

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Executive
Date: 28th July 2014
Report for: Information
Report of: Executive Member for Children's Services

Report Title

Secondary School Sufficiency Review – Consultation Outcome

Summary

This report outlines the findings and recommendations of the public consultation phase of the Secondary School Sufficiency Review.

The Council has a statutory duty to ensure the sufficiency of school places for Trafford children and young people. The review has been undertaken to help us identify how we can meet that duty in the light of projected demographic pressures and a range of other challenges in the secondary sector.

Trafford Secondary Schools have embraced the freedoms offered by national policy to adopt a variety of governance arrangements. Therefore the Council is the admissions authority for only 1 of the 18 mainstream secondary schools in Trafford (Lostock College). This means that any recommendations of the review can only be implemented in partnership with the schools.

The consultation ran from 18th November 2013 to 24th February 2014 and included the opportunity for feedback from key stakeholders including parents, Headteachers, governors and a range of professionals. A total of 26 written feedback forms were received as well as direct submissions from schools and feedback received during briefing sessions and individual meetings.

The recommendations of the review have been shared with Secondary Heads and they are supportive of the proposals included. We will continue to work with schools to progress recommendations as we move into the next stage of the review.

Place planning is complex as school admissions are based on parental preference. Projections show there will be areas of the borough with a substantial shortage of places and other areas where schools are undersubscribed leading to sustainability issues.

Recommendation(s)

Executive notes the outcome of the Review and supports implementation of the proposals described in Section 4 of the report in conjunction with Schools.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

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Background Papers: None

Relationship to Policy Framework/Corporate Priorities	Preserving and improving education excellence
Financial	No financial implications for the LA at this stage. More specific financial implications will be the subject to a future report once proposals are developed further.
Legal Implications:	Council has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places to meet the need of Trafford Children and Young People. Trafford is the admissions authority for only 1 of the 18 Secondary Schools so has limited role in terms of admissions.
Equality/Diversity Implications	Schools are subject to current legislation about equality and diversity. There are no particular implications identified arising from this report.
Sustainability Implications	Ensuring sufficiency and quality of school places in all communities within Trafford will reduce travel to learn patterns and support sustainable school travel plans
Staffing/E-Government/Asset Management Implications	N/A
Risk Management Implications	N/A
Health & Wellbeing Implications	N/A
Health and Safety Implications	N/A

1.0 Background

1.1 National Context

National policy direction has fundamentally changed the relationship between Local Authorities and Schools over the last 4 years with increasing numbers of secondary schools choosing alternative governance arrangements. The expansion of the Academies programme also means that those schools converting to Academy status have become their own Admissions Authority.

It is likely this trend will continue and the Council's role has evolved into that of an enabler supporting the system. Schools have been given far greater flexibilities to change both their Published Admissions Number (PAN) at an individual level and their actual admissions. The key driver in national policy is to enhance the opportunity for parental preference in relation to places and expand the diversity of provision.

1.2 Local Context

Trafford schools are amongst the best in the country and are consistently ranked in the top 5 nationally across a wide range of achievement measures. Trafford operates a selective system with seven grammar schools and has a diverse range of Secondary Schools. There are a number of factors locally that underpin this review;

- a) There is only one maintained secondary school in Trafford so there is very limited direct control for the Council on admissions policies.
- b) Trafford Council retains the statutory duty to ensure sufficiency of places for Trafford residents and needs to find a way to achieve this in a system with a wide range of individual admissions authorities.
- c) Due to the success of Trafford Schools we are a net importer with a large demand from outside of Trafford. Grammar Schools each operate their own individual entrance tests providing a further layer of complexity to the admissions arrangements.
- d) There are a small group of Trafford secondary schools with falling or low pupil numbers impacting on potential future viability.
- e) Projections suggest that the demographic increases in primary pupils will have an impact on the secondary sector by 2017.
- f) As there are very few Trafford Secondary Schools with vacant places we have a challenge around the disproportionate impact of in year admissions on those schools.
- g) There is a significant variation in the numbers of pupils with statements of SEN in our mainstream secondary schools. A key theme of the SEN review has been to expand inclusive opportunities in the mainstream sector.

