

# Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda  
Item No.

Report of Director for People  
to  
People Scrutiny Committee

6

on  
26<sup>th</sup> November 2013

Report prepared by:  
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**Provision of Primary Places**  
**Executive Councillor: Councillor James Courtenay**  
***A Part 1 Public Agenda Item***

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**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To outline proposals to secure sufficient reception school places across the Borough for 2015 and beyond. It is intended to submit these proposals to Cabinet on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2014

**2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 **The Committee's views are sought**

**3. Background**

- 3.1 The current primary places strategy, agreed in November 2010, sets out how the Council would provide sufficient places for admissions in September 2013 and September 2014. This was based on the completion of works at Milton Hall, Westborough, Temple Sutton, Hamstel Infant and Junior, St. Mary's, Bournemouth Park, Blenheim, Federated Thorpe Greenways and Friars as agreed in the current capital programme. These expansions have provided sufficient places for the 2013 intake and capital works are still to be completed for the 2014 reception intake at: Bournemouth Park; Hamstel Infant; and Federated Thorpe Greenways Infant schools.
- 3.2 Places for September 2015 and beyond were also agreed by Cabinet in January 2013 through the expansion of St. Mary's on the East Street site by 60 places for three years and the expansion of St. Helen's by 30 places per year on the existing site. In addition, to meet demand from the Leigh on Sea area an additional 30 places were made available at Darlington Primary School, in September 2012 and September 2013 and proposed for September 2014. The site for St. Mary's has been acquired and refurbishment of the premises is due to take place from January 2015. The initial design process at St. Helen's is underway and is on target to provide the necessary places from September 2015. Expansion work at Darlington in the summer 2013 has created space to enable additional pupils to be admitted in 2013 providing additional places

for pupils in the Leigh-on-Sea area. Further consideration is still needed about the provision of additional accommodation at the school for the 2014 intake.

- 3.3 The births across the town are indicated in Appendix 1 and this shows the consistently high level of births since 2006/07 with annual variations. The full year of births for 2012/2013 is at 2,195. The continuing high birth rate in Southend supports the Office of National Statistics (ONS) information released in 2012 that births will remain at a high level.
- 3.4 The breakdown of births by areas within the Borough is illustrated in Appendix 2. The highest increase in births is within the central areas.
- 3.5 Forecasts in the two central areas are shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1

<b>Admission Year</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>
<b>East Central</b>	642	645	636	644
<b>West Central</b>	479	518	490	476
<b>Total</b>	1,121	1,163	1,126	1,120

- 3.6 Additional places have been provided within the central areas in Southend as set out in paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2 although there remains a shortfall of planned places for 2015 and beyond, compared to the forecasts from the high birth numbers as illustrated in Appendix 3. This shows a continuing deficit of places in the central area and parental choice is therefore limited with parents having to compromise their school choices and often having to travel further for a school place.
- 3.7 The Audit Commission document "Trading Places" (1996 updated 2002) recommends that local authorities should aim for a 5% surplus in capacity to allow for: parental choice, changes in preferences and pupil number variations from one year to the next. The majority of other local authorities use 5% headroom in planning for pupil places and this acts as a good indicator in establishing if there are sufficient places in Southend. This is not included in forecast numbers but provides a useful indicator when comparing places available against the forecast for admissions, as is the case later in this report.
- 3.8 The DfE have allocated additional basic need grant funding of approximately £3.5 million for two specific projects in the central area at Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School and the Federated Thorpe Greenways Infant and Junior Schools. These are both popular schools that are oversubscribed each year and creating places will increase satisfaction of parental preferences. The funding is only for permanent expansions that meet the demand from forecast information.
- 3.9 The pattern of admissions preferences indicates that expansion at Sacred Heart and St. Helen's meets an increasing demand for Catholic places. As more faith pupils are admitted, this makes places available at non-faith schools that would normally have been a lower preference for a popular school. This in turn increases the places available at catchment and other non-faith schools in the

area giving much more opportunity to satisfy parental preferences at local central schools.

