

<b>Item No.</b> 10.	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 6 December 2022	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Cabinet
<b>Report title:</b>		Place planning Across Southwark's Primary Schools: A strategy for future-proofing quality and supply	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>		Councillor Jasmine Ali, Deputy Leader and Children, Young People, Education and Refugees	

## **FOREWORD – COUNCILLOR JASMINE ALI, DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE, EDUCATION AND REFUGEES**

Ten years ago the demand for school places outstripped supply. At that time the council embarked on an ambitious programme of school refurbishment and building in order to provide enough school places for our children and young people. Today we are dealing with just the opposite, where supply exceeds demand for school places.

At the same time Southwark school standards have never been better. At the time of writing this foreword our schools are rated as 98% Ofsted good or outstanding. It is the principle of this Council to protect a high quality of education.

The attached strategy offers an explanation for the phenomenon of falling school rolls, provides an assessment of the financial risk outlines an approach to deal with this, based upon a series of options to be taken by the council and local schools.

The strategy has been drawn up by a cross council team involving education, regeneration and finance in close collaboration in close consultation with head teachers, school governors and councillors. It reflects a great deal of hard work of everyone involved in order to keep education strong and mitigate the negative impact of falling school rolls on education in Southwark.

I ask the Cabinet to note the contents of this strategy. The next phase of this work will be outlined in a plan that I will bring to Cabinet in the New Year.

The contents of the strategy are as follows:

### **The current situation**

- 72 state funded primary schools with reception classes
- 924 surplus places in Reception
- 5,855 surplus places across the primary school system

- 22% vacancy rate in September 2022

### **Reasons for decline in numbers**

- Falling birth rate – 30% decrease in births since 2012 in Southwark
- Demography – Census 2021 data: 0-4 year olds reduced by 21% in 10 years
- Migration/Brexit – net migration from EU countries is now in decline
- Housing crisis – Southwark house prices up 32% since 2016, while average rents are as high as £3,100 for a 2-bed property
- Benefit changes – Universal Credit, Local Housing allowance and bedroom tax may have forced families out of inner London

### **Financial impact**

- 420 reception places (14 classes) have been removed since 2017
- Reductions in supply have not kept pace with falling demand
- Vacant school places are not funded
- Expenditure could exceed income by over £5m in financial year 2023-24
- A £10m in-year deficit would accrue over the next two financial years if we take no action

### **Going forward**

- Meeting DfE recommended numbers would mean removing between 575 to 750 school Reception places (19 to 25 forms of entry (FE))
- Factors which will be considered for removing capacity from schools will be:
  - Falling number on roll (past numbers of pupils and projections)
  - Financial sustainability
  - Quality of education (for example, Ofsted rating)
  - Quality of estate and buildings (compliance issues, health of buildings, etc.)
  - Local issues (e.g. availability of other similar designations of schools in the local area.)
  - The impact on the number and denomination of places at faith schools, and the balance of places between secular and faith schools
  - Staffing and capacity
  - Equality, health & climate impact implications
- Options for approaches to removing capacity will include:
  - Capping reception intake (although this is a short term fix)
  - Formal reduction of Reception Published Admission Number (PAN)
  - Amalgamation of schools
  - Closure
- Draft timeline includes: Cabinet agreement of strategy (December 2022), Schools informed of recommendations (March 2023), Informal consultation (June/July 2023), Statutory consultation (September 2023), Final Cabinet decision (July 2024).

## **RECOMMENDATION**

1. That the Cabinet agree the strategy and approach for future-proofing the quality of education and supply of school places, attached as Appendix 1 of the report.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

2. Ten years ago the demand for school places outstripped supply. Today we are dealing with just the opposite, where supply exceeds demand for school places.
3. Local authorities have a legal duty to provide sufficient school places, in the right location, for the population. Between 2010 and 2016, as demand and projected demand across London increased rapidly, many London local authorities including Southwark, needed to add primary school places.
4. Since 2016, we have seen a steady decline in demand for primary school places in most parts of London and across Southwark and its neighbours.
5. The number of school places required fluctuates over time as a result of local and national changes, for example, in birth rates, migration, housing policy and regeneration.
6. Today across Southwark there are 72 state funded primary schools with reception classes. We have 924 surplus places in Reception and a total of 5,850 surplus places across the primary school system. This has put pressure on individual school finances as schools are funded for each pupil on roll.
7. For the 57 local authority maintained primary schools (i.e. Community Schools and VA schools) this represents a risk to maintaining a good quality of education, increases the challenge to attract or maintain staff and poses a financial risk to the council.
8. In recent years we have taken steps to reduce surplus capacity such as reducing schools pupil admission numbers (PANs), federating schools and supporting schools to make alternative use of school space. However, strategies to remove surplus capacity have not kept pace with the rate of reducing number of children across our schools. A borough-wide approach that removes the majority of these surplus places over the next three years, will now be required to adequately address the scale of capacity.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

