

UPDATE ON THE STRATEGY FOR THE PERMANENT EXPANSION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES

Report by the Strategic Director of Learning & Children's Services
Executive Member for Children and Young People's Services

Purpose

The Local Authority has a statutory duty as the commissioner of school places in the area to ensure that there are sufficient places in schools across the area to promote diversity and increase parental choice. As reported to Executive in April 2009 there is a significant increase in the numbers of children requiring a school place and therefore a sustained need to expand Primary School provision. The Local Authority is developing a Strategy to provide the additional places from 2010 onwards. As requested this report updates the Executive on the informal consultation carried out during May and June to inform the development of the Strategy and outlines the next steps in the consultation process that will be required to establish the additional places.

Action proposed by the Executive Member for Children and Young People's Services

The Executive is recommended to:

1. note these proposals including feedback from the informal consultation set out in Annex 1, including the request that the Local Authority identify further sites for new schools;
2. request a further report to Executive in November 2009 on the proposed Strategy, after further consultation with all interested parties; and
3. note that proposals for statutory consultation will commence no earlier than late in 2009.

Reason for action proposed

To meet the Local Authority's statutory responsibility to secure sufficient school places.

BACKGROUND

1. As the commissioner of school places in the local area the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that there are sufficient school places for all children who need to be educated, to ensure fair access to local schools, to ensure that there are sufficient schools in their area. There is also a duty to promote diversity and increase parental choice. In response to an identified need to permanently expand Primary School provision the Local Authority carried out an informal consultation in May and June 2009 to inform the development of a strategy for permanent expansion of existing primary schools and the building of some new schools.

INFORMAL CONSULTATION PROCESS

2. As set out in the April 2009 Executive Report there is a lengthy consultation process to develop and deliver an expansion Strategy involving a range of stakeholders including schools, parents, local residents, Diocesan representatives and neighbouring Local Authorities. Meetings had previously been held with Headteachers collectively, with individual Governing Bodies and with the Southwark Diocese and RC Archdiocese of Southwark. The Local Authority undertook informal consultation in May and June 2009 to seek views on how to create up to 15 additional forms of entry in Primary Schools across the Borough.
3. The consultation reflected the need to maximise awareness of the need for permanent expansion of Primary Schools and to provide parents and residents with options to contribute their views in a number of ways. A combination of methods was used: paper information and questionnaires, online information and questionnaires and open meetings. Equalities monitoring was included on the questionnaire in order to demonstrate the range of respondents in the local community.
4. A full consultation document and a two page summary were made widely available, each including the same questionnaire. A summary leaflet of the consultation paper setting out options for a permanent increase in Primary School places in each of the four school places planning areas across the Borough was widely distributed. This indicated that the additional places would be created by expansion of existing schools in Kingston Town and South of the Borough, with the option of a combination of expanding existing schools and the creation of one new school in each of Surbiton and Maldens and Coombe areas.
5. The consultation process was publicised on the Kingston website and in the local press with 17,000 copies of the summary leaflet issued to parents of pre-school children attending early years settings and children attending Kingston primary schools, as well as copies of both documents being available at Primary Schools, early years providers, GPs' surgeries and libraries. Electronic distribution via email was sent to all Councillors, local authority staff and professionals linked to the Children's Trust.
6. Four open meetings were held in early June 2009 at venues across the Borough. Council Officers from Learning & Children's Services including those responsible for planning of school places, school admissions, school improvement and the property team were available to explain the expansion options and answer questions from attendees. The aim of the meetings was to give people the opportunity at an early stage in this process to find out more about the proposals and offer their views.
7. The consultation document and the public meetings together constituted an initial informal consultation and were only the first stage in a longer process. The aim was to collect views to inform decisions about the preferred mix of schools to expand. The final plan for the expansion of Primary School places will also be informed by the availability of land for new schools, the likely outcome of planning applications and the practical issues of expanding individual schools.

