

Cabinet

7 December 2021

Annual Education Sufficiency Update 2021

Recommendation

1. That Cabinet endorses the Annual Education Sufficiency Update 2021 and notes the proposed schemes to ensure sufficiency of school places in Warwickshire.

1.0 Key Issues

- 1.1 Section 3 in the Annual Update 2021 outlines the key sufficiency challenges which provide the context to the practical implementation of sufficiency proposals.
- 1.2 A series of workshops have been undertaken with Elected Members to review pupil forecast information, current sufficiency proposals and discuss local key issues in each District and Borough area.
- 1.3 Housing growth in line with current housing trajectories across the county is expected to increase the long-term demand for school places as new families move into the county. This is by far the biggest challenge in ensuring sufficiency of school places and the expected impact of this housing growth is included in the pupil forecast data presented. However as new families move into Warwickshire over the next academic year the level of short-term demand for places will vary depending on the age of the children and availability of places in the relevant year groups at local schools. Where possible the available capacity in areas with housing growth should exceed the 4% target to account for these variances.
- 1.4 There can often be pressure for school places when families apply late or part way through the academic year and schools are already at capacity. The allocation of school places is administered in line with the School Admission Code published by the Department for Education (DfE) and all processes must be undertaken in line with this legislation. To overcome this issue, the target is to maintain 4% capacity in any given year group across each planning area, however there is no provision within the code that would allow schools or Local Authorities to hold places at any school to accommodate those late or in year applicants.

- 1.5 All school places offered are done so in line with the relevant admission arrangements for that school. Education sufficiency planning operates in a mixed economy of Local Authority influence and Academies having the autonomy to make decisions relating to increasing or decreasing intake number, class organisation and admission arrangements independent of the Council's strategic approach.
- 1.6 The County Council works in partnership with all the Warwickshire family of schools; however, it is not always the case that the admission arrangements set by an academy trust will give full consideration to the Local Authority's strategic approach to ensuring sufficiency of school places.
- 1.7 The Warwickshire School Admissions Team processes approximately 23,000 school applications every year. Over the last 4 years an average of 93% of all Warwickshire children have been offered one of their first three choices of secondary school and 98% of Reception children have been offered one of their first three choices of primary school.
- 1.8 To support the sufficiency planning it is important the Admission Service operates as effectively as possible, ensuring places are offered in line with the relevant policies and legislation. For children starting school in reception or transferring to junior or secondary school Central Government have set out a national timeline for processing applications but for in year applications minimising the time taken for a child to be offered and start at a new school is a key priority for Education Services. A full detailed review of all aspects of the Admission Service is currently being undertaken.

2.0 Options and Proposal

- 2.1 The update attached as Appendix A outlines pupil number forecasts from September 2021 covering a 5-year period for primary phase and a 7-year period for secondary phase and provides details of any pressures expected during that period.
- 2.2 The below projects have been approved or confirmed, where a scheme is being delivered by partners, and the additional capacity they will provide is expected to be delivered by the dates shown. All future demand for school places shown in the pupil forecasts in Appendix 1 is in addition to these existing projects.

Approved schemes contributing additional capacity in forecasts starting from 2021				
Planning Area	Phase	School	Scheme	Date of delivery
South Leamington	Primary	Oakley Grove School (Primary)	New School - additional 60 Reception places	2023

Warwick and Leamington	Secondary	Oakley Grove School (Secondary)	New School - additional 180 Year 7 places	2023
Kenilworth	Secondary	Kenilworth School	Expansion by school - additional 60 Year 7 places	2023
Rugby South	Secondary	Houlton School	New School – additional 180 Year 7 places	2021
Atherstone	Secondary	The Queen Elizabeth Academy	Expansion - additional 30 Year 7 places	2021
Nuneaton North & East	Primary	Lower Farm Academy	Expansion by DfE - additional 30 Reception places	2023
Stratford upon Avon	Secondary	Stratford School	Expansion - additional 60 Year 7 places	2024

2.3 Details of approved capital schemes, as well as proposed projects to meet expected pressures, are outlined in each section. All projects are subject to change in response to relevant changes in housing developments in the area and the impact on expected need for places.

2.4 Demand for school places is expected to continue to increase across many parts of the county, predominantly in line with housing growth. It is expected the significant pressures will be at secondary age level as larger primary cohorts move through to secondary school. Increased demand at primary level could continue where there is expected housing growth in line with current housing trajectories. However, the economic effect of COVID-19 could result in a reduction in housing growth impacting on the level and timing of any potential new provision or expansion of existing provision.

2.5 Specific planning areas across Warwickshire that are forecast to experience pressure on school places are identified and an explanation of any proposed action to remedy this is given.