9. This strategy seeks to enable the council to work closely with schools to manage places in primary schools while we attempt to weather the current demographic storm brought about by a national and local fall in birth

rates, the movement of families from the UK, following first the uncertainties, and later, the reality of Brexit, and finally, the movement of families from London to other parts of the country following the pandemic, and more recently, the cost of living crisis.

10. A member officer group was established and an internal Place Planning Officers Group was established in April 2021 to inform further approaches to managing the surplus capacity created through falling rolls. This was followed by regular and continuing meetings with school leaders including governors. Ward councillors were also offered webinars. A Head Teachers School Strategy Board was set up in January 2022 to further understand and develop solutions to the challenge of falling rolls in schools.
11. In addition to developing the strategy with the members of the groups above, the challenge and proposed approach has been shared for discussion as it has developed, with: Chairs of Governors (at the Southwark Governors' Association); School Business Managers; wider groups of head teachers (at the Head Teachers Breakfast Briefings); the DfE (via the Regional Schools Director); School Trades Unions; CEOs of Multi Academy Trusts; Diocesan Boards; councilors; colleagues in neighbouring boroughs and via the London Councils group.
12. The implementation of the strategy will be overseen by a Places Planning Board and a Delivery Group, who will provide resourcing where appropriate, and will provide updates to the council on progress.
13. The strategy and approach, attached as appendix 1, has been developed in consultation with:
  - i) the Head Teachers School Strategy Board: a consultative and advisory body of representative head teachers from maintained primary schools in each of the five planning areas in Southwark;
  - ii) The Place Planning Officers Group: a group of senior officers from departments across the council, including: Planning and Regeneration, Finance, Law, Schools HR, Governor Services, Place Planning and Education Access, Learning and Achievement, SEND, Estates, Communications, and others as appropriate;
  - iii) Southwark councilors.
14. The education team is committed to working with individual schools to assess the feasibility of keeping a school open where there are falling numbers of pupils. This will involve practical support for the schools, including the assessment and advice of school financial plans and risk assessments.
15. This strategy proposes to make changes in one phase to minimise disruption and distress to children and families, communities and staff so

that if a school move is required, it is only required once. This will help to promote stability and help families plan for and identify an alternative school for their child and school based staff to seek re-deployment opportunities.

16. Working closely with school leaders, and receiving independent oversight, the strategy and its implementation approach aims to provide a fair and transparent process that anticipates and mitigates any potential disproportional impact on communities
17. Each school directly affected will be supported by a transition team, comprising expertise from HR, Finance, Law, SEND, Learning and Achievement and Governor Services, among others. These teams will support the school to transition to their new state, whether that be amalgamation or closure.
18. This strategy and proposed approach to implementing it is ambitious, and will require the support and combined work of many stakeholders across the council and in, and around, our schools and their communities.
19. Advice and support in writing the strategy was provided by an external consultant, and any process going forward will have independent oversight.

### **Policy framework implications**

21. This report has been produced in the context of Southwark's Council plan and borough plan (please see background documents listed below) and the strategy to future-proof the quality and supply of education across the borough supports the council's aspirations to give its children and young people the best start in life.

### **Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts**

#### **Community impact statement**

22. To have to develop and implement a strategy like this is not an easy decision, nor one the council takes lightly. However, it is necessary to take decisive, timely, and significant action in order to protect the high quality education of the children that attend our schools.
23. This strategy will have an impact on our communities across Southwark. Some schools will close, and this will have an effect on the children who attend them as they move to attend other schools, as well as on those schools that remain open.
24. We know that changing schools can be disruptive for children and families and we will prioritise working closely with our schools and the families affected to support as smooth a transition for children and staff as possible.

25. We cannot control parents' right to choose where their children go to school, and the impact of parental choice does have an effect on communities. However, we are confident that our schools provide an excellent education for all children, and that acting now, in a way that is significant, will provide overall long-term stability for our schools and families.

