

<i>COMMITTEE</i>	<b>YOUTH AND EDUCATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>
<i>DATE</i>	<b>9 JULY 2002</b>
<i>TITLE OF REPORT</i>	<b>REPORT OF THE SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN TASK GROUP</b>
<i>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER</i>	<b>Bjorn Simpole, overview and scrutiny co-ordinator</b>

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report sets out the findings of the task group established by the Committee to examine the draft School Organisation Plan.

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 The Committee are asked to recommend that the changes to the draft School Organisation Plan as outlined in paragraphs 4.5 – 4.7 are incorporated in the draft plan.
- 2.2 That the Committee considers any further changes it wishes to make to the draft plan following the receipt of further information relating to selective boys places.

**3 INTRODUCTION**

- 3.1 This Committee established a task group to scrutinise the draft School Organisation Plan. The Group which comprised councillors Mrs Etheridge, Juby, Price (substituted by Councillor Rowan – Robinson at the second meeting) and Wendy Purdy received officer support from the assistant director (school services), planning and review manager and overview and scrutiny co-ordinator. They also welcomed the contribution of Keith Williams (National Association of Headteachers).
- 3.2 The group held two meetings, the second of which focused on the secondary school aspects of the Plan. Comments and proposed amendments to the plan largely focused on expanding on a number of sections to provide further clarification, raising matters which had not been fully considered in the document and proposing corrections to the document where inaccuracies or inconsistencies were found.

**4 FINDINGS**

- 4.1 The group was informed by officers that following the Ofsted inspection, this year's draft plan had been substantially revised with far more detail being included than before. As a starting point, the various sections and annexes of

the plan were explained in detail to provide the group with background knowledge of the plan. It was emphasised that the Council only proposed a School Organisation Plan and that the document would need to be agreed by all groups on the School Organisation Committee, or determined by the Schools adjudicator before it became the final plan for Medway.

4.2 The second meeting of the group focused primarily on the aspects of the Plan that related to secondary education. This was a particularly pertinent subject for the group to examine given the difficulties that had been experienced with admission arrangements for September 2002, particularly in the Walderslade area.

4.3 A copy of the draft plan which has already been updated taking into account a number of the comments and suggestions below and was attached as Annex A to the report for the 25 June 2002 meeting.

4.4 The group's comments and suggested amendments to the plan have been divided into three categories :- general, those that relate specifically to primary places and those relating to secondary provision.

#### 4.5 General

- a) The period of consultation with stakeholders is too short and a longer timeframe should be built in for future years.
- b) A suggestion was made that an exercise could be conducted where parents were surveyed to find out why they sent their child to a certain school. This could be done as a one off exercise and could help with the planning of school places in future years.
- c) References in the report should be to the 'Kent and Medway Strategic Health Authority'.
- d) The pupil product figure for new housing developments should be added to paragraph f) at 1.2.1.
- e) Consideration should be given to changing the ratios used to forecast pupil product figures, due to the changing demography of British society – *Officers advised that a new calculation would be in operation from 2003.*
- f) A further bullet point should be added to paragraph f) at 1.2.2 – to include consideration of sustainability issues, ie extra car journeys.
- g) Ensuring that mention is made in the document about possible proposals to change the pattern of the school year and the possible affect this might have on school places.
- h) That 2.10 be expanded to take account of the potential affect that the government green paper on learning for 14-19 year olds might have on accommodation in the future.
- i) Including a reference in the plan of the need to identify children with special needs at an earlier stage.
- j) Mentioning in the report that as Medway had received a good Ofsted report, this might have an effect on school places in future years.
- k) The potential effect that proposed developments in Kent would have on school places in Halling and Secondary school places in Medway.

