

BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

This matter is a Key Decision within the Council's definition and has been included in the relevant Forward Plan

Joint Report of the Executive Director People and Executive Director Place to Cabinet

Secondary School Pupil Place Planning

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To update the current position with regards to meeting the demand for secondary school mainstream places within the central planning area.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 That the Council continues to engage with, and support, Multi Academy Trusts that express an interest in opening a Free School within Barnsley.

2.2 That the Council as a nominated eligible local authority applies to receive the new Presumption Free School Grant.

2.3 That the Council supports the provision of temporary accommodation for the academic year commencing September 2020, which may be run by a Free School in the event of a Multi Academy Trust application being successful as a new Free School would not be built by this date.

2.4 That in the event of a Free School application being unsuccessful, that the Council accommodate the demand for pupils in 2020 within its existing estate.

3.0 Introduction

3.1 There are three schools that serve the central planning area, providing 4,100 secondary school places; Horizon Community College (2,000 pupils), Barnsley Academy (900 pupils) and Darton College (1,200 pupils)

3.2 Current projections indicate a rising demand for school places in the central planning area. From September 2020 to September 2027 the cumulative peak demand indicates a requirement for an additional 657 places. There is a demand for an additional 87 places in September 2020.

3.3 Within the central planning area 103 potential housing sites have been identified for development as part of the local plan. These range from just 1 dwelling to over 1,200 dwellings on the largest site and will provide an additional 9070 houses, resulting in a potential 1,360 new secondary students.

3.4 Obviously these developments are over a number of years and students are only in secondary school for a five year period, but to support the population growth resulting from additional housing via the local plan it would be prudent to include additional capacity into the central planning area.

- 3.5 The secondary school place planning team, consisting of representatives from School Organisation, School Admissions and Assets have determined that there is a need for an additional 900 mainstream school places.

There are a number of options to meet this demand:

3.6 **New Free School built and run by Multi- Academy Trust (MAT)**

- 3.7 The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) have recently opened applications for the next wave of Free Schools, with a final submission date of 5th November 2018. Local Authorities are unable to apply to open a Free School, but officers have met with two Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) both of whom have already registered an initial interest in providing a free school within Barnsley. Under this option capital build costs would be met by the ESFA, however the ESFA would not fund any external infrastructure or highways costs, such costs would fall to the Council to fund.

3.8 **New presumption school built by Authority and run by Multi-Academy Trust**

- 3.9 The department for Education Central Capital Unit have identified Barnsley amongst a total of 20 authorities that are eligible to apply for a new one off Free School Presumption Grant which can be used alongside the Basic Need Grant Allocation to support the capital costs of a new secondary school. The grant for Barnsley would be £3,185 per place created with the total final amount therefore being dependent on the total capacity of the new school. The Council would have to run a competition to identify a suitable MAT to run the new school. It is worth noting that the Council would be responsible for any additional capital costs that exceed the value of the Free School Presumption Grant and the Basic Need Allocation.

3.10 **Create spaces within its existing estate**

- 3.11 That in the event of the failure to progress the building of a new Free School by either of the routes described in 3.7 and 3.9 the Council would look to accommodate the demand for pupils in 2020 within its existing estate. A feasibility study has been commissioned by the school place planning team, carried out by Gleeds, a property and construction consultancy, to explore options to accommodate pupils within the existing estate. Under this option the Council could utilise the Basic Need Grant Allocation to contribute towards meeting the capital costs, however it is likely this route would require significant investment from the Council in order to meet the required capital costs.

4.0 Proposal and Justification

- 4.1 It is proposed that the authority continues to engage with, and support, Multi Academy Trusts that express an interest in opening a Free School within Barnsley.

- 4.2 The justification for this proposal is

The Council have received formal notice from the Department for Education (DFE) that currently two MATs have registered a formal interest in opening a Free School in the central planning area of Barnsley. Additional information is being sought from the Council to inform the application being developed by the MATs.

- 4.3 This latest wave of Free School applications is specifically targeting areas where:
- there is demonstrable basic need for a high proportion of the additional school places that the free school will provide, and;
 - located in one of the governments targeted districts as having the lowest standards and capacity to improve.
- 4.4 In addition to this, the DFE are also keen to extend the Free Schools programme to areas that have not previously benefitted.
- 4.5 Any Free School application from Barnsley would meet the above criteria and as a result, if successful the majority of costs for providing the Free School would be met by the DFE. There could be additional costs for external infrastructure works that may have to be met from by the Council; however these cannot be quantified at this stage.
- 4.6 The difficulty with creating a new Free School within the central planning area is finding a suitable site. At present no site location has been proposed however the successful MAT will enter negotiations with land/building owners to acquire a suitable site. Once negotiations have been concluded a site will be confirmed.
- 4.7 The DFE are expected to announce successful applicants in Spring 2019, with a final decision been made approximately 9 months after that. Assuming the initial approval is around April 2019 and with an estimated 18 month construction period, the earliest a Free School is likely to be delivered would be September 2021. If a site has to be purchased a more realistic opening date would be September 2022.
- 4.8 As the school would not be ready for a September 2020 opening to meet the demand for place, there may be an option to open the Free School in temporary accommodation funded by the Authority, but run by the Free School provider. This would be necessary to avoid adversely affecting the viability of the Free School as it is recognised that a secondary with fewer than 600 places would not be financially viable, and would be dependent on site constraints and approval of the MAT, Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) and the DFE.
- 4.9 It is also proposed that the Council applies for the new Free School Presumption Grant as it is possible to do this whilst still pursuing the Free School application as outlined at 3.7. In the event of a Free School application through the MAT route being successful the opportunity to apply for this grant would be withdrawn by the Education Central Capital Unit.

