



Executive
10th April 2006

**Report from the Director of
Children and Families**

For Action

Wards Affected:
ALL

**Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel - School Places
Task Group Report**

Forward Plan Ref: C&F05/06-38

1.0 Summary

1.1 This report provides a response to the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel's report entitled 'School Places Task Group'.

2.0 Recommendations

Executive to:

2.1 Note the findings and recommendations in the School Places Task Group report and thank the task group for their work.

3.0 Details

3.1 In its meeting of 19 October 2004 the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel set up a School Place Task Group on to investigate school places in Brent, with a view of concentrating on main issues for the short to medium term (i.e. 0 to 6 years). It was agreed that the work of the Task Group would not start immediately due to other commitments its members were involved in.

3.2 Prior to its first meeting, held in December 2005, the Chair of the School Place Task Group received confidential briefings from the Director of Children and Families. Since then 3 meetings with Children and Families officers took place between 12 December 2005 and 24 January 2006. Their examination included: a review of the approach to pupil forecasting and improvements introduced; what the current position is on the balance between the supply of

and demand for school places; the short term measures the Children and Families Directorate has taken to deal with the immediate problem of a shortage of secondary places.

- 3.3 The School Place Task Group report was presented to Scrutiny on 2 February 2006 (see copy attached for ease of reference).

4.0 Recommendations from the Task Group

The Task Group recommended that:

- 4.1. the new procedures, for the balance between the supply of and demand for school places, are continuously reviewed and reported on regularly to the Executive and the Scrutiny Panel.
- 4.2 the new procedures (already in place) for co-ordinating casual admissions and provision for children out of school, made possible by the collaboration and co-operation between schools, be formally endorsed by the Executive.
- 4.3 the actions taken to utilise surplus places in neighbouring boroughs, including the advice and support given to parents in seeking to take up places in other boroughs, be formally endorsed by the Executive.
- 4.4 a report to be made to the Executive on the significant resource implication on the short, medium and long term for providing additional places, following discussions with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).
- 4.5 sources of external funds be investigated to help support the Children and Families Investment Plan including the maximisation of S106 resources from developers.
- 4.6 the proposal of the Children and Families Department to have land for schools earmarked at the planning stage of major developments be endorsed (because S106 contributions in cash may not be adequate if there is no land for constructing schools).
- 4.7 the data obtained in the January pupil census (Appendix 5) be used to monitor any trends in primary school children having to travel further to find places.
- 4.8 a consultation exercise be undertaken with parents with regard to their choice of schools, which should feed into future place planning.

5.0 Children and Families Department Response

5.1 This section sets out the responses of the Director of Children and Families to the recommendations made by the Task Group and numbered 4.1 to 4.8.

<p>Task Group recommendation 4.1:</p> <p>the new procedures, for the balance between the supply of and demand for school places, are continuously reviewed and reported on regularly to the Executive and the Scrutiny Panel.</p>	<p>Response:</p> <p>There are at present many schemes already in place that are addressing the current situation with school places and there are also plans focusing on the medium and long term as outlined below:</p> <p><u>Roll projections and forecasts</u></p> <p>It has always been understood in making school pupil projections, for example in Brent's Schools Organisation Plan 2003, that such projections are subject to considerable uncertainties and can have margins of error. The uncertain impact of possible major new housing developments in Brent is one example in particular. A more recent example, has been a significant inward migration of school-aged children into Brent in the last two years.</p> <p>In December 2004, as pupil projections received from the GLA were not reflecting what was happening on the ground in Brent, the Director of Children and Families commissioned a consultant to carry out a thorough review of primary and secondary school places. The consultant interrogated GLA projection methodology and was successful in locating key areas that were causing the projections to be inaccurate. Future projections should now be more reliable.</p> <p>Brent officers have for several years had regular meetings with the GLA which include 19 other London boroughs and discussions around pupil and population projections, accuracy, child yield, mobility, cross border issues etc.</p> <p>In addition officers have regular meetings with officers of neighbouring authorities to discuss common problems, mobility, cross border issues, housing developments and their affects on places etc.</p> <p>The Authority needs to communicate with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) accurate pupil projections that will help them better understand the difficulties faced in placing pupils.</p> <p><u>Place Planning Development Group</u></p> <p>The Place Planning Development Group has been meeting on a regular basis since July 2003. It is chaired by the Director of Children and Families and core membership is made up of key officers from the Children and Families, Housing and Community Care and Environment and Culture</p>
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	<p>departments. Key issues are discussed and decisions made on creating school places, the building of new schools, the affects of housing developments, planning, funding streams etc.</p> <p><u>Cross departmental work</u> There is already in place the sponsorship of cross departmental work by Lead Members of Children and Families and Environment and Culture and the respective Directors to co-ordinate intelligence across the council to better provide a basis for more accurate forecasting and response to demand.</p> <p>The Children and Families Department is undertaking considerable work to generate better forecasts of Brent school places. Note, however, that Brent has not made any decisions in recent years to reduce, in net terms, the supply of school places. It would be quite misleading, therefore, to suggest that any current shortage of school places are due to past forecast errors.</p>
<p>Task Group recommendation 4.2</p> <p>the new procedures (already in place) for co-ordinating casual admissions and provision for children out of school, made possible by the collaboration and co-operation between schools, be formally endorsed by the Executive.</p>	<p>Response:</p> <p>The Executive note the task force comments. Half termly assessment centres are now a regular feature of the casual admissions process. However, it is for the task force to endorse the Department's and schools' successful actions in responding to casual admissions during 2005.</p> <p>There is an effective process in place for co-ordinating casual admissions and the provision for children out of school made possible by the collaboration and co-operation of Brent schools. As a result pupils that were identified to be placed have been able to be placed either to a project or to a school place.</p> <p>By March 2006 the system had addressed 114 unplaced pupils who had attended the November 2005 assessment centre. However, a further 130 pupils arrived in the borough and were registered as being without a school place between December 2005 and February 2006. Two further assessment centres were set up to identify the levels of literacy, numeracy and English spoken by these newly arrived pupils. The majority of these children have now been successfully placed.</p>
<p>Task Group recommendation 4.3</p> <p>the actions taken to utilise surplus places in neighbouring boroughs, including the advice and support given to parents in seeking to take up places in other boroughs, be formally endorsed by the Executive.</p>	<p>Response:</p> <p>It is for the Task Force to endorse the Department's actions.</p>

