



Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel Working Group

19 June 2014

Time 6.00 pm **Public Meeting?** YES **Type of meeting** Scrutiny
Venue Committee Room 1 - Civic Centre, St Peter's Square, Wolverhampton WV1 1SH

Membership

Chair Cllr Julie Hodgkiss (Lab)

Labour

Cllr Paula Brookfield
Cllr Susan Constable
Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre
Cllr Peter O'Neill
Cllr Martin Waite

Conservative

Liberal Democrat

Quorum for this meeting is three Councillors.

Co-opted members

Mrs Rosalie Watkins	Roman Catholic Church (Diocesan Schools Commission)
Hadeel Omar	Parent Governor Representative
2 representatives	Youth Council

Information for the Public

If you have any queries about this meeting, please contact the democratic support team:

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Agenda

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

<i>Item No.</i>	<i>Title</i>
1	Apologies for absence
2	Declarations of interest
3	Primary School Organisation Strategy (Pages 1 - 24) [To conduct pre-decision scrutiny on primary school organisation strategy and to feed comments back to Cabinet.]



Scrutiny Working Group

19 June 2014

Report title	Primary School Organisation	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Phil Page Cabinet Member for Schools, Skills and Learning	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable director	Tim Johnson, Education and Enterprise	
Originating service	School Planning & Resources	
Accountable employee(s)	Bill Hague	Service Manager School Places and Transport
	Tel	01902 556943
	Email	bill.hague@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by		

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Panel is recommended to:

1. Conduct pre-decision scrutiny and refer comments to Cabinet.

Recommendations for noting:

The Panel is asked to note:

1. This item is being considered as pre-decision scrutiny and will therefore not be available to call-in once a decision is made by the Executive.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 This report introduces the Primary School Organisation Strategy 2014 - 2017 and details the proposed 2015 Primary School Expansion Programme. This paper provides information to inform pre-decision scrutiny.
- 1.2 A report will be taken to Cabinet on 25 June 2014 recommending;
 - The approval of the Primary School Organisation Strategy 2014 – 2017;
 - The undertaking of required statutory processes in relation to the proposed schemes in the 2015 Primary School Expansion Programme, and;
 - The delegation of authority to the Cabinet Member for Schools, Skills and Learning in consultation with the Strategic Director for Education and Enterprise, to consider the outcomes of initial consultation and to determine whether or not to proceed to Formal Consultation, in relation to qualifying schemes in the 2015 Primary School Expansion Programme.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Local Authorities have a duty to ensure sufficiency of school places.
- 2.2 Levels of demand for primary school places in Wolverhampton have increased in recent years. In order to meet demand, the Council has recently invested in the provision of a significant number of additional primary school places in areas of high demand across the City.
- 2.3 Levels of demand are anticipated to continue to increase in the short term and projections suggest that additional school places will need to be introduced into the school estate in order to ensure that sufficient school places are available.

3.0 Primary School Organisation Strategy 2014-2017

- 3.1 The Primary School Organisation Strategy 2014-2017 outlines strategic policy with regard to primary school organisation and provides a framework to guide the future development of primary school provision in the City.
- 3.2 In light of the changing educational environment and the dynamic demographic position, strategic policy with regard to primary school organisation is subject to annual review.
- 3.3 The development of the Primary School Organisation Strategy 2014-2017 has been informed by contributions from senior representatives across Learning and Achievement and the maintenance of an issues log which highlighted potential changes to the predecessor strategy (Primary School Organisation Strategy 2013-2016).
- 3.4 In order to support the development of the Strategy key stakeholders including; Headteachers and Chairs of Governors of all Infant, Junior and Primary Schools in the City, all Ward Councillors, Trade Union Representatives, local Diocesan Authorities, local

Educational Trusts, and Wolverhampton Schools' Improvement Partnership were consulted.

3.5 Please find a summary of consultation responses below:

- Concern that a 'one size fits all' approach may be adopted and emphasis of the need to consider individual school circumstances when considering changes to the school estate
- The need to ensure that the Local Authority takes account of the variety of provision to ensure that a range of provision is available.
- The need to ensure that proposed changes to schools are discussed with Diocesan Authorities in the first instance.

3.6 A copy of the Primary School Organisation Strategy 2014-2017 can be found at Appendix A.

3.7 The Strategy is aligned to the Council's School Improvement Strategy and seeks to secure sufficient school places where high quality education is provided that contribute to improved educational outcomes across the City. The Strategy details the structural solutions that the Council may consider proposing in order to improve standards in underperforming schools.

3.8 The Primary School Organisation Strategy 2014-2017 contains frameworks to support both the identification of schools for expansion and, in cases where there is considerable surplus capacity, the removal of provision.

4.0 2015 Primary School Expansion Programme

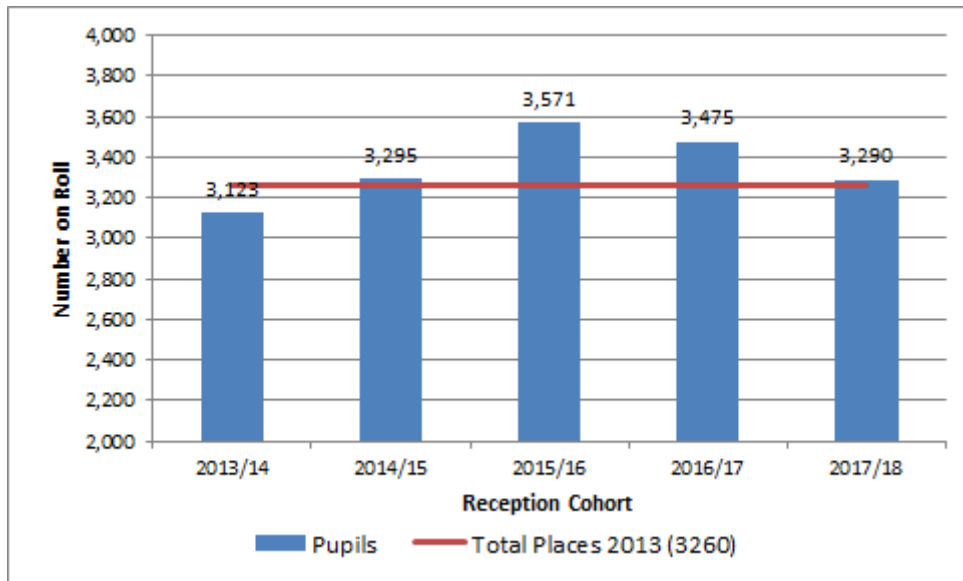
4.1 Levels of demand for primary school provision in the City have increased significantly in recent years. This upsurge has primarily been driven by an increase in the number of births to Wolverhampton residents.