FEEDBACK FROM INFORMAL CONSULTATION PROCESS

8. A total of 1,232 response forms were returned and 191 people registered as attending one of the four meetings. Ninety per cent of the response forms were completed by parents or carers of children, and ninety five percent of all respondents lived within the Royal Borough of Kingston. Details of the respondees by School Planning Area is shown in Annex 1.
9. Just over 45% of respondees (561) added comments to their forms. The main issues that people raised in their responses are set out below (percentage in brackets indicates percentage of respondents who commented on this issue):
- Build new schools rather than expand existing ones (8%)
 - Schools should be no bigger than three forms of entry (7%) - the consultation options included the possibility of expanding four schools to four forms of entry
 - Concerns there appeared to be proportionately fewer proposals to expand faith schools (4%) – this was raised as a general issue but approximately half of those that mentioned it did so in the context of the Kingston Town planning area. 33% of existing permanent reception year places are in faith schools. The proposals across the borough allow for up to 30% of the possible new places in existing schools to be in faith schools.
 - Dissatisfaction with consultation approach (3%)
 - Concerns whether the need for future secondary expansion is being addressed now (3%). This is addressed in the Building Schools for the Future Strategy, and the detailed consultation document included reference to the proposal to consult on a possible site for a new secondary school.
 - Concerns about expanding Ellingham Primary, Chessington due to the size of the site and concerns about access etc (3%)
 - Concern that a new primary school was not proposed for Kingston Town planning area (2%)
 - Issues relating to the previous decision to amalgamate Buckland Infants and Moor lane Junior School, and suggestion that Moor Lane site be reopened as a new primary school for Chessington (2%) – the building is currently being refurbished and will reopen in September as the location for the Integrated Service for Disabled Children.
10. The preference to build more new schools and not to expand more than by three forms of entry were reflected in the available preferences on the response forms. These are shown in the tables set out in Annex 1. In the three planning areas where it was proposed to expand schools to four forms of entry these were the least favoured options. In Surbiton and the Malden and Coombes areas there was strong support for a new three form entry Primary School. The preferred options are as follows:
- The favoured options for Kingston Town area, in order of preference, are to expand Alexandra Infant School, St Joseph's RC Primary School, King Athelstan Primary School and expand Fern Hill Primary School by one form of entry only.

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- The favoured options for the Surbiton area, in order of preference, are to expand Grand Avenue Primary School, a new 3 form entry school on Surbiton Hospital site, expand St Matthew's Primary School, Maple Infant School and Christ Church Primary School.
 - The favoured options in the Maldens and Coombe area, in order of preference, are to build a new 3 form entry Primary School, and expand Christ Church Primary School, Corpus Christi RC Primary School, and Burlington Infant and Junior Schools.
 - The proposals for the south of the borough are to expand Lovelace Primary School and Ellingham Primary School. However a small number of respondents did not favour expansion at Ellingham.
11. It should be noted that this aspect of the consultation was not intended to be a vote to determine the mix of schools for expansion, rather it provides contextual information to set alongside other factors which will determine the final proposals. The consultation paper set out clearly that the final plan for the expansion will combine the results from the consultation, availability of land for new schools, likely outcome of planning applications and the practical issues of expanding individual schools as determined from the feasibility studies which are currently being undertaken.
12. A summary of all of the comments received is set out in a report available in the Members Room, Learning & Children's Services Reception in Guildhall 2, and on the Kingston Website.

FEASIBILITY STUDIES

13. Consultants have been appointed to undertake the feasibility studies required to determine the practical aspects of expansion at each of the thirteen schools named as possible options for expansion. This work will inform both the options for providing additional places for September 2010 on an interim basis, and the permanent expansion Strategy for September 2011 onwards.
14. The Consultants have been asked to consider the feasibility of remodelling to accommodate the additional form(s) of entry; the capacity for the site to accommodate temporary accommodation from September 2010 whilst the works are undertaken, and in the event that expansion is not possible on the site, the potential to accommodate a demountable for a bulge class instead.
15. An initial series of feasibility studies has concluded that most of the school sites could accommodate the additional form(s) of entry. This is based on analysis of the school sizes and external areas required, using national guidance issued by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. Christ Church Primary, New Malden currently operates from two sites; neither of which are sufficiently large to expand by one form of entry and it remains a stated priority for the school, Diocese and Local Authority to co-locate the school in a new building on a single site.
16. The next phase of feasibility studies now underway will consider the possible positioning of buildings on each site to accommodate the additional classrooms

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needed, shortfalls in other accommodation, and possible remodelling options together with associated costs. This work is expected to be completed by mid-July 2009.

