

TO: EXECUTIVE
DATE: 16 NOVEMBER 2021

EDUCATION CAPITAL STRATEGY 2022-26
Executive Director, People

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report sets out proposals for the creation of a new Capital Strategy for Education & Learning from 2022 – 2026 (5 years).

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **That the Executive notes and feeds back on the proposed plan to develop a new Capital Strategy for Education & Learning 2022-26.**

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The Capital Strategy has the following objectives:

- To comply with the Council's statutory duty to provide sufficient school places
- Make recommendations following discussions with Headteachers, Governors and Trustees for the best use of the Education estate
- Consider in consultation with Headteachers, Governors and Trustees whether any potentially surplus mainstream accommodation could be used for SEND use
- Produce specific outcomes as projects on the Council's capital programme

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Alternative options will come forward as part of consideration of each proposed project and these will be evaluated and reported on as part of the capital bidding process to bring projects onto the capital programme in each year.

5. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

- 5.1 The proposed Strategy derived from the School Places Plan 2021-25 (SPP).
- 5.2 In summary pupil numbers on roll are forecast to change over the next 5 years:
- | | |
|---------------|------------------------------|
| • Early Years | - decrease by up to 5% (114) |
| • Primary | - decrease by up to 9% (898) |

- Secondary KS 3 & 4 - increase by up to 6% (384)
- Post 16 - increase by 28% (331)
- SEN - increase by 7.8% (340)

Mainstream

- 5.3 The Education Capital Strategy 2022-26 is informed by our existing school places forecasting system used to create the annual DfE School Capacity (SCAP) survey return and School Places Plan (SPP). Forecasts are calculated from cohort survival in each year group adjusted for housing and migration. This is already well established, with forecasts in place up to 2028.
- 5.4 Our target should be to maintain no more than a 5% surplus of intake year places in each sector. Primary surplus intake for Sep-21 is 15% (rising) and secondary surplus intake for Sep-21 is 3% (also rising). Subject to this we should seek to maximise the numbers of parents who get their first preferences with admissions - which is of interest to ward members.
- 5.5 The Primary Strategy will therefore be to reduce the number of surplus places, and three workshops will be held during the second half of the 2021 Autumn term with the Headteachers of North Bracknell, South Bracknell and Crowthorne & Sandhurst to understand the implications of surplus places in each Planning Area, to explore the options and to identify which schools might reduce their admission numbers. It should be noted that there is no intention of considering any school closures as part of this.
- 5.6 Schools must be able to operate within the revenue budgets derived from their numbers on roll (NOR). A significant surplus of places, as currently being experienced in primary schools, results in more incidences of financial difficulty. It can divert substantial management and other resources both in schools and at the council and can ultimately impact on school standards and effectiveness. Changes must also be undertaken in a planned way to enable schools to make appropriate and timely arrangements for staffing and training.
- 5.7 The Secondary Strategy will be to closely monitor the NOR against the current capacity.

Special Educational Needs

- 5.8 A forecasting model will be built to specifically evidence what additional provision is needed where and when.
- 5.9 Analysis of past pupil numbers will demonstrate trends for each type of Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) which will be used to forecast future needs. Gap analysis with existing provision will evidence what new capacity is needed or where existing provision needs to change.
- 5.10 Location factors will consider whether new provision needs to be local i.e. on multiple sites or central i.e. a single provision. Cost/benefit of creating new in-Borough facilities will be compared with sending pupils out-of-Borough.
- 5.11 This work will be undertaken during the 2021 Autumn term.

Early Years

- 5.12 Early Years has a forecasting function which is summarised in the SPP each year. Provision is split between private providers and primary schools with nurseries.
- 5.13 The Council is required by law to 'report annually to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare and make this report available and accessible to parents'. The 2020 Child Sufficiency Assessment is available at Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2020 (bracknell-forest.gov.uk)
- 5.14 The most recent assessment evidences that there is currently sufficient childcare capacity across the Borough to meet the forecast demand for places until 2022/23.
- 5.15 We will work with Early Years to derive specific capital strategy outcomes from the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment including the future role of the Child Development Centre. This work will be done in 2022.