2.0 Objectives of Review

2.1 This is a wide ranging review that is looking at potential issues over the short, medium and long term. The stated objectives of the review are to;

- Develop a shared vision for future secondary provision in Trafford that can be jointly owned by the Trafford Family of Schools
- Ensure sufficiency of places for Trafford resident secondary school pupils
- Establish a forum to support a consistent approach to admissions across the sector

- Enhance opportunities for Trafford resident pupils to access high quality local provision
- Identify and mitigate the impact of School Funding reform on the future viability of Trafford schools
- Review Fair Access Protocol and agree standards for managing in year admissions
- Extend the opportunities for inclusion within the mainstream Secondary Sector

3.0 Consultation

3.1 A consultation has been undertaken on a wide range of options identified through the first phase of the review process. The consultation ran from 18th November 2013 to 24th February 2014 and included the opportunity for feedback from key stakeholders including parents, Headteachers, governors and a range of professionals through the following methods;

- Submission of written and online feedback forms
- Briefings to relevant groups including secondary heads, governors, diocesan representatives, and elected members
- Individual meetings with schools to discuss specific issues
- Publication of consultation document on Council website, circulation of documents in schools e-bulletin and to chairs of governors, and media briefings.

A total of 26 feedback forms were received as well as direct submissions from schools and feedback received during briefing sessions and individual meetings.

All consultation documentation is available at the following link;

<http://www.trafford.gov.uk/residents/community/stronger-communities/consultations/review-of-secondary-school-sufficiency/trafford-council-review-of-secondary-school-sufficiency.aspx>

4.0 Recommendations for Next Phase

4.1 Place Planning by Area

Trafford manages all its projections and returns to the Department for Education through five strategic planning areas. Due to the diversity of provision in the Secondary Sector in Trafford a number of issues cut across planning areas but for clarity a section on each school has been included in the report organised by planning area. All options outlined are based on the current position and we know that this will require regular review.

4.1.1 Altrincham Planning Area: Projections estimate that there will be a shortfall of 253 Year 7 places in the Altrincham area by 2016-7 and 328 places by 2019. It is likely that a number of factors will reduce this projection such as out of borough movement, take up of places in the independent sector, and displacement of pupils migrating into the Altrincham schools from other parts of the borough. There is a potential knock on effect on capacity in Sale schools with the contraction of places in Altrincham. Taking into account these factors we expect there to remain a substantial gap in places to be covered. The maximum number of additional Year 7 places possible over the schools in this area is 160 if all proposals are taken forward and all places are taken by Trafford residents. This will still leave a gap of 168 based on the 2019 projection.

- **Wellington School** - The school is oversubscribed and the circle around the school from which admission applications are successful is reducing each year. This position will be exacerbated by the growing demographic challenges over the next 5 years. Expansion has been explored but following consideration by the governing body it is not considered viable due to the size of the site particularly taking into account the school infrastructure.
- **Altrincham College of Arts** – The school has increased numbers to the point at which it is currently oversubscribed and is at capacity. The catchment area incorporates WA14, WA15 and M33 and it is expected that as the growth in numbers in the Altrincham area take effect this will impact on availability of places for pupils in the more distant parts of the catchment area. Projections suggest that this is likely to significantly reduce the travel to learn pattern that has been established from the Sale area. Even accounting for displacement of pupils back into schools in other parts of the Borough projections suggests a need for additional places at the school by 2017. The current site is at capacity so any additional growth would need to include expansion of the site itself as well as additional build.
- **Altrincham Boys Grammar School** - Currently all pupils resident within the catchment area who are successful in the entrance test are offered a place at the school. This is reflected in 77% of the current Year 7 intake being Trafford residents. On the assumption that the demographic growth will reflect current ability ranges it is recommended to work with the school on potential to expand by 30 places in Year 7 by 2017.
- **Altrincham Girls Grammar School** - Currently all pupils resident within the catchment area who are successful in the entrance test are offered a place at the school. This is reflected in 86% of the current Year 7 intake being Trafford residents. On the assumption that demographic growth will reflect current ability ranges it is recommended to work with the school on potential to expand by 2017. The school currently operates on the basis of varied numbers across its year groups due to significant restrictions on site capacity. Options to move to 7 Form Entry across all year groups will be explored.
- **Loreto Grammar School** - There are no proposals from the review in relation to the school. The school is oversubscribed and there is no scope within the existing school to expand but this option could be explored in the future if funding was available. Further discussions will be undertaken with the school to try and maximise the proportion of Trafford residents gaining a place.
- **St Ambrose College** - There are no proposals from the review in relation to the school although further discussions will be undertaken with the school to try and maximise the proportion of Trafford residents gaining a place.
- **Blessed Thomas Holford** – There are no proposals from the review in relation to the school.
- **Free School proposal** - During the consultation period notification was received of plans for North Cestrian Grammar School to make a free school application to become part of the state funded sector. The proposal is for this to happen from September 2015 and would provide up to an additional 65 Year 7 places. The