4.2 Figure 1 illustrates the projected size of future Reception cohorts in the City.

Please note that:

- The 2014 Primary School Expansion Programme is currently being implemented; this Programme will introduce 90 additional Reception places into the school estate with effect from September 2014.
- Projections will be subject to validation.

Figure 1: Projected Reception Cohorts (Source: Wolverhampton City Council)



- 4.3 In order to ensure that the Council continues to meet its statutory duties and that an appropriate level of parental choice is available, the introduction of additional school places is required.
- 4.4 In line with the Primary School Organisation Strategy 2014-2017, the following factors were considered when prioritising school expansion schemes:
- Parental Choice – schools which are most popular with parents
 - School Performance - schools judged as ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’ by Ofsted
 - Attainment - schools whose end of key stage results consistently exceed floor standards
 - School Leadership – schools with stable and proven leadership
 - Location – schools located within areas of high demand
 - Viability for expansion – schemes which can be most easily and efficiently implemented
 - Value for money - schools that can most cost effectively be expanded.
- 4.5 The 2015 Primary School Expansion Programme proposes both permanent expansions and the introduction of bulge classes (time limited expansions of the capacity of individual year groups within schools). The introduction of bulge classes has been considered because of an anticipated peak in demand in the short term. Proposing the introduction of bulge classes, as opposed to proposing the permanent expansion of all schools in the Programme, supports the longer term sustainability of the school estate and offers a more efficient use of resources.
- 4.6 When undertaking any primary school reorganisation or development scheme the Council seeks to minimise disruption to pupils and parents and avoid any longer term detriment to pupils. It is recognised that making significant changes to individual

establishments can have a disruptive effect on the delivery of education.

Representatives would provide support to schools through any change process; School Support Groups would be organised and support packages tailored to schools' individual needs. In addition as with the 2014 Primary School Expansion Programme, school performance would be closely monitored during the expansion process via the regular review of a risk register and school performance would also be monitored by the Council's Schools Monitoring and Review Team.

- 4.7 Adopting a flexible approach is essential in order to undertake successful school place planning in the current environment. Given the potential for the both the establishment of new Free School provision in the City and the constantly changing demographics of the City, it is essential that the factors that can influence the Programme are monitored. Representatives are currently developing contingency plans in case the need to alter or expand the Programme is identified.
- 4.8 For the purposes of primary school place planning the City is divided into three planning areas; this enables a more precise identification of local circumstances and a clearer definition of local needs. The locations of these planning areas and the schools contained within them are illustrated in Appendix B.
- 4.9 Please note that a summary of all proposed schemes in the 2015 Primary School Expansion Programme is available at Appendix C.
- 4.10 The provision of additional primary school places would be supported by the undertaking of a variety of capital investment schemes including the refurbishment and adaptation of existing spaces, modular construction and traditional extensions. Feasibility work to assess the options on each proposed site is currently on-going.

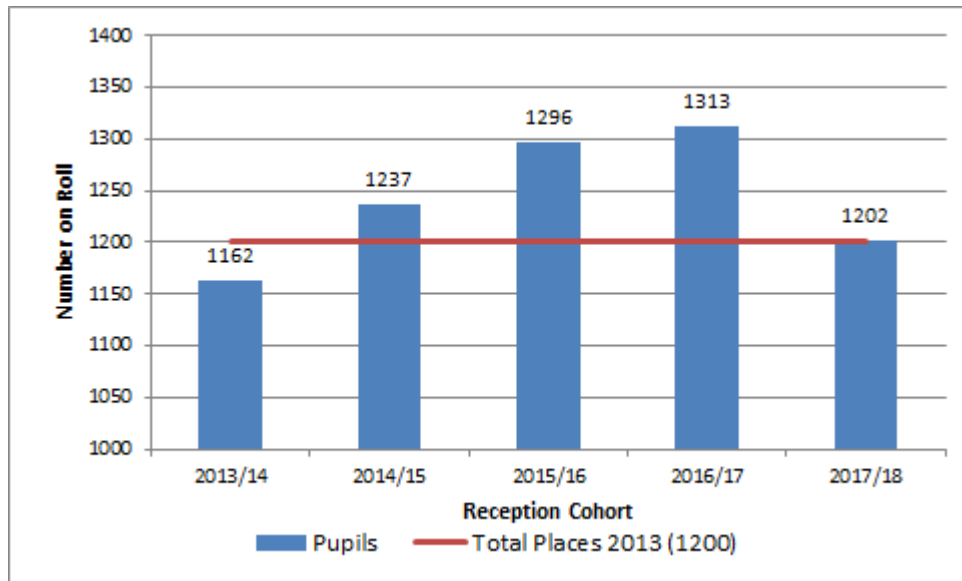
5.0 Planning Area 1

- 5.1 Planning Area 1 consists of the following Wards; Bushbury North, Bushbury South and Low Hill, Fallings Park, Heath Town, Oxley, Wednesfield North and Wednesfield South. Levels of demand for primary school provision in Planning Area 1 have increased significantly in recent years.
- 5.2 Figure 2 below illustrates the projected size of future Reception cohorts in Planning Area 1.

Please note that:

- The 2014 Primary School Expansion Programme is currently being implemented; this Programme will introduce 60 additional Reception places into schools in Planning Area 1 with effect from September 2014.
- Projections will be subject to validation.

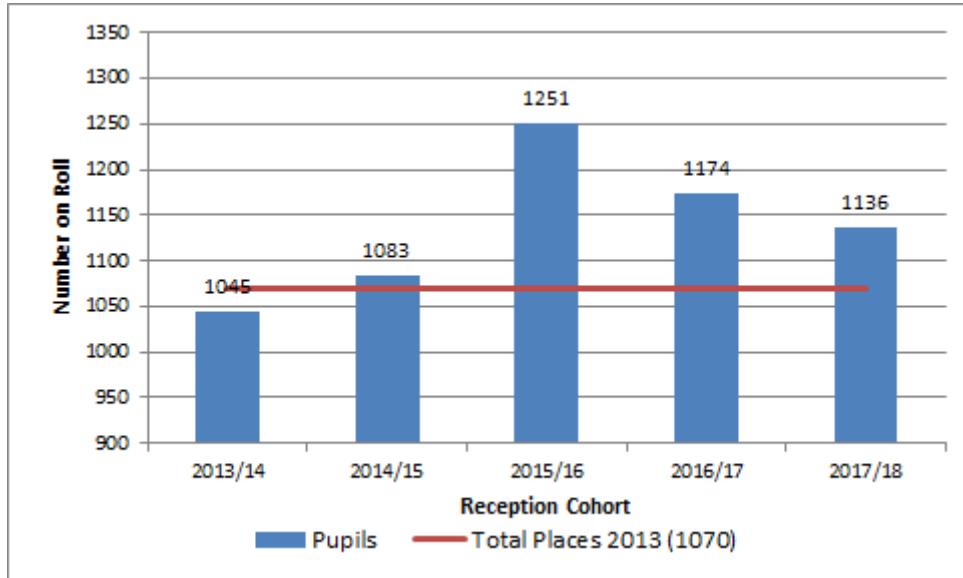
Figure 2: Projected Reception Cohorts (Source: Wolverhampton City Council)



- 5.3 Future levels of demand for primary school provision in Planning Area 1 are anticipated to be impacted upon by a number of significant local housing regeneration schemes. Housing regeneration schemes within Planning Area 1 that are anticipated to result in a pupil yield include the Goodyear site (Bushbury South & Low Hill Ward) and the development of the former Jennie Lee Centre (Wednesfield South Ward).
- 5.4 In order to meet the anticipated level of demand and to ensure that sufficient primary school places are available it is proposed that additional school places are introduced in Bushbury Hill Primary School (Fallings Park Ward).
- 5.5 Bushbury Hill Primary School
- 5.5.1 It is proposed that the number of Reception places available in Bushbury Hill Primary School is increased from 30 to 60 in both September 2015 and September 2016. These bulge cohorts would then flow through the school and the admission limit in Reception would revert to 30 in September 2017.
- 5.5.2 At Bushbury Hill Primary School's last full inspection by Ofsted in October 2012 the School was judged to 'Require Improvement'. The School has continued through Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools (HMI) monitoring process that is a consequence of a 'Requires Improvement' judgement. Positive feedback has been received during monitoring visits and projected outcomes for 2014 confirm this position.
- 6.0 Planning Area 2**
- 6.1 Planning Area 2 consists of the following Wards; Bilston East, Bilston North, Blakenhall, East Park, Ettingshall, and Spring Vale. Levels of demand for primary school provision in Planning Area 2 have increased significantly in recent years.

6.2 Figure 3 below illustrates the projected size of future Reception cohorts in Planning Area 2.

Figure 3: Projected Reception Cohorts (Source: Wolverhampton City Council)



Please note that the projections will be subject to validation.

6.3 Future levels of demand for primary school provision in Planning Area 2 are anticipated to be impacted upon by a number of significant local housing regeneration schemes. Housing regeneration schemes within Planning Area 2 that are anticipated to result in a pupil yield include the Bankfield Works development (Bilston East Ward), the Great Bridge Road development (Bilston East Ward) and the Ward Street development (Ettingshall Ward).

6.4 In order to meet the anticipated level of demand and to ensure that sufficient primary school places are available in Planning Area 2 it is proposed that additional school places are provided in the following schools:

- Bilston CE Primary School (Ettingshall Ward)
- Eastfield Primary School (East Park Ward)
- Loxdale Primary School (Bilston East Ward)
- Manor Primary School (Spring Vale Ward)
- St Martin's CE Primary School (Bilston East Ward)
- Stowlawn Primary School (Bilston North Ward).

6.5 Bilston CE Primary School

6.5.1 It is proposed that Bilston CE Primary School is permanently expanded. Bilston CE Primary School's Published Admission Number is currently 45. It is proposed that with effect from September 2015, the School's Published Admission Number is increased to 60.