- 3.10 The Diocese of Brentwood fully supports the expansion of St. Helen's and Sacred Heart Catholic schools.
- 3.11 The projects are strictly limited to the grant funding of £1,745,000 per project. Initial thoughts on deliverable projects are:
  - a) a scheme to link the buildings at Sacred Heart would add an additional 30 places per year. This would also address the ongoing issue of safe access across the buildings;
  - b) a small infant extension and a new Year 6 block at the Federated Thorpe Greenway Infant and Junior schools to add 30 places per year.
- 3.12 The grant funding must be spent on these two specific projects. It cannot replace existing projects in the capital programme or be used for any other new project. If we do not use the grant funding of £1,745,000 for these specific projects it will have to be returned.
- 3.13 House purchases in Windermere Road are progressing well with the three remaining houses currently in the purchase process and the expectation is that the last house will be purchased within the next few months.
- 3.14 The house purchases are already in the approved capital programme in order to address safeguarding and access issues at Sacred Heart School. Should any of the purchases fall through and not be made in time for the expansion to take place, the grant would need to be returned, although the house purchases would continue.
- 3.15 The Governing Body of Sacred Heart have agreed, in principle, to move forward with the expansion of the school to 420 places from September 2015. This will be the admission of 60 pupils into reception from 2015 and year on year into the future. From 2021 the school would reach capacity with seven year groups of 60 pupils.
- 3.16 Officers are currently consulting with the Governing Body of The Federated Thorpe Greenways about the proposals to expand on a permanent basis the Infant and Junior schools to 450 and 600 places respectively. This will continue the agreed admission in 2014 of 150 into the Infant School and year on year into the future. From 2016 the school would reach capacity with three year groups of 150 pupils. The Junior School will admit 150 pupils into Year 3 in 2017 and then year on year into the future. From 2020 the school would reach capacity with four year groups of 150 pupils.
- 3.17 The additional projects at Thorpe Greenways and Sacred Heart reduce the deficits by 60 places per year as shown in Appendix 4. As this shows there is still an on-going deficit of places.
- 3.18 The temporary expansion by 30 pupils for three years agreed by Cabinet in November 2010 at Hamstel Infant and Junior schools started in September 2013 with the admission of a 150 pupils. Additional accommodation has already been

provided at the Junior School to take account of the increase in future years, and alterations have been made to accommodate the first additional group of 30 pupils in the Infant School.

- 3.19 The possibility of making these schools five forms of entry on a more permanent basis is something that both governing bodies have considered and have agreed in principle. This would require additional capital works other than those already completed. Additional accommodation will be provided for two further groups of 30 in the Infant School for the permanent expansion proposal. In the first instance, this will need to be provided for September 2014. The budget for this is within the initial £1.9 million allocated for the temporary expansion.
- 3.20 The dining facilities at the Infant School are already inadequate for the school and are on the Junior School site. The Deputy Prime Minister's announcement in September 2013 that all infants should receive a nutritious hot meal means that addressing dining facilities for the Infant School would seem a priority. (Full details of the DPM's announcement are still to be received). Additional dining space would add capacity to the site overall and allow many of the suitability issues in the Junior School to be addressed. A proposal that both schools would wish for is to create a multi-purpose community hall that would provide additional dining facilities and provide sports and community facilities at the school. A further hall at the school would use existing hard play or playfields that would be re-provided by sports facilities within the hall. This would assist with a planning application especially as Sports England is a statutory consultee.
- 3.21 Births in the Leigh area have followed the same pattern as births across the Borough with increases in the last few years. Schools in the area have been oversubscribed, with West Leigh and Leigh Infant schools not being able to admit all catchment applications in 2012 and 2013. Chalkwell is oversubscribed and does not offer a realistic alternative to those two schools. Births in the West Leigh catchment area are the highest in 2011/12 and 2012/13 and this will most likely mean further refusals in that catchment area in 2016 and 2017.
- 3.22 The addition of places at Darlinghurst Primary School in 2012 and 2013 has proved successful with parents being able to attend a closer alternative school. There is an indication that some parents have put the school as a preference for 2013 rather than it being a school that is allocated as an alternative offer.
- 3.23 Darlinghurst Primary School has agreed to maintain a published admission number (PAN) for 2014 of 120. Forecasts suggest that numbers in the area will remain high into the immediate future and additional places should be provided at the school. Should Darlinghurst return to a PAN of 90 in 2015, this would reduce the availability of places in the area, especially in 2015 and 2016, reducing the available spaces in these years to below the 5% headroom outlined in paragraph 3.7. This is shown in Appendix 5.
- 3.24 The Leigh schools remain very popular and, with limited opportunity to expand at Chalkwell, Leigh, and West Leigh Schools, expansion at Darlinghurst is on balance an appropriate response to ensure that parents are able to attend a local school.

