

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda
Item No.

Report of Deputy Chief Executive (People)

to
Cabinet

on

13th March 2018

Report prepared by: Brin Martin, Director of Learning

Secondary School Places

People Scrutiny Committee

Executive Councillor: Councillor Courtenay
A Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)

1. Purpose of Report

This report is to update Cabinet on the current position regarding the future provision for Secondary School places across the Borough 2018-2020 and beyond.

2. Recommendations

- a. That Cabinet notes the position regarding the provision of sufficient secondary school places.
- b. That Cabinet approve the decision to reverse its decision to pursue a Free School option in favour of expansion in existing secondary schools.

3. Background

Cabinet has for some years been informed of the impending requirement for additional school places from 2018 onwards in secondary schools. This followed on from the primary school growth in previous years, combined with other demographic changes in Southend.

In essence, this will require an additional 3 forms of entry (90 pupils) in 2018; 6 forms of entry (180) in 2019 and a further 2 in 2020 (60). In all, this will require 330 addition places each year for the next 5 years.

We have been working very closely with Essex County Council (ECC) to consider mobility across the South Essex boarder, both for learners attending a Grammar School from out of Southend, but also for whatever reason, a Southend resident choosing an Essex school. This information from Essex has fluctuated, but is currently estimated to be 250 pupils a year being educated in South Essex from Southend. ECC originally gave a very clear message that in 2018 these places would increasingly no longer be available.

As a result of the known numbers increasing, for some years officers had worked through the School Places Working Party to ask schools to expand, with very limited success.

Therefore, the decision was taken by Cabinet in Sept 2017 to pursue an additional school, which would have to be a free school. This was due to be funded by the Wave 13 Free School Capital route, but this has yet to be announced. The only other alternative would be for the Council to fund the capital build through a presumption route, in addition to relinquishing the identified land in St Laurence.

As a result of this Free School direction, the collective of non-selective secondary schools made a late proposal to expand to the required number, on the condition that the Free School option was discontinued. Meetings with the Leader and Executive Portfolio holder followed, where a commitment to reverse the Free School decision was given, the purpose of this report.

Currently, given Cabinet's approval of this report, officers are pursuing the expansion route. Bearing in mind that the first set of places are required for September 2018, the timeline is very tight, and will almost certainly have to result in temporary mobile solutions in a number of projects. This will escalate costs. In addition, constraints and conditions placed upon the projects by planning control make for additional complications and delays.

Currently, for 2018, the additional places of one form of entry each are progressing at Shoeburyness; Belfairs, St Thomas More leaving no surplus places, however through the successful project to attract more Southend residents to our Grammar Schools, an additional form of entry has also accessed local places within the Grammar schools enabling Southend to meet late and in-year secondary applications.

Officers are continuing to confirm the expansion plans with schools for 2019 and 2020. Whilst this paper seeks Cabinet approval to reverse the previous decision to pursue a Free School option for this period, the demographic situation beyond 2020 with the projected need for 10,000 houses for Southend within the next ten years may require an additional school into the future as it is unlikely these numbers could be met by further expansion of existing schools.

4. Other Options

The decision previously taken by Cabinet was in effect the alternative option.

5. Reasons for Recommendations

The decision to revert to an expansion as opposed to a free school option has been taken for a number of reasons:

- a. The Government's Wave 13 Capital Free School programme, due in March 2017, has yet to materialise;
- b. Schools collective desire to pursue an expansion route over and above a new free school has the backing of the school community;
- c. This will no longer result in the loss of a capital asset to the Council as additional land is no longer required.

6. Corporate Implications

6.1 Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities

Ensure residents have access to high quality education to enable them to be lifelong learners and have fulfilling employment

6.2 Financial Implications

The original decision was predicated upon the loss of a capital land asset in the St Lawrence ward. This land now will remain under Council control for future use.

6.3 Legal Implications

None

6.4 People Implications

None, other than the requirement to provide sufficient Secondary School Places for Southend residents.

6.5 Property Implications

See 6.4 above

6.6 Consultation

Consultation has already taken place with all secondary schools in the Borough, with Essex County Council Capital Team and with the office of the Regional Schools Commissioner.

6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

Not applicable

6.8 Risk Assessment

The situation regarding the possible funding through a free school route has in effect in part led to the current proposal. A full risk assessment is logged on the Corporate Risk Register, and each separate project for expansion will also feature a detailed specific risk assessment.

6.9 Value for Money

With no announcement of a Free School Capital Programme, this option provides good value for money based upon the allocated and approved budget.

6.10 Community Safety Implications

Not applicable

6.11 Environmental Impact

Not applicable, other than at each specific Capital Project.

7. Background Papers

None

8. Appendices

None