- l) Officers should consult further with colleagues in the Planning department to verify the accuracy of the details contained in Annex Q (New major housing developments).
- m) Highlight the need to improve transport provision to enable students to travel more easily around Medway. The group would like to forward comments into the Passenger Transport Best Value Review that assistance should be given to children for concessionary bus fares before 9am and that the case for buses to be provided to individual schools to certain areas should be examined.
- n) Amend 2.6 a) to read 'from the nearest school as defined appropriate by Medway LEA'.
- o) The capacity and situation at Bradfields special school should be closely monitored.
- p) Officers should investigate if Pupil Referral Units could be included in the plan.
- q) Adding the wording 'appropriate' to the second line of 2.11 a)

#### 4.6 Primary

- a) St Mary's Island Primary School had been omitted from the maps in the plan.
- b) Forge Lane/ Hillyfields school should be referred to as Saxon Way primary school as they will have merged by the time the plan is finalised.
- c) To add reasons to 2.7 to explain why all-through schools are preferable to the LEA.
- d) Clarify paragraph c) in 3.3.1 to explain why there was a reduction in the number of primary school pupils.
- e) Highlighting in the plan the potential effect that the development of a university in Medway would have on primary school places in certain areas.

#### 4.7 Secondary

- a) A further category is added to Annex K to show the number of schools with more than 1500 pupils.
- b) The NAHT representative raised particular concerns that the figures in the plan relating to secondary surplus places bore no relation to the real situation and asked why Standard Numbers could not be used. *Officers explained that they were bound by DFES guidelines but that an extra column could be added to Annex V (ii) to show the Standard Number and also to provide an explanation in the plan.*
- c) The Plan should include details of actual numbers of pupils on roll - data that is already available to the LEA from the January pupil census (para 4.7 b) refers).
- d) General concern was expressed that the plan shows a large number of surplus places, when the reality is that most schools are full and there have been an unprecedented number of appeals this year. *Officers stated that a more accurate system of NET capacity would be used from 2003 and that this would highlighted in the Plan.*

- e) Provide an explanation in the plan that due to new building works a school's capacity would often be higher than their maximum admission number. While capacity existed it could not all be filled immediately.
- f) It was important that a debate was held soon about the possible need to expand certain popular schools.
- g) Headteachers would be sent amended More Open Enrolment (MOE) calculations which would show them alongside the Standard Number.
- h) There was a need to include details of the year seven intake for each school and their implications on admissions for this year and 2003/4.
- i) Clarify section 3.4.3 c) to light of the actual situation at selective schools.
- j) Provide the correct figure for selective girls surplus places at 3.4.3 b) which is not 40%
- k) The reference in 3.44 c) should be to Year 7.
- l) Evidence should be contained in the plan to back up the view that there are insufficient selective boys places.
- m) More commentary in the plan should be added to the non-selective section to add an area analysis. i.e. there may be surplus places at one school but this does not necessarily mean that they would be taken by pupils who have been refused admission to a school on the other side of Medway.
- n) Officers should contact colleagues at Kent County Council to obtain information about the potential effect that a new secondary school in Sittingbourne would have on school places in Medway.
- o) Reference should be made in the section on Hoo to emphasise that new housing would have a knock on effect that pupils currently attending Hundred of Hoo from Strood may not be able to do so in the future.
- p) Including post 16 numbers in Annex L
- q) Emphasising that 3.5.2 refers to 16-19 year olds only.
- r) Amend 3.5.3 a) to highlight that all sixth forms co-operate with other post – 16 providers.

4.8 At the Committee meeting on 25 June 2002, members considered the group's findings as outlined above. Concern was raised by some members that the plan suggested that there were insufficient boys selective boys places, while there was a lack of evidence in the Plan to back this up. It was agreed that consideration of the Plan would be deferred, pending the receipt of further information and that no recommendations would be forwarded to the Cabinet meeting on 9 July for approval.

4.9 Officers agreed to send further information to members on this issue prior to this meeting so that the Committee can finalise its views.

## **5 CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

5.1 Further details of responses to the consultation exercise will be given at the meeting.

## **6 CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 Given the length and complexity of the draft plan, it is felt that a review of the document through a member task group was the most appropriate method of scrutinising the plan. Given that this is a yearly plan, it is likely that it will develop into a fuller and more comprehensive document each year.

## **7 DIRECTORS COMMENTS**

- 7.1 The meetings of the task group have produced many challenging and constructive comments about both the methodology and content of the draft School Organisation Plan. The revisions that have been made as a consequence will undoubtedly help to make it a more robust and accessible plan.

## **8 LEGAL AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Several of the recommendations if implemented will give rise to specific legal implications which can be addressed at the appropriate time.
- 8.2 There are no specific financial implications arising out of this report.

## **9 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Draft School Organisation Plan 2002 – 2006

Reports to Youth and Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 9 May 2002 and 25 June 2002

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