Post 16

- 5.16 The previous Assistant Director Education & Learning undertook to develop a Post 16 Strategy, and this was included as an LA responsibility in the Learning Improvement Strategy 2019-22.
- 5.17 All secondary schools currently offer post 16 education except for Kings Academy Binfield who are expected to open their Post 16 in Sep-23. Current post 16 take-up and NOR vary significantly between each school.
- 5.18 Because Post 16 falls outside the Council's statutory responsibility the approach will therefore be to employ an external facilitator to manage a review of Post 16 with Bracknell Forest schools.
- 5.19 The capital strategy will be an output of the Review and will depend on schools' appetite for collaborative working. This could include creation of shared facilities or individual development of Post 16 facilities on individual school sites.
- 5.20 Because by Jan-22 five out of seven secondary schools are expected to be academies they will be likely to drive the agenda.
- 5.21 There are two significant non-school Post 16 providers which have historically drawn pupils out of Bracknell Forest schools:
 - Bracknell & Wokingham College, located in Bracknell
 - Farnborough Sixth Form College, located 3.5km from our southern border
- 5.1 We may wish to include these external providers in part of this review, but it is important that our schools feel that they are in control of the process.
- 5.2 This work will be done in the 2022 Autumn term.

Reporting

- 5.22 The vehicle for reporting the Capital Strategy will be the annual School Places Plan (SPP), which is updated and published at the beginning of each calendar year.

- 5.23 The Strategy will be evidenced by data and all four elements will be presented in a consistent format to make them easy for the reader to understand, including use of graphics to illustrate past and future trends.

Implementation

- 5.24 Capital construction projects for Education & Learning will be led and co-ordinated by the Head of School Property, Places & Admissions who will work closely with the relevant Service Heads in each area over the details and to meet their requirements. This is a change whereby Service Heads previously managed their own projects. We are building on the knowledge and experience of the Head of School Property, Places & Admissions who has implemented over £200m of construction work for Bracknell Forest, and this will also free up Service Heads to concentrate on their own service areas.
- 5.25 Capital projects will be brought forward for approval by the Executive as Project Appraisal Decision Sheets (PADS) on the annual capital programme.
- 5.26 The Council's Property team will implement the construction projects on the capital programme subject to in house capacity. If Property have no capacity, then with the approval from the Assistant Director Property, the Head of School Property, Places & Admissions may implement projects directly via the Council's Managing Partner Atkins.

Timescales

- 5.27 The intention is to complete all four elements of the Capital Strategy by January 2023:

2021 Autumn Term:	Workshops with Headteachers and presentation to Chairs of Governors Creation of the Mainstream and SEN Capital Strategies
Mar-22	Publish the Mainstream & SEN Capital Strategy in the SPP
2022 Spring Term	Creation of the Early Years Capital Strategy
2022 Autumn Term	Post 16 Review
Jan-23	Include the Early Years & Post 16 Capital Strategy in the SPP

Resources

- 5.28 Additional strategic leadership would be needed to secure the delivery of this ambitious new Capital Strategy for Education & Learning from 2022 – 2026 (5 years).
- 5.29 Part of this would be provided through the Head of School Property Places & Admissions who has some time freed up to create the new Strategy by transferring the Information Governance and the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme Co-ordinator roles to others.
- 5.30 Further short-term strategic leadership has been secured within the responsibilities of the interim part time Assistant Director - Education Projects in the Autumn term 2021.
- 5.31 Funding for an external consultant facilitator will be required in the Autumn term 2022/23 financial year to conduct the Post 16 Review estimated at £10,000.
- 5.32 Other key individuals within Education & Learning include:

- Head of Children's Support Services
- Head of Early Years
- Head of School Standards

6. Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 6.1 Section 13 of the Education Act 1996 places a general duty on the Council to secure that efficient primary and secondary education is available to meet the needs of the population in its area. Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on the Council to secure that sufficient schools for providing primary and secondary education are available in its area. The Education Capital Strategy contributes towards the discharge of these statutory obligations.

