

Cabinet

28 January 2025

Annual Education Sufficiency Update (0-25) 2024

Recommendation

That Cabinet reviews and endorses the Annual Education Sufficiency Update (Ages 0-25) 2024 and confirms its support for the development of design, feasibility and detailed costings for the proposed projects identified in the report.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Annual Education Sufficiency Update (“the Update”) provides information about the early years, childcare and education provided to Warwickshire children and young people aged 0-25. It provides the current context for the delivery of the WCC Education Sufficiency Strategy and the Warwickshire SEND and Inclusion Strategy.
- 1.2 The Update is an important published document that is used as a foundation for setting s.106 requirements (funding required from development to contribute towards delivery of Council services such as education, highways and other infrastructure). It is provided as Appendices 1 and 2 for endorsement.
- 1.3 Local Authorities are required by legislation (in particular the Childcare Act 2006) to assess the sufficiency of the childcare in their area and report annually to members. The Update fulfils this function. Early Years education is also assessed.
- 1.4 The Update outlines the current sufficiency situation in Warwickshire schools, including pressures on school places in some areas and the impact of new housing across the County. Forecasts of future pupil numbers and details of capital projects for new schools and expansions of schools are provided. The Council’s forecasting methodology that is used in producing the Update was assessed independently in 2023 and found to be sound and accurate.
- 1.5 The margins in place planning are narrow, with the role of the Local Authority to ensure there are sufficient places available and, when creating new places, to consider the impact on existing provision in a location.
- 1.6 Warwickshire experiences a significant number of 'in year' school admissions (where pupils join after September or into a non-intake year i.e. not Reception

or Year 7). This is mainly due to families moving into the area either to new housing or as a result of relocation. It also includes pupils moving between Warwickshire schools.

- 1.7 The Update refers to the requirement for some Secondary schools to admit pupils in year and above the usual number of available places, to meet this demand.
- 1.8 In the past, schools have generally been receptive to admitting small numbers of additional pupils in year as well as to opening new temporary 'bulge' classes (of 30 pupils) when requested. More recently, we have experienced increased reluctance from schools to admit pupils in year and/or over their number of available places.
- 1.9 In some cases, schools have reduced their number of places available with the effect that they do not have to admit additional pupils. As academies, all but one of our secondary schools are able to set the number of available places in each year group, even where this is below their established Published Admission Number (PAN) for that intake year. Schools/Trusts will often make these decisions to support with staffing arrangements and timetabling as a result of stable pupil numbers.
- 1.10 In total 76 year groups across 29 schools currently have no available places such that any new applications for the rest of the 2024/25 academic year would not be placed automatically.
- 1.11 Four out of the five Secondary schools in Nuneaton are reporting that they are operating at or above their number of available places in every year group. All Rugby schools are reporting that they are operating at or above their number of available places in at least one year group. These are both areas with high levels of new housing that are likely to have significant in year applications during the 2024/25 academic year (approx. 10-15 per year group). This is largely due to schools reducing their number of available places.
- 1.12 When schools decline an application, the student will be placed at the closest school that has a place available – this may result in Home to School transport costs being incurred. Education Services uses the Fair Access Protocol to compel schools to admit students that are deemed to be vulnerable, wherever possible at their closest school.
- 1.13 13 new schools have opened in Warwickshire since 2010, comprising six Primary, two Secondary, one all-through and four special schools. There have also been several permanent school expansions contributing to an overall increase of over 11,000 new permanent school places in the last 10 years.
- 1.14 During the next five-year period we currently expect to deliver another five new schools, as well as several expansion projects for both mainstream and specialist settings. Longer term if all proposed housing development across the county builds out as suggested up to a further additional 18 new schools

may be delivered to meet the need for school places that the new housing will bring.

