

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

Date: **17 October 2022**

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

Title of report: **School Organisation Plan 2022-2026**

Purpose of report: **To approve the publication of the School Organisation Plan 2022-2026.**

RECOMMENDATION:

The Lead Member is recommended to approve the publication of the School Organisation Plan 2022-2026.

1. Background

1.1 The local authority has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places to meet demand across East Sussex. In support of this duty, the local authority publishes a School Organisation Plan. The plan sets out the projected demand for primary, secondary and special educational needs (SEN) places and 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.

1.2 The School Organisation Plan is a 4-year rolling plan that is updated annually. The current plan, covering the period 2021-2025, was approved for publication by the Lead Member for Learning and School Effectiveness on 15 November 2021. A new draft plan covering the period 2022-2026 has been produced using the most recent set of pupil forecasts which take account of factors such as the latest information on births, GP registrations, parental preferences, housing developments and migration patterns. The updated draft plan can be viewed in **Appendix 1**.

2. East Sussex context

2.1 The draft plan describes how births in East Sussex, which peaked at 5,503 in academic year 2010/11, have been falling ever since. In 2019/20 births fell to around 4,600 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 reducing, until at least 2025/26. The local authority's pupil forecasts show numbers recovering beyond this point. However, intake forecasts beyond 2025/26 are based on demographic projections of future births rather than actual live birth or GP registration data. Looking at previous cycles of births and Year R intakes, it is very possible that we may not see a recovery in Year R numbers across the county generally until the 2030s. In areas of the county such as Hailsham and Bexhill, where high volumes of new housing are being built, 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 in either 2022/23 or 2023/24. 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 we have provided additional places in recent years to meet growing demand. We are also working very closely with Beacon Academy to address the significant rise in demand for secondary places in Crowborough.

2.4 The local authority is seeing rising demand for places for children and young people with SEN. The number of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) has been rising steeply in recent years. In the next 4 years, we forecast that numbers will grow by around 16%, to approximately 4,500. The 3 primary need groups that have had, and are predicted to continue to have, the biggest increases are Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and, to a lesser extent, Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD).

2.5 To address the rising need for SEN places in the county, 381 new special school and alternative provision places have been created since 2020 through the establishment of 4 new free schools. In

addition, 52 new specialist facility places have been created across 5 mainstream primary and secondary schools since 2019. We continue to explore opportunities for new special school places and specialist facility provision in the county.

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 demand across East Sussex. The draft School Organisation Plan for the period 2022-2026 sets out the projected demand for primary, secondary and SEN places and 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.

3.2 Accordingly, the Lead Member is recommended to approve the publication of the School Organisation Plan 2022-26.

ALISON JEFFERY

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Draft School Organisation Plan 2022-2026