- 6.5.2 At Bilston CE Primary School's last full inspection by Ofsted in July 2013 the School was judged to 'Require Improvement'. The School has continued through the HMI monitoring process that is a consequence of a 'Requires Improvement' judgement. Positive feedback has been received during the monitoring process and projected outcomes for 2014 confirm this position.
- 6.5.3 It should be noted that Bilston CE Primary School was included in the Council's 2012 Primary School Expansion Programme. The School's intake was increased from 30 to 45 in order to support the needs of the local community. At this time it was recognised that the School's Governing Body had ambitions to further increase the capacity of the School and the building works required to facilitate the initial expansion were designed in such a way that that the School could be further enlarged if required in the future.
- 6.5.4 Proposing an increase in the School's Published Admission Limit to 60 is in line with the Council's policy on vertical grouping. It is recognised, that whilst this organisational model works effectively in a number of schools across the City, that the employment of vertical grouping can mean that planning and delivering the curriculum is more complex.
- 6.6 Eastfield Primary School
- 6.6.1 It is proposed that Eastfield Primary School is permanently expanded. Eastfield Primary School's Published Admission Number is currently 45. It is proposed that with effect from September 2015, the School's Published Admission Number is increased to 60.
- 6.6.2 At Eastfield Primary School's last full inspection by Ofsted in January 2013 the School was judged to be 'Good'.
- 6.6.3 It should be noted that Eastfield Primary School was included in the Council's 2012 Primary School Expansion Programme. The School's intake was increased from 30 to 45 in order to support the needs of the local community.
- 6.6.4 Proposing an increase in the School's Published Admission Limit to 60 is in line with the Council's policy on vertical grouping. It is recognised, that whilst this organisational model works effectively in a number of schools across the City, that the employment of vertical grouping can mean that planning and delivering the curriculum is more complex.
- 6.7 Loxdale Primary School
- 6.7.1 It is proposed that the number of Reception places available in Loxdale Primary School is increased from 30 to 60 in both September 2015 and September 2016. These bulge cohorts would then flow through the School and the admission limit in Reception would revert to 30 in September 2017.
- 6.7.2 At Loxdale Primary School's last full inspection by Ofsted in November 2009 the School was judged to be 'Good'.

6.8 Manor Primary School

6.8.1 It is proposed that Manor Primary School is permanently expanded. Manor Primary School's Published Admission Number is currently 60. It is proposed that with effect from September 2015, the School's Published Admission Number is increased to 90.

6.8.2 At Manor Primary School's last full inspection by Ofsted in March 2008 the School was judged to be 'Outstanding'.

6.9 St Martin's CE Primary School

6.9.1 It is proposed that the number of Reception places available in St Martin's CE Primary School is increased from 30 to 60 in both September 2015 and September 2016. These bulge cohorts would then flow through the School and the admission limit in Reception would revert to 30 in September 2017.

6.9.2 At St Martin's CE Primary School's last full inspection by Ofsted in October 2013 the School was judged to be 'Good'.

6.10 Stowlawn Primary School

6.10.1 It is proposed that the number of Reception places available in Stowlawn Primary School is increased from 30 to 60 in September 2015. This bulge cohort would then flow through the School and the admission limit in Reception would revert to 30 in September 2016.

6.10.2 At Stowlawn Primary School's last full inspection by Ofsted in January 2013 the School was judged to be 'Good'.

7.0 Planning Area 3

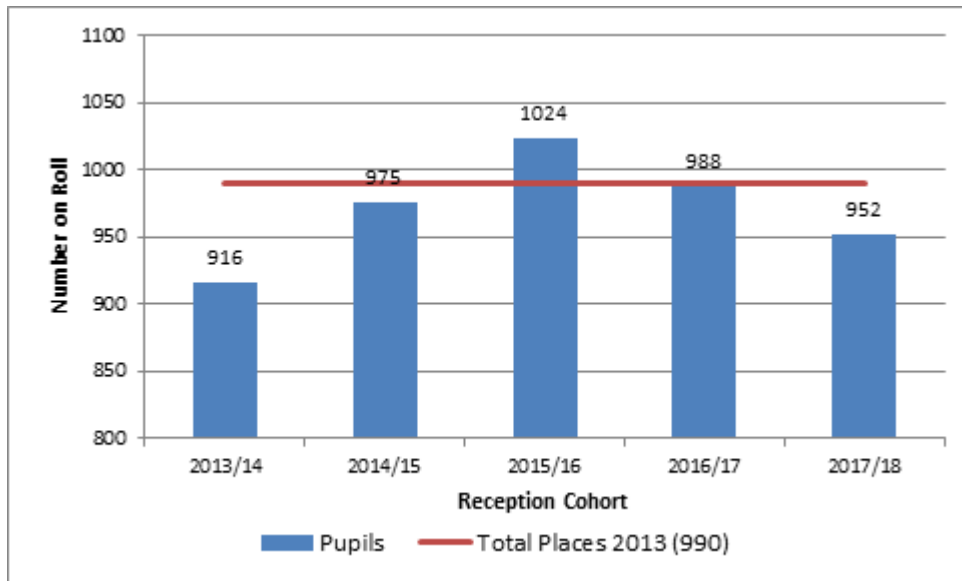
7.1 Planning Area 3 consists of the following Wards; Graiseley, Merry Hill, Park, Penn, St Peter's, Tettenhall Regis and Tettenhall Wightwick. Levels of demand for primary school provision in Planning Area 3 have increased in recent years.

7.2 Figure 4 below illustrates the projected size of future Reception cohorts in Planning Area 3.

Please note:

- The 2014 Primary School Expansion Programme is currently being implemented; this Programme will introduce 30 additional Reception places into Planning Area 3 with effect from September 2014.
- Projections will be subject to validation.

Figure 4: Projected Reception Cohorts (Source: Wolverhampton City Council)



7.3 Future levels of demand for primary school provision in Planning Area 3 are anticipated to be impacted upon by a number of significant local housing regeneration schemes. Housing regeneration schemes within Planning Area 3 that are anticipated to result in a pupil yield include the Craddock Street development (St Peter's Ward) and the development of the former Adas site (Tettenhall Regis Ward).

7.4 In order to meet the anticipated level of demand and to ensure that sufficient primary school places are available in Planning Area 3 it is proposed that additional school places are provided in the following schools:

- West Park Primary School (Park Ward)
- Westacre Infant School (Tettenhall Wightwick Ward)

7.5 West Park Primary School

7.5.1 It is proposed that the number of Reception places available in West Park Primary School is increased from 30 to 60 in both September 2015 and September 2016. These bulge cohorts would then flow through the School and the admission limit in Reception would revert to 30 in September 2017.

