

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 29 January 2009

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director - Children and Young People

SUBJECT Primary Organisation

WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide a summary of the current primary school organisation, the number of primary places and the current and projected primary school numbers in Halton. In addition, provide an update on the Primary Capital Strategy including the drivers for prioritising future investment and process for revising and resubmitting the Strategy to the DCSF.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

2.1 The Board note the current and proposed level of primary surplus places across the authority and request a further more detailed report on the current and predicted capacity of each primary school.

2.2 The Board agree the key drivers for an investment priorities matrix as outlined in paragraph 3.5 of the report.

2.3 The Strategic Director for Children and Young People be authorised in consultation with the Executive Board Member for Children and Young People to make the revision to the Primary Capital Strategy required by the DCSF and resubmit the revised Strategy to the DCSF by the deadline of 31st January 2009.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The local authority now has a role as Commissioner and quality assurer of school places rather than direct service provider. It is therefore responsible for shaping a system that meets the local needs. In managing its duty the local authority is required to ensure that there are sufficient schools in number, character and size and that school provision within the area provides both diversity and choice.

3.2 There are current 46 primary schools, 3 junior schools and 3 infant schools in Halton. 31 of the primary schools are community, 5 schools are voluntary controlled (Church of England), 13 are voluntary aided (Catholic) and 3 are voluntary aided (Church of England).

3.3 The Audit Commission and DCSF guidance recommends that there should be no more than 10% surplus provision across an authority and that schools should not have more than 25% surplus places. In Halton, the level of surplus capacity in primary schools has varied over the last

few years. In January 2007 the number of primary places totalled 11,756, whilst the total pupil numbers in Halton primary schools was 9729, leaving over 2027 surplus places, 17% over capacity. Following revisions to the net capacity of a number of primary schools the net capacity reduced in September 2008 to 11,088, with total pupil numbers of 9688, leaving 1400 surplus places across the borough. This represents a 12.6% surplus and 8 schools with surplus capacity in excess of 25%.

3.4 Predicting the likely level of future primary provision using PCT live birth data and applying the previous rate of school admission to births, the future primary numbers are estimated to be on average 1462 per year. This would give an estimated total school primary population of around 10,234, a total of 854 surplus places, 8% surplus capacity. Although this total figure is below the recommended 10%. It is predicted that there will still be schools within the borough with over 25% surplus capacity. In addition, although there are surplus places in some areas, in others the increase in the birth rate and new housing has resulted in a shortage of provision and increases in school places to meet needs therefore needs to be explored. A driver for the prioritisation for the investment matrix through the Primary Capital Programme is therefore responding to the local demography and changing pupil numbers.

3.5 The DCSF have set a target for Halton that 15% of primary schools in the worst condition should be rebuilt or taken out of use and that a further 35% should be remodelled to bring them up to 21st century standards. A range of key drivers have therefore been identified which will support the delivery of the national targets and allow Halton to meet its local priorities. The key drivers will be included in an investment matrix :

- School capacity and pupil numbers;
- Improving facilities in the most deprived areas – each school to be ranked on the basis of the levels of deprivation;
- Raising school standards – each school to be ranked;
- Addressing building condition – all schools ranked according to their condition;
- Opportunities to join PCP with other capital investment and provide integrated and extended services.

In addition, the authority will consider the suitability of its primary provision in relation to special educational needs and disabilities, unmet extended and community services need, health through improved dining and play provision, and access to ICT. Priority will also be given to removing temporary accommodation, increasing specialist accommodation and providing more flexible learning spaces.

3.6 The outcome of the assessment of the PCP was sent to the authority in November 2008. The assessment which had been undertaken by Capita on behalf of the DCSF identified that further work was needed on the Strategy before any funding could be confirmed. The vision and context of the Strategy were assessed as sound however, the following work is being undertaken to strengthen and revise the strategy:

- detailed data and analysis on pupil numbers, standards and ICT provision, extended schools and early years provision and condition, suitability and capacity of schools;
- an outline of the strategy to achieve transformational change;
- the links to national and local priorities;
- how ICT will be embedded and procured;
- the approach to raising standards and to design;
- the Programme Management arrangements;
- the matrix to identify investment priorities;
- Investment priorities for the first four years (only the first two years were identified in the original submission; and
- Evidence of consultation.

3.7 A consultant from 'Place' consultancy was assigned to Halton in December 2008 to support the revision of the document. Once a revised draft has been produced the consultant will review it and provide feedback prior to its re-submission.

3.9 The next steps are that the revisions to the Primary Capital Strategy must be submitted to the DCSF by the end of January 2009 along with the matrix for prioritisation and the priorities for the first four years of investment.

Following the further analysis of pupil places and projected numbers a detailed report will be presented to the Board on the opportunities and options for future primary re-organisation.

4.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The Authority must develop a strategic approach to capital investment for primary schools over 14 years. For 2009/2010 and 2010/11 the indicative primary capital funding is £8.4 million. Funding from 2011/12 will be subject to public spending review.

5.0 **OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The Authority must identify how it intends to address demographic change, falling rolls, the Standards Agenda as well as increase the diversity, choice and access to popular schools and improve building condition and suitability. It needs to consider a range of provision such as Trusts, Federations, amalgamations and all-age provision.

5.2 Proposals will need to be developed on the future primary school organisation. School and public consultation will then need to be

undertaken.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

The Primary Capital Programme contributes directly to priority SM5: Transforming Learning Opportunities for all Children.

Increase choice, diversity, inclusion and high standards and reduce the surplus capacity within Halton schools.

Transform the learning environment: workforce, buildings, learning resources and technology.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

By providing 21st Century primary provision for all pupils, standards will improve providing greater employment prospects for Halton's Children and Young People.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

In developing primary provision the authority will seek to improve the sports and dining facilities and work collaboratively with other agencies to encourage healthy eating, promote high nutritional standards and provide access to a wider range of extended services.

6.4 A Safer Halton

New primary provision will be designed to ensure that children, staff and other community users feel safe and secure on schools sites.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The Primary Capital Programme seeks to ensure that schools become a major resource for the communities they serve and will be designed to offer shared community facilities, linking to other wider regeneration projects as well as being the focus for the local delivery of children's services.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 A risk analysis has been undertaken which has identified a number of key risks. The key risks include the timeline for delivery, school organisation and approval of the Strategy and the impact of any delay on primary capital approval on the BSF Programme.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 The Primary Capital Strategy must be inclusive and consider the needs of

all primary schools. The Programme aims to increase diversity access and choice, address under performance, provide more integrated local services for every child and family.

9.0 REASON (S) FOR DECISION

9.1 Following evaluation of the Halton's PCP further it has been suggested that revisions are made to the original submission to strengthen this document prior to funding being approved.

10.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

10.1 This is a DCSF requirement.

11.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

11.1 The Primary Capital Strategy must be submitted to the DCSF by 31st January 2009

12.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Every Child Matters: Primary Capital Programme – Primary Strategy for Change. Department for Children, Schools and Families (6.12.2007)	3 rd Floor Grosvenor House	Lorraine Cox
Draft Primary Capital Strategy	3 rd Floor Grosvenor House Intranet/internet	Lorraine Cox
Presentations and Notes Primary Headteachers Meeting, Diocesan Meetings and Extended Services Meetings	3 rd Floor Grosvenor House	Lorraine Cox
Executive Board Report – Primary Capital Programme – 20 th March 2008	3 rd Floor Grosvenor House Internet	Lorraine Cox
DCSF – Primary Capital Programme Notification of Assessment of Outcomes	3 rd Floor Grosvenor House	Lorraine Cox