5.0 Consideration of Alternative Approaches

- 5.1 In the event of an unsuccessful Free School application the Council would consider the options outlined at paragraphs 3.8 to 3.11 of this report. A further report will be presented to Cabinet upon the outcome of the Free School application.

6.0 Implications for Local People and Service Users

- 6.1 Local Authority officers and members and the local public will be consulted with as part of the ESFA consultation process on the establishment of a new Free School.

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1 Consultations have taken place with representatives of the Service Director – Finance (S151 Officer).
- 7.2 The Council has a statutory duty to provide pupil places across the borough. As noted in Section 3 of this report, there is a significant predicted shortfall of places in the central planning area from September 2020 through to 2027. Irrespective of the outcome of the Free School application, there is likely to be a significant call on Council resources to ensure its statutory responsibilities are met as detailed below.
- 7.3 The preferred approach to address the forecast demand in pupil places would be to secure
a Free School which would be run by a MAT. At this stage likely costs are unknown, however, based on the ESFA's formula funding rate of £0.016M per secondary school pupil the estimated cost of building a 900 place secondary school is in the region of £14.5M; however this would not include any highways or external infrastructure work, which would be in addition to this. Under this option most of the capital costs associated with the construction of a new Free School would be met by the ESFA. However, there will likely be a call on Council resources to fund any external infrastructure and highways works, none of which can be quantified at this stage, as no site or potential design of the school are known.
- 7.4 If the Free School application is successful it is unlikely that the school will be ready in time to meet demand for places in September 2020, currently estimated to be 87 pupils. The Council may need to work with the MAT to meet the demand using temporary accommodation whilst the new Free School is being built; again this is likely to be a call on the Council's resources.
- 7.5 Should the Free School application be unsuccessful the Council will be required to explore other options as outlined within paragraphs 3.8 to 3.11, requiring a significant call on the Council funding.
- 7.6 The ESFA have recently awarded the Council £6.4M Basic Need Grant Allocation to address the projected shortfall in school places for 2020/21 in the central planning area. The Basic Need funding has been calculated based on the yearly School Capacity survey (SCAP) submitted by the Council, however it does not take account of additional forecast demand as a result of future housing developments, which the Council will still have a statutory duty to provide for. The housing development will naturally increase pupil demand and would attract additional basic need grant. This funding would be used to contribute towards alternative options should the Free School application be unsuccessful. It should be noted that in the event of the Free School application being successful it is highly likely that the ESFA will look to recoup the £6.4M of funding allocated to the Authority to meet the demand for places in the central area, to avoid duplication of funding via the Free School route.
- 7.7 As outlined in paragraph 3.8 – 3.9 the Government have recently announced a new Free School Presumption Grant which is designed to contribute towards meeting the capital costs of building a new mainstream secondary school should a Free School application via a MAT be unsuccessful. As referred to above, Barnsley has been identified as 1 of the 20

Local Authorities eligible to apply for this funding. For Barnsley there is potential to attract funding in the region of £2.866M based on a 900 place secondary school, this may be able to contribute towards reducing the call on Council resources in addition to the Basic Need Grant if that is the approach. This could potentially bring a total resource contribution towards providing school places in the central planning area of approximately £9.3M, however as noted in paragraph 7.6 this would not be sufficient to fund the total capital costs of providing the required number of school places in the central area, and will result in a significant call on Council resources to bridge the funding gap.

7.8 Although the likely cost to the Council cannot be quantified at this stage, irrespective of which proposal is taken forward a decision will be needed in terms of deprioritising or deferring funding allocated to other schemes in order to fund the works required in order to meet our statutory obligations to provide pupil places, placing other schemes at risk of non-delivery.

7.9 A further report will be presented to Cabinet upon the outcome of the Free School Application to outline the alternative preferred option to address the demand for secondary school places post 2020.

8.0 Employee Implications

8.1 There are no direct employee implications.

9.0 Communications Implications

9.1 There are no direct Communication implications at this stage in the process.

10.0 Consultations

10.1 The Local Authority are being consulted by the ESFA on applications to establish free schools within the authority,

One of the proposers of a potential free school is currently consulting with the public.

11.0 The Corporate Plan and the Council's Performance Management Framework

11.1 The Councils priority as set out in the Corporate Plan for 2017 – 2020 People Achieving Their Potential is as follows;

Every child attends a good school and is successful in learning and work.

The potential establishment of a new free school should help contribute towards this priority.

12.0 Promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

12.1 A new free school would have to meet ESFA requirements in this area.

13.0 Tackling the Impact of Poverty

13.1 There are no direct implications.

14.0 Tackling Health Inequalities

14.1 There are no direct implications.

15.0 Reduction of Crime and Disorder

15.1 There are no implications

16.0 Risk Management Issues

Risk Detail	Probability Impact	and	Score	Mitigation
Failure to have a new free school approved by the ESFA	Probability low Impact high		4	Accommodate immediate demand within existing estate and develop long term plan
No agreement reached with Free School Provider to accommodate pupils in September 2020	Probability low Impact high		4	Accommodate within existing estate

17.0 Health, Safety and Emergency Resilience Issues

17.1 There are no health, safety and emergency resilience issues at this stage of the process.

18.0 Compatibility with the European Convention on Human Rights

18.1 There are no implications.

19.0 Conservation of Biodiversity

19.1 There are no implications.

20.0 Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

21.0 List of Appendices

21.1 None.

22.0 Details of Background Papers

If you would like to inspect background papers for this report, please email governance@barnsley.gov.uk so that appropriate arrangements can be made

Officer Contact: M.T. Rawlins and Nina Sleight

Date: 08/08/2018

Financial Implications/
 Consultation (to be signed by senior Financial Services Officer where no financial implications)