### **Equalities (including socio-economic) impact statement**

26. Although we have completed an Equality Impact Needs Analysis (EINA) for the strategy, we are aware that in taking any action, we will need to further review impact. Each proposal for affected schools, once identified, will be impact assessed prior to any decision to proceed to consult on possible amalgamation or closure and will feed into the overall EINA, so impact can be tracked and mitigated at a macro and micro level.
27. We are proud of being a diverse borough that provides an excellent standard (97% Good or Outstanding- Ofsted) of education to all of our children. We believe that diversity in schools brings opportunity and we want to ensure that we consider and, wherever possible, maintain this in any changes we make to the school estate.

### **Health impact statement**

28. We do not anticipate any impact on physical health.
29. In our development of the strategy, we considered that there may be some adverse impact on the mental health of children and families, school and council staff created or exacerbated by the strategy itself and/ or of the approach to implementing it that we have proposed. We considered alternatives to both with this in mind, and have not found an approach that would avoid this completely.
30. We propose to mitigate the mental health impact in the following ways:
  - i. Involve schools and other key stakeholders as early as possible in the process, including at development stage where possible, to engage them in understanding the challenge and use their expertise and insight to design the solutions;
  - ii. Communicate effectively and with simple, clear messaging, to ensure those affected understand the plan, what will happen next and how it will affect them, and how to raise objections to or questions about it;
  - iii. Provide a transition team around each affected school that supports them and their children and families through the process, both from a practical and pastoral perspective.

## **Climate change implications**

31. A reduced number of schools and classes could have a positive effect on the climate, as fewer buildings will be heated/cooled. Even if children have to travel a little further to alternative schools, we still do not expect any Southwark child to have to travel more than two miles to attend their primary school. Wherever possible, we encourage children to travel to school on foot, by bicycle, or on public transport.
32. There should therefore be no additional adverse effects on climate change due to this strategy.

## **Resource implications**

33. There are resource implications attached to this strategy, whether it is implemented or not, and some of these can be seen in appendix 3 (finance). It is clear that the implications of doing nothing will be considerably higher than acting now.
34. If the strategy is approved, a more detailed implementation plan will be finalised and show financial resourcing requirements.

## **Consultation**

35. This strategy has been developed in consultation with Southwark's primary head teachers and key officers from the council as detailed above. Advice, feedback and comments on the strategy and the proposed approach for implementing it have been provided by additional stakeholders, including Chairs of Governors, School Business Managers and Trades Unions.
36. We have shared draft versions of the strategy and approach and have received feedback via email, questionnaire and verbally. The feedback has been incorporated to emphasise the London wide nature of the challenge, make more explicit the full range of reasons for decline in pupil numbers, to be clear about the range of schools in scope and how we communicate the issues to the parent and wider community.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS**

### **Director of Law and Governance**

37. The council has duties under the Education Act 1996 to secure that there are sufficient schools for providing primary and secondary education for their area. These schools need to be sufficient in number, character and equipment to provide for all pupils the opportunity of appropriate education. Appropriate education means education that offers such variety of instruction and training as may be desirable in view of the pupils' different ages abilities and aptitudes and the different periods for which they may be expected to remain at school including practical instruction and training appropriate to their different needs. In exercising these functions the Act requires councils

to have particular regard to the need for securing that primary and secondary education are provided in separate schools and the need for securing that special educational provision is made for pupils who have special educational needs. In practice, discharging these duties requires the council to actively monitor demand for school places, and plan to match supply to demand.

38. The report sets out a strategy to make changes to primary school provision in the light of the current over capacity. The production of this strategy is an executive decision of the Council that is undertaken by the Cabinet in accordance with its roles and functions set out in Part 3B of the Council's constitution.
39. Statutory processes apply to any proposal to alter a maintained school. Any such specific proposals will be subject to statutory consultation and publication under the Education and Inspections Act 2006, and in accordance with regulations and guidance issued under that Act.
40. The report refers to consultations that have already been undertaken in producing the strategy and confirms that comments have been taken on board in producing the proposed version of the strategy. Any statutory consultation on specific school alteration proposals will need to be taken account of prior to any decision to publish those proposals.
41. The report indicates that the Cabinet will make a further decision next year on any schools that will be the subject of statutory consultation with a view to alteration. Any decisions to close a school will ultimately need to be made by the Cabinet.
42. Cabinet is reminded that the public sector equality duty under section 149 Equality Act 2010, applies to the exercise of these functions. This requires that due regard be given to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between people with protected characteristics and those with none. Cabinet should take account of the Equality Impact Needs Analysis included as an Appendix to the strategy and give this due regard in considering this report. Any proposals to alter a maintained school will be subject to a full equality impact assessment which will be submitted for consideration by the Cabinet when taking any decision to carry out statutory consultation.

