective ways to supply places.	A1
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.	D3
Applications for Free Schools increases	Applications for Free Schools could be a risk to strategic planning framework as the Council has no control over where or by whom the application is made.	Monitor all applications to Secretary of State, and work with DFE to influence outcomes of applications to suit, and fit in with, the Councils wider pupil place planning strategy.	A2

Other Local Authorities placing children in Medway	Other authorities are placing children into Medway schools including unaccompanied asylum seekers, which adds pressure to the system and is difficult to plan for.	Retain a certain level of flexibility within the system To meet unexpected inward movement of children requiring a school place.	A3
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## 6. Full Council Motion

- 6.1 Full Council agreed the following motion, proposed by Councillor Pendergast and supported by the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, at its meeting on 18 July 2019:

“Following events concerning Stoke Primary School, this Council requests the Cabinet to commit to keeping rural and village schools open for the benefit of the local communities in so far as its powers allow.”

- 6.2 Section 6 of The School Place Planning Strategy 2018-22, approved by Cabinet in July 2018 under decision 88/2018, sets out the updated School Organisation Principles. These are a set of guidelines drawn up to help ensure that decisions are taken in a clear and consistent way and reflect the current education landscape. The motion as set out in 5.1, fits with the principles which state “Where possible, provide a good choice of provision, support successful schools to expand, and meet parental preference...” and “Ensure sufficient places are available to meet demand, and retain some flexibility within the system...”
- 6.3 Where the school is local authority maintained, the Council is generally the decision maker on proposals to make changes to schools and will be able to determine proposals around rural schools accordingly. However, if the school is an academy, the Council is no longer the decision maker and can only make representations to the Regional Schools Commissioner as it did in the case of the proposals to make changes to Stoke Primary School.

## 7. Consultation

- 7.1 No consultation is required for this report but any specific proposals that are progressed as a result of this report will include a consultation process as appropriate.
- 7.2 No Diversity Impact Assessment accompanies this report. Assessments will be provided for individual proposals brought forward as a result of actions from this report.

## 8. Financial implications

- 8.1 All projects approved and undertaken as a result of this report will be funded through the Children and Adults’ Capital Programme. Funding implications for proposed projects will be included in subsequent procurement board reports requesting funding approval for each individual project.
- 8.2 Where appropriate, developer contributions will be sought from new housing schemes to assist with the provision of school places in areas of demographic growth. Developments resulting from the Local Plan will be considered

accumulatively to identify the most suitable and wider use of developer contributions or developer provided schools to provide the most benefit.

- 8.3 Occasionally, additional funding sources and initiatives become available such as free school waves or targeted basic need initiatives. Where possible the Council will seek to make use of those opportunities to reduce the demands upon the limited funding currently available.
- 8.4 The Government's Free School programme provides an opportunity to create additional provision without the responsibility for funding. The funding waves announced under this programme are separate from the Free School presumption process, where new schools from housing developments are funded by the council. All opportunities to benefit from future Free School waves will be explored. This is particularly relevant to secondary provision which requires significantly higher capital funding than primary schools. However, the availability of land is an issue. Officers will seek to secure Free School provision for Medway as required and discussions with the DFE will continue.
- 8.5 Medway Council receives an annual basic need grant from central government. This is calculated from the School Capacity return which the Council submits each year. The table below highlights the levels of funding due to be received until 2021/22. The table shows that the DFE has determined that Medway will receive a nil grant award for 2020/21, and the allocation for 2021-22 has yet to be announced. At a national level, the Department for Education may offer further opportunities to bid for targeted funds to deliver the basic need for school places, although there is no guarantee that there will be opportunities or that bids will be successful.

Year	Funding allocation
Carry over	£1.9m
2015 –16	£2.2m
2016 –17	£2.3m
2017 - 18	£9.0m
2018 - 19	£3.1m
2019 - 20	£3.8m
2020 - 21	£0
2021 - 22	TBC

- 8.6 This table outlines the remaining available funding within the Capital Programme from central government basic need grants together with developer contributions and lists the current required projects.

Funding remaining (up to and including 2020-21 allocations)	£1,082,000
Projects required and awaiting approval subject to funding availability – with estimated costs	
Expansion of Hundred of Hoo Primary by 1FE	£2,000,000
Change to primary school at St Nicholas CEVC Infant	£800,000
Associated changes at Gordon Federation schools	£500,000
Total of outstanding projects	£3,300,000
Remaining funding requirement up until March 2021	£ - 2,218,000

- 8.7 As can be seen from the table above, there is insufficient funding available at this time to complete all the required projects. Currently there is no funding remaining for projects to further expand primary, secondary or special provision. These will need to rely either entirely upon future years funding beyond 2021, be funded as a result of future Free School programmes, or through developer contributions. It is uncertain at this time whether Medway will receive grant funding beyond 2021, and this will not be announced until the later in 2019.
- 8.8 There is £10.9m in agreed section 106 contributions for education outstanding from developments either underway or yet to start. However, the receipt of these funds is reliant upon housing schemes completing, and with the funding received in instalments at agreed trigger points over time it is uncertain when this funding will be available.
- 8.9 However, when the average cost of expanding and building schools is taken into account the scale of the challenge in providing sufficient school places from Section 106 agreements alone is highlighted;
- 1FE primary expansion £2.1m
  - 2FE new build primary school £6.5m
  - 6FE secondary school £25m

## **9. Legal implications**

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 From 24 January 2014 there is no longer a requirement for a ‘pre-publication’ (informal) consultation period for prescribed alterations, there is however a strong expectation on Local Authorities to consult interested parties to develop their proposals prior to formal publication 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 go through this consultation processes.
- 9.3 Where an expansion is proposed at an academy it falls to the academy trust to carry out the appropriate statutory consultation. In these circumstances the Regional Schools Commissioner is the decision maker on the proposals. If these proposals are to meet basic need for school places, then responsibility for funding falls to the Council. All decisions on funding approval will follow the Council’s procurement procedures.

## **10. Recommendations**

- 10.1 The Cabinet is asked to:
- 10.1.1 consider the comments of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- 10.1.2 note the continued excellent progress made against the School Organisation Plan and School Place Planning Strategy frameworks, which have ensured that the Council has met its duty and sufficient school places are currently available to meet the increasing demand;



10.1.3 authorise officers to undertake further feasibility studies and statutory consultations as necessary to ensure that plans are in place to meet demand as and where it emerges;

10.1.4 note the ongoing work being undertaken to ensure sufficient Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision is available within Medway.

10.1.5 note the limited funding position for providing school places and to support officers' efforts in acquiring additional funding or identifying alternative means of ensuring sufficient school places continue to be available. In particular in the short term:

- primary provision in Peninsula West through a 1FE expansion of Hundred of Hoo Academy
- selective secondary provision through expansion of current schools wherever possible, or through the establishment of an annexe of one of Medway's Grammar Schools
- a range of special school provision to meet increasing wide ranging need.

10.1.6 commit to keeping rural and village schools open for the benefit of the local communities so far as its powers allow, in accordance with the motion agreed at Full Council on 18 July 2019 and on the basis set out in section 6 of the report.

## **11. Suggested reasons for decisions**

11.1 By approving the recommendations in section 10, the Cabinet will be ensuring that the Council meets its statutory duty to ensure sufficient good quality school places are available

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### **Appendices**

None

### **Background papers**

School Place Planning Strategy -

<https://democracy.medway.gov.uk/mgconvert2pdf.aspx?id=42617>