- 3.25 Darlington will become an academy in January 2014 and the land and buildings will be leased for 125 years to the Academy Trust.

#### **4 Proposals**

- 4.1 A summary of the proposals is that: funding from the DfE be used for the expansion of Sacred Heart and Thorpe Greenways; Hamstel Infant and Junior schools are further expanded to take 150 per year and Darlington is expanded to 120 pupils per year.
- 4.2 The cost of further expansion of the Hamstel Schools and the expansion of Darlington is not fully known at this point until full feasibility and design work is completed. At this stage, an estimate of £2,200,000 in total should be allowed across both schools. These funds can be found within the existing capital programme through savings on some works that will not now be required at Bournemouth Park, St. Mary's first phase and Blenheim schools. Work at Darlington would be delivered over a number of years and commitment to future capital programme would spread the cost if needed. A second phase at St. Mary's Annexe on the East Street site to accommodate 2FE is unlikely to be needed with the provision of the proposed additional places set out in this report. There would have likely been difficulties in further expansion on this site due to limited site capacity, being in a conservation area and planning difficulties, especial in relation to traffic. The capital costs for the expansion of Sacred Heart, and Federated Thorpe Greenways Infant and Junior, Hamstel Infant and Junior and Darlington schools would be subject to a further report by the Head of Finance and Resources.
- 4.3 Under School Organisation Regulations the permanent expansions of Thorpe Greenways Infant and Junior Schools and Hamstel Infant and Junior Schools are subject to a statutory consultation processes by the Council. The expansions of St. Helen's and Sacred Heart as permanent are also subject to consultations and it is proposed that a joint consultation takes place on the expansion of the four schools jointly with the Brentwood Diocese.
- 4.4 Consultation would comprise of an initial consultation with stakeholders including parents, staff, governors, other schools and members of the public. The outcome of the first stage would normally then be reported to Cabinet for a decision as to whether or not to proceed to statutory notice stage. The outcome of the second stage would then be reported to Cabinet for a decision to proceed with expansions or otherwise. To meet timescales for expansion, Cabinet will be asked to consider a delegation of the decision to proceed to the statutory stage, to the Executive Councillor for Children and Learning and the Corporate Director for People, if there are no strong objections.
- 4.5 As a community school consultation would normally take place for Darlington but as it will become an academy there will be no requirement to consult in the same way.

#### **5. Advantages & Disadvantages**

- 5.1 If the birth numbers fall in the future this could lead to surplus places centrally and across the Borough. Nationally the indications are that many authorities

are expanding on a permanent basis and that the Office of National Statistics also confirms that birth numbers will remain high for the next 9 years. The current and forecast numbers going into primary schools at present will mean that schools will need to be larger than they currently are, with places only becoming a significant surplus some 10 to 15 years away. Much of the capital works to make schools up to their current capacities (Milton Hall, Bournemouth Park, Blenheim, and Temple Sutton) have also addressed condition and suitability issues rather than adding significant capacity at the schools. This would be the case specifically at Thorpe Greenways and Hamstel should births drop. The schools would be able to return to a PAN of 120 some time in the future, if necessary and appropriate, and benefit from improved and expanded accommodation.