proposal is subject to a successful bid to the Department for Education and it is not clear at this stage the overall impact it will have on admissions in the area.

These options all relate to academies or free schools and will be subject to external capital bids or in the case of North Cestrian the application process for free school status. Achieving all the additional places available from these options will be very challenging and still leaves a significant shortfall, although that could be mitigated elsewhere in the system.

4.1.2 Partington Planning Area: There is one secondary school in the area;

- **Broad oak School:** The school currently has a substantial number of surplus places. A range of options to manage this and ensure the sustainability of the school have been discussed through the consultation process. It is an outstanding school and there is potential growth of the cohort within its natural catchment area through planned housing developments. This is likely to increase demand for places in the medium to long term and the focus of actions should be on maximising numbers in the short term. There is a strong commitment from both the Dean Trust and the Council to ensuring the sustainability of the school and we will work together to draw up plan to achieve that objective.

4.1.3 Sale Planning Area: There are 3 schools within this area with significantly different issues. Travel to learn patterns currently show a drift south from Sale to Altrincham. Overall in Sale there are nominally 60 available Year 7 places, however projections suggest these will be removed by 2016-17.

- **Sale High School** - Whilst there is currently capacity available at the school the finding of the Review is that this will be absorbed by the increasing numbers coming through the system from the primary sector and displacement from Altrincham schools. The school is in a strong position to benefit from the demographic changes and the projected growth in number of Year 7 pupils in Sale by 2016-17 will be addressed through capacity at the school. The Council has a strong commitment to ensuring the school is in a position to take advantage of these demographic changes to reach full capacity and will work jointly with the school on a development plan.
- **Sale Grammar School** – There are no proposals for this school arising from the review.
- **Ashton on Mersey School** - the school is heavily oversubscribed and is unable to meet demand from its natural catchment area. It is a large school with limited if any scope for further expansion. The school already has close links with Broad oak School as part of the Dean Trust and there may be scope to expand this further to support increased numbers at that school. AoM also has a large and increasing number of pupils with statements of special educational needs and workstreams within the SEN review may impact on that pressure.

4.1.4 Stretford Planning Area: There is a divergence in the issues for the schools serving the Old Trafford/Stretford areas and Lostock. Overall there are surplus places in the area even taking into account projected demographic increases however they are not spread evenly.

- **Stretford High School** - The school has received increasing applications for admission over a number of years and is oversubscribed for Year 7 places. There have been substantial increases and expansions in the primary schools in the catchment area and this is likely put a major pressure on places over the next

couple of years. There are some challenges with expansion on the site however this should be explored further as part of the planning for 2016-17.

- **Stretford Grammar School** - The school has a low proportion of its intake that are Trafford residents (55%). This is partly due to its geographic location on the border with Manchester but also the migration of Trafford resident pupils to other Trafford Grammar Schools, enabled by access through the tram network. A significant factor is believed to be the physical infrastructure of the school so capital investment could support increased access by Trafford pupils. To support an increase in the proportion of Trafford resident pupils stronger links with primary schools in the Stretford and Old Trafford areas would be beneficial. It is proposed that further discussions are held with the governing body to explore opportunities to attract and prioritise Trafford residents through the admissions arrangements.
- **Lostock College** - Current pupils numbers are below the level at which a school is financial viable and have been for a number of years following previous plans to reorganise secondary provision. The review has reinforced the value of the school both as part of the Trafford education offer and as a local community resource. In the medium to long term the increasing numbers of children coming through the primary sector and planned housing developments in the locality should increase demand for places. Therefore the recommendation of the review is that a commitment is made to the school and a joint development plan established by key stakeholders to ensure its future sustainability.

