

33/21 Strategic School Place Planning and School Admissions

The Board considered a report and presentation from the Director of Children's Integrated Commissioning on Strategic School Place Planning and School Admissions.

It was reported that local authorities had a legal duty to ensure that sufficient school places existed for all children and young people residing within their boundary. The Board noted that the Council very carefully monitored pupil numbers and trends and developed school place planning proposals in response to population changes and housing growth, linked to Core Housing Strategies.

It was reported that city-wide primary pupil numbers had increased significantly over previous years but that pupil numbers moving into reception were now beginning to gradually decline and that higher pupil numbers were now moving from primary education to secondary education. It was noted that as a result of increasing secondary pupil numbers, secondary school expansions were implemented in September 2018 and September 2019, to meet the increasing demand for places.

The Board noted that based on projections, City-wide Year 7 pupil numbers would peak in 2023-24 and that a school expansion project was proposed at Landau Forte College, as part of the Council's forward planning to ensure sufficient school places over future years. It was reported that the total estimated cost of the project was £11.936m and that capital funding had been approved by Council Cabinet on 10 November 2021. It was noted that this would create an additional 520 school places across years 7-11 and that pupil numbers would continue to be closely monitored and reviewed.

It was reported that Derby City Council had been working closely with partners in Amber Valley Borough and South Derbyshire District Councils to prepare separate but aligned Housing Local Plans. It was noted that there were proposals for around 18,000 properties within Derby or on the edge of the City, known as the Derby Urban Area (DUA). It was reported that sites of over 750 new homes usually required a new primary school on site.

The Board noted that in Derby City, due to their scale, four of the largest local plan housing allocations required a new primary school to be provided and that two of these had already been delivered.

It was reported that for school admissions, the number of applications for the main rounds, reception intake and secondary transfer, reflected the current trend in both pupil numbers and projections across Derby City. It was noted that Derby had positively continued to sustain a high percentage of first preference and top 3 preference offers.

The Board noted that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, school admission appeals had been adapted in accordance with DfE temporary guidance and had been heard virtually since April 2020, returning to face-to-face hearings October 2021 after the decision not to extend the temporary guidance passed 30th September 2021. It was reported that the Council had successfully adapted to this new way of working and was continuing to provide fairness and transparency to families and schools.

The Chair asked whether Derby was mirroring the national trend in terms of pupil numbers. The Board noted that Derby was mirroring the national trend. A councillor commented that expanding Landau Forte College did not tackle issues within Derby around children being unable to travel to school by foot. The Board noted that the Council were working with parents and schools to encourage good travel plans for schools in Derby.

A councillor questioned whether there were any plans to increase the number of primary school places within Oakwood. The Board noted that there were no major housing developments in Oakwood and that developers were only required to provide additional capital funding if, as a result of their development there were insufficient school places. It was reported that developments within Oakwood were small scale and therefore didn't meet this criteria.

A councillor asked whether there were areas within Derby where there was significant pressure on school place numbers. It was reported that the Council used the same methodology as the DfE which broke pupil numbers down to clusters/wards. It was noted that this methodology identified any pressure points within the city. It was noted that a tolerance surplus of 5-10% was accounted for.

A councillor questioned when 'normal areas' had last been reviewed in the city. The Board noted that each time a new school was created a new normal area was also established. It was reported that normal areas were therefore looked at each time a school was built and that a wholesale review was not necessary at this time. A councillor commented that they believed that work should be done to assess whether a review was necessary at secondary school level. A councillor commented that any review should focus on accessibility and how pupils can be encouraged to walk or cycle to a local school.

The Board resolved:

- 1. to note the strategic school place planning update relating to:
a. population changes and;
b. the proposed long-term housing growth arising from the Core Strategies.**
- 2. to note Derby City Council's achievements, against national results for primary and secondary school admissions offers and appeals.**
- 3. to recommend to Cabinet that that work should be done to assess whether a review on 'normal areas' was necessary at secondary school level. Any review should focus on accessibility and how pupils can be encouraged to walk or cycle to a local school.**

MINUTES END