

Report to CABINET

Education Provision Strategy 2020-2024

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Shaid Mushtaq (Cabinet Member of Education and Skills)

Officer Contact: Andrew Sutherland (Director of Education, Skills and Early Years)

Report Author: Andy Collinge, Head of School Support Services
Ext. 4239

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Reason for Decision

The Council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places within the borough. Education Provision covers all those of statutory school age and also includes pupils with SEND. Both mainstream school places and SEND have been included in this strategy document. In order to deliver a comprehensive offer of places in the borough an Education Strategy has been prepared to clarify the Council's position and intentions with regard to the provision of school places.

Recommendations:-

1. That the Education Provision Strategy 2020 -2024 be approved and adopted.
2. That authority be delegated to the Member for Education, Skills and Early Years and the Director of Education, Skills and Early Years to update the strategy annually in line with demographic and place pressures over the period that the strategy is in place.

1 Background

- 1.1 Oldham Council is facing significant challenges as a result of increasing demand for school places. There are predicted significant increases in demand for pupil places for the foreseeable future and beyond the timeframe of this strategy.
- 1.2 Statute requires the Council to provide a place for every child. This strategy will enable the Council to fulfil that duty. Although not contained in statute it is also the clear target of the Council to ensure that as many of these places as possible are in good and outstanding provision. In addition, it is also the clear target of the Council to ensure that as many parents as possible obtain a school place of their choice.
- 1.3 The strategy clarifies the position regarding Council support for Trusts and other providers wishing to open new provision in the borough. The Council will only endorse new academies and schools where there is a clear demonstrable need for such provision and that provision is overseen by organisations who have a proven, long standing and consistent track record of delivering good and outstanding provision

2 Current Position

- 2.1 The draft Education Provision Strategy provides the context and policy for the provision of statutory education places in the borough. Provision in the primary sector is relatively stable, however there is significant pressure and demand on places in the secondary and SEND sectors and this is set to continue as the population in the borough increases over the coming decade.
- 2.2 The framework for making decisions regarding the provision of school places is overseen by the Education Provision Group which comprises of elected members, officers and representatives from academies and maintained schools.
- 2.3 The current process for approving school expansions and the establishment of new provision is, in comparison to other GM authorities lengthy and time consuming. A new process of approving new schools and expansions is contained in the strategy which ensures that all statutory approvals are met and seeks to streamline decision making so new provision can be agreed as quickly as possible without compromising the need for consultation with residents and elected members.
- 2.4 Previously central government had set out a commitment that all schools should convert to academy status by 2022 (White Paper, Education Excellence Everywhere). This is no longer the position and it is clear that for the foreseeable future the school system will be a mixed economy of community, voluntary aided schools and academies/free schools.

3 Options/Alternatives

- 3.1 **Option One:** Adopt the Education Provision Strategy as appended to this report. This strategy reflects the Council's position to provide high quality places and provision.

Option Two: Suggest amendments to this strategy as presented. This is not the recommended option as the strategy has been developed to address the most pressing requirements in the borough.

Option Three: Not adopt the strategy. This is not recommended as it would leave the Council vulnerable in the light of implementing its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places.

4 **Preferred Option**

4.1 It is recommended that the appended strategy is approved.

5 **Consultation**

5.1 Appropriate consultation has taken place.

6 **Financial Implications**

6.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. However, the Education Provision Strategy will need to operate within the parameters of the existing Capital Strategy and have regard to any revenue implications as outlined in section 5 of the Strategy for any proposed capital investments. Any revenue implications that affect the Council General fund budget will need to be incorporated in the Medium Term Financial Strategy and budget setting process. The revenue implications are included in the Education Provision Strategy (Liz Caygill)

7 **Legal Services Comments**

7.1 Adoption of the Education Provision Strategy would assist the Authority in meeting its statutory duty to provide school places. The strategy should be reviewed in the light of any legislative changes (Alexander Bougatef)

8. **Co-operative Agenda**

8.1 A Co-operative council delivering good value services to support a co-operative borough.

8.2 The provision of sufficient numbers of quality school places is a statutory service and contributes to the Council's outcome around *getting the basics right* (Andy Collinge)

9 **Human Resources Comments**

9.1 There are no HR implications from a statutory perspective. Expansion of existing provision will provide valuable employment opportunities in the borough (Andy Collinge)

10 **Risk Assessments**

10.1 By working within an agreed strategy the risk of running short of school places will be reduced and the likelihood of creating high quality places will be increased. (Mark Stenson)

11 **IT Implications**

11.1 None

12 **Property Implications**

12.1 Adoption of this strategy will aid the implementation of school projects to meet the Authorities Statutory Duty and allow schemes to be prioritized. (Andrew Hall)

13 **Procurement Implications**

13.1 None

14 **Environmental and Health & Safety Implications**

14.1 The availability of quality school places will reduce the likelihood that parents will travel beyond a reasonable walking distance in order to take their children to school. This in turn will reduce car journeys within the borough

14.2 By attending their preferred choice of school parents and children are more likely to feel confident about their educational experience which can contribute to their sense of well-being (Laura Smith)

15 **Equality, community cohesion and crime implications**

15.1 Admission authorities have a legal duty to comply with the parental preference wherever possible. Consequently, Oldham's school place planning approach takes account of identified demand for places. In terms of equality, the proposal will positively increase the supply of school places in the borough.

15.2 The LA makes every effort to ensure that parents are not only aware of which schools are available in their local area and beyond but that the information that is published is clear and concise so that parents and young people are able to make informed choices about the school that they would like to attend. The level of satisfaction in terms of the availability of places at a preferred school contributes to community cohesion. (Andy Collinge)

16 **Equality Impact Assessment Completed?**

16.1 Advice has been sought on EDI and there are no implications for any vulnerable groups. (Andy Collinge)

17 **Key Decision**

17.1 Yes

18 **Key Decision Reference**

18.1 EDS-07-19

19 **Background Papers**

19.1 N/a

20 **Appendices**

20.1 Education Provision Strategy 2020 – 2024 (Inc Associated Appendices)