**Strategic Director of Finance and Governance REF: [CAS22/10]**

43. The Strategic Director of Finance and Governance notes the recommendations in this report to agree the strategy and approach for future-proofing the quality and supply of school places. Noting the rapidly declining financial situation across a range of schools it is important that the proposed approach is implemented robustly and that the schools estate is rightsized as swiftly as possible, both to ensure the sustainability of the schools and to protect the financial stability of the council. The Strategic Director of Finance and Governance also notes the financial implications of



the strategy as described in appendix 3a and 3b and the importance of ensuring that the supply of school places matches demand.

44. Schools governing bodies have a responsibility to manage their delegated budgets in accordance with the Southwark Scheme for Financing Schools, which in turn is based on national regulations. The scheme was last updated with effect from April 2021. Therefore, any revenue consequences flowing from the changes contained within the report to individual schools delegated budgets will need to be managed closely and carefully by schools having due regard to the provisions set out in that document and any existing financial arrangements agreed with the Local Authority set out in the scheme.

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
19 October, 2021, Cabinet: Pupil Place Planning Report for 2021. Item 15.	Children's and Adults' Services, 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Education Directorate, 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Ric Euteneuer 020 7525 5234
<a href="https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s102233/Report%20and%20appendices%20Pupil%20place%20planning%202021.pdf">https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s102233/Report and appendices Pupil place planning 2021.pdf</a>		
20 October, 2020, Cabinet: Pupil Place Planning Report for 2020. Item 19.	Children's and Adults' Services, 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Education Directorate, 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Ric Euteneuer 020 7525 5234
<a href="https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s91339/Report%20Pupil%20place%20planning%20report.pdf">https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s91339/Report Pupil place planning report.pdf</a>		
29 October, 2019, Cabinet: Pupil Place Planning. Item 15.	Children's and Adults' Services, 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Education Directorate, 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Ric Euteneuer 020 7525 5234
<a href="https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s85384/Report%20Pupil%20Planning%20Places.pdf">https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s85384/Report Pupil Planning Places.pdf</a>		
30 October, 2018, Cabinet: Pupil Place Planning Item 9.	Children's and Adults' Services, 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Education Directorate, 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Ric Euteneuer 020 7525 5234
<a href="https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s78194/Report%20Pupil%20Place%20Planning.pdf">https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s78194/Report Pupil Place Planning.pdf</a>		
31 October, 2017, Cabinet: 2017 Primary and Secondary School Place Planning Strategy Update	Children's and Adults' Services, 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Education Directorate, 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1	Ric Euteneuer 020 7525 5234

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Item 8.	2QH	
<a href="https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s78194/Report Pupil Place Planning.pdf">https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s78194/Report Pupil Place Planning.pdf</a>		
25 November, 2020, Council Assembly: Refresh of the Council Plan 2018-2022.  Item 6.1 And Appendix 1, Agenda Item 9.	Children's and Adults' Services, 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Education Directorate, 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Ric Euteneuer 020 7525 5234
<a href="https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s92005/Report Council Plan.pdf">https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s92005/Report Council Plan.pdf</a>		
<a href="https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/b50012014/Council Plan 2018-2022 Appendix updated Tuesday 08-Sep-2020 16.00 Cabinet.pdf?T=9">https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/b50012014/Council Plan 2018-2022 Appendix updated Tuesday 08-Sep-2020 16.00 Cabinet.pdf?T=9</a>		
The Borough Plan	Children's and Adults' Services, 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Education Directorate, 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Ric Euteneuer 020 7525 5234
<a href="https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s92006/Appendix A Southwarks Borough Plan 2020.pdf">https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s92006/Appendix A Southwarks Borough Plan 2020.pdf</a>		
London Councils "Do the Maths 2020"	Children's and Adults' Services, 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Education Directorate, 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Ric Euteneuer 020 7525 5234
<a href="https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/our-key-themes/children-and-young-people/education-and-school-places/do-maths-2020">https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/our-key-themes/children-and-young-people/education-and-school-places/do-maths-2020</a>		

## APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Place planning across Southwark's Primary Schools: A strategy for future- proofing quality and supply

## AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Councillor Jasmine Ali, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children, Young People, Education and Refugees	
<b>Lead Officer</b>	David Quirke-Thornton, Strategic Director of Children's and Adults' Services	
<b>Report Author</b>	Poppy Charlton, Service Development Manager	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	24 November 2022	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	Yes	
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments Included</b>
Director of Law and Governance	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	Yes	Yes
List other officers here	N/A	N/A
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Yes	No
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>		24 November 2022