

CABINET

10 MAY 2022

SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING STRATEGY 2022-27

Portfolio Holders: 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 new School Place Planning Strategy 2022-27 (appendix 1) replaces the current strategy which runs until 2022. It explains how demand for school places is monitored and how actions can be taken to ensure that appropriate levels of good quality school places are available.

This provides the overarching strategy behind the supply of sufficient school places. Annual updates will provide information on school places and will recommend further actions required to address emerging need based upon analysis of the most up to date information and data.

1. **Budget and Policy Framework**
 - 1.1. Medway Council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places. The School Place Planning Strategy describes the principles, methods, and challenges of this duty.
 - 1.2. Annual reviews of the School Place Planning Strategy will provide up to date information and proposals to make sure there continue to be sufficient good school places for the expected numbers of pupils.
 - 1.3. Any proposals which follow from this School Place Planning Strategy will follow the School Place Planning Strategy Principles. They will also support the Council Plan Priority of 'Supporting Medway's people to realise their potential', and the outcome of 'All children achieving their potential in schools'. Any proposals, if approved, would be delivered through available funding from the Education Capital Programme.
2. **Annual reviews**
 - 2.1. Annual reviews to the School Place Planning Strategy will make proposals for maintaining the appropriate level of school places in Medway. These

proposals will be based on the most up-to-date information, as well as an analysis of local and national policy and strategy.

3. Climate change implications

- 3.1. No climate change implications arise directly from this report, however as any projects are progressed, designs and construction methods will consider such impacts and look to contribute to the Council's ambitious and exciting climate change agenda.
- 3.2. By creating local provision for children and young people, it is expected that there would be a reduction in car journeys across Medway which will reduce any impacts upon air quality.
- 3.3. Pupils are encouraged by schools to walk or cycle to school, and this becomes more achievable if the provision is local.
- 3.4. As part of the schools' maintenance and condition programme, as well as when expanding or building schools, officers look to utilise methods and materials to help reduce the carbon footprint, examples include replacing fossil fuelled heating systems with greener alternatives, LED lighting, improving insulation, photovoltaics and providing vehicle charging points.

4. Risk management

- 4.1. 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	Risk rating
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

5. Consultation

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

6. Financial implications

- 6.1. 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.

- 6.2. 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.
- 6.3. Over recent years, no basic need funding has been provided by central government to Medway council to provide additional places. Therefore, the funding of projects in the current capital programme is reliant upon section 106 receipts, or council borrowing in advance of future developer contributions due to the delay in receiving funding through this avenue. The government has advised of an allocation of basic need funding in respect of 2023/24 which will be added to the capital programme and individual schemes and their funding agreed in due course.
- 6.4. 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.
- 6.5. 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.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1. 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.
- 7.2. 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 process.
- 7.3. 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.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1. The Cabinet is asked to approve the School Place Planning Strategy 2022-27 as presented at Appendix 1 to the report, for implementation from 1 September 2022.

9. Suggested reasons for decisions

- 9.1. By approving the strategy, 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

Appendix 1 - School Place Planning Strategy 2022-27

Background papers

School Place Planning Strategy 2018-22
<https://democracy.medway.gov.uk/mgconvert2pdf.aspx?id=42617>