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| 10 March 2015 | ITEM: 8 |
| Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee | |
| Pupil Place Plan (2015-2019) | |
| Report of: Janet Clark ,Strategic Lead - Operations, Resources and Libraries Unit | |
| Wards and communities affected: All | Key Decision: key |
| Accountable Head of Service: Carmel Littleton, Director of Children's Services | |
| Accountable Director: Carmel Littleton, Director of Children's Services | |
| This report is Public | |
| Purpose of Report: To report on the latest draft version the Pupil Place Plan (2015-2019) and bring to the attention of the Committee the latest forecast of pupil place requirements and the creation of a Schools Forum Pupil Place Planning Sub Group | |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Authority has undertaken to publish an annual Pupil Place Plan and the 2015 to 2019 version is available as a draft for discussion.

The Pupil Place Plan gives information about the supply of school places in the Authority and forecasts pupil numbers for the next five years, setting the context of the provision of school places in the Authority.

The Council commissioned an external review of pupil place planning methodology which resulted in a number of recommendations being proposed and accepted. In addition, the Schools Forum agreed to the creation of a Pupil Place Planning Sub Group which will enable the Council to work more closely with representative head teachers and governors to review pupil place projections and discuss how additional school places might be introduced and surplus places removed.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to comment on the draft forecasts, the proposed amendments to Planning Areas and the introduction of the Schools Forum Pupil Place Planning Sub Group.**

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

- 2.1 Thurrock has a statutory duty to provide a school place for every child living in its area of responsibility, who is of school age and whose parents want their child educated in the state funded sector.
- 2.2 To aid meeting this statutory duty, the Authority undertook to publish an annual Pupil Place Plan. This document is of use to many interested parties including potential school sponsors and developers of new dwellings.
- 2.3 As population demographics are dynamic, it is necessary to continually review and update pupil place forecasts. Pupil place requirements are reviewed several times during the year and an annual report is published with the latest forecasts.
- 2.4 The latest draft Pupil Place Plan for the period 2015 to 2019 is attached for comment. The external review of Pupil Place Planning methodology commissioned by the Council resulted in the format of the Plan changing to make it more accessible to lay readers. The Pupil Place Plan gives information about the supply of school places in the Authority and forecasts pupil numbers for the next five years, with information on the changing context within which planning takes place.

3. External Review and Recommendations

- 3.1 The Council commissioned an external review of pupil place planning methodology in 2014 to ensure that the processes involved were sufficiently robust and thorough. The report produced concluded that Thurrock's processes were generally robust.

However, the report highlighted that the context within which the Council is required to plan school places is becoming increasingly complex. There has been a proliferation of admissions authorities with the ability to increase their pupil numbers without consultation within proscribed limits. The Council is not permitted to open a new school without a competition and the presumption is in favour of Free Schools which take on average 4 years to bring to fruition. It is theoretically possible that the Council would have a statutory obligation to provide additional pupil places and, if no academies or Free Schools wished to add or open places, have no means of delivering its legal obligation.

The Borough has experienced a steep increase in the birth rate together with a more mobile population. During the last few years the Council has experienced a significant increase in the number of in year applications from families moving into the Borough. The unprecedented number of applications for places in all year groups made during the academic year from families unknown to the Borough is very difficult to manage. Many of these families are arriving in Thurrock from London and abroad.

The review report pointed out that the birth data on which the projections are based is geographically based ie demand from an area. However the use of catchment areas has the effect of turning the forecast into demand for individual schools. This can distort geographical demand.

The Council is currently considering whether it would be advantageous to move away from the “demand for” model as more Thurrock schools do not use catchment areas as part of their oversubscription criteria.

The external review recommended a reduction in the number of planning areas to 5 for primary phase places and three for secondary phase places. Larger planning areas provide more flexibility. The proposed pupil place planning areas are included in the document in appendix 1.

- 3.3 The new primary phase planning areas are as follows and the schools which fall within them are listed below.

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| Aveley, Ockendon and Purfleet |
| Aveley, Benyon, Bonnygate, Dilkes, Holy Cross, Kenningtons, Purfleet, Shaw, Somers Heath |
| Grays |
| Belmont Castle, Deneholm, Harris Chafford Hundred, Harris Mayflower, Little Thurrock, Quarry Hill, St Thomas’, Stifford Clays, Thameside, Tudor Court, Warren, West Thurrock |
| Tilbury |
| Chadwell St Mary, East Tilbury, Gateway, Herringham, Lansdowne, St Mary’s, Tilbury Pioneer, Woodside |
| Corringham and Stanford-le-Hope |
| Abbots Hall, Arthus Bugler, Corringham, Giffards, Graham James, St Joseph’s, Stanford Le Hope |
| Rural Area |
| Bulphan, Horndon on the Hill, Orsett |

- 3.4 The secondary planning areas have been reduced to three and the schools which fall within the new planning areas are listed below:

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| West |
| Ockendon, Ormiston Park |
| Central |
| William Edwards School, Hathaway, Harris Chafford Hundred, Harris Free School, Grays Convent, Gateway |
| East |
| Gable Hall, Hassenbrook, St Cleres |

