



Education Select Committee  
28 January 2013

## SCHOOL PLACE PROVISION

**Purpose of the report:** Scrutiny of Services and Budgets

The purpose of this report is to enable the Select Committee to scrutinise School Place Planning and the Provision of School places through the Schools Basic Need Capital Programme.

### Introduction:

- 1 The School Commissioning Team within the Schools and Learning Directorate undertakes School Place Planning in Surrey County Council. The procurement and delivery of school building projects and responsibility for the Capital Programme is through the Property Services Team within the Change and Efficiency Directorate. There is a close working relationship between the two teams which operate as a 'virtual team' in the delivery of the Schools' Basic Need Programme.
- 2 The teams plan to provide the appropriate number and quality of school places across the County, to meet changes in pupil demand and to maintain sustainable patterns of provision for the future. In planning provision, the Schools and Learning service has to have regard to many factors including: the diversity of provision now and for the future, parental preference, the geography of demand and changes to this arising from new development; the sustainability of provision, particularly in terms of finance, school leadership and standards to support good educational outcomes and school performance.
- 3 Alongside these educational considerations many physical factors are assessed when determining the appropriate sites for school development. These include; the likelihood of planning approval being obtained; the size of school sites; the availability of other sites; access; the construction of existing schools and highways considerations.
- 4 Both teams, on behalf of the County Council, endeavour to undertake these tasks in cooperation and partnership with School Governing Bodies and Foundations, Church Dioceses, education professionals including Headteachers and school staff, parents and local communities

and other key stakeholders. This requires a high level of negotiation, especially with schools for which the County Council does not control admissions or where a school is outside of Local Authority Control such as an Academy or Free School.

- 5 The current context is one of a rising primary school population across Surrey that will feed into the secondary school sector in due course. The County Council has established a capital basic need programme to expand school places across the County. The current 5 year programme, 2012-17 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), will provide around 9000 primary places and 600 secondary places. Further school places are being planned to 2021.
- 6 The Council is required to plan to ensure that an appropriate number of school places are provided over the long term and the programme of basic need allows for this. Additionally every year the Council must ensure that all applicants are offered a place at the start of September. Fluctuations in demand patterns can challenge any established programme of school place delivery and as a result changes to the profiling of the long term programme or temporary solutions may be required on a yearly basis.

#### **Surrey Context**

- 7 Surrey County Council is the 7<sup>th</sup> largest education authority based on the number pupils educated within its schools. The number of new pupils entering Surrey schools as at October 2012 was 13,080 in primary and 10,212 in secondary. The total number of Surrey schools as at October 2012 was 351 (primary 298 and secondary 53) In addition the Council maintains 23 Special School, and 4 Nursery Schools. The County has in excess of 140,000 students educated in its maintained schools
- 8 The County has a diversity of school provision, including Foundation, Trust, Free and Academy Schools; Church Aided Schools, affiliated to 6 independent dioceses, as well as Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools.
- 9 In comparison to National Performance Standards Surrey is a high performing authority in terms of pupil outcomes. Attainment at all key stages is above the national average. In addition post 16 participation is high and the level of young people not in education, employment or training is amongst the lowest in the country.
- 10 The Council produces a School Organisation Plan. This comprehensive document, reviewed annually, sets out the forecasts and the forecast methodology of pupil demand over a ten-year period. In addition it details the existing provision and indicates where changes in future demand will cause the council to alter the number of school places offered, either by increasing or rationalising school provision.

## Development of the Basic Need Programme

### Demographics

- 11 The most significant variable affecting School Place Planning within Surrey has been a change in demography that has, in turn, impacted on the number of children requiring school places.
- 12 Between 2002 and 2010 birth rates within Surrey increased by 20%, with the Boroughs of Reigate and Banstead, Elmbridge, and Woking seeing increases of in excess of 28%. Although increases in birth rates have reduced there has not been a significant change in trend and we are therefore planning for a long-term increase in births up to 2016.
- 13 Births in 2008, 2009 and 2010 at 13,710, 13,626 and 14,018 respectively were higher than any of the preceding 15 years.
- 14 Allied to this, Surrey had been identified to accommodate 56,600 new dwellings up to 2026. Whilst changes to planning law may alter this, it is clear that significant pressure for school places will result from future new housing.
- 15 It is also acknowledged that the current economic downturn has led to increased demand reflective of a reduction in the proportion of Surrey resident pupils educated in the private sector.
- 16 These factors have led to an increased demand for pupil places that have been experienced initially in the Primary phase and will follow into the Secondary sector. Projections are produced annually using the latest school rolls and births data together with borough and district housing assumptions. This process identifies the likely need for additional places over the next ten years.
- 17 Surrey saw a significant drop in birth rate from 1998 – 2001, which created surplus provision in some Surrey Schools. Some of this surplus was removed in a government-led drive to reduce surplus places earlier this decade. As the number of children requiring school places has increased, much of the remaining surplus provision across the whole County has been utilised to meet the additional demand.
- 18 The level of demand has reached the total capacity of the existing schools and, as such, any decision to expand school provision relates directly to a capital requirement to provide new accommodation.
- 19 The demand for additional places is concentrated in urban areas; Elmbridge, Guildford Town, Woking Town, Reigate and Redhill, Horley, Farnham and latterly, Spelthorne have been under particular pressure.