- 1.15 10 Primary planning areas are operating with significant (>15%) surplus places and are forecast for this to continue. As Government funding for schools is based on the number of pupils on roll this typically causes financial strain for schools in those areas. The majority of these are government designated rural schools and/or are in receipt of sparsity funding and we are limited in the organisational options to respond to the reduction in local populations.
- 1.16 In recent years Warwickshire has welcomed children and young people as part of Government initiatives to support asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants from countries including Afghanistan, Ukraine, Hong Kong and Syria. All school-age children are offered school places under the same process as existing Warwickshire residents. These additional pupils were not specifically planned for and have increased pupil numbers during the school year in certain areas of the County.
- 1.17 Post-16 education in Warwickshire is also covered in the Update, with an assessment of its sufficiency to meet the needs of the County.
- 1.18 Provision of specialist education for Warwickshire's children and young people with Special Educational Needs/Disabilities (SEND) is covered in the Update, along with an assessment of sufficiency and details of projects intended to increase provision. Information regarding Alternative Provision is also included in this Update.
- 1.19 Warwickshire schools attract pupils who live in other local authority areas. At the October 2023 school census, 12% of secondary and 4% of primary pupils live in other local authority areas. Some Warwickshire residents attend schools in other local authorities but on a smaller scale than those attending Warwickshire schools from other local authority areas.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 The lack of available Secondary school places in at least some year groups in the majority of schools is likely to result in some pupils being placed at schools that require provision of Home to School transport. This has financial implications for this and future years. At Q2 of 2024/25, Home to School Transport was forecasting to overspend by £3.3m on mainstream school transport.
- 2.2 Detailed costing for capital projects to provide more school places will be provided once design and feasibility work has been undertaken for each individual project outlined in the Update.
- 2.3 All of the Basic Need capital grant for 2024/25 was allocated to schemes as part of the report presented to County Council on 14 May 2024. The

Department for Education has confirmed the Council will receive zero in 2025/26 and has not confirmed an allocation for 2026/27 onwards.

- 2.4 The Department for Education (DfE) has announced that the Council has been allocated High Needs Capital Funding of £7.015 million in total for 2023/24 (additional £4.987 million) and 2024/25 (£2.028 million).
- 2.5 In November 2023 the government announced the Childcare Expansion Capital Grant to support local authorities in delivering the expansion of the 30 hours early years entitlement for working families for children over the age of 9 months. Warwickshire County Council received a total of £0.999 million.
- 2.6 In July 2024, a report was presented to Cabinet and Council highlighting the shortfall in funding to deliver school places over the medium term and to seek £20.155 million from the Capital Investment Fund to meet the estimated shortfall in funding.
- 2.7 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 used where appropriate to deliver the projects proposed.
- 2.8 The initial revenue costs for the new schools and additional classes at existing schools will need to be met utilising Pupil Growth Funding, which is allocated from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and ongoing costs will be covered by DSG grant allocations and its allocation by the National Funding Formula.

3. Environmental Implications

- 3.1 All future school capital projects will be developed in accordance with statutory regulations which include Building Regulations 2021. These regulations made changes to the requirements around ventilation, energy efficiency and overheating, and electric vehicle charging with the intention of improving sustainability. Schools will as a result be built to standards that are expected to produce lower carbon dioxide omissions compared to previous standards.
- 3.2 As part of the feasibility work on new build capital projects, where feasible Net Carbon Zero and associated costs has been explored and considered. However, due to the approximate 20% uplift in cost on new build projects and current funding constraints, Net Carbon Zero is not currently being taken forward.
- 3.3 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.

- 3.4 The Warwickshire Education Sufficiency Strategy 2024 – 2029 outlines ‘Right places at right time’ 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.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 The Update is provided as Appendices 1 and 2.

5. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

- 5.1 Following endorsement by Cabinet, the Update will be shared with local elected members to update them regarding sufficiency issues and proposed projects in their areas. The Update will also be published on the WCC website.
- 5.2 Engagement with schools and early years settings regarding sufficiency and place pressures will continue through one-to-one discussions and consortia/area network meetings.
- 5.3 Proposed projects outlined in the Update will be worked through the initial feasibility stages including due diligence from colleagues in Finance, Infrastructure Delivery, Strategic Asset Management, Design & Major Projects and other stakeholders as required.
- 5.4 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.
- 5.5 Once agreed by the Board all capital projects outlined will be subject to future reports to Cabinet, and Council as necessary, usually as part of a programme of works for funding approval.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Annual Sufficiency Update 2024

Appendix 2 - Annual Sufficiency Update 2024, Appendices

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

Local Member(s): None – this is a County wide report

Other members: Councillors Marian Humphreys, Jerry Roodhouse, and Barbara Brown