Executive Director of Resources: Finance

- 6.2 CMT is aware of the significant financial challenges most LAs are facing in managing their HNB budgets. Locally, the BF High Needs Block budget first moved into an overspend in 2019-20 at £3.2m which increased to £4.8m and 2020-21 with the 2021-22 budget forecasting a £5.7m deficit. Current estimates indicate a cumulative deficit of £20.9m at March 2023. Whilst LAs are not currently liable for their HNB deficits, this is subject to review from April 2023 with the expectation that liability for the debt will return to LAs.
- 6.3 A significant factor in the deficit is the high number of pupils transported out of the Borough to specialist providers. Increasing local capacity by reprofiling surplus school places to specialist SEND provisions would likely deliver substantial financial benefits over the longer term, both to the Overall Schools Budget and the council funded school transport budget.
- 6.4 Any financial implications from the proposed Education Capital Strategy will need to be considered as part of the council's overall capital budget setting process. The strategy will need to include how external funding can be maximised, including S106 contributions, DfE grants, specifically those relating to creating additional SEND places and land sale at school sites where there are surplus places. A clear policy for sharing receipts from land sale needs to be agreed for this.
- 6.5 Developing the strategy may also incur additional revenue costs to the £10,000 set out in the supporting information, in particular for any feasibility studies that do not result in a capital project. A funding source for this is required.

Assistant Director Property

- 6.3 Any proposals to incorporate building works or alterations to either reduce or expand services should include for RIBA stage 1 feasibility costs within the first year to understand the required budget to make these changes in future years. The feasibility schemes should be reviewed by the corporate property and construction and maintenance teams to understand the viability and suitability of the proposals presented. It would also be prudent to ensure that any changes to buildings could be reversed if capacity increases after 2026.

- 6.4 At present the construction and maintenance team does not have any capacity to provide multi-disciplinary design services and as such it should be considered to engage with either the existing managing partner or look to appoint another consultant to provide this service.
- 6.5 Any future reduction in pupil numbers may also have an effect on the level of funding being obtained annually from the DfE under their school condition improvement grant funding and as such future years' programmes will have to be adjusted accordingly.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.5 Not undertaken, however all subsequent construction work arising from this Strategy will be undertaken in accordance with Part M of Building Regulations which set out the specific requirements for disabled access.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.6 Identified risks include:

ISSUE		RISK	COMMENT
1	Sufficient school places	LOW	Forecasts suggest there will be sufficient school places for the forecast period 2021-25.
2	Surplus school places	MEDIUM	Forecasts suggest primary surpluses will increase, but secondary surpluses will decrease. Measures to reduce the surplus of primary places will mitigate this risk.
3	Council's ability to manage the supply of school places	MEDIUM	Academies may choose to depart from catchment area admissions policies and/or admit over their PANs. Effective relationships with academies are essential.
4	Capital Cost Risk	MEDIUM	It is likely that there will be costs associated with the conversion of surplus mainstream accommodation for use by SEN
5	Revenue Cost Risk to the Council	LOW	Surplus places reduce the likelihood that Home to School Transport will be incurred.

6	Revenue Cost Risk to Schools	MEDIUM	Primary schools experiencing significant surpluses of places may also experience revenue pressures where reducing funding formula reduces their budgets. Putting surplus accommodation to constructive alternative use will help mitigate this.
7	Reputation Risk	MEDIUM	The Council could stand to be criticised if there are too many surplus school places. Reduction of surplus places is therefore a priority

Climate Change Implications

- 6.7 None specifically, however all construction work arising from this Strategy will be undertaken in consideration of the Council's Climate Change Strategy, including the amount of CO2 emissions from any installed plant & equipment.

Consultation

- 6.8 The School Sufficiency Board was consulted on in Sep-21 and supported the proposed Strategy.
- 6.9 The Strategy was presented to an All Members Briefing on 03-Nov.
- 6.10 Headteachers were briefed on 04-Nov and invited to planning area workshops, which will take place later this month.
- 6.11 The Strategy was presented Chairs of Governors on 11-Nov.
- 6.12 Schools Forum will be consulted on 09-Dec.

Background Papers

School Places Plan 2021-25

Contacts for further information

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