## Demand for places reception school places

- 20 The total number of 'on time' Reception applications was 13,485. This figure includes out of county applicants and Surrey applicants applying for non-Surrey Schools and was approximately 5% greater than those received in 2011, which was 4% up on 2010 figures. (1470 more applicants in 2012 than 2010)
- 21 Trend analysis, whilst masking much variation between Districts and Boroughs had indicated an increase of 1% on 2011 figures. This would have equated to 19 classes above schools existing capacity. The School Commissioning Team had anticipated that growth would be above the indicated trend and had been planning for additional spaces above forecast especially in the urban areas where demand increase has been most acute. Discussions were ongoing with schools concerning additional classes throughout the autumn and spring terms and 34 classes or part classes were confirmed.
- 22 Following the first iteration of parental preferences in mid March 2012 an additional 8 classes and part classes were agreed with schools by the end of the spring term.
- 23 In total 42 additional classes and part classes were provided throughout the county to meet this demand. This compares with 22 classes and part classes provided in 2011.
- 24 The distribution of additional classes by District/Borough is indicated below.

District/Borough	Forecast Demand	Shortfall of Classes against Projection	Actual Applications	Actual Additional spaces (Classes) provided
Elmbridge	1431	3	1619	240 (8)
Epsom and Ewell	925	2	922	60 (2)
Guildford	1458	3	1437	150 (5)
Mole Valley	827	0	902	60 (2)
Reigate and Banstead	1484	2	1654	195 (6 + 0.5)
Runnymede	833	1	825	30 (1)
Spelthorne	1102	1	1099	60 (2)
Surrey Heath	1012	0	989	0 (0)
Tandridge	872	0	927	57 (1 + 2, 0.5)
Waverley	1279	0	1435	105 (3 + 0.5)
Woking	1101	3	1236	240 (8)
<b>Surrey</b>	<b>12,324</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>13,045</b>	<b>1197 (38 + 4, 0.5)</b>

- 25 One of the additional forms provided in Tandridge was used to meet demand in the Redhill/Merstham area of Reigate and Banstead. This resulted in some challenging allocations of school places in this area. Throughout the County, whilst there were some individual cases in rural areas, of placements made in excess of 5 miles there were no significant groups of children without offers of local schools.
- 26 Despite all of the stresses implicit in the system requiring significant adjustment, schools worked extremely well in cooperation with the Authority to ensure it met its statutory duty, to offer all applicants a school place. The additional demands placed on schools when taking 'bulge' classes are recognised and we will continue to work with schools to manage these as they progress through the schools.

**Demand for permanent school places**

- 27 The need for additional permanent places will not be felt uniformly across all areas or via a gradual year on year increase. We are anticipating particular pressures in Reigate Town, Redhill and Merstham, Elmbridge Borough, Woking and Guildford Town.
- 28 The current five year plan outlines a programme to deliver the following number of permanent primary school places by borough as follows;

<b>Borough</b>	<b>Number of Places</b>
Elmbridge	1980 (9+ forms of entry)
Epsom and Ewell	840 (4 forms of entry)
Guildford	1500 (7+ forms of entry)
Mole Valley	240 (1+ forms of entry)
Reigate and Banstead	1680 (8 forms of entry)
Runnymede	1050 (5 forms of entry)
Spelthorne	600 (2+ forms of entry)
Surrey Heath	420 (2 forms of entry)
Tandridge	210 (1 form of entry)
Waverley	630 (3 forms of entry)
Woking	750 (3+ forms of entry)

- 29 Mostly we have identified expansions to existing schools however in some instances new sites are being sought specifically in Reigate and Banstead Borough.
- 30 Officers will also need to monitor the level of school applications for entry in 2013 that are received to ascertain whether these are in line with forecast trends. Should applications for school places be well above trend, the Council will engage with the planning process at an early stage so that any accommodation can be provided in a timely manner.