2.6 Where an increase in pupil numbers is expected parental preference dictates not all schools will see a uniform increase in demand. The strategy aims to retain a minimum of 4% capacity in each year group across any given planning area to ensure places remain available to accommodate additional pupils as new families that move into an area. Work will continue to assist and encourage all schools to be proactive in their approach to attracting pupils to prevent large disparities between schools that are at capacity and those that are significantly under capacity. This is undertaken as a proactive approach alongside the ongoing work to assist schools with longer term sustainability.

2.7 Pressure on SEND places will initially be addressed by supporting and equipping mainstream schools to ensure a greater proportion of learners with EHC plans at school age are supported in their local mainstream setting, developing the second phase of 'resourced provision', the opening of The Warwickshire Academy and completing

existing expansion projects. Improving the commissioning of high needs places, to ensure sufficiency of local specialist provision, sits within the SEND & Inclusion Change Programme.

- 2.8 Pupil forecast data factors in the expected impact of housing developments across the county, the timescales for delivery of which are reliant on the data produced by the local planning authorities. The expected demand for in year places particularly may not be fully realised where this data deviates from the reality of the delivery of new housing.

3.0 Financial Implications

- 3.1 The full extent of the future financial implications are yet to be quantified and detailed costing will be provided once design and feasibility work has been undertaken for each individual project outlined in this update.
- 3.2 Initial cost estimates relating to additional provision, particularly new schools, have been produced utilising national benchmarking data. Work is ongoing to identify the expected capital requirements and funding profile for all future Education Capital projects over the short to medium term.
- 3.3 All proposed education capital projects are considered against independently published third-party data to benchmark the cost to the County Council of providing school places and ensuring effective allocation of resources.
- 3.4 There is the likelihood that the consideration of any Carbon Neutral build methods will increase overall costs beyond the existing benchmarks.
- 3.5 Basic Need grant funding is provided by the DfE to deliver the expected requirement for mainstream places across the 4-16 age range. This grant is calculated on a per pupil basis for mainstream places and excludes those places as a result of housing growth which are expected to be funded via developer contributions.
- 3.6 Available Education capital resources currently total £4,245,000. However, as outlined there are multiple demands expected on this funding to deliver Education Capital projects across the county to ensure sufficient school places are available.
- 3.7 Warwickshire's Basic Need grant funding allocation to be received in 2022 has been confirmed at £2,330,000
- 3.8 Limited future Basic Need Grant funding is expected in the

2021-26 MTFS period, currently forecast at £4,000,000 per annum.

- 3.9 The need to forward fund education infrastructure before receipt of developer contributions together with competing demands to utilise Basic Need capital resources for education provision such as Early Years sufficiency, SEND provision and condition of the school estate will put significant pressure on the funding available to provide sufficient school places.
- 3.10 Due to the significantly reduced Basic Need Grant expected in future years and forecast infrastructure requirements exceeding the amount of developer contributions secured through existing agreements, any funding gap which cannot be met by future developer contributions will require additional borrowing via the Capital Investment Fund (CIF). The fund currently has £90.9 million available over the 2021-26 MTFS period.
- 3.11 Developer contributions will continue to be sought to provide the new provision needed as a result of housing growth and funds secured relevant to each individual scheme will be utilised where appropriate to deliver the schemes proposed.
- 3.12 The initial revenue costs for the new schools and additional classes at existing schools will need to be met utilising Dedicated Schools Grant, Pupil Growth Funding.

4.0 Environmental Implications

- 4.1 Following the County Council's declaration of a Climate Change Emergency the design brief for all Education Capital projects will require the consideration of Carbon Neutral build methods to ensure the environmental impacts of delivering and operating the new provision are reduced where possible.
- 4.2 Environmental risk assessments together with mitigation statements to reduce any potential environmental impacts are required for each capital project. Where a risk of environmental damage is identified measures will be required to ensure these risks remain at a minimum throughout the construction process.
- 4.3 The Education Sufficiency Strategy 2018/2023 outlines Local Schools for Local Children as a key strategic priority. Where possible this approach will design in sustainable transport opportunities and reductions in home to school transport requirements for all new schools and expansions, while remaining conscious of the carbon requirements associated with the construction process and the opportunities for future reductions in emissions associated with home to school transport.

5.0 Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

- 5.1 Proposed schemes outlined in the sufficiency update will be worked up through the initial feasibility stages via the Education Capital Access and Organisation Working Group.
- 5.2 Following confirmation of the availability of funding, the appropriate consultations, and feasibility studies all projects require agreement by the Education Capital Access and Organisation Board.
- 5.3 Once agreed by the Board all individual capital projects outlined will be subject to future reports to Cabinet, and Council as necessary, for funding approval.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Annual Education Sufficiency Update 2021

Background papers

1. Education Sufficiency Strategy 2018-2023 [Link](#)
2. Formulation of the Education Sufficiency Strategy (Children & Young People O&S Committee report approved 23/02/2021) [Link](#)

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

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Other members:

