

Summary of Discussion from Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel Meeting on 20 June 2018

- The Head of School Organisation gave an overview of the results of the public consultation and the work done to respond to demographic changes in schools and the demand for places at secondary schools in Wolverhampton.
- The Head of School Organisation advised the panel that most of secondary schools are academies and therefore outside of local authority control. The Council will continue working with academies and the Regional Schools Commissioner.
- The Head of School Organisation advised the panel that previously that there would be separate plans for primary and secondary schools place planning, but a decision was taken to combine the plans into a single document.
- The Head of School Organisation explained the impact of changes in secondary school surplus provision from 6% to 5%, school reorganisation and the need to increase the number of places.
- The Head of School Organisation advised the panel of the need for sustained investment to create sufficient number of school places and the work being done to get a more accurate assessment of pupil numbers.
- The Head of School Organisation commented on the challenges in predicting numbers following the increase in the number of new free schools which are not opening in areas where demand is greatest which is adding to the problem of finding sufficient secondary school places in these areas.
- The Head of School Organisation commented on the work being done to support post 16 agenda and encouraging schools to work together to combine class sizes where numbers are low so that they can offer A Level courses - the Council is concerned with improving the teaching environment for this age group.
- The panel queried the issue of increase in the number of school appeals work done to increase capacity in the more popular schools. The Head of School Organisation acknowledged the issue of demand for places for popular schools and the work being done to raise standards at other schools to offer parents alternatives. The Head of School Organisation commented on work done to help underperforming schools to improve and discussions with the Regional Schools Commissioner who is aware of the work being done and improvements in the performance among Wolverhampton schools.
- The panel queried if funding went with the child that moves schools or is expelled. The Head of School Organisation confirmed that the funds will follow the child but may take time depending on when they move between schools.
- The panel queried the reasons for the low public response from schools and the public to the consultation document and expressed concern that this does not give a reliable picture of the situation. The panel queried options for increasing the numbers of responses. The Head of School Organisation commented on the work done since 2012 to increase the number of responses, but with limited success. It was commented that for the first time the external consultation on the strategy encouraged schools to share this consultation with parents. The Head of School Organisation advised the panel that School Organisation Officers will look at ideas for improving responses to future consultations.

- The panel discussed the provision available to meet the needs of children and young people with SEN. The Head of School Organisation advised the panel how medical evidence submitted by parents or carers in support of school application is considered when deciding levels of priority. The Head of School Organisation advised the panel that highest priority in the allocation on places is given to looked after children or previously looked after children.
- The panel discussed the funding of school expansion. The Head of School Organisation advised the panel that the Department for Education gives an allowance towards the capital costs of expanding school places, but the process is done in a piecemeal fashion. The Council wants to avoid unnecessary disruption caused by building work and increase capacity in a more planned way.
- The Head of School Organisation advised the panel that a report on funding for school's capital programme will be presented to Cabinet in September 2018 which will detail plans for financing the increase in school places. The panel agreed to receive a report about the outcome of this discussion at the meeting on 14 November 2018.

Resolved:

1. The panel comments on the Vision for School Organisations 2018-20 to be included in the report to Cabinet.
2. The Head of School Organisation to report about the outcome of discussion about the funding of school place expansion at the panel meeting on 14 November 2018.