<p>Task Group recommendation 4.4</p> <p>a report to be made to the Executive on the significant resource implication on the short, medium and long term for providing additional places, following discussions with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).</p>	<p>Response:</p> <p>The Executive's position in identifying the need for more school places in Brent has been crystal clear. It is providing for these through, among other plans, a second Academy school in Wembley, the expanded new Wembley Manor Primary School, a reform of special education needs provision, and by reserving funds for additional school places for secondary schools in the 2006-07 budget.</p> <p>The Council's Capital Investment Plan 2006/2009 for Children and Families makes provision for the expansion of 210 school places in the primary sector. There is also provision to support the additional supply of 300 secondary school places pending the conclusion of negotiations currently underway.</p> <p><u>Expansion of secondary schools</u> The 2006 Council Budget reserves funds to expand capacity in existing Brent secondary schools.</p> <p><u>Second Academy</u> The Expression of Interest has been submitted to the DfES for a second academy in the Wembley Park area. This will be an all-through school – 2FE primary and 6FE secondary, creating 1320 school places plus nursery and sixth form provision.</p> <p><u>Expansion of primary schools</u> There are plans to expand primary schools. The Asset Management Team is in the process of reassessing the physical capacity of each primary school with the aim of raising admission numbers to create additional places. The LA is looking closely at opportunities to expand provision at Stonebridge, Fryent and Kensal Rise schools.</p> <p>The new Second Academy will create 420 primary places as outlined above.</p> <p><u>Wembley Manor Primary School</u> Wembley Manor Infant and Junior schools will cease to exist on 31 August 2006. On 1 September 2006 Wembley Manor Primary School will be created. Once the new build is completed (January 2008) the school will expand from 3FE to 4FE creating an additional 210 primary places.</p>
<p>Task Group recommendation 4.5</p> <p>sources of external funds be investigated to help support the Children and Families Investment Plan including the maximisation of S106 resources from developers.</p>	<p>Response:</p> <p>Maximisation of additional resources for school places through S106 and through other opportunities such as Targeted Capital funding has been part of the Council's strategy for several years. The Council's Capital Board regularly reviews capital resources across all departments.</p>

<p>Task Group recommendation 4.6</p> <p>the proposal of the Children and Families Department to have land for schools earmarked at the planning stage of major developments be endorsed (because S106 contributions in cash may not be adequate if there is no land for constructing schools).</p>	<p>Response:</p> <p>The new Local Development Framework sets out the Council's spatial strategy. It will link other services that the council provides. It will prioritise consideration of the need to allocate land for education sites.</p> <p>The Council has submitted an objection to the Mayor's housing target plans (February 2006), as amongst others, it would lead to an in-balance between supply of school places and demand created by the significant additional housing.</p>
<p>Task Group recommendation 4.7</p> <p>the data obtained in the January pupil census (Appendix 5) be used to monitor any trends in primary school children having to travel further to find places.</p>	<p>Response:</p> <p>The January pupil data are used in the GLA pupil projections and therefore help to determine the provision of school places. The Task Group report acknowledges that the most significant explanation of home to school distances is parental preferences eg for VA schools.</p>
<p>Task Group recommendation 4.8</p> <p>a consultation exercise be undertaken with parents with regard to their choice of schools, which should feed into future place planning.</p>	<p>Response:</p> <p>Information about schools that are oversubscribed, the level of oversubscription, and the expression of parental choice will be gathered from the primary and secondary co ordination. This will be shared with the place planning group. Consultation with parents will be undertaken annually by a written survey that will be enclosed with the parent handbooks and carried out at the point where parents are choosing which schools to apply to. Every two years we will consult a randomly selected group of parents for more in depth feedback. This will be reported to CFD Departmental Management Team.</p>

6.0 Financial Implications

- 6.1 The budget allocated for the expansion of Wembley Manor Primary School is £10m gross. £3.6m is allocated for the expansion of secondary school places. The cost range forecast for the expansion of either secondary schools or primary schools is between £1.5m (where no DfES support of specialist space is needed) to say between £4.5m - £5.5m where specialist spaces are required and remodelling of the existing buildings is needed.
- 6.2 Funding will be received from DfES, BSF and mainstream capital. Revenue costs of additional pupils will be met from within the Dedicated Schools Budget and forwarded through the Dedicated Schools Grant.
- 6.3 There will be a further report to the Executive when more precise funding assessments have been made.
- 6.4 The Council's Investment Plan for Children and Families for the next few years from 2006 – 2009 has provision of £70m. This is intended to address the need to rebuild, remodel, expand and refurbish school across the local authority.

7.0 Legal Implications

- 7.1 The Task Group considered implementation of the statutory duty on the Council under the Education Act 1996 section 14 to ensure that sufficient school places for primary and secondary education are available for the area.

8.0 Diversity Implications

- 8.1 There are no specific diversity issues. This report hopes to address equalities issues to help make services fairer and easily accessible to all.

9.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

- 9.1 None.

Background Papers

- i) School Places Task Group Report

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