17. A final phase of feasibility in the Autumn Term will consider the curriculum and management issues to help shape possible design solutions informed by both the Local Authority and individual schools.
18. The Local Development Framework Core Strategy will need to include sites for new schools and school expansion. Public consultation on Issues and Options for the Core Strategy took place recently and referred to the need to expand schools and identify potential new sites to provide sufficient school places. The next key date set out in the Core Strategy Project Plan is to report to the Executive in November 2009 to seek approval to consult on the Preferred Strategy. The Preferred Strategy will need to include potential sites for new schools and school expansion.

NEW SCHOOL SITES

19. Officers in the Local Authority are continuing to work to identify potential sites for new primary schools. From an educational and project delivery perspective it would be preferable to build new schools as these could be fully designed to deliver the concept of a 21st Century School. In addition the building costs of a new school are broadly comparable with the remodelling cost of permanently expanding an existing school, once all of the additional accommodation changes are taken into account (e.g. classrooms, additional toilets, hall, kitchen and dining facilities, outdoor curriculum and play space, and staff areas etc).
20. With regard to sites in private ownership, the Council has two options:
 1. Acquire the property by negotiation from a willing seller;
 2. Acquire the property using powers of compulsory purchase derived from Section 226(1) (a) of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004). A compulsory purchase order should only be made where there is a compelling case in the public interest.
21. The Local Authority would in the first instance seek to acquire any suitable land by agreement. It is recognised that acquiring any land or property using powers of compulsory purchase would be a lengthy process that would be unlikely to deliver a new build school for several years after the places are needed. This option would, therefore, only be considered as a last resort if there were no other practical options.
22. The additional cost of acquiring land not in RBK ownership would need to be resourced. This cost may however be partly offset by a reduced need to use temporary modular buildings on existing school sites whilst remodelling work is undertaken.
23. To date there are very limited options identified as possible sites for a new Primary school. This is mainly due to the size of site required for a two or three form entry Primary school and the limited availability of land locally.

ADMISSIONS TO PRIMARY SCHOOLS FOR SEPTEMBER 2010

24. It is projected that an additional twelve forms of entry are needed for September 2010 Reception Year admissions. A number of schools have indicated a willingness to host an additional class for 2010, including some who have also expressed an interest in permanently expanding their admission number from September 2011.
25. When the feasibility studies are completed at schools that may expand this will indicate if it is possible for those schools to also accommodate an additional class for September 2010 whilst the building works are underway.
26. It will therefore be necessary to separately agree which schools will have temporary classes for Reception for September 2010 alongside developing the Strategy for permanent expansion. Information will be published on the Kingston website and in the Primary Schools Admission Booklet about the schools that will host the additional classes. This will ensure that parents have the necessary information to make their preferences of school before the closing date for Primary School Admissions on 4 December 2009.

NEXT STEPS

27. There is a need to continue detailed discussions at individual schools, initially with the Governing Body and then with the wider school community and local residents regarding the potential expansion proposals. Meetings will be arranged to enable this to take place early in the Autumn Term.
28. The statutory consultation process to expand named schools and/or build new schools is set out in guidance published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. This phase of consultation starts with the publication of a statutory notice of the Local Authority's intention to permanently expand a school site or establish a new school in the area.
29. There are different requirements for the statutory consultation around expansion of an existing school and establishing a new school but it will be important to publish an overall strategy to address the shortfall of places. This Strategy is likely to include a combination of:
 - New build schools (subject to site availability)
 - Expansion of existing schools
 - Need to accommodate bulge classes at some schools whilst building works take place at schools which are to be expanded permanently
30. A competition is required where a Local Authority wishes to establish a new school. This includes cases where a brand new school is required to meet an increase in the local population. The Local Authority must identify the proposed site for the new school although proposers may put forward proposals to establish the school on a different site.
31. When the Local Authority is proposing an expansion of school places there is a requirement to consider if there is a sufficiently diverse range of schools available for parents. There is also a strong presumption that the pattern of school places by

type of school is maintained where new classes or schools are added. Currently 67% of places are available in Community schools, 20% in Church of England Primary schools and 18% in Roman Catholic Primary schools

