

To:  Cabinet
12 November 2024

School Attendance Strategy Request for Public Consultation Executive director of People

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 Bracknell Forest Council and its partners recognise the need for a clear strategic vision to improve school attendance. This will ensure we are aligned with the Department of Education Guidance 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' which was developed to help schools, trusts, governing bodies, and local authorities maintain high levels of school attendance and improve consistency of support and became statutory from August 2024.

2 Cabinet member for (portfolio) Introduction

- 2.1 Cllr Roy Bailey

3 Recommendation(s)

- 3.1 Cabinet are asked to approve the request to undertake a public consultation on the proposed school attendance strategy.
3.2 The revised strategy to be presented to cabinet following the consultation

4 Reasons for recommendation(s)

- 4.1 Stakeholder consultation is an important part of the development of the school attendance strategy, enabling schools, parent/carers, children & young people, members, key stakeholders, and wider residents to understand and comment on the proposed strategy.

5 Alternative options considered

- 5.1 There is no current strategy for school attendance within Bracknell Forest and with the introduction of the statutory guidance '[working together to improve school attendance](#)' the option of not doing anything has not been considered.

6 Supporting information

- 6.1 On 6th May 2022, the Department for Education released new non-statutory guidance [Working together to improve school attendance](#) to help schools, trusts, governing bodies, and local authorities maintain high levels of school attendance and improve consistency of support.
6.2 This guidance became statutory on 19th August, and schools, trusts, governing bodies, and local authorities must have regard to it as part of their efforts to maintain high levels of school attendance.

Strategy Overview

- 6.3 The strategy proposes the following priority areas:
- We are in this together; ensure clear roles and responsibilities for all partners
 - We are consistent with shared approach and training
 - We recognise the need to support for the most vulnerable
 - We are responsive in meeting the needs of our local community

Consultation

- 6.4 A structured consultation plan has been developed including a combination of consultation methods providing opportunities for schools, parents/cares, children and young people and key stakeholders including members, voluntary organisations, other statutory organisations to give their views on the proposed strategy. This includes the following elements:
- The consultation plan includes an online survey that individuals and organisations will be invited to complete; it is proposed to run the survey for a period of 9 weeks from 18th November to 17th January 2025.
 - Member workshops or other opportunity for Members to provide comments.
 - Consultation workshops – targeting schools, parent/carers, internal colleagues, and other groups of professionals.
 - Invitation to key stakeholders to submit written comments by email.

See consultation plan in appendices.

- 6.5 In addition, a communication plan will be developed to ensure that the consultation is promoted widely, this will include.
- Promoting the attendance strategy and online survey on the council's website
 - Use of intranet and external newsletters such as Forest Views
 - Targeted emails to key contacts and organisations
- 6.6 Once the consultation is complete and the responses analysed, the proposed strategy will be finalised and presented to the cabinet for approval on the 26th March 2025.
- 6.7 The proposed 'go live' date for the strategy is April 2025.

7 Consultation and other considerations

Legal Advice

- 7.1 The legal implications are as set out in the body of the report and draft Attendance Strategy. The draft Attendance Strategy sets out the priorities, roles and measures proposed to be followed by the Local Authority, in conjunction with its partner agencies and key stakeholders, to improve school attendance and punctuality. The Department for Education's "working together to improve school attendance" guidance, dated 6th May 2022, as amended, became statutory on 19th August 2024, meaning that schools, trusts, governing bodies, and the Local Authority must have regard to it as part of their efforts to maintain high levels of school attendance.

The 2024 Statutory Guidance complements the provisions of The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and The Education (Penalty Notices)

(England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 (which includes now imposing a duty on schools to consider Fixed Penalty Notices, or other proportionate means of enforcement for school non-attendance, where the requisite criteria for doing so is met. It also complements the National Framework for Penalty Notices and Bracknell Forest Council's new own local "Code of Conduct" for issuing Fixed Penalty Notices and as to other local measures to address school non-attendance, both in force as from 19th August 2024. It also complements the legal provisions of the Education Act 1996, including under s.7 which places a duty on parents to ensure that their children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to the child's needs, age, ability and aptitude and to any special education need or additional learning needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school (meaning in accordance with the attendance rules of the school) or otherwise.

The proposed Attendance Strategy proposes the framework and sets out the priorities, roles, and measures, by which the Council and its partner agencies and key stakeholders will seek to ensure that the provisions of the above-referred are met and in a fair, uniform and proportionate way.

Financial Advice

- 7.2 The Executive Director: Resources is satisfied that no significant financial implications arise from agreeing to undertake the consultation or delivering the proposals within

Other consultation responses

- 7.3 All schools were asked to complete an initial survey to establish what priority areas they felt should be included within the strategy. Colleagues including Education, Youth Justice, Children Social Care and Early Help have reviewed and provided feedback on the draft strategy.

Equalities impact assessment

- 7.4 There are negative impacts regarding disability and racial equality, but these can be mitigated by ensuring that we make the strategy available accessible to all should people request in in alternative format or language.

Strategic risk management issues

- 7.5 The strategy supports any strategic risk management issues by having improved attendance management system in place.

Climate change and ecological impact

- 7.6 There will be no impact on climate change and ecological impact.

Health & wellbeing considerations

- 7.7 Promoting consistent school attendance is vital not only for academic success but also for the overall health and well-being of our students. Regular attendance fosters a sense of belonging, enhances social connections, and supports mental health by providing stability and routine. Our attendance strategy is designed to address barriers to attendance, such as health issues and socio-emotional challenges, ensuring that all students feel supported and engaged.

Background Papers

Appendix 1 - table summarising key areas included within the priorities.

Draft school attendance strategy

EIA

Consultation Plan

Contacts for further information

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