

<b>Report of:</b>	Helen Watson, Executive Director of Children’s Services Cllr Barrie Cooper, Executive Member for Children’s Services
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<b>Submitted to:</b>	Executive - 21 January 2020
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<b>Subject:</b>	School Place Planning Strategy 2020-25
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**Summary**

<b>Proposed decision(s)</b>
<p>That Executive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notes the pressure on school places particularly in secondary schools as larger cohorts of pupils move through from primary; and</li> <li>• Approves the School Place Planning Strategy, recognising the importance of working in partnership with schools, trusts and other partners in the light of increasing levels of autonomy.</li> </ul>

<b>Report for:</b>	<b>Key decision:</b>	<b>Confidential:</b>	<b>Is the report urgent?</b>
Decision	Yes – has an impact on more than two wards	The report is not confidential	Non-urgent

<b>Contribution to delivery of the 2018-22 Strategic Plan</b>		
<b>Business Imperatives</b>	<b>Physical Regeneration</b>	<b>Social Regeneration</b>
The strategy sets out how the Council will work with its educational partners to ensure that school places are managed as efficiently and effectively as possible and in doing so meet its statutory obligations.	The strategy provides the basis for the provision of school places to support the delivery of new homes and a growing school-age population.	The strategy will assist the Council in ensuring that there are sufficient school places to meet demand, that pupils can access a quality school place and reduce travel distances for children and their families.
<b>Ward(s) affected</b>		
The Place Planning Strategy covers the whole of Middlesbrough and all of the schools within it, including academies and free schools. Members will be consulted over any plans to significantly alter the pattern of school provision within their ward.		

## What is the purpose of this report?

1. The report seeks the approval of the School Place Planning Strategy 2020-25.

## Why does this report require a Member decision?

2. The School Place Planning Strategy is an important document with wide-reaching implications for the town and the Council beyond the Children's Services portfolio.

## Report Background

3. Middlesbrough Council has a statutory duty to secure sufficient school places to educate all school-age pupils who require one. Demand for school places varies depending upon prevailing birth rates, net migration and pupils' movement within the town, often as a result of housing development. The Council must monitor these trends and put in place appropriate strategies and plans to add or remove places as required.
4. The last place planning strategy, approved in 2013, set priorities against a trend of higher birth rates which led to increased demand for primary school places. Births peaked at 2,095 in 2010/11 and have since fallen to 1,887 in 2017/18. The Council must continue to monitor and plan primary school places against a recent trend of net inward migration and in response to housing development.
5. Demand for secondary school places has been increasing for a number of years as larger cohorts of pupils join from primary schools. Combined with a recent increase in the popularity of Middlesbrough's secondary schools and inward migration into the town's primary schools, demand for Year 7 places is projected to increase beyond the number of places on offer. Demand for Year 7 places is expected to peak in 2022/23, approximately 650 higher than at its lowest point in 2014/15.
6. While birth rates have been falling for a number of years, the school age population continues to grow. This growth continues to create additional demand for specialist services including special schools and alternative education providers.
7. On this basis, the Place Planning Strategy at Appendix 2 sets out the Council's approach to the management of school places over the period 2020-2025. It covers all publicly funded schools including community, foundation and academies. It aims to set a framework against which the Council and its partners can plan to meet future demand and changes in the demographics of the town.
8. The main structure of the strategy is as follows:

Section	Summary
Purpose of the strategy	Explains the purpose and aims of the strategy
Background	Explains the context against which the strategy is set, including the broad features of Middlesbrough's education system and the Council's role in place planning
Current provision	Describes the primary, secondary, special and alternative education sectors, the provision offered and pupils.
Demographic Trends and emerging priorities	Sets out the main drivers behind changes to the school-age population, projections of roll numbers and priorities for meeting demand.
General approach and principals	Establishes the Council's approach to managing school places including adding and removing places.

Delivery	How the priorities within the strategy will be delivered including the role of the Council, partnership working and funding.
Maintaining and reviewing the strategy	Establishes a minimum five year review period, with annual updates of supporting documents.

9. As the majority of Middlesbrough's schools are now academies, the Council has limited powers to directly control the availability and distribution of school places. While the Council retains powers to make changes to community and foundation schools it has no such powers in relation to academies and free schools.
10. The Council is therefore almost entirely reliant upon the cooperation of schools, academy trusts and other education providers to meet the challenges of adapting to the ever-changing demographics of the town.
11. The engagement of these partners will be a key element of the successful management of school places in Middlesbrough. An approach must be established in which a shared understanding of the issues is developed and a consensus reached on the actions required. This must link with school-based decisions about admission limits and admission arrangements and a willingness to seek pragmatic solutions.

