

Report to: **Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability**

Date: **15 November 2021**

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

Title of report: **School Organisation Plan 2021-2025**

Purpose of report: **To approve the publication of the School Organisation Plan covering the period 2021-2025.**

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

**The Lead Member is recommended to approve the publication of the School Organisation Plan 2021-2025.**

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**1. Background**

1.1 The local authority has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places to meet present and future demand across the county.

1.2 The local authority is responsible for promoting a good supply of strong schools through planning, organising and commissioning places in a way that raises attainment, increases diversity, encourages collaboration and promotes community cohesion. The local authority seeks to achieve this in partnership with key stakeholders including schools and academies, parents and carers, the dioceses, borough and district councils, the Department for Education (DfE), the Regional Schools Commissioner and local communities.

1.3 In support of our statutory obligation, the local authority publishes a School Organisation Plan, the purpose of which is to share the projected demand for places in the future and to set out where we think we will need to commission additional places or reorganise existing provision to maintain a sustainable network of schools with the right number of places in the right locations to serve local need.

1.4 The current School Organisation Plan, covering the period 2020-2024, was approved for publication by the Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability (EISEND) on 22 October 2020.

1.5 A new draft plan for the period 2021-2025 has been produced using the most recent set of pupil forecasts which take account of the latest information on births, GP registrations, parental preferences, housing developments and migration patterns. The draft School Organisation Plan for 2021-2025 can be viewed in **Appendix 1**.

**2. East Sussex context**

2.1 Births in East Sussex peaked at 5,503 in academic year 2010/11. Since then, births have fallen to 4,786 in 2019/20 (a drop of 13%) and are likely to continue to fall until at least 2021/22.

2.2 The fall in countywide births is reflected in falling primary reception (Year R) intake numbers, which are forecast to continue falling, at least until 2024/25. The local authority's pupil forecasting model is showing numbers recovering beyond this point. However, intake forecasts beyond 2024/25 are based on demographic projections of future births rather than actual live birth or GP registration data and therefore may change as new data becomes available. Looking at previous cycles of births and Year R intakes, it is possible that we may not see a recovery in Year R numbers until the second half of the decade. In areas of the county such as Hailsham and Bexhill, where high volumes of new housing are planned, Year R numbers may rise sooner than in other parts of East Sussex.

2.3 Previous high numbers in primary schools are being reflected in rising Year 7 secondary school intakes. Year 7 numbers are predicted to peak around 2022/23 or 2023/24, with overall numbers on roll in secondary schools expected to peak around 2024/25 or 2025/26. Generally, there is sufficient capacity in

secondary schools to meet the increased demand for places, but in some areas, most notably Hailsham and Newhaven/Peacehaven, there has been a need to provide additional places. This is set out in more detail within the plan.

2.4 The local authority is also seeing rising demand for special education needs (SEN) provision. The local authority's strategy to address this is contained in the East Sussex Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy 2019-2021, which will be updated by a new, ambitious strategy covering the period 2022-2024. In summary, new special schools/alternative provision have been established in Hailsham, Hastings and Bexhill, with another new special school due to open in Eastbourne in the 2022/23 academic year. In addition, new primary and secondary specialist facilities within mainstream schools have been created in Lewes, Hailsham, Hastings and Robertsbridge. It is proposed to add more special school places and specialist facilities in the coming years, as part of our SEND place planning strategy.

2.5 Currently, forecasts for SEND are published separately to the School Organisation Plan. However, it is our intention to incorporate SEND place planning in the School Organisation Plan from next year.

### **3. Conclusions and reasons for recommendation**

3.1 In conclusion, the local authority has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places to meet present and future demand across the county. The draft School Organisation Plan for the period 2021-2025 clearly sets out the projected demand for places in the future and where the local authority thinks we will need to commission additional places or reorganise existing provision to maintain a sustainable network of schools with the right number of places in the right locations to serve local need.

3.2 Accordingly, the Lead Member is recommended to approve the publication of the School Organisation Plan 2021-25.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Draft School Organisation Plan 2021-2025