- 5.2 As the additional places provided centrally still leave a slight deficit and have not achieved 5% headroom, a further drop in numbers would allow for this to take place. The proposed expansion does however provide opportunities for pupils to attend more local schools.
- 5.3 The report on providing places at St. Mary's and St. Helen's schools in October 2012 and to Cabinet in January 2013 had looked at a range of alternative options including the Library, Ambleside College building and a site search and these alternatives were discounted. Since then there has been further suggestions for alternative sites, such as Warrior Square and the former Queensway House site both in the Council's ownership. Both sites are already identified for alternative uses, however if they were available both would require a multi-storey urban school with very little green space. The comparison simply on cost to replace the three school proposal set out at Thorpe Greenways, Hamstel and Sacred Heart would mean a loss of £3.5 million grant and a cost of around £8 to £10 million for a three form of entry school. From a cost perspective two forms of entry are being provided through the grant funding and an additional form at Hamstel estimated at an additional £1.2 million.
- 5.4 There is also an inherent risk that the grant funded projects could also fail if the consultations for either bring out adverse views and the Council decides not to proceed. With the Brentwood Diocese supporting the expansion at both Catholic schools to meet demand for Catholic places, there seems less likelihood that these will draw adverse consultation results. The size of the school is likely to be an issue for the expansion of both Hamstel and Thorpe Greenways schools. This is mitigated in that these remain infant and junior schools and would have 450 place infant and 600 place junior schools, smaller than a number of primary schools. Access and transport will also be an issue for parents and local residents and this will require careful consideration to reach an acceptable solution. Some mitigation will be made through school travel plans, which will need to be acceptable for planning purposes.
- 5.5 The expansion of Darlington Primary School is to provide an alternative to Leigh parents that are unable to secure places at the oversubscribed schools of West Leigh, Leigh and Chalkwell. However this may create surplus places in other areas and may impact in the medium to long term on schools in the North West of the Borough. Should this occur, consideration to some rationalisation in the area may be needed as would be the case if numbers in Leigh reduce.

This would not necessarily be negative for schools as they would benefit from expanded space for other uses addressing potential suitability issues.

- 5.6 The significant enlargement of a school may have an impact on the strategic leadership, governance, operation and organisation of the school. Support to schools will be made available to assist with the transition to a larger school without impacting on standards and effectiveness.

## **6. Proposed recommendation to Cabinet**

- 6.1 The Federated Thorpe Greenways Infant and Junior Schools be expanded permanently to provide an additional one form of entry from September 2015.
- 6.2 Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School is expanded permanently to provide an additional one form of entry from September 2015.
- 6.3 Hamstel Infant School and Hamstel Junior School are expanded permanently to provide an additional one form of entry from September 2015.
- 6.4 A statutory joint consultation takes place with the Diocese of Brentwood about the provision of primary places in central Southend, that being the significant enlargement of: Hamstel Infant and Junior Schools; Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School; St. Helen's Catholic Primary School; and The Federated Thorpe Greenways Infant and Junior School.
- 6.5 A delegation of the decision to proceed to the statutory stage to the Executive Councillor for Children and Learning and the Corporate Director for People if there are no strong objections.
- 6.6 Darlington Primary School is expanded permanently to provide an additional one form of entry from September 2015.

