

Committee: **Audit and Best Value Scrutiny Committee**

Date: **21 November 2007**

Title of Report: **Planning School Places**

By: **Director of Children's Services**

Purpose of Report: **To provide Members with a report on the progress made towards the recommendations in the Audit Commission report entitled 'Planning Primary School Places', dated May 2006**

RECOMMENDATION: The Scrutiny Committee is recommended to note the progress made against the recommendations made in the Primary School Places Audit Report 2005/06

1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 Whilst it is difficult to calculate the true 'cost' of a surplus place, it is evident that maintaining surplus places in school leads to uneconomic class sizes and pressure on a school's revenue account.

2. Supporting Information

2.1 The Audit Commission report contained five recommendations. They need to be considered against the Commission's observation that this Council has "taken a proactive approach to managing school places with some success in managing surplus places and action planned to increase provision in areas of shortage."

R1 *The Council reviews its policy of addressing school capacity and place planning to ensure timely action is taken and a consistent approach is adopted*

2.2 In 2006 the Council agreed a policy framework to guide the planning of school places. This framework was subject to consultation with stakeholders and has general support. It provides a structure for the review of school places, including criteria to address surplus places in small primary schools. The framework explains the consultation process the Council will adopt and relative roles and responsibilities. It also enables discussion of the issues without necessarily initiating a formal review. This approach facilitates appropriate engagement of all stakeholders in school place planning.

2.3 Whilst the policy framework is secure, Members will wish to note:

- Officers are currently re-examining the forecasting methodology to ensure data is robust and able to take better account of cross border movements and the impact of new housing
- Numbers in the primary sector have been in decline (in January 2006 there were 35,695 in the primary sector, in January 2007 that had fallen to 35,185) and are likely to remain so for the medium term. The overall surplus levels are being managed via a series of actions including removal of temporary accommodation and reusing/redesignating surplus spaces. Lack of human resource and other priorities have prevented any large scale primary reviews of provision, however
- A new Government funding stream, Primary Capital Programme, will be available from 2009/10. It has just been confirmed that this will be in the form of grant rather than supported borrowing and that guidance is expected by the end of November 2007. In essence, the Government is likely to want school place planning and review to be linked to capital investment priorities. The strategy for both school place planning and capital investment will need to be clearly established by early 2008/09.

2.4 Having completed school suitability surveys and updated condition records, officers will be reassessing school capacity in early 2008 to complete an Asset Management Plan (AMP) cycle. This may result in some readjustment of school capacities and changes to Published Admission Numbers (PANs).

R2 *The Council reviews its formula for predicting pupil numbers generated by new house building on a regular basis and in light of experience.*

2.5 The pupil forecasting role within Children's Services has been consolidated and a new member of staff appointed to focus on reviewing our approach and methodology. In terms of outcome it will be expected that a new version of a School Organisation Plan (no longer statutory) will be produced in 2008. Part of that review will link to a more proactive role in working with colleagues in Transport and Environment and the Districts to secure developer contributions arising out of new housing developments.

R3 *The Council reviews its funding formula for schools to ensure it is the most effective possible at providing for the needs of all pupils*

2.6 An initial review of the special educational needs, additional needs and deprivation factors was carried out over the last year. The results highlighted the potential for significant changes and it is considered that further detailed discussions with schools are necessary before firm proposals are developed. A working group of officers and headteacher and governor representatives is currently engaged in reviewing the remaining factors within the primary and secondary schools funding formula. Any proposals for change will be subject to formal consultation with schools and the Schools Forum.

R4 *The Council seeks to achieve a higher take up by schools of its financial training packages*

2.7 The department runs a range of financial training courses including Forward Financial Planning for headteachers/senior school staff, Financial Administration and Refreshers for school bursars and Financial Planning/Excel Workshops for school staff to drop in for help with problems. The training is sold as part of the Services to Schools initiative and the pricing policy is designed to encourage take-up. All schools are required to submit three year medium term financial plans to assist in the early identification of financial problems. If these plans indicate possible problems, officers work with schools to develop proposals to address the issues.

R5 *The Council seeks to address capacity issues in primary schools, including those relating to headteachers*

2.8 In June 2007 the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee considered a report from the School Improvement Service on behalf of the Director that provided an update on progress against an earlier Scrutiny Review (Scrutiny Review of the School Improvement Service, March 2006). Part of that review considered capacity issues in primary school particularly around recruitment and support of new headteachers. An extract from that report is attached at Appendix A.

3. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation

3.1 Progress to secure the recommendations contained in the Audit Commission report are ongoing, and will need to be linked into the developing strategy to bring together AMP data, school place planning information and our capital strategy.

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Local Members: All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

'Planning Primary School Places', Audit Commission, May 2006

No.	Recommendation	Timescale	Lead	Progress including actions	Additional actions	Impact on schools
1.	Leadership: Delivery of a programme to encourage, mentor, and identify potential candidates for headship within our schools	On going since the Scrutiny Review made this recommendation	Nina Siddall/ Helen Kenward	<p>Significant progress has been made in respect of this recommendation, although it is early as yet to judge the impact in terms of recruitment and retention of new leaders.</p> <p>The SIS has significantly enhanced its published strategy for improving leadership and management across the whole spectrum of schools with a particular focus on developing leadership potential amongst the schools' workforce. Key strategies have included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Senior Level Leaders Progression Programme - A programme has been running over this academic year entitled 'Senior Level Leaders; Growing and developing our leaders', open to all acting or aspiring senior leaders in primary, secondary and special schools. The programme has consisted of a whole day launch followed by six twilight sessions and a two day conference that will take place on 21 and 22 June. 40 school representatives have taken part - 30 from primary schools, 8 from secondary schools and 2 from special schools. Many participants will be presenting at the conference on the impact of work they have been doing in their schools as a result of participating in the programme; 2. Middle Level Leaders' Progression Programme – A nine month programme for developing middle level leaders and leadership across all schools has been run this academic year - to date there have been 32 participants 	<p>Agenda for the next round of County and Area governor fora will focus on governors' role in creating sustainable leadership in their schools, by supporting the identification of leadership potential and ensuring that those aspiring to senior leadership positions are developed to do so</p> <p>The senior leadership programme for 2007 will incorporate a succession planning programme</p> <p>Consultation is under way for a</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been successful recruitment to the large majority of vacant headships in the county, including to headship in schools in more challenging areas • The strategy for seconding serving or aspiring headteachers to act as interim leaders in schools in need has been successful in helping to stabilise and turn around a number of schools requiring additional support, and has also led to promotion or substantive new headteacher positions for several of the interim leaders • The Senior and Middle Level Leaders' Progression

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				<p>on the programme from primary, secondary and special schools. Additionally, a tailored course has been offered to middle level leaders in 5 of our secondary schools during 2006-07. This has proved extremely popular and has been added to the suite of support offered by the secondary consultant team.</p> <p>Both the senior and middle level leader courses have carried the possibility of accreditation from the University of Brighton so that participants can write up their findings as either part of a masters degree or simply as a free standing postgraduate certificate;</p> <p>3. identifying future leaders through the Fast Track programme: discussions are taking place to plan a workshop on Fast Track at the Primary and Special School Headteachers' conference in January 2008 – the whole theme of the conference being “Leadership for Learning : Grow Your Own Leader – Leadership from Within”. This conference (as previous conferences) is organised by CfBT/SIS and supported by the active involvement of effective headteachers from East Sussex schools;</p> <p>4. the Small Schools Adviser is continuing to support the “New Headteachers of Small Schools” programme through an allocation of funding to the established headteacher facilitator of this group;</p> <p>5. encouragement and identification of potential amongst middle and senior leaders for future senior leadership and headship positions, plus identification of the progression steps required for headship and selection of a</p>	<p>hard federation between 3 schools in Hastings which will include a federated middle level leadership structure</p>	<p>Programmes have been very positively evaluated by participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So far, one participant in the Fast Track programme has obtained a headship in East Sussex

No.	Recommendation	Timescale	Lead	Progress including actions	Additional actions	Impact on schools
				<p>range of appropriate development programmes at each step;</p> <p>6. encouragement to schools to ensure staff at the appropriate level undergo training with the National College of School Leadership (NCSL) on established NCSL programmes, such as National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH) and the Leading from the Middle programme;</p> <p>7. active identification of interim headteachers for placements in schools where temporary robust leadership is required – these may be existing headteachers but, where appropriate, they can be experienced deputies with proven track records in their roles who are aspiring to headship – interim positions meet the need of the receiving schools (which often are facing challenging circumstances) while also extending and developing prospective headteachers' experience –the development of expertise amongst teachers via the Advanced Skills Teachers and other Leading Professional Programmes;</p> <p>8. facilitating and coordinating the establishment of networks for leadership teams to promote more collaborative working.</p>		<p>Several of these interim headteachers have subsequently been appointed as substantive headteachers at the school where they have provided temporary leadership</p>