## **Capital Programme**

- 31 The County Council has recognised the ongoing capital demands needed to provide these additional school places. The Council has agreed a capital programme to account for school increases (Basic Need) over a five-year period.
- 32 The initial programme, based on cost estimates for traditional build of all new school places in line with Department for Education school building recommendations, was significantly above affordability levels.
- 33 Following the establishment of the programme there have been changes to school building recommendations, both in terms of site sizes and built areas, both of which have been significantly reduced. Similarly a centrally funded Priority School Building Programme has been established that put forward models of new school buildings with reduced floor area and greater potential for different forms of construction aimed at significantly reducing costs. As a result of these factors 40% saving targets were applied to the Basic Need Programme.
- 34 This has challenged the teams to review the provision of school buildings and consider alternative approaches to their delivery. The property teams have been reviewing the market and piloting new proven modular system builds, these offer costs savings and also reduce the time required on site therefore reducing disruption to schools. Additionally we will be required to challenge schools to make better use of existing space through design planning and adaptation. We will also consider alternative building use, such as the use of offices that could be returned to original use when demand patterns change.
- 35 We are restricting the use of temporary/demountable classrooms whilst developing a modular light system to replace demountables. These have full planning permission and offer permanent solutions in modular construction at reduced costs.
- 36 Further planning work is also being undertaken to map out the long-term school planning requirements. Forecasts of future pupil demand are being tested for the period 2016 – 2020. Increases in demand experienced in 2012 have led to a revision of existing school demand forecasts. A further 20 forms of reception entry have been identified as required in between 2014 – 2016. As with the 2012-17 programme these additional forms are being developed with a 40% budget reduction built in and are being included as part of the 2013 – 2018 MTFP.

## **Delivery of the Programme**

- 37 A cluster programme office has been developed to enact the capital programme. The programme office includes professionals from Hampshire County Council, Surrey County Council, Reading and West Sussex County Council. By combining the projects of these authorities the Council is able to attract efficiencies and significant cost savings by

grouping relevant projects and going to market with larger programmes of work.

- 38 The programme office is already delivering against the capital programme. The budget position at the end of November 2012 was within £0.513m (Budget £31.993m, actual £31.480m). The position for the entire MTFP is broadly in line with the programme costs with additional costs relating to further land purchases.

### **Conclusions:**

- 39 The Council is experiencing a significant and long-term increase in the demand on school places and the existing provision is running close to its physical capacity. The council has made a substantial commitment to address this through a capital programme to provide permanent school buildings over a 5-year period. Many capital projects have already been developed and the council has been providing additional permanent provision from 2011 through a cluster programme office.
- 40 Increased demand will continue beyond this period specifically in the Secondary sector. There will be further capital requirements to account for this growth and these have been identified in the medium term financial plan 2013-18 that will be considered for member approval.
- 41 Officers will need to continue to monitor and revise pupil level forecasting to ensure that both statutory duties are met and that any changes in demand patterns are responded to appropriately.

### **Financial and value for money implications**

- 42 The financial commitment in relation to future capital expansion of schools is significant. All capital projects will have to go through the relevant procurement procedure to ensure best value.
- 43 The source and proportions of future long-term capital funding, whether it be through local borrowing or grant funding from the DfE is unknown at this stage. However, the implications of the funding source are crucial for local authorities in their corporate and financial planning.
- 44 The Council is working with its Districts and Boroughs in the development of the Community Infrastructure Levy. This process will ensure that developers provide appropriate capital funding to meet the additional demand that results from new housing

### **Equalities Implications**

- 45 The provision of sufficient school places, accessible to all, is a statutory duty for all authorities. Providing appropriate education for all is of specific importance for those most vulnerable within our communities.

## **Risk Management Implications**

- 46 The service will need to moderate its approach to stakeholders with regard to the changing status of schools as they respond to national policy development. This relates specifically to School Organisation proposals in the context of greater freedoms for individual schools through Academy Status, and the links to central government in providing future capital and local services. In addition the Council will need to work with Free School proposers to ensure that this additional provision is recognised within the strategic plan for school place provision within Surrey.

## **Implications for the Council's Priorities or Community Strategy/Local Area Agreement Targets**

- 47 The provision of sufficient school places contributes to the children and young people strand of the Community Strategy.

### **Recommendations:**

- That the Select Committee continues to have an overview of the performance of the School Planning and Property Services Team in the delivery of school places

### **Next steps:**

- The Select Committee will receive updates of performance against the Capital Programme.

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### **Sources/background papers:**

School Organisation Plan 2012 - 2022