## **7. Corporate Implications**

- 7.1 **Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities**  
The provision of places allows pupils within the Borough to access quality learning opportunities to achieve the best possible outcomes for all children.
- 7.2 **Financial Implications**  
The allocation of Basic Need funding from DfE to provide additional school places is anticipated to continue at the same level as previous years and will support these expansions.
- 7.3 **Legal Implications**  
The Council has a duty to provide sufficient pupil places.  
There will be a need for a statutory consultation under the School Organisation Regulations 2007 for the permanent expansion of Hamstel Infant and Junior Schools, Sacred Heart Primary School, St. Helen's Primary School and The Federated Thorpe Greenways Infant and Junior Schools.
- 7.4 **People Implications**  
None

- 7.5 **Property Implications**  
The key property implication is the completion of house purchases in Windermere Road to free up space for expansion at Sacred Heart. The sites at Hamstel, Greenways and Darlington are in the Council's ownership. The latter will be subject to 125 year lease as an Academy.
- 7.6 **Consultation**  
Consultation has taken place with the Headteachers and the Brentwood Diocese Bodies over the four proposals. The Governing Bodies at the four schools agree in principle to the proposed expansions.
- 7.7 **Equalities and Diversity Implications**  
The provision of addition primary places at the schools outlined in the report will provide additional pupil places across the central area of Southend which will enhance access to school places for all groups and increased satisfaction of parental preference.
- 7.8 **Risk Assessment**  
The option to expand at Sacred Heart is dependent on the purchase of the remaining houses in Windermere Road. There is a risk in delivering this expansion and therefore the provision of additional places in the Central area.
- 7.9 **Value for Money**  
The options proposed represent the best value for money options as options for a new school would be more expensive.
- 7.10 **Community Safety Implications**  
None envisaged.
- 7.11 **Environmental Impact**  
None envisaged.