#### **What decision(s) are being asked for?**

12. That Executive:
  - Notes the pressure on school places particularly in secondary schools as larger cohorts of pupils move through from primary; and
  - Approves the Place Planning Strategy, recognising the importance of working in partnership with schools, school trusts and other partners in the light of increasing levels of autonomy.

#### **Why is this being recommended?**

13. Middlesbrough Council has a statutory obligation to ensure that there are sufficient school places to meet demand. The Place Planning Strategy will ensure that the Council complies with this duty.
14. The strategy is required in order to guide the development of school provision as the school-age population changes. The strategy provides a framework against which the work of the Council and decisions by individual schools and trusts can take place.
15. The proposal would contribute to the social regeneration of Middlesbrough: providing more local school places, ensuring that young people can get the right education, learning experiences and qualifications they need to achieve their potential.
16. The subject of the report has not been examined by the Overview and Scrutiny Board or by a Scrutiny Panel.

#### **Other potential decisions and why these have not been recommended**

17. Executive could choose to not approve the strategy. While this would not prevent the necessary school place planning work from taking place, it would make it more difficult for partners to understand the Council's priorities and approach.

18. With little direct control over the availability or distribution of school places, without an overarching strategic document the Council is at greater risk of having insufficient control to make the required changes. Schools and other partners could make decisions about school places without enough understanding of the town's priorities.
19. Without a strategy it would be more difficult for schools and trusts to understand their critical role in reshaping education provision to meet future demand. This could increase the risk of the Council being unable to find schools and trusts to work and ultimately result in the Council failing to deliver its statutory sufficiency duty.

### **Impact(s) of recommended decision(s)**

#### ***Legal***

20. The Place Planning Strategy assists the Council in meeting its duty, under Section 14 of the Education Act 1996, to provide sufficient school places to meet demand.
21. Where plans flowing from the strategy require significant changes to be made to a locally maintained school, the Council will comply with the arrangements set out in the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013. Separate arrangements exist in relation to making significant changes to academies and academies would be required to make these arrangements where necessary.

#### ***Financial***

22. A programme of investment will be needed in order to deliver the priorities included in the strategy and provide flexibility within the system to cope with unexpected increases in demand. In order to achieve value for money, schools will need to maximise the use of their premises.
23. The Council receives capital allocations from the Department for Education (DfE) to provide new primary and secondary school places via the Basic Need grant. The level of grant is directly linked to forecasts of unmet demand. Grant levels vary from year to year but over the life of the strategy it is anticipated that there should be sufficient grant income to fund the necessary works.
24. Capital funding for special school places is received via the DfE's Special Provision fund.
25. Costs will be identified as schemes are developed and brought forward, with the view that the capital cost be met from these grants. Where appropriate, housing developer contributions will also be sought where there is a clear link between demand and new housing. Further contributions may also be sought from schools.
26. Approval for individual schemes will be sought from Executive, normally as part of the Schools Capital Programme, and included in the Capital Investment Strategy for approval by Council.
27. The DfE provides the Council with revenue funding for enlargement schemes through the National Funding Formula within the school block. The School Management Forum's approval to establish a Growth Fund from this funding is being sought with a view that this should fund any revenue costs.

#### ***Policy Framework***

28. No Policy Framework implications have been identified.

## ***Equality and Diversity***

29. A Level 1 (Initial Screening) Impact Assessment (IA) accompanies this report at Appendix 1.
30. The impact assessment identifies that the strategy would have a positive impact on the local community and would not represent a concern to equal rights, disability discrimination or the impingement of human rights.
31. The decision being sought aims to positively affect educational outcomes for young people aged 5-18, removing the need for these children to travel to schools outside of the town to access appropriate education, or be without an education.

## ***Risk***

32. The recommendations included in the report would help to address the following risks included in the Children's Services risk register:  
**04-014** - If the Council is not able to secure funding for schools from developers or Council funding grants and if Middlesbrough schools continue to do well whilst schools in neighbouring LA's fair less well, influencing parental choice then this will put pressure on corporate capital resources or the Council will fail in its duty to secure sufficient school places.

## **Actions to be taken to implement the decision(s)**

33. Following approval the strategy will be published and used as the basis for consultation and discussion with schools and trusts.
34. The priorities within the strategy will be used to establish a five year programme of work. The delivery of this will be assisted and monitored by the Strategic Place Planning Group of senior Council officers. Individual schemes within the programme will be worked up with schools and trusts to the timescales identified in the plan.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Impact Assessment

Appendix 2 – Place Planning Strategy 2020-25

## **Background papers**

35. No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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