

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL	Cabinet 20 January 2021
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Report title	City of Wolverhampton Education Place Planning 2020-2022	
Decision designation	AMBER	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Dr Michael Hardacre Education and Skills	
Key decision	Yes	
In forward plan	Yes	
Wards affected	All Wards	
Accountable Director	Emma Bennett, Director for Children's and Adult Services	
Originating service	Children's Services	
Accountable employee	Bill Hague	Head of Education Business and Support Services
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Report to be/has been considered by	Children and Young People Leadership Team	3 December 2020
	Strategic Executive Board	21 December 2020
	Extraordinary Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel	5 January 2021

Recommendation for decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the 'City of Wolverhampton Education Place Planning 2020-2022' strategic policy document.

Recommendations for noting:

The Cabinet is asked to note:

1. The outcome of external consultation in relation to 'City of Wolverhampton Education Place Planning 2020-2022' strategic policy document.

2. The summary of discussion from the Extraordinary Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel on 5 January 2021, regarding the 'City of Wolverhampton Education Place Planning 2020-2022' strategic policy document.
3. The impact of the demographic uplift on demand for schools in the City.
4. The need to identify and develop appropriate solutions to meet anticipated demand for primary and secondary educational provision in the future.
5. That the Regional Schools Commissioner is responsible for determining if academies can expand. The Council is not in full control of all the factors relating to the effective and timely supply of school places.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 This report introduces the School Organisation strategy entitled 'City of Wolverhampton Education Place Planning 2020-2022' (The Strategy). The paper reports the outcome of the external consultation exercise and seeks approval of this strategic policy document.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Strategy for school organisation in Wolverhampton outlines the framework for decision making regarding primary and secondary school places across the City of Wolverhampton. It highlights the impact of demographic uplift on demand for schools across the City and the need to identify and develop appropriate solutions to meet anticipated demand for primary and secondary educational provision in the future.
- 2.2 The document sets out the opportunities, challenges and recommendations for Education provision in Wolverhampton. It is a key feature of the City of Wolverhampton Council's approach to meeting its statutory duties as an advocate for parents and families, supporting vulnerable children and championing educational excellence. It offers a framework to guide the future development of the school estate in the City.
- 2.3 The Strategy seeks to secure sufficient high-quality school places to improve educational outcomes for all pupils across the City. It contains frameworks to support both the identification of schools for expansion and, in cases where there is considerable surplus capacity, the removal of provision. Surplus places are school places that have not been filled.
- 2.4 Underpinning the Council's Our Council Plan, Wolverhampton's Children, Young People and Families Plan 2015-2025 and Wolverhampton Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy the document details the basic need challenge facing the City and outlines the approach adopted by the Council to meet this challenge.
- 2.5 The Strategy also details that the Council is not in full control of all factors relating to the effective and timely supply of school places. To ensure that the needs of families and pupils can continue to be met effectively it may, on occasion, be necessary for the Council to adopt a more responsive approach to school place planning.
- 2.6 A copy of the 'City of Wolverhampton Education Place Planning 2020-2022', is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 2.7 On 5 January 2021, Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel conducted pre-decision scrutiny on the strategy, an extract of the minutes can be found at Appendix 2.

3.0 Consultation

- 3.1 The development of the 'City of Wolverhampton Education Place Planning 2020-2022' has been informed by contributions from senior representatives across Education during an internal consultation which ran from 18 March 2020 to 3 April 2020. Originally

external consultation was due to take place in June 2020 but due to the impact of COVID it was deemed appropriate to delay this until Autumn Term 2020.

3.2 Following approval from Strategic Executive Board on 8 October 2020 and to support the development of the strategy, key external stakeholders were consulted.

3.3 External consultation commenced on 12 October 2020 until 8 November 2020. Consultation sought to obtain view and comments from the following stakeholders:

- The Headteachers/Principals and Chair of Governors of Infant, Junior, Primary, Secondary, Pupil Referral Units, Special Schools and maintained nurseries in Wolverhampton
- Diocesan Authorities
- Academy Trusts
- Trade Unions
- All Councillors
- ConnectEd Directors
- Wolverhampton MP's
- Let us Play
- Give us a break
- Wildside Activity Centre
- The Way Youth Zone
- Changing Our Lives
- Voice for Parents
- Wolverhampton Youth Council
- West Midlands School Organisation Group (this group includes School Organisation Officers from the Councils of Staffordshire, Sandwell, Walsall, Birmingham, Dudley, Telford and Wrekin and Worcestershire)
- Regional Schools Commissioner

In addition, social media channels were utilised, and a press release was issued, sign posting to the Council's Consultation Portal.

4.0 Outcome of External Consultation

4.1 52 responses were received during external consultation. The feedback survey contained 11 questions: 10 relating to new sections of the Strategy and a general feedback question. The number of responses for each question and key points raised during consultation are summarised below. A copy of individual responses can be found in Appendix 3.

4.2 Question 1 - Do you agree with an annual review of the condition and suitability of temporary accommodation across the maintained school estate?