4.1.5 Urmston Planning Area: There is an issue in this area with lack of options as there are two single sex schools, Flixton Girls High School and Wellacre Academy. This has been raised through the consultation but we are not in a position to make any recommendations on this issue.

- **St Antony's Catholic College** - The school has had significant challenges over the last two years with reducing admissions and a poor inspection outcome together with declining performance. An improvement plan in conjunction with Loreto Grammar is in place and working well to turnaround this position with very positive evaluations of progress. There has been a positive impact on admissions for the 2014-15 academic year reversing the previous trend. The upward trajectory needs to continue prior to a review of the position following the admissions round for September 2015.
- **Wellacre Academy** – There are no proposals arising from the consultation for this school. There is sufficient capacity within the planning area to meet projected demographic growth and no sustainability concerns in relation to the school.
- **Flixton Girls High School** – There are no proposals arising from the consultation for this school. There is sufficient capacity within the planning area to meet projected demographic growth and no sustainability concerns in relation to the school.
- **Urmston Grammar** – There are no proposals arising from the consultation for the school.

4.2 Admissions Arrangements - As described in the scoping document 17 of the 18 secondary schools in Trafford are their own admissions arrangements. Therefore

any options in relation to admissions arrangements would need to be endorsed by the governing body or trust board. The proportion of Trafford resident pupils in schools varies significantly but the baseline analysis did not find evidence to support the anecdotal view that numbers of out of borough pupils in our schools is rising. We will continue to liaise with those schools with a lower proportion of their intake from Trafford residents to explore ways to prioritise.

For those schools with potential sustainability issues we will ensure that a review of catchment areas to maximise potential admissions is included in development plans to be jointly established by the LA and the school. However it must be recognised that any changes in admissions arrangements will only be effective if we are also able to impact parental preference which is the key driver in the admissions process.

Whilst there has been a positive response in the written responses to increased consistency of Grammar School tests this is a very challenging subject that is within the remit of the individual governing bodies. There are examples nationally that could be used as a basis for discussion and we would like to work with the Grammar Schools to facilitate an appraisal of the options.

4.3 6th Form Provision – There was a strong response to the consultation supporting the view that there needed to be a rebalancing of provision between academic and vocational routes. There was also agreement that the current surplus of places was a significant issue, however no solutions have been forthcoming about how that is addressed. There was strong agreement that the mix between academic and vocational routes needs to be reviewed and it is recommended this is now taking forward as a separate workstream. We will also continue to monitor surplus capacity in conjunction with school.

4.4 Fair Access Protocol – As identified the current Fair Access Protocol needs revising and a draft will be shared with schools after Easter with a view to implementing a new FAP from September 2014. The revised protocol needs to address challenges highlighted in the consultation and set clear criteria for a panel to operate to.

4.5 Inclusive Mainstream Opportunities – This objective will be progressed through the SEN Review action plan. In particular the workstreams relating to Secondary ASD provision and the Virtual School model should bring capacity to mainstream schools in the Secondary Sector.

5. Other Options

5.1 A range of options were considered during the consultation phase and these are set out in the consultation documentation available at the link included in Section 3 of this report

6. Reasons for Recommendation

6.1 The LA has a general duty under section 14 of the Education Act 1996 to secure in its area sufficient schools in number, character and equipment to provide all pupils the opportunity of appropriate education (s. 14 (2)). Projections show that numbers in some areas of the borough will exceed the capacity in the system by 2017 with further growth in demand beyond that point. Conversely we are aware that a small number of schools face sustainability challenges due to low or falling numbers.

There are no straightforward solutions to the challenges set out in the scope of the review but the consultation has identified opportunities and areas for further investigation as set out in Section 4 of the report.

- 6.2 National policy has fundamentally changed the relationship between schools and the Local Authority. Our role is now to facilitate as system leaders and ensure that the system has the quality and sufficiency of provision required to maintain Educational Excellence in Trafford.

Key Decision No

If Key Decision, has 28-day notice been given? N/A

Finance Officer Clearance*(type in initials)...*GB.....

Legal Officer Clearance *(type in initials)...*MJ.....

[CORPORATE] DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE *(electronic).....*DB

To confirm that the Financial and Legal Implications have been considered and the Executive Member has cleared the report.