

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL****CABINET****DATE:** 23 FEBRUARY 2021**REPORT OF:** MRS JULIE ILES, CABINET MEMBER FOR ALL-AGE LEARNING**LEAD OFFICER:** RACHAEL WARDELL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND LIFELONG LEARNING**SUBJECT:** SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN**ORGANISATION STRATEGY**

Growing a Sustainable Economy So Everyone Can Benefit, Tackling

**PRIORITY AREA:**

Health Inequalities and Enabling a Greener Future

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**SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

The Cabinet is asked to consider the Surrey School Organisation Plan covering the academic years from September 2020-2030 for publication.

The School Organisation Plan sets out the policies and principles underpinning both mainstream and specialist school organisation in Surrey. It highlights the likely demand for school places projected over a 10-year period and sets out any potential changes in school organisation that may be required in order to meet the council's statutory duty to provide sufficient places. The council has created over 10,000 additional places over the last five years in mainstream schools and specialist provision, and still needs to provide more while current levels of government funding continues to fall short of the amount needed to create those places.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

It is recommended that:

1. The School Organisation Plan 2020-2030 is approved for recommendation to Council to determine its publication.

**REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The School Organisation Plan is a key document used by schools and education stakeholders in considering medium and long term plans. It is necessary to review the plan to ensure that the best and most up to date information is published for use in this process to encourage collaborative and collegiate planning.

**DETAILS:****The current position in Surrey**

1. The county council has a statutory responsibility to ensure that there is a sufficient number of school places for all pupils who require one. The council must monitor future projected demand and decide and discuss the appropriate changes to school organisation, where necessary, in order to meet this statutory responsibility.
2. The current context across Surrey is that the school age population has now started to stabilise after a period of significant increase over the last decade. The decrease

in the birth rate from 2013 is now causing a surplus of places in the primary sector in some areas of Surrey, and any pockets of exceptional demand are generated largely by additional housing. The council recognises that vacant places can destabilise schools and have a significant budgetary impact. Council officers are engaged in facilitating conversations with primary school leaders, academy trusts and other stakeholders about school organisational changes that could help to support those primary phase schools when they have vacancies to secure sustainability for schools moving forward, whilst preserving any latent capacity to future-proof for potential demographic changes. .

3. Meanwhile, the sharp increase previously experienced in primary cohorts is now also impacting on the secondary sector, as these larger cohorts are now transitioning into secondary schools. The secondary school population is expected to continue to increase up to 2025 in some areas, and so the county council's capital programme to expand mainstream school places is now focussing on managing the demand pressures in secondary schools.
4. Additionally, in September 2019, the county council launched its capital programme for providing additional specialist school places for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Since 2017, the council have provided over an additional 600 specialist places.
5. In the phase of further education, larger cohorts from secondary schools are now moving into further education settings such as sixth forms and colleges. With the requirement for young people to continue in education or training until the age of 18, challenge to capacity is already being experienced within some institution types. Where specialist facilities are required, such as for the delivery of vocational and technical qualifications, this is directly restricting delivery of provision within priority skills areas. Recognising that the local authority plays no direct role in the provision of capital funding to address demands exceeding or projected to exceed capacity, we continue to support applications to the Education and Skills Funding Agency for capital funding as individual institutions submit them. One of the aims is to develop a more robust evidence base to support applications going forward and improve the success rates of applications made. Further education providers within both Woking and Reigate & Banstead have been directly impacted by restrictions relating to the availability of capital funding to support increased pupil populations and demand within skills priority areas.
6. It must also be recognised that the period which this plan covers is one with unique uncertainty and probably volatility. The Covid-19 pandemic will inevitably put further strain on local authorities seeking to meet their statutory duty to provide a school place for every child. Currently, it is uncertain what the effect will be on the school age population both in terms of the birth rate and migration into and out of Surrey, but there is a strong likelihood that the current demographic trends will change and that school organisational decisions will need to be made to react to the changes in those demand patterns.
7. Furthermore, the pandemic will have also impacted on Surrey schools and colleges and their pupils, and the council needs to be sure that it is making school organisational decisions that best support its schools in continuing to provide the best education for all pupils so that they can achieve their potential. It is anticipated that those aged 16-18 who may have previously planned to progress to work-based

training or employment destination may now be seeking a full-time education placement because of a shifting economic landscape. Those progressing to further education over the coming years are likely to require increased levels of pastoral support and delivery models that reintroduce the concept of a structured learning environment.