Option	Total	Percent
Yes	51	98.08%
No	1	1.92%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

4.3 Question 2 – Do you have any comments/feedback regarding the annual review of temporary accommodation?

There were nine comments received with the majority in favour of an annual review. The importance of reviewing temporary accommodation was highlighted for the well-being and health and safety of children, teachers and staff across the school estate and to ensure that children are learning in the best possible environment.

4.4 Question 3 - Do you agree with the recommendation to undertake an annual condition review of maintained schools to inform priority for rebuilding of schools?

Option	Total	Percent
Yes	50	96.15%
No	2	3.85%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

4.5 Question 4 - Do you have any comments/feedback regarding the recommendation to undertake an annual condition review of the maintained school estate?

There were 10 comments received and it was highlighted that condition should be a priority and that rebuilding of older schools is of benefit as this can save money.

4.6 Question 5 - Do you agree with the ambition for new school buildings to be environmentally friendly to support the Council's carbon neutral aim?

Option	Total	Percent
Yes	51	98.08%
No	1	1.92%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

4.7 Question 6 - Do you have any comments/feedback regarding the ambition for any new buildings to be environmentally friendly to support the Council's carbon neutral aim?

There were 14 responses received. It was highlighted that any future design features need to be sustainable and that consideration needs to be given to the financial consequences for schools if environmentally friendly methods cost more to maintain and run than traditional methods. It was noted that everyone has a duty to reduce carbon emissions, ensure health and safety of children, staff and teachers. It was highlighted that schools that are environmentally friendly set a good example to pupils and helps children understand how we can all do our part to help the environment when making changes to provision.

4.8 Question 7 - Do you agree with identifying opportunities for strengthening multiagency working through co-location of services and schools?

Option	Total	Percent
Yes	46	88.46%
No	6	11.54%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

4.9 Question 8 - Do you have any comments/feedback regarding the co-location of services and schools?

There were 10 responses received. It was highlighted that multi-agency work is vital in schools as it allows easier access to families which achieves better outcomes for both children and families, it might enable outside agencies to obtain a better insight by being co-located. It was noted that the co-location would need to benefit both parties and not as part of a cost saving exercise. It was suggested that repurposing of unused outbuildings or former caretakers' houses could facilitate co-location of services. Safeguarding and logistical arrangements (car parking, staff room space etc.) would need to be considered.

4.10 Question 9 - Do you agree with the recommendation to review the usage of school sites and rationalising the school estate to help meet Council objectives around regeneration, housing and climate change?

Option	Total	Percent
Yes	30	57.69%
No	22	42.31%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

4.11 Question 10 - Do you have any comments/feedback regarding the review and rationalisation of the school estate to help the Council meets its wider objectives?

There were 19 responses received. It was highlighted that consideration should be given to rationalisation of the school estate, however, concerns around conserving nature and wildlife, retaining adequate playing fields and green space for recreation and sports was raised.

4.12 Question 11 - Please provide any further comments you would like to make regarding this strategy, stating the section and page number you are referring to.

There were 5 responses received. It was raised that children need to be at the centre of decision making and not money, that working in partnership with schools on change proposals is essential, and the diversity and quality of the education offer should not be reduced.

5.0 Responses to External Consultation

5.1 In response to the outcomes of consultation, representatives of the Education Department would like to make the following comments:

5.2 There is a small number of maintained school sites that house temporary accommodation. Corporate Landlord undertake an annual capital investment programme which is based on condition data as collected from commissioned surveys with the appropriate improvement works then prioritised and undertaken. Education will seek support from Corporate Landlord to identify specific issues relating to temporary accommodation to ensure that this provision continues to be fit for purpose.

- 5.3 The aforementioned annual review undertaken by Corporate Landlord will help identify the schools with the greatest backlog of required building works, which may then assist when determining which maintained school buildings should be prioritised for rebuilding. Previously, Central Government has funded priority school rebuilding programmes, should this opportunity arise again the Local Authority would be in a very good position to submit applications based on the latest data. In addition, should the opportunity arise as part of a citywide strategy to create a network of sustainable schools through rebuilding or relocation, this data is invaluable to help guide policy and meet the needs of the residents.
- 5.4 The feedback received regarding the ambition for any new buildings to be environmentally friendly to support the Council's carbon neutral aim will be forwarded to the Climate Emergency Working Group/Steering Group. In addition, when any new schools or additional accommodation is proposed, climate change and environmental implications will be considered as part of the delivery of the scheme.
- 5.5 As and when opportunities arise to strengthen multiagency working through co-location, the Council would work in partnership with individual schools and services to explore this. It is recognised that any changes would need to ensure that the benefits for both parties can be achieved and will ultimately enhance the overall support and provision for children and families. A pilot of Social Workers located in Secondary Schools is underway at present. The outcome of this pilot would feed into any plans for future co-location.
- 5.6 Concerns were raised regarding rationalisation of the school estate to support wider Council objectives and the impact on playing fields/green space. The Council will not remove any green space or playing fields that are utilised by the school estate. Should removal of green space be required engagement with Sport England, planning requirements and views from relevant stakeholders would all be considered as part of any proposals.
- 5.7 In response to the further comments made in regard to the strategy overall, it should be noted that any changes to the school estate would be fully consulted upon with all relevant stakeholders and any statutory processes would be followed.