7.5.2 At West Park Primary School's last full inspection by Ofsted in April 2014 the School was judged to be 'Good'.

7.6 Westacre Infant School

7.6.1 It is proposed that Westacre Infant School is permanently expanded. Westacre Infant School's Published Admission Number is currently 75. It is proposed that with effect from September 2015, the School's Published Admission Number is increased to 90.

7.6.2 At Westacre Infant School's last full inspection by Ofsted in November 2010 the School was judged to be 'Good'.

7.6.3 It should be noted that Westacre Infant School's corresponding Junior School is Uplands Junior School which has a Published Admission Number of 96.

8.0 Statutory Process

8.1 When proposing significant prescribed alterations to schools, Local Authorities must follow statutory guidelines as detailed within The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.

8.2 Local Authorities must follow a statutory process when seeking to expand a school if;

- The proposed enlargement to the premises of the school is permanent (longer than 3 years) and would increase the capacity of the school by:
 - more than 30 pupils; and
 - 25% or 200 pupils (whichever is the lesser).

8.3 Overview of statutory process:

Stage 1	Publication	Statutory Proposal Published – 1 day
Stage 2	Representation	Formal consultation process (4 weeks)
Stage 3	Decision	Decision maker must make a decision on the proposal within 2 months of the end of the Representation Period or the decision is referred to the Schools Adjudicator
Stage 4	Implementation	Proposal implemented as specified in the published statutory notice

8.4 The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 have removed the requirement for a prescribed 'pre-consultation' period. However, there is a strong expectation that proposers consult interested parties in developing their proposal prior to Publication as part of their duty under public law to act rationally. In line with this duty, it is proposed that interested parties including Governing Bodies, parents, school staff and local communities are consulted prior to reaching Publication.

8.5 Please note initial discussions have taken place with all schools proposed for inclusion in the 2015 Primary School Expansion Programme. The proposal has been outlined along with the democratic process and required consultation processes.

8.6 Statutory consultation is required for the following proposed school expansions as the criteria outlined in paragraph 8.2 have been met; Bushbury Hill Primary, Bilston CE Primary, Eastfield Primary, Loxdale Primary, Manor Primary, St Martin's CE Primary and West Park Primary. The following consultation and decision making timeline is proposed:

- **1 July 2014 – 28 July 2014 (Initial Consultation)**
Consultation with stakeholders including parents, staff, Governors and the local community regarding the proposals.
- **August 2013 – Individual Executive Decision Report**
Consideration given to the responses to initial consultation and a decision will be made whether or not to proceed to Stage 1 of the statutory process.
- **29 September 2014 (Stage 1 – Publication)**
If a decision is made to continue, a Public Notice would be published summarising the proposals.
- **29 September 2014 – 26 October 2014 (Stage 2 – Representation)**
Representation Period – Offers stakeholders the opportunity to submit comments on the proposals to be taken into account by the decision-maker.
- **10 December 2014 – (Stage 3 – Decision)**
The Cabinet of the Council would consider the Representations which would inform the final decision on the proposals.
- **1 September 2015 (Stage 4 – Implementation)**
If the proposals are approved then the expansion would be implemented.

Please note that schools have the option to consider conversion to Academy status; the process for an Academy to seek to expand differs significantly from that required for community school expansions, however, in both cases consultation is required.

8.7 The determination of admission arrangements into schools for September 2015 was part of statutory consultation undertaken in Autumn 2013. Subject to approval and in line with the requirements of the School Admissions Code, the Governing Body of each school would be consulted on the proposed change to the school's Published Admission Number.

8.8 Please note that not all schemes included within the 2015 Programme meet the defined criteria to follow the statutory consultation process. Westacre Infant School and Stowlawn Primary School do not meet the criteria whereby statutory consultation is required; Representatives of the Council will attend Full Governing Body meetings of these schools to outline the proposals and seek approval to change admission limits.

9.0 Financial implications

- 9.1 Feasibility work has yet to be undertaken but the costs for the Programme are estimated at £10-15 million. Please note that this estimate has been based solely upon a m² rate and is therefore subject to change.
- 9.2 The funding strategy for the Programme will be developed over the forthcoming months for reporting to Cabinet (Resources) Panel and Council in the Autumn. Sources of funding could include Basic Need and capital maintenance allocations from central Government, capital receipts ring fenced to the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) Programme that are for the benefits of the schools' estate, and prudential borrowing.
- 9.3 Increasing the admission numbers of schools will also have revenue budget implications. Subject to approval by Schools Forum, the additional revenue costs attached to these proposals would be 100% grant funded through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and therefore require no additional financial commitment from the Local Authority.

[CF/06062014/Z]

10.0 Legal implications

- 10.1 Local Authorities have a duty to ensure sufficiency of school places.
- 10.2 As detailed in Section 8, there is a requirement to undertake a statutory process when proposing significant changes to schools.
- 10.3 Any proposals to alter the structure of schools would need to comply with the provisions in the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 to ensure that sufficient consultation is undertaken and that relevant stakeholders are notified of proposals and decisions in a timely manner.

[RB/06062014/G]

11.0 Equalities implications

- 11.1 An Equality Analysis (Stage 1) has been undertaken with regard to the Primary School Organisation Strategy 2014 - 2017. This indicates that there are no reasons why it is not safe, in relation to the Public Sector Equality Duty and Equality Act 2010 to proceed as indicated in the recommendations.

12.0 Environmental implications

- 12.1 Any building work arising from these proposals would be geared to promote improvement to the physical environment. Specifications for building work would ensure that any materials, site works and equipment involved follow the Council's Environmental Policy and the Council's commitment to carbon reduction.

13.0 Human resources implications

13.1 Subject to final approval of proposals, there is likely to be a need for schools to employ additional staff to support the increased number of pupils. However, the future organisation of staff within schools is the responsibility of individual schools' Headteachers and Governing Bodies.