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS – CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

32. The overall cost of capital works that will be required to create up to 15 additional forms of entry will be significant. The costs will comprise further investment in temporary accommodation in advance of permanent building works being completed. The costs will depend on the mix of new schools and expansion of existing sites e.g. a new 3 form entry school would typically cost £8m, and expansion of an existing school by 1form of entry is at least £2m.
33. Our current estimates are that between £20m and £30m is needed over the period 2009 to 2013 to fund a permanent expansion Primary school places by the required 28%.
34. Recent discussions with the Department for Children, Schools and Families regarding the need for additional capital grant funding have been positive. There is now an understanding of the significant need for Primary school places not only across London but also in many other urban areas nationally. Kingston is well placed to attract additional funding in the future funding allocations, in view of the preparations that are already in place.

CONCLUSIONS

35. It is recognised that there is a need to provide certainty as soon as possible for parents and schools regarding the proposed strategy to expand schools and develop new schools. The need is urgent and an agreed strategy must be available for further temporary classes for September 2010 on an interim basis, and permanent expansion for 2011.
36. The consultation responses provide a clear request from parents that further consideration be given to the potential for more sites for new schools. To date the Local Authority has concentrated on sites that are already in the Council's ownership, as well as considering land owned by NHS Kingston. The main reason for this approach was that it was felt desirable to ensure that any new school could be delivered as soon as possible, and this remains the most straightforward way to deliver any new schools in good time.
37. In view of the consultation responses a process to identify sites not in the Council's ownership will now be explored more fully. However it is important to avoid delay in providing the additional places as part of a permanent expansion and there is a practical limit to the use of temporary buildings as an interim measure.
38. The proposed way forward therefore, is to pursue options to expand existing schools with those schools most able and willing to do this by continuing with the feasibility work and further discussions with Governing Bodies and with the Southwark Diocese and RC Archdiocese of Southwark in the early Autumn. At the same time there is a necessity to look again at the options for new school sites and to progress the costings of different options and to confirm the available funding.

39. We propose therefore to take a further report with final recommendations back to the Executive in November 2009.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

40. In undertaking the role of commissioner of school places in the local area the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that there are sufficient school places for all children, to ensure fair access to schools, and to ensure that there are sufficient schools in the area. There is also a duty to promote diversity and increase parental choice. The Government's stated aim is to secure a more diverse and dynamic schools system which is shaped by parents' preferences for a good local school.
41. There is clearly a responsibility for the Local Authority to ensure that the Strategy for expansion reflects the needs of all children in the Borough, and not just those of parents who are more able to express their views. An underlying requirement is that the Strategy will contribute to improving the quality of local provision, and will lead to improved educational outcomes for children. The Local Authority is therefore required to pay particular attention to the effects on groups of children that tend to under-perform including children from certain ethnic groups, children from deprived backgrounds and children in care, with the aim of narrowing attainment gaps. The proposals will also be required to take the needs of other pupils into account e.g. children with learning difficulties and disabilities.
42. The proposals to be developed in Kingston will therefore support the detailed plans within the Children and Young People's Plan and the Strategy for Early Intervention and Prevention - 'Closing the Gap'.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

43. There are significant environmental implications arising from the building works that will be required to provide additional school places. The extensions to existing schools or new schools will be designed to ensure that there is improved sustainability of school buildings. Wherever possible the agreed priorities within the Primary Capital Programme Strategy adopted by Executive in June 2008 and approved by the Department for Children, Schools and Families in November 2008 will be incorporated into expansion plans. In this way it is hoped that greater efficiencies will be achieved through the rationalisation and remodelling of school buildings and the use of ICT, and that the plans will maximise the use of outside spaces for outdoor learning and play through careful landscaping. There will also be implications for transport and access to schools, when some sites are expanded.

Background papers: held by Anne Redparth (author of report), 020 8547 5276;
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1. Primary Capital Programme Strategy
2. Pupil Number Projections Data
3. Informal Consultation Materials (available on Kingston Website:
http://www.kingston.gov.uk/browse/education/schools/primary_expansion_consultation.htm)
4. Informal Consultation Responses