6.0 Evaluation of alternative options

- 6.1 Option 1: no strategy in place. This would mean that the Local Authority would not have a framework for school organisation and related decision making regarding primary and secondary school places across the city of Wolverhampton.
- 6.2 Option 2: Approve the 'City of Wolverhampton Education Place Planning 2020-2022'. This will be adopted as the framework for school organisation and related decision making regarding primary and secondary school places and school sites across the City of Wolverhampton.

7.0 Reasons for decision

- 7.1 If the 'City of Wolverhampton Education Place Planning 2020-2022' is approved by Cabinet, this framework will be adopted and used to inform school organisation in Wolverhampton. The Strategy will be particularly important in exploring solutions and decisions when introducing additional capacity into the City, maintenance of temporary accommodation, priority for rebuilding of schools, new school buildings designed to be environmentally friendly and identifying opportunities for strengthening multi-agency working through co-location of services and schools and where appropriate rationalisation of the school estate.
- 7.2 This strategic policy document aids the Council in meeting its statutory responsibilities regarding the provision of sufficient school places.

Notwithstanding this, the Regional Schools Commissioner is responsible for determining if academies can expand. The Council is not in full control of all the factors relating to the effective and timely supply of school places.

8.0 Financial implications

- 8.1 Projected levels of demand suggest that further investment in additional school places will be required in the future to ensure that supply can meet demand. This could be over and above the existing capital programme.
- 8.2 The Strategy outlines how the Council will meet its statutory responsibilities regarding providing sufficient school places. Central Government provide a level of capital funding through the Basic Need formula. Historically, the amount received through the Basic Need funding has been insufficient to cover the costs of expansion schemes. This has led to the Council having to fund the balance, predominantly through borrowing.
- 8.3 The Medium Term Capital Programme includes funding for the Primary School Expansion Programme 2021 and 2022 and the Secondary School Expansion Programme 2021 and 2022. In the event that there is any surplus against these it will first be used to support the next tranche of expansion schemes.
[TS14122020/K]

9.0 Legal implications

- 9.1 Under sections 13 and 14 of the Education Act 1996 (as amended by the Education Acts 2006 and 2011), a local education authority has a general statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places available to meet the needs of the population in its area. The local authority must promote high educational standards, ensure fair access to educational opportunity and promote the fulfilment of every child's educational potential. It must also ensure that there are sufficient school places in their area and promote diversity and increase parental choice. To discharge this duty the local authority has to undertake a planning function to ensure that the supply of school places balances the demand for them.

- 9.2 The Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires local authorities to promote choice and diversity when carrying out their strategic duties in relation to the provision of new school places.
[TS/07122020/R]

10.0 Equalities implications

- 10.1 An initial equality analysis has been undertaken with regard to the 'City of Wolverhampton Education Place Planning 2020-2022'. The strategy focuses on the supply of sufficient high-quality school places for primary and secondary school pupils who may belong to groups with different characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010. The analysis of the strategy has not found any equality issues at its design stage. The implications of specific significant change proposals developed in line with the policies outlined within the Strategy will be subject to individual equality analyses.

11.0 All other implications

- 11.1 The Strategy includes the ambition that any new school buildings are environmentally friendly and support the Council's aim to be carbon neutral by 2028.
- 11.2 To support the process Corporate Landlord would work with maintained schools identified within the scope of any place planning exercise to establish the feasibility and likely cost of providing additional pupil capacity on those sites. This process will require the support of a cross section of professionals including Surveyors, Engineers, Architects etc. allowing desk top information and initial sketch proposals to be considered
- 11.3 Corporate Landlord will also liaise with colleagues in Legal Services in the case of feasibility works on Academy, Church or Free School sites that are subject to lease agreements. Corporate Landlord will be able to consider other potential solutions outside of the current traditional school estate if required. It must be noted Education will need to identify a budget prior to commissioning these initial feasibility works.
- 11.4 Any expansion schemes that are delivered by Trusts (but funded by the Council) the Corporate Landlord service would be involved in the project to provide assurance that the proposed scheme is delivering the required capacity in a timely fashion and offering value for money.
- 11.5 The Local Authority has a statutory duty to:
- ensure that sufficient school places are available within their area for every child of school age whose parents wish them to have one
 - to promote high educational standards, to ensure fair access to educational opportunity, and;
 - to help fulfil every child's educational potential.
- 11.6 The Local Authority must also ensure that there are sufficient schools in its area and promote diversity and parental choice.

11.7 These duties contribute to the health and wellbeing of young people and young adults in the education system and a good education is a significant wider determinant of health.

12.0 Schedule of background papers

12.1 None.

13.0 Appendices

13.1 Appendix 1 - The 'City of Wolverhampton Education Place Planning 2020-2022'

13.2 Appendix 2 - Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel Minutes (extract) (5 January 2021)

13.3 Appendix 3 - Consultation Responses