- 3.6 The Harris Federation Free School will open in September 2015 with 120 places in temporary accommodation on the site of the existing Harris Academy. The location of the permanent site for the school is not known at this time however, the Council is advised that the Harris Free School will open in temporary accommodation on the site of the existing Harris Chafford Hundred School. Until the permanent site is confirmed the new Free school has been located within the Central planning area.
- 3.7 The Council has acted on information from the DfE and advertised 120 places at the new secondary Free School in the School Admissions brochure for September 2015. Many applications have been received and thus far the new Free School has accepted 90 of the applications. However, it appears that the EFA has not yet secured a site for this school which is normally essential to achieving Funding Approval and therefore permission to open the school. The short time remaining for the Free School to achieve final approval is a matter of concern.
- 3.8 The primary phase forecasts in the 5 year plan are calculated on the basis of known data regarding live births in Thurrock, the number of children already on roll in schools and the anticipated child yield from proposed housing developments in the planning system. However, our experience over the last three years of the scale of demand from families arriving in the Borough throughout the academic year has resulted in the addition of a 7% contingency. Already in the 2014/5 academic year a further 2.7% of the total school population has arrived in the Thurrock from elsewhere. By the end of the academic year in July 2015 that figure is likely to be closer to 5%.
- 3.9 There is currently surplus capacity in the secondary phase and therefore the projections are based on known data of how many children there are in Thurrock schools and historic patterns of transfer. No additional contingency has been added for secondary places. We anticipate that the surplus capacity in some secondary schools will be required as the increased primary population moves through the system. The number of children the Borough retains between Year 6 and Year 7 is also likely to increase as neighbouring Boroughs schools fill up with their own increased primary population due to the general rise in the birth rate. The need for secondary places will also be closely monitored to determine the changing impact of inward migration.
- 3.10 With the arrival of so many families we have experienced the need to open bulge classes in this academic year, in year groups other than Reception and Year 7, and the report details those areas where classes have been placed. The scale of inward migration is difficult to manage as we cannot know before they apply how many children need to be accommodated in which year groups. The situation is under constant review.
- 3.11 As part of the Council's drive to ensure a strategic and proactive approach to pupil place planning, the Schools Forum was asked to consider the creation of a Pupil Place Planning Sub Group to be made up of representative head

teachers and governor representatives. A consultation document was sent to all head teachers and chairs of governors inviting their views on the proposed new group. The responses received were positive.

- 3.12 The new sub group will enable a small number of committed head teachers and governor representatives to study the forecasts in detail and consider how fluctuations in pupil numbers might be dealt with in advance of the changes taking place. This will enable the schools to be closely involved in the process and bring their detailed local knowledge to the table. The new Sub Group will meet for the first time in the Spring of 2015.

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

- 4.1 Section 14(1) of the Education Act 1996 places a legal duty on local authorities to secure sufficient primary and secondary school places for children in their area.

5. CONSULTATION (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors were consulted on the working and membership of the new Schools Forum Sub Group. The consultation period ran for 6 weeks and closed on 14th November 2014. The finished Pupil Place Plan will be sent to maintained schools, Academies and the Free school for consultation.

6. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 6.1 The issues in this paper support one of the five strategic priorities in the vision of the Authority: *To create a great place for learning and opportunity* - by supporting families to give children the best possible start in life; and raising levels of aspirations and attainment so that local residents can take advantage of job opportunities in the local area.

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre, Finance Officer**

School places are funded through allocations of the Dedicated Schools Grant, which is linked to the number of pupils within school, although it is lagged by one year, so significant growth can put some short term pressure on School Budgets.

The Capital costs of providing the infrastructure to provide more School places are generally funded through Basic Needs Capital Grants, although there is continual pressure on these costs and in some cases there could be

the need to borrow to support further development. These costs would be detailed within the Schools Capital plan

7.2 **Legal**

Implications verified by: **Assaf Chaudry, Major Projects Solicitor**

The proposals contained in this report comply with the Council's statutory obligations under the Section 14(1) of the Education Act 1996 in that it places a legal duty on local authorities to secure sufficient primary and secondary school places and this still stands. Sections 6A, 7, 9, 10 and 11 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA, 2006), as amended by Section 37 of the Education Act 2011 sets out the process for establishing new schools, including a requirement to give precedence to proposals for new academies. The EIA 2006 puts the local authority in the role of strategic commissioner of provision for children and young people. Therefore the Council has an obligation to ensure that sufficient and suitable places are available in Thurrock for every child of school age attending school or due to start school and to provide additional places to meet any shortfall due to any increase.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren, Diversity & Equalities Manager**

The Pupil Place Plan aims to inform the Thurrock Capital Programme to improve learning environments for young people, support improvements in standards, raise aspirations and give all children the best possible start in life (implications unchanged from previous plan).

7.4 **Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental**

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Pupil Place Plan (2014-2018)

APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:

- Draft Pupil Place Plan (2015-2019)

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