

## **ESSEX SCHOOLS ORGANISATION PLAN 2005-2010**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report seeks Members' comments on the latest draft Essex School Organisation Plan 2005-2010 and outlines the implications for Rochford District.
- 1.2 A copy of the Plan has been placed in the Members' Library. Comments on the Plan are required by 1 August 2005.

### **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Plan is prepared by the Essex Local Education Authority to explain the arrangements for securing the provision of primary and secondary education. Interestingly, the Children Act 2004 requires service authorities dealing with children to prepare a Children and Young People Plan. The new arrangements delete the requirement for a School Organisation Plan and, therefore, it is likely this will be the last Plan in the current format.
- 2.2 The Plan is not intended to identify changes to named schools, but the School Organisation Committee will take the information included in the Plan into account when it considers such issues.
- 2.3 The Plan is divided into three sections, as follows:
  - Information relevant to managing the supply of school places.
  - Relevant policies and principles.
  - Managing the supply of school places.

### **3 RELEVANT INFORMATION**

- 3.1 This section of the Plan provides details of the present situation in Essex schools and the projected changes based on population projections and changing housing numbers.
- 3.2 Population forecasts for the period 2001 to 2011 indicate that most Districts will experience an increase in population; Epping Forest (-0.5), Maldon (-3.6) and Rochford (-1.5) will show a small decrease. For Rochford it is anticipated the population in 2011 will be 80,300. It should be borne in mind that these population projections are not updated on an annual basis and the School Organisations Plan is relying on the same data presented in the previous Plan.

- 3.3 However, work is underway to update the forecasts for the East of England Plan and it may be that, subject to availability, revised figures can be included in the Plan.
- 3.4 Forecasts of pupil numbers are based on information about births, GP registrations and new housing. Overall, levels of births have been following a downward trend and in Rochford District, for example, there were 852 births in 1996 and 760 in 2003.
- 3.5 For the moment, the housing allocations from the existing Structure Plan continue to be used to assess school place requirements. In theory, the Structure Plan runs until 2011 and so for Rochford a housing allocation of 3,050 units is taken into account in the calculations.
- 3.6 Looking at the forecasts, in broad terms across the County, with a couple of exceptions, pupil numbers are expected to fall over the next five years. However, when potential additional pupils from new housing are included, primary numbers slightly increase over the same period. The Plan says nothing more than that such additional pupils will be monitored carefully.
- 3.7 In Rochford, for Primary Schools with housing included, it is forecast that pupil numbers will drop from 6,949 in 2005 to 6,322 in 2010 (-9.0%). For Secondary Schools, including the 16-19 group, it is forecast that with housing, the number of pupils will rise slightly from 5,617 in 2005 to 5,655 in 2010 (+0.7%).

#### **4 POLICIES AND PRINCIPLES**

- 4.1 This section of the Plan explains the policies and principles that influence the provision of school places, including school performance, increasing diversity, early years provision and special educational needs.
- 4.2 Of particular interest is the section outlining the arrangements for remedying a surplus or shortage of places. The Plan is premised on matching the supply for school places as closely as possible with demand and ensuring value for money.
- 4.3 The LEA has a Surplus Places Management Plan for dealing with at least 30 surplus places and/or a 75% or less occupancy rate. Measures that may be employed to remove surplus places include re-designation of accommodation, removing temporary accommodation; removing permanent accommodation and school closure.
- 4.4 Where there is a demonstrable need for additional places in an area, then consideration will just be given to determining whether the increased demand could be met by expanding existing successful and popular schools in the area.

- 4.5 The Plan recognises there are tensions in meeting parental choice for popular schools where surplus places exist nearby. However, Government guidance does not prevent popular schools expanding, despite the existence of surplus capacity in neighbouring, less popular schools.

## **5 MANAGING THE SUPPLY OF SCHOOL PLACES**

- 5.1 This section of the Plan provides detailed statistics about individual schools in Essex. For Rochford, the Primary Schools figures are as follows:-

Capacity		Number on roll			Surplus/Deficit		
		Actual	Forecast				
2005	2010	2005	2010	2010 with housing	2005	2010	2010 with housing
7,501	7,256	6,949	6,234	6,322	552	1,022	934

- 5.2 For Secondary Schools, the figures are:

Capacity		Number on roll			Surplus/Deficit		
		Actual	Forecast				
2005	2010	2005	2010	2010 with housing	2005	2010	2010 with housing
5,610	5,699	5,617	5,589	5,655	-7	110	44

- 5.3 The figures for each school are attached to the report as Appendix One.

## **6 IMPLICATIONS FOR ROCHFORD**

- 6.1 The tables in Appendix One show that in 2010 several schools will have a deficit of places.
- 6.2 Glebe Infants, Rochford, Stambridge and Ashingdon Primary Schools all show likely deficits, although this must be set against the overall surplus of Primary School places of 934 in the District.

- 6.3 Of the Secondary Schools, only the Sweyne Park School shows a small deficit and overall there is a finely balanced relationship between pupil numbers and places.
- 6.4 Given the significant projected surplus of Primary School places, it is likely that the LEA will look carefully at the situation in a number of the District's Primary Schools.
- 6.5 In the Secondary Schools, the projected position is reasonably well balanced.
- 6.6 Unlike previous Plans, there do not seem to be any major projected difficulties with school places over the next five years. There is, though, a concern over the future arrangements for Primary Schools given the projected surplus of places. It is therefore suggested that Essex County Council be advised that great care must be taken before any decisions are made to Primary Schools in the District and that if any changes are proposed in due course they are the subject of full consultation.

## **7 RECOMMENDATION**

- 7.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

That, subject to comments from Members, this report forms the basis of the Council's response to the consultation on the Schools Organisation Plan 2005-2010.

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### **Background Papers:-**

Draft Schools Organisation Plan 2005-2010

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