14.0 Corporate landlord implications

14.1 Subject to final approval of the proposals included in the 2015 Programme, the intention is to improve the Council's education portfolio through capital investment schemes likely to include, refurbishment and adaptation of existing spaces, modular construction and traditional extensions. All such works would be commissioned appropriately through the Corporate Landlord.

15.0 Schedule of background papers

- Meeting of the City Council (6 November 2013) 2014 Primary School Expansion Programme – Funding Strategy.
- Cabinet (Resources) Panel (24 September 2013) 2014 Primary School Expansion Programme – Funding Strategy (exempt report).
- Cabinet (19 June 2013) Primary School Organisation

Primary School Organisation Strategy 2014 – 2017

1. Introduction

Background

This Strategy is a key feature of Wolverhampton City Council's approach to meeting its statutory duties as an advocate for parents and families, supporting vulnerable children and championing educational excellence.

Underpinning both the Council's Corporate Plan and Wolverhampton's Children and Young People's Plan, this document details the significant challenges that the Council faces with regard to the sufficiency and distribution of primary school places in the City and outlines a set of recommendations to guide the future development of primary school provision across Wolverhampton.

The Primary School Organisation Strategy, aligned with the Council's School Improvement Strategy, seeks to secure sufficient school places where high quality education is provided that contributes to improved educational outcomes across the City. The two Strategies recognise the Council's role in ensuring sufficiency of provision and in influencing the quality of education provided regardless of how schools are organised or governed.

The principles that have guided the development of this Strategy are:

- The right of every child to fulfil their potential
- The needs of local communities
- The value of partnership working
- The requirement to consider the sustainability of the school estate
- The need to ensure resources are used efficiently.

Context

Key Statutory Duties:

Councils are under a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places in their area, promote high educational standards, ensure fair access to educational opportunity and promote the fulfilment of every child's educational potential. They must also ensure that there are sufficient schools in their area, promote diversity and increase parental choice.

There is a legal requirement that any class containing infant aged children (five, six and seven year olds) will not exceed a maximum of 30 pupils with a single class teacher, other than when an additional pupil admitted fits the criteria for an 'excepted' pupil (as defined in the School Admissions Code).

Demand:

The main challenge that the City faces, in relation to the organisation of primary school provision, is ensuring that sufficient high quality school places are available to meet the needs of local communities across the City.

Levels of demand for primary school provision across the City have increased significantly in recent years. This upsurge has been primarily driven by an increase in the number of births to Wolverhampton residents; a 26% increase between 2002 and 2012 (Office for National Statistics). As demand has increased, the number of surplus school places has reduced and levels of surplus within lower year groups are now constrained.

In order to meet demand, the Council has recently invested in the provision of additional primary school places in a number of areas of high demand across the City; however, additional primary school places will be required in order to meet future demand. Pupil projections suggest that the size of Reception cohorts across the City will increase in the short term.

Autonomous School System:

New central government policy initiatives, including the establishment of Free Schools and the conversion of schools to Academy status, have changed the landscape in which education is delivered and school organisation is undertaken.

Wolverhampton's primary school estate is likely to change significantly in the short to medium term as schools convert to Academy status and as groups propose the establishment of Free School provision in the City. However, the Council must continue to ensure that the needs of local communities across the City are met and that sufficient high quality primary school provision is available.

2. Primary School Organisation

This section details the key recommendations that the Council will use to guide the organisation of the primary estate:

School Size

In order to ensure the efficient use of resources, whilst avoiding the loss of a more personal primary ethos, it is recommended that primary schools in the City provide a minimum of 30 places per year group (one form entry) and a maximum of 90 places per year group (three form entry).

Larger primary schools (2 form entry and above) can potentially offer; greater opportunity for specialism, workforces to have a wider spectrum of experience and expertise, increased opportunity to offer a broad and balanced curriculum, greater flexibility to cover staff absence, increased potential to provide strategic leadership succession opportunities, the opportunity to use resources more efficiently and an increased ability to respond to change more readily. This Strategy supports the development of larger schools, where appropriate.

Admission Limits

Admission limits will be managed in accordance with Infant Class Size Regulations and in order to promote the most efficient use of resources. This Strategy recommends that admission limits, which exceed a form of entry (i.e. 30 pupils), are either set as full forms of entry (multiples of 30) or half forms of entry (multiples of 15).

The Introduction of Additional School Places

In order to meet rising demand for primary school places the Council will continue to consider, where feasible, the expansion of existing schools across the City.

The following factors will be considered when prioritising potential school expansion schemes:

- Parental Choice – schools which are most popular with parents
- School Performance - schools judged as ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’ by Ofsted
- Attainment - schools whose end of key stage results consistently exceed floor standards
- School Leadership – schools with stable and proven leadership
- Location – schools located within areas of high demand
- Viability for expansion – schemes which can be most easily and efficiently implemented
- Value for money - schools that can most cost effectively be expanded.

In order to safeguard the sustainability of the school estate, the expansion of existing schools will always be investigated in the first instance, prior to considering the introduction of new provision.

Bulge Classes

In specific circumstances, where local demand is predicted to rise and then fall within a short period of time, the Council will consider the introduction of bulge classes. These are time limited expansions of the capacity of individual year groups within a school, for example, a temporary increase of a school’s admission limit by one form of entry in an individual year group to meet demand. Bulge classes would only be considered when the permanent expansion of a school to meet demand would not be sustainable.

Vertical Grouping

Vertical Grouping (or the employment of mixed age classes) is most commonly employed in primary schools with intakes of 45 or 75 and works successfully in a number of schools across the City. However, the use of this structure can increase the complexity of planning and delivering the curriculum.

