



<u>Committee and Date</u>
People Overview
Wednesday 28 September 2022

<u>Item</u>
<u>Public</u>

## **AN UPDATE ON SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING IN SHROPSHIRE**

### **Responsible Officer**

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### **1. Synopsis**

This report provides an update to the report considered by the People Overview Committee at their meeting on 29 September 2021.

### **2. Recommendations**

2.1. That the People Overview Committee notes the report.

## **REPORT**

### **3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal**

- 3.1 Local authorities have a statutory duty under section 14 of the Education Act 1996 to ensure sufficient schools are available in their area to provide primary and secondary education, whether in maintained schools or academies. This requires the provision of a school place for every child living in its area of responsibility who is of school age and whose parents choose for their child to be educated in the state funded sector. There is also a duty to secure sufficient childcare and special education needs and disability (SEND) provision in the local authority area.
- 3.2 The current school place planning programme has highlighted a number of risks that can impact on the authority's ability to meet its statutory responsibilities including: securing appropriate funding

from a range of funding streams; realising some funding streams long after the projects are completed (eg capital receipts); external factors impacting on materials costs and programme timetables (eg inflation, global supply shortages/delays and the climate agenda); and, securing support from the host school/academy to expand provision.

- 3.3 This report will reference planned changes to the existing roles and responsibilities in relation to school place planning.

## **4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1. Where additional school places are required, whether on an existing school site or through a new school, there are a range of funding streams to meet the costs of any necessary capital works. These include: Government allocated basic need capital grant, high needs capital for specialist provision, early years capital funding, contributions from housing developments through CIL and Section 106, and any potential receipts from the sale of surplus school sites within Council ownership. The securing of CIL funding and allocation of capital receipts is dependent on Cabinet approval

## **5. Climate Change Appraisal**

- 5.1. Where tender processes for these large capital projects are set against the background of the Council's declaration of a climate emergency in May 2019. Contractors are increasingly required to demonstrate the high environmental credentials/standards set in the tender documentation, with projects targeting a BREEAM 'Excellent' rating (BREEAM is the world's leading sustainability assessment method for master planning projects, infrastructure and buildings).

## **6. Background**

- 6.1. A report on School Place Planning in Shropshire was considered by the People Overview Committee at their meeting on 29 September 2021. This followed a Members' Scrutiny Development Session on school place planning that was held on 21 September 2021.

## **7. Update**

- 7.1 Since the last report to the People Overview Committee, two major school place planning projects have been completed:

- the new five classroom teaching block at Meole Brace School was completed late in the autumn term 2021, opening to students in January 2022
- the expansion of Harlescott Junior School, and the relocation of Sundorne Infant School to the junior school site, was completed in time for the staff and pupils to move in at the beginning of the summer term.

- 7.2 As reported last September, the last major review of school place planning was carried out in late 2015 and engagement meetings with key stakeholders were held across the county in the first half of 2016, including with Council members. This was linked to and informed by the current Local Plan through to 2026 and the impact of this on school places.
- 7.3 The school place planning review process requires the early and extended engagement with the schools and academies in the locations where pupil growth is forecast, primarily in those areas where significant housing development is planned. It is worth noting that the local authority has no current powers to direct academies to expand and so local partnership working to secure the additional school places is essential and to date has been successful in Shropshire.
- 7.4 A similar exercise will be launched this spring and will draw on the draft Local Plan for the plan period 2016-2038., which proposes to deliver 30,800 dwellings across the county, with the majority of development planned for the larger strategic and principal centres, significant growth in Shrewsbury, a new garden village in Bridgnorth (Tasley), and new strategic sites at Clive Barracks (Tem Hill) and the former Ironbridge Power Station.
- 7.5 The draft Shropshire Local Plan was submitted last September and Planning Inspectors are carrying out an independent examination of the draft plan. Stage 1 Hearing Sessions in July 2022 focused on legal and strategic matters. Stage 2 Hearing Sessions are likely to focus on more detailed matters. It is anticipated that following the examination process, subject to the conclusions reached and Council approval, the draft Shropshire Local Plan will be adopted by Shropshire Council in 2023.
- 7.6 The school place planning officers are already engaged in early discussions on the potential areas in which significant pupil growth may be expected.
- 7.7 Last September it was reported that, following the launch of the Government's national School Rebuilding Programme in 2019, two Shropshire schools - Belvidere School in Shrewsbury and St Andrew's CE Primary in Shifnal – have been included in phases 1 and 2 respectively of the programme, and will be completely rebuilt.

- 7.8 In March 2022, the Department for Education invited nominations for schools to be included in future phases of the School Rebuilding Programme. Five Shropshire maintained schools were put forward by the local authority, of which two have received visits this summer by the Department's technical advisers as part of the next assessment phase of the approval process. The authority will be advised in due course whether these two projects will be progressing for inclusion in a future phase of the programme.
- 7.9 The Government launched the education white paper '*Opportunity for all: strong schools with great teachers for your child*' in March 2022. Alongside this they published a green paper on the future of the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and alternative provision (AP) system and launched a public consultation on the green paper's proposals. Both of these will have far reaching implications as part of the Government's planned reforms of the school system.
- 7.10 In the context of the school system, the white paper outlines that "local authorities will:
- meet their communities' need for good school places across the local system so that there is a suitable place for every child
  - secure the best outcome for individual children, especially the most vulnerable - they will have a strengthened role overseeing local admissions arrangements, assuring arrangements to keep children safe, and making sure children attend school
  - hold new legal powers in areas such as admissions and have improved access to data so that they can deliver these responsibilities more effectively."
- 7.11 In respect of school place planning and sufficiency of school places, the local authority will be responsible for planning and securing provision through the forecasting of pupil place needs for mainstream, AP and specialist schools, and identifying options for delivering this. The responsibility for multi-academy trusts will be to collaborate with other trusts and with the local authority to support the development and delivery of agreed places.
- 7.12 The Department for Education will quality assure the local authority pupil forecasts and provide basic need and high needs funding to the local authority, while the Department's Regions Group will be responsible for making decisions about expanding and creating academy trusts and schools, working alongside local authorities and trusts to ensure place plans align.
- 7.13 The Department has already advised that their annual School Capacity Survey (SCAP) return on mainstream school places will be

extended in 2023 to collect additional data on capacity and forecasts relating to specialist provision, in particular the physical capacity of SEND units/resourced provision in mainstream schools, maintained special schools and special academies, and corresponding forecasts of demand for the specialist places in these settings. A new SEND Net Capacity Assessment (NCA) Tool will be released this autumn to aid authorities with the assessment of physical capacity and guidance will be provided on producing forecast of future demand for specialist provision.

7.14 The school place planning review will take into account and fully reflect the changing school system, the structural changes this will result in and the redefined and clarified roles and responsibilities of the local authority, academy trust and Department for Education via the Regions Group.

## 8. Conclusions

8.1. The report provides an update and summary of the school place planning position in Shropshire, the imminent launch of the major school place planning review and the impact of the Government’s plans for the school system on the provision of school places.

<p><b>List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)</b></p> <p>21 September 2021 – Members’ Scrutiny Development Session on School Place Planning</p> <p>29 September 2021 – People Overview Committee report on School Place Planning</p>
<p><b>Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)</b></p> <p>Cllr Kirstie Hurst-Knight</p>
<p><b>Local Member</b></p> <p>All Members</p>
<p><b>Appendices</b></p> <p>None</p>