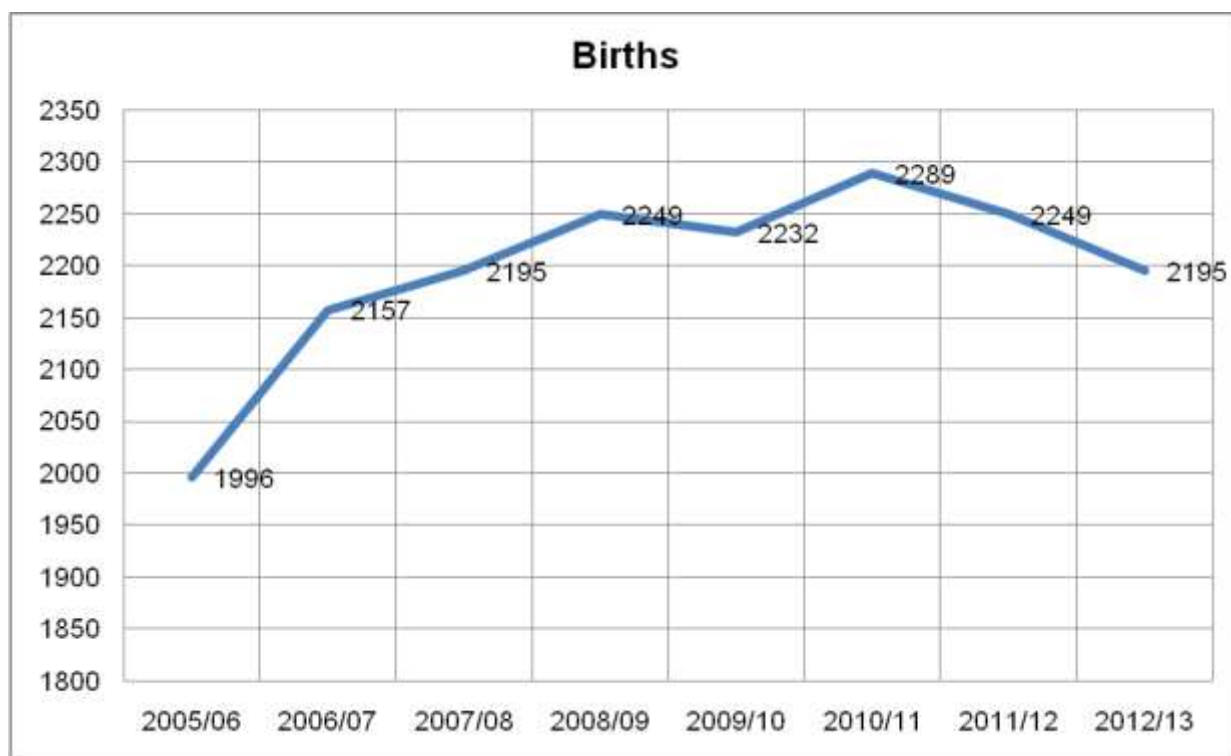
## **8. Background Papers**

- 8.1 Cabinet 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2010 – “Provision of Primary School Places”.  
<http://apps.southend.gov.uk/minutes/>
- 8.2 Cabinet 20<sup>th</sup> April 2008 – “Sacred Heart Primary School”  
<http://apps.southend.gov.uk/minutes/>
- 8.3 Children and Lifelong Scrutiny Committee 26<sup>th</sup> November 2012 – “Provision of Primary Places 2015”  
<http://apps.southend.gov.uk/minutes/>
- 8.4 Cabinet 8<sup>th</sup> January 2013 – “Provision of Primary Places 2015”  
<http://apps.southend.gov.uk/minutes/>

## **9. Appendices**

- 9.1 Appendix 1: Graph of Southend Births
- 9.2 Appendix 2: Births by Area
- 9.3 Appendix 3: Planned Central Primary Places
- 9.4 Appendix 4: Planned Central Proposed Places from Grant Allocation
- 9.5 Appendix 5: Planned Leigh Primary Places

## Appendix 1 - Graph of Southend Births



## Appendix 2 – Births by Area

	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13
East Central	552	601	596	633	676	679	669	678
Leigh	546	539	569	583	550	582	570	548
North West	155	204	190	199	206	186	180	189
Shoeburyness	261	281	327	306	296	297	314	279
West Central	482	532	513	528	504	545	516	501

### Appendix 3 – Planned Central Primary Places

Pupil Places	PAN	Planned		
	2014	2015	2016	2017
Bournemouth Park	90	90	90	90
Porters Grange	90	90	60	60
Temple Sutton	120	120	120	120
Hamstel	150	150	120	120
Sacred Heart	30	30	30	30
Thorpe	150	120	120	120
Barons Court	30	30	30	30
Earls Hall	90	90	90	90
Milton Hall	90	90	90	90
St. Helen's	30	60	60	60
St. Mary's	90	120	120	120
Westborough	90	60	60	60
Total Central Places	1050	1050	990	990
Forecast	<b>1121</b>	<b>1162</b>	<b>1126</b>	<b>1102</b>
Deficit/surplus	-71	-112	-136	-112

### Appendix 4 –Proposed Central Places from Grant Allocation

Pupil Places	Proposed Places		
	2015	2016	2017
Bournemouth Park	90	90	90
Porters Grange	90	60	60
Temple Sutton	120	120	120
Hamstel	150	120	120
Sacred Heart	60	60	60
Thorpe	150	150	150
Barons Court	30	30	30
Earls Hall	90	90	90
Milton Hall	90	90	90
St. Helen's	60	60	60
St. Mary's	120	120	120
Westborough	60	60	60
Total Central Places	1110	1050	1050
Forecast	<b>1162</b>	<b>1126</b>	<b>1102</b>
Deficit/surplus	-52	-76	-52
	-5%	-7%	-5%

## Appendix 5 – Planned Leigh Primary Places

PAN	2014	2015	2016	2017
Blenheim Primary	90	90	90	90
Chalkwell Hall Infant	105	105	105	105
Darlinghurst Primary	120	90	90	90
Fairways Primary	60	60	60	60
Leigh Infant	90	90	90	90
West Leigh Infant	120	120	120	120
Total Leigh Places	585	555	555	555
<b>Forecasts</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>553</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>521</b>
Surplus / Deficit	63	2	14	34
	12%	0%	2%	7%