

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda
Item No.

Report of Corporate Director for Corporate Services

to

People Scrutiny Committee

8th April 2014

Report prepared by:
Jane Theadom and Fiona Abbott

**In depth scrutiny report
'Southend Primary Schools' Falling Grammar School Entry Figures'
A Part 1 Agenda Item**

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek formal approval to the draft report of the scrutiny project "Southend Primary Schools' Falling Grammar School Entry Figures".

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the report and the recommendations from the in depth scrutiny project attached at **Appendix 1** be agreed.
- 2.2 That the Chairman be authorised to agree any final minor / typographical changes to the draft report.
- 2.3 That in accordance with Scrutiny Procedure Rule 10 (Part 4 (e) of the Constitution), to agree that the Chairman present the final report to a future Cabinet meeting.

3. Background

- 3.1 The People Scrutiny Committee selected this topic at the meeting on 9th July 2013 (Minute 145 refers). The project plan was agreed by the Scrutiny Committee at the meeting on 8th October 2013 (Minute 350 refers).
- 3.2 The objectives of the project were to seek to understand the reasons for the falling number of local primary aged children gaining entry into the four grammar schools located in Southend. Additionally, to consider how best to ensure that all children achieve the best possible outcome at the end of primary school education (Key Stage 2 (KS2)) and where appropriate the best possible chance to access a grammar school place.
- 3.3 The Member Project Team, which was Chaired by Councillor Alex Kaye, met on four occasions and also held three witness sessions. Members heard from a number of key partners who reflected on the issues and shared their thoughts.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 The draft scrutiny report is now attached at **Appendix 1**. The proposed recommendations were shared with the witnesses and the report has been agreed by the project team.
- 4.2 It should be noted that approval of any recommendations with budget implications will require consideration as part of future years' budget processes prior to implementation.
- 4.3 Scrutiny is recommended to endorse the following conclusions from the review, for approval by Cabinet:

1	To ensure every child has access to a good school, we will continue to challenge and intervene in schools where pupil progress, teaching and quality and leadership and governance capability are below the standard we expect.
2	To ensure that every child has access to the most appropriate secondary education and to maximise the uptake of grammar school places by local primary aged children, we will expect the leadership (including Governors) of every Southend primary school to support and encourage children who are on track to achieve (or have the potential to achieve) Level 5 at the completion of KS2 to enter for the 11 + examination.
3	To improve communication, information sharing and monitoring of impact with the Consortium of Selective Schools in Essex (CSSE), we will invite Southend Consortium members to an annual meeting to monitor and review grammar school applications and admissions from Southend primary schools, the impact of any changes made, specifically including writing and verbal reasoning and to ensure the Council is consulted on any future changes proposed, for example consideration of the venue.
4	To improve communication and information sharing with parents and carers we will produce a <i>Secondary School Options and Frequently Asked Questions</i> feature in <i>Outlook</i> at the appropriate time. We will augment this with a communiqué on <i>Secondary School Options and Frequently Asked Questions</i> to be sent to every Year 5 primary school child in the Borough at the same time.
5	To ensure Pupil Premium funding is used to narrow the achievement gap and support vulnerable children and families, we will challenge schools on the use of the funding, ensuring Primary School Governing Bodies include the progress of eligible children on each term's agenda.
6	To increase the level of challenge to Primary Governing Bodies we will expect them to monitor and review the trends and patterns in Secondary School applications and destinations with the aim of ensuring high quality transition for every child.
7	To improve communication between schools we will provide an annually updated directory of support and outreach services provided by the four grammar schools.

5. Other Options

Not applicable.

6. Corporate Implications

- 6.1 Contribution to Council's Vision and Critical Priorities – Becoming an excellent and high performing organisation.
- 6.2 Financial Implications - there are financial implications to some recommendations but as yet they are unquantifiable. However, any recommendations progressing with associated financial implications will need to go through the annual budgetary process before implementation, as currently no revenue or capital budgets exist for the proposals.
- 6.3 Legal Implications – none.
- 6.4 People Implications – none.
- 6.5 Property Implications – none.
- 6.6 Consultation – as described in report.
- 6.7 Equalities Impact Assessment – none.
- 6.8 Risk Assessment – none.

7. Background Papers

- Project team meeting notes – meetings held on – 14th November 2013, 10th December 2013, 17th February 2014 and 10th March 2014.
- Agreed notes from witness sessions – meetings held on 28th November, 2nd December 2013 and 14th January 2014.
- Written evidence received

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 – draft project report