

## Report to the Cabinet

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 2 December 2021

### Report of the Head of Service - Asset Management

#### Part I

Electoral Division affected:  
(All Divisions);

**Corporate Priorities:**  
Delivering better services;  
Protecting our environment;  
Supporting economic growth;  
Caring for the vulnerable;

### School Place Provision Strategy 2022 to 2025

(Appendix 'A' refers)

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#### Brief Summary

As the education authority for Lancashire, the county council has a range of statutory duties to fulfil. Our ambition to provide good access, quality and outcomes in education are set out in the Lancashire Education Strategy 2022-2025 which is also being considered at this meeting.

The School Planning Strategy 2022-25 delivers on this ambition with the aim to provide 'the right number of school places, in the right areas, at the right time to meet need'. It sets out a series of priorities for improvement, areas of growth and reduction in the need for school places, and areas for future action. The strategy can be found at Appendix 'A'.

#### Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to:

- (i) Consider the priorities for improvement and areas for action referred in the draft School Place Provision Strategy 2022-25, as set out at Appendix 'A'.
- (ii) Approve the adoption of the School Place Provision Strategy 2022-25.

## **Detail**

There are 628 schools in Lancashire, of which 482 are primary schools and 82 are secondary schools, which provide mainstream school places across the county. The School Place Provision Strategy 2022 to 2025 is primarily concerned with ensuring that there are enough places available at these schools, identifying where more are needed, and where, in some cases, a planned reduction in places is necessary.

As of October 2021, there were 175,701 pupils attending Lancashire schools, of which 101,399 attended primary schools and 67,694 attended a secondary school. At a population level, we know that:

- birth rates have fallen 6.5% over the last 5 years, and 9% over the last 10 years;
- higher number of pupils are moving into secondary phase, which is creating pressure on places;
- there are pockets of growth in primary planning areas, mainly led by housing development and in some areas by inward migration;
- we have an emerging challenge of surplus places as primary numbers in some areas reduce.

Whilst, we perform well overall in meeting the need for school places, we know that in some areas of the county, we need to develop a more innovative approach to make sure there are enough places available in a shorter, to respond effectively to growth in pupil numbers. This is reflected in the strategy as priorities for improvement in our approach, and will require closer collaboration with our school partners, other responsible bodies and governing bodies to meet the need for places.

### **Priorities for improvement**

The priorities for improvement set out in the strategy support delivery of the county council's Corporate Priorities.

In our efforts to provide better services, the strategy sets out the ambition to make school planning information more easily available. It offers a more responsive approach to local context, where the growth in pupil numbers exceeds forecast numbers, and seeks to develop a better understanding of the impact that a shortage or surplus of places may have on local schools. The strategy gives a commitment to collaborative working with schools across the county, responsible bodies and the Department for Education.

In caring for the vulnerable, the strategy commits to an improvement in the rate at which Children Missing Education are able to access a school place, and introduces a new approach to supporting children and families who are new to east Lancashire, as they transition into our schools.

In protecting the environment, the strategy seeks to deliver sustainable school accommodation within the scope of expansion projects.

Finally, the strategy has a role to play in supporting economic growth and sets out a commitment to engage with major employers, to understand the potential impact of their workforce strategies, and to work closely with local planning authorities in our efforts to secure developer contributions towards education infrastructure and additional places. Built projects will follow Department for Education guidance on standardised design, and the county council will seek opportunities to renew the school estate, through a greater focus on new schools where appropriate.

## **Consultations**

The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee discussed the draft strategy on 9 November 2021 and there were no specific additional recommendations.

Where delivery of the School Place Provision Strategy 2022 to 2025 requires the addition or removal of school places, the appropriate legislation and Department for Education guidance will be followed and, where appropriate, statutory consultation would apply.

## **Implications:**

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

## **Risk management**

## **Financial**

The School Place Provision Strategy 2022 to 2025 should be considered alongside the Capital Strategy for Schools which is reviewed annually.

## **Legal**

This strategy supports the county council's statutory duty to provide good access, quality and outcomes in education, through the provision of sufficient, good quality school places.

Lancashire County Council's statutory obligations in relation to school place commissioning are set out in the School Place Provision Strategy. An agreed School Place Provision Strategy will inform the future planning of school places and set a collaborative framework for discussions with schools and other stakeholders.

## **Equality and Cohesion**

This strategy aims to:

- provide sufficient school places for every child in Lancashire who wants one
- promote high educational standards
- provide fair access and equal opportunity
- promote the fulfilment of every child's potential
- promote diversity in provision

- expand popular and successful schools, and
- increase opportunity for parents and carers to access schools of their choice

The School Place Provision Strategy 2022 to 2025 will impact most protected characteristics groups, but will have its greatest impact on the age (children and young people) protected characteristic. There may also be particular impacts on pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, some of whom will be included in the disability protected characteristic group and ethnicity protected characteristic group, based on specific actions in the Strategy to meet particular needs. However, it is anticipated that the impact of the Schools Place Provision Strategy on protected characteristics groups should be broadly positive, and will contribute positively towards the Public Sector Equality Duty's general aims of advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between protected characteristics groups.

Where specific projects are being considered for individual schools, individual Equality Impact Assessments are carried out as part of the process, to ensure the county council can meet its Public Sector Equality Duty responsibilities, and that any adverse impacts identified as part of the process are fully considered and, where possible, acted on.

### **Property Asset Management**

This strategy supports delivery of the Asset Management Strategy (Property), through adherence to good estate management guidelines set out by the Department for Education.

### **List of Background Papers**

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
None		
Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate		
N/A		