When an opportunity or need arises consultation will be conducted with Headteachers and Governors to consider increasing or reducing admission limits in schools with existing 45 or 75

admission limits. This Strategy recommends that the introduction of additional 45 or 75 admission limits only be considered once other practical solutions have been exhausted.

Intervention

As identified within the Council's School Improvement Strategy, the Council will consider proposing the adoption of structural solutions (including both federation and sponsored academy status) in order to improve standards in underperforming schools.

Federations:

Federations offer schools the opportunity to share best practice and support one another.

The term federation is used to describe the creation of formal shared governance structures, which enable schools to raise standards and enhance provision by sharing resources, staff, expertise and facilities. There are a variety of federation models that allow schools to choose which model best suits their needs.

Regardless of the federation model adopted, individual schools retain their identity, continue to receive individual school budgets, have separate Ofsted inspections and report on performance individually.

Federating schools can have a number of benefits, including:

- Providing a structured way for schools to learn from each other and share best practice
- Offering opportunities for improved teaching and learning through increased specialism
- Building capacity across the federation
- Saving on planning and administration time
- Offering better support and development opportunities for School Governors
- Providing broader career opportunities across the federation
- Extending curriculum entitlement.

Sponsored Academies:

In certain circumstances, the Council will facilitate the sponsorship of schools to become academies or support eligible schools to convert to academy status. Such steps will only be taken to support the overall improvement of education in the City, including the raising of pupils' attainment and progress.

Where appropriate, the Council will work with other agencies to identify locally sourced sponsors to support the conversion of schools.

Specialist Provision

This Council recognises the value of some specialist provision being attached to primary schools. For example, sensory resource bases are the most appropriate way to meet the needs of pupils with sensory needs and this Strategy requires that any primary school reorganisation does not detrimentally impact on such provision.

It should be noted that resource base provision across the City is commissioned by the Council and that service level agreements are in place with individual providers/schools.

Infant and Junior School Provision

This Strategy recommends that the Council invites responsible bodies (e.g. Governing Bodies or Trusts) to consider the merger or amalgamation of infant and junior schools whenever the Headship of a school becomes vacant. For merger to be considered, the leadership of the establishment that is proposed for expansion must be at least 'Good'.

Bringing infant and junior schools together offers a number of advantages, including:

- Reducing the number of major transitions that pupils face
- Reducing the likelihood of lost learning at the beginning of Key Stage 2
- Increasing the opportunity for specialist teachers to work with a wider range of pupils
- Providing the opportunity for a consistent approach to the curriculum to be adopted
- Ensuring the continuity of teaching, learning and achievement
- Cost savings through economies of scale.

Please note that, in this context:

- The 'merger' of infant and junior schools is the process of joining the schools together by discontinuing one establishment and expanding and altering the age range of the other.
- The term amalgamation relates to the process of joining the schools together by discontinuing both establishments and creating a new school.

Surplus Place Position

Surplus places are school places that have not been filled.

This Strategy recommends that a minimum level of surplus within each year group of 4% (against admission number) is available at a citywide level.

A level of surplus is essential in order to provide for parental choice, to allow for unexpected fluctuations in demand and to offer flexibility to cater for mid-year entrants. Too few surplus places can result in reduced parental choice, increased travel times, and increased class sizes. However, too great a number of surplus places can lead to the inefficient use of resources.

To ensure that pupils can access a local school and that pupils' travel times are reasonable this Strategy recommends that, where required, a primary school place is available within a maximum of two miles of each primary school pupils' home. An aspiration of this Strategy is to

offer pupils a school place within their local community. In order to support this aspiration, the Council has recently introduced Planning Areas. The City has been divided into three planning areas which will enable a localised approach to be adopted when developing solutions and reporting upon primary school organisation. This approach also recognises the differing pressures facing local communities across the City.

Removal of Maintained Provision

In certain circumstances the Council will consider the removal of maintained provision.

This Strategy requires that the Council considers the closure of a school if the school meets two or more of the following criteria:

- The school is judged Inadequate by Ofsted
- The performance of pupils at the school is unacceptably low
- The school has a significant number of surplus places
- There are significant suitability issues in respect of the school's accommodation and/or site
- Closure could be effected without denying any pupils access to at least one alternative school with available places within a maximum of two miles of their home.¹
- The substantive Headteacher has left or is leaving.

Prior to initiating any statutory processes to close a school, the Council will consult with the school's Headteacher and the Chair of the school's Governing Body to discuss how the criteria may apply to their school. As part of this process the Council will review and consult with schools' Governing Bodies regarding:

- The likely impact of a school's closure on other schools in the local area, taking account of numbers on roll and the capacity of schools to enhance provision for children and families
- Projected levels of future demand
- The importance of the school to the wider community
- The condition, suitability and sufficiency of school facilities.

Free Schools and Academies

The environment within which school place planning is undertaken is undergoing significant change as a result of central government policy initiatives including the introduction of Free Schools and the conversion of schools to Academy status.

Legislation dictates that, when considering the establishment of a new school, Free School/Academy proposals should be considered in the first instance.

¹ If the closing school is denominational, then alternative denominational provision (Church of England or Catholic) should be available within a maximum of two miles of pupils' homes, where appropriate.

The Council recognises the value of sustaining an effective partnership with all schools regardless of their status or governance arrangements. In order to support the Council with its duty to ensure the supply of sufficient school places within an increasingly autonomous school system, the Council will seek to establish and maintain a strong working partnership with any Free Schools, Academies, Trusts and Diocesan Authorities in the City.

Opportunities to expand on the number of Free Schools in the City will be explored in order to meet basic need; however introducing additional Free School provision in geographically appropriate locations and in a timely manner presents a significant challenge.

In order to improve the quality of education across the City the Council will continue to recommend the adoption of structural solutions (including federations and sponsored academy status) and seek to influence the implementation of effective governance arrangements that promote school improvement.

Estate Management

It is recommended that a long term approach is taken to the management of educational assets in order to ensure that fluctuations in demand can be effectively and efficiently catered for.