### **School Organisation Plan in summary**

8. The first section of the plan describes the regulations and principles which underpin the planning of future provision in Surrey. This includes setting out the government regulations, policies and guidance, describing the legislative framework through which changes in school organisation are achieved, detailing the process of school commissioning in Surrey and setting out the methodology by which school age population forecasts are produced. An overview of the current situation in Surrey in terms of demographics and school population is also provided, including details on the county's state funded schools and identifying county-wide trends in births and housing.
9. The plan goes on to provide individual chapters discussing educational provision in each of Surrey's boroughs and districts, with quadrant chapters on SEND provision. Recent birth data and trends are set out, with primary, secondary and SEND provision then being separately discussed. Projections for places are shown in graphs and the implications of these are detailed.

#### **CONSULTATION:**

10. The School Organisation Plan is not subject to statutory consultation. However, the phase leads for Surrey's school councils have been consulted, alongside internal colleagues. Once authorised for publication, the plan will be widely distributed to education stakeholder groups and organisations, including schools, Local Planning Authorities and Dioceses. It is considered to be a helpful tool to aid future planning at a school level. The plan will also be published on the Surrey County Council website for public viewing.

#### **RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:**

11. The statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places for all applicants within Surrey is held by the county council. An understanding of the school estate and how school organisation changes relate to demographic changes is vital to performing this duty.

#### **FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS**

12. The School Organisation Plan underpins the school basic need planned capital programme and determines the level of additional school places required across the county. The plan is the business driver for the required capital investment which forms part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
13. This latest iteration of the School Organisation plan is aligned to the current budgets within the Council's MTFS. There is therefore no additional request for Capital funding at this time.

#### **SECTION 151 OFFICER COMMENTARY**

14. Although significant progress has been made over the last twelve months to improve the Council's financial position, the medium-term financial outlook beyond 2021/22

remains uncertain. The public health crisis has resulted in increased costs which may not be fully funded. With uncertainty about the ongoing impact of this and no clarity on the extent to which both central and local funding sources might be affected in the medium term, our working assumption is that financial resources will continue to be constrained, as they have been for the majority of the past decade. This places an onus on the Council to continue to consider issues of financial sustainability as a priority in order to ensure stable provision of services in the medium-term. As such, the Section 151 Officer supports the review of the School Organisation plan. The outcome will be factored into the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

**LEGAL IMPLICATIONS – MONITORING OFFICER**

15. This is a key document in ensuring that Surrey County Council is able to comply with its duty to ensure that sufficient school places are available in the area. Section 13 of the Education Act 1996 places a general duty on the Council to secure that efficient primary and secondary education is available to meet the needs of the population in its area. In doing so, the Council is required to contribute to the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community. Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on the Council to secure that sufficient schools for providing primary and secondary education are available in its area. There is a legal duty on the Council therefore to secure the availability of efficient education in its area and sufficient schools to enable this.

**EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY**

16. There are no direct equalities implications arising from the School Organisation Plan. However, the provision of a sufficient number of school places which are open to all applicants will support the council's commitment to equality and diversity.

**OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

17. The potential implications for the following council priorities and policy areas have been considered. Where the impact is potentially significant a summary of the issues is set out in detail below.

<b>Area assessed:</b>	<b>Direct Implications:</b>
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	Set out below
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	Set out below
Environmental sustainability	No significant implications arising from this report.
Public Health	No significant implications arising from this report.
Climate change	No significant implications arising from this report
Carbon emissions	No significant implications arising from this report.

## **CORPORATE PARENTING/LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN IMPLICATIONS**

18. This is a key document to ensuring that the appropriate numbers of school places are provided to meet the demand of our residents. All places provided have the highest priority given to children in the care of the local authority.

## **SAFEGUARDING RESPONSIBILITIES FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND ADULTS IMPLICATIONS**

19. The council has a duty to promote and improve educational outcomes for all children, particularly those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged. The School Organisation Plan is an important piece of evidence used to plan the appropriate number of school places, thereby aiding the council in fulfilling this duty.

## **WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:**

20. If approved by Cabinet, the School Organisation Plan will be published on the Surrey County Council website and distributed widely to all stakeholders including Surrey schools, district and borough councils and local Diocesan boards.
21. The School Organisation Plan is reviewed periodically to allow for the incorporation of new and updated information, usually following an annual timescale.

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### **Contact Officer:**

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### **Annexes:**

Annex 1 - School Organisation Plan 2020-2030

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