

Meeting: Schools Forum
Date: 13 March 2012
Subject: Primary School Expansion Programme
Responsible Officer: Adrian Parker, Head of Education Strategy and School Organisation
Enclosures: None

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report provides information on the Council's primary school expansion programme and related school organisation issues including proposals for secondary and special school strategies, up-dates on free schools and academies, and school admissions.

Recommendations: FOR INFORMATION

Section 2 – Report

Introduction

1. Harrow Council is working closely with schools in Harrow to ensure a sufficient supply of school places to meet the increasing demand. Work is progressing to implement the agreed strategy to permanently increase the size of a sustainable number of schools and to meet peaks and variations in demand through opening temporary additional classes across all schools in Harrow.
2. This report updates the Forum on the range of work that is being progressed.

Primary School Expansion Programme

3. At its meeting on 15 December 2012, Harrow Cabinet considered the outcomes of the borough-wide consultation held during the Autumn Term and agreed that statutory consultations would be undertaken about proposals to expand 9 schools on 7 sites.
4. A review is being conducted of how to meet the remaining need for additional places in the South West Primary Planning Area. In view of the considerably low capital allocation from the government and the resulting unaffordability of the proposed school expansion programme, it was decided to defer with the statutory consultation on proposals to permanently expand the Welldon Park schools and to consider the possibility of a different solution to meet the remaining need for additional places in the South West Primary Planning Area. The schools in the South West Primary Planning area have been invited to

submit their thoughts about potential solutions to meeting the increased demand for school places in the planning area. A verbal update will be provided to the meeting.

Statutory consultations about proposals to expand schools

5. Statutory consultations were held between 16 January 2012 and 27 February 2012 about proposals to expand the following schools:

Camrose Primary School with Nursery
Cedars Manor School
Glebe Primary School
Marlborough Primary School
Pinner Park Infant and Nursery School
Pinner Park Junior School
Stanburn First School
Stanburn Junior School
Vaughan Primary School

6. Harrow Council distributed consultation information to a wide range of stakeholders including neighbouring local authorities, local MPs, Councillors, unions, diocesan bodies, voluntary organisations, and Harrow Youth Parliament. The schools distributed information and response forms to their school communities, including parents and local residents, and arranged meetings and displays to enable discussion about the proposals. Officers attended consultation meetings at 8 of the schools.
7. At the time of writing this report the statutory consultations had not closed, and information and a verbal update will be provided to the Forum at the meeting.
8. The outcomes of the statutory consultations will be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 4 April 2012 and Cabinet will decide whether to publish statutory proposals in relation to each of the schools.

Reception places in September 2012

9. Applications for Reception places in September 2012 are being received in line with projections, and plans are being finalised to open sufficient Reception classes to meet the demand. The 7 schools proposed for permanent expansion that have Reception classes, and Welldon Park Infant and Nursery School, have each agreed to open an additional Reception classes in September 2012.
10. Officers are reviewing the applications against the number of places and at this stage in the process, it is expected that at least a further two classes will be required. Late applications for reception classes continue to be received.

Year 7 Places

11. On the National Offer Day 1 March, 1969 places were offered in Harrow Schools against 2220 Year 7 places. 69% of 1st preferences were met and 88% were offered one of their top three preferences in comparison to 66% and 87% respectively in September 2011.

Approximately 600 Harrow residents were offered places at out-borough schools. There were approximately 250 vacancies across 4 schools. This compares with approximately 100 vacancies in September 2011. There will continue to be late applications but it is expected that a higher level of vacancies will remain this September.

12. When the increased number of reception pupils enter the secondary schools the challenge will be for all high schools, free school proposers and Harrow Council to work together to manage the supply of places to ensure all Harrow residents have a Year 7 place as required when the pupil numbers increase.

Free schools

13. In October 2011, the Government announced that a free school would open in Harrow in September 2012. The proposers are the I-Foundation and the proposed free school, Avanti House, will be an all through school with two forms of entry in the primary phase and six forms of entry in the secondary phase. To date no site has been identified for the school by the proposers and government officials. The Council has a relationship with the I-Foundation established during the process to open Krishna-Avanti Primary School.
14. The proposers are inviting applications to the new school for Reception and Year 7 places. These applications are being made outside the Local Authority's timescale for admission to reception and Year 7 in September 2012. Those parents that apply to Avanti House may be offered a school place received through applications to local authorities as well as Avanti House.
15. Any free school places would contribute to meeting the increased demand. In particular, the proposed secondary school places would make a significant contribution to the predicted shortfall of secondary places when the increased numbers of pupils in the primary sector transfer to secondary schools from around 2016.
16. The Government has invited applications from proposers wishing to open mainstream, special and alternative provision free schools in September 2013. The deadline for applications is 24 February 2012. Any successful applications for free school provision in Harrow will need to be factored in to school place planning.

Special School/SEN Placements Strategy

17. The Local Authority, working in partnership with schools, is developing a Special School/SEN Placements Strategy. The overarching vision for the Strategy is to ensure that there is provision for pupils, young people, and their families, with special education needs or Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (LLDD) that is continuous from 0 to 25 years, is supported by coherent services, and has a vision shared by all partners which is communicated consistently.
18. The strategy is intended to address a number of issues that the Local Authority, in partnership with schools and providers, needs to address currently, including:

- the impact of an increasing pupil population with the associated rise in the proportion of pupils with SEN;
 - greater financial pressure arising from Special Educational Needs (SEN) statements;
 - changing SEN demand/profile with more complex needs, and;
 - pressure on places in special schools.
19. In Spring 2011, the Department for Education (DfE) published the Special Educational Needs and Disability Green Paper. A consultation period followed until the end of June 2011. The Green Paper proposed fundamental reform to the SEN system to address a range of problems. The Government's response is awaited and the impact of these Government policy changes will inform the local context.
20. It is proposed that a report is presented to Cabinet in July with a series of options for consultation. Consultation would take place during the Autumn Term with a report to Cabinet in December. If there are any proposals requiring statutory processes these would be undertaken accordingly. It is expected that there would be a phased implementation of any changes and these would be planned to coincide with the beginning of new academic years.

Financial Implications

21. The schools capital grant allocated to Harrow in 2012/13 for basic need and maintenance is £5.1m, which is less than last year's allocation (£6.744m was allocated in 2011/12). This allocation is disappointing and if this trend continues for subsequent years there remains a real risk that there will not be adequate external funding for the expansion programme. This risk is being considered as part of setting the Council's 2012/13 to 2016/17 Capital Programme.
22. Government announcements are awaited on the Primary School Building Programme (for which Harrow submitted 11 applications) and on the additional £600m for pupil places nationally included in the Autumn Statement. The outcome of the national review of schools' capital is also awaited.
23. Harrow believes it has fared badly from the current Department for Education allocation method for basic need, and that in the latest announcements it has received less capital grant than any other outer London borough. Strong representations about this have been made to officials at DfE and to Harrow's MPs. In order to further represent its position, Harrow is participating in a pilot capacity data collection exercise being conducted by Partnership for Schools (PfS). The intention of the exercise is to help the Department for Education to better capture basic need pressures. PfS plan to report on their findings to the Department for Education by the end of February 2012.

Section 3 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact:

Johanna Morgan, Education Professional Lead, Education Strategy and School Organisation, 020 8736 6841.