Where appropriate, sites should be reserved as contingency to cater for anticipated increases in demand, such as that resulting from new housing developments. However, it should be recognised that adopting a longer term approach will result in short-term budgetary pressures as sites must be secured and maintained.

Where circumstances arise that present the opportunity to use existing school accommodation in different ways, this Strategy would require that priority is given to the provision of statutory school places.

Change Management

Whilst any primary school reorganisation or development scheme seeks to minimise disruption to pupils and parents and avoid any longer term detriment to pupils, it is recognised that making significant changes to individual establishments can have a disruptive effect on the delivery of education.

This Strategy requires that schools are effectively supported through the change process. The method of support required would need to be tailored to schools' individual needs, but would be agreed at an early stage via a School Support Group which would be organised and chaired by the School Place Planning Team.

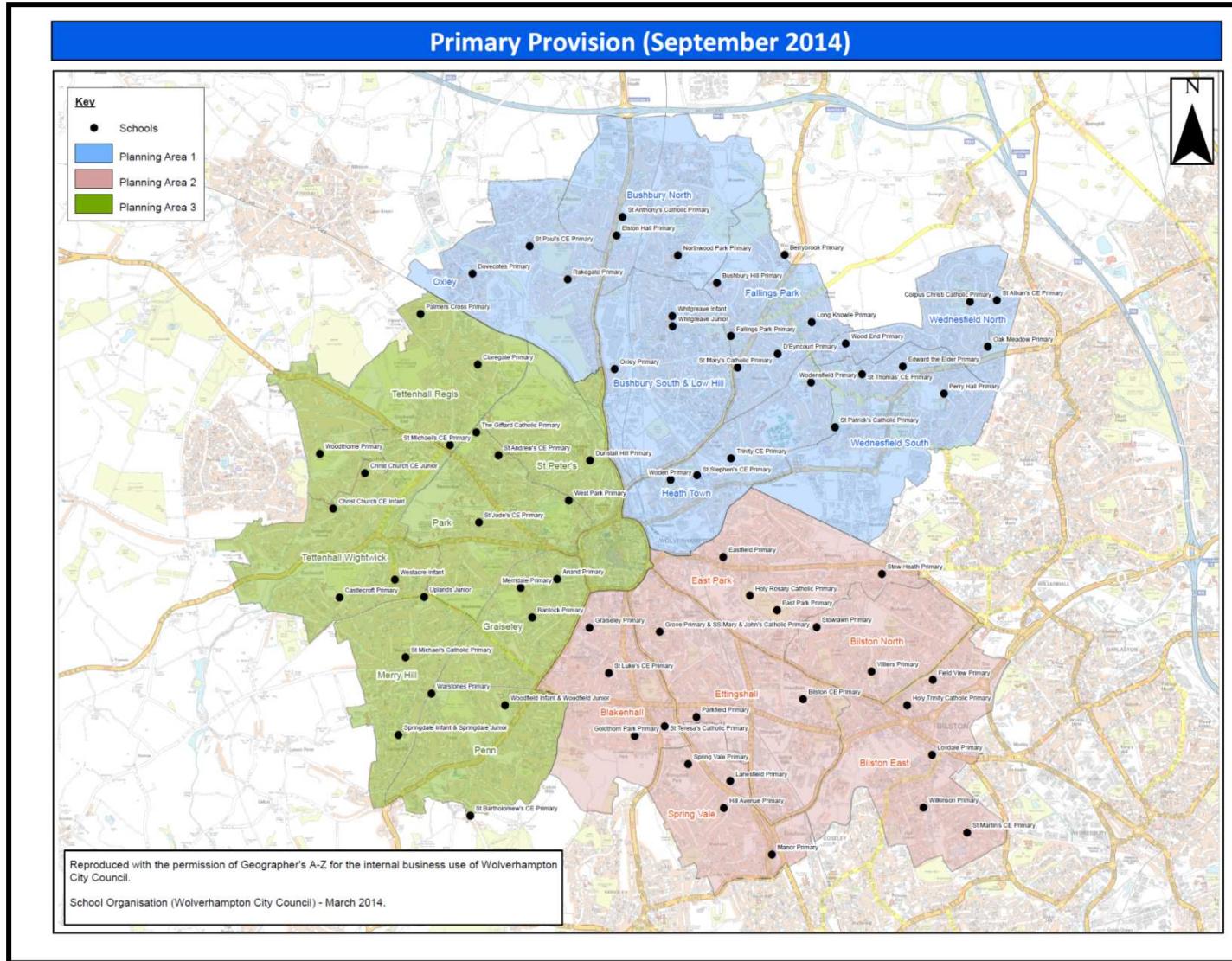
Other Considerations

This strategy requires that when considering primary school organisation:

- The Council works closely with Diocesan Authorities to ensure that an appropriate balance of denominational and community places are available.
- That, if at all possible, the need for compulsory redundancy is avoided.
- Equal opportunities are promoted and that particular groups of children are not disadvantaged.

Strategy Review

The Strategy will be subject to review on an annual basis.



2015 Primary School Expansion Programme - Summary

Planning Area	School	Ward	Permanent Expansion/ Bulge	Published Admission Number 2014/2015	Proposed Published Admission Number 2015/2016
1	Bushbury Hill Primary	Fallings Park	Bulge	30	60
2	Bilston CE Primary	Ettingshall	Permanent	45	60
	Eastfield Primary	East Park	Permanent	45	60
	Loxdale Primary	Bilston East	Bulge	30	60
	Manor Primary	Spring Vale	Permanent	60	90
	St Martin's CE Primary	Bilston East	Bulge	30	60
	Stowlawn Primary	Bilston North	Bulge	30	60
3	West Park Primary	Park	Bulge	30	60
	Westacre Infants	Tettenhall Wightwick	Permanent	75	90