

Report to Cabinet



Date of Meeting	29 th September 2020
Portfolio	Cabinet Member for Children's Services
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Public/Private Document	Public
	Appendix 1 - Private

Secondary School Places 2021 and 2022

Executive Summary

- 1.1 Rochdale Council is awaiting delivery of two new mainstream Secondary schools that are being delivered by the Department for Education, DfE, through the Free school programme. The DfE will not guarantee when the schools will open until planning consent for the schools is guaranteed and until a date for practical completion is set.
- 1.2 Until that date the council must work to meet its statutory obligation to offer every child living in the borough a place in Secondary school.
- 1.3 The Schools Organisation and Development Team are working closely with the DfE to deliver the new schools as soon as possible but must also plan for the scenario where any new school places are delayed. This report details these plans.

Recommendation

- 2.1 That Cabinet approve the release of funds from Basic Need capital funding to deliver additional places at Wardle Academy for 2021 and 2022 as detailed in appendix 1.
- 2.2 That Cabinet recognise that the delivery of our much needed Secondary schools through the central government Free school programme leaves the council dependent on timings and decisions by central government with regards to the delivery of those schools, and consequently puts at risk delivery of its statutory duty to offer a school place to every child living in the borough.
- 2.3 That Cabinet approve the release of funds from Basic Need capital funding to meet the need to deliver 120 additional places for September 2021 in existing borough Secondary schools, as detailed in appendix 1.
- 2.4 That Cabinet approve the release of funds from Basic Need capital funding to support the delivery of the new Edgar Wood academy, if DfE deem that the

early opening in temporary accommodation is deliverable for 2021.

Reason for Recommendation

- 3.1 The council has a statutory duty to offer every pupil living in the borough, who applies, a Secondary school place. Where the council offers a school place that is over the statutory “safe walking distance” for the age of that child the council is required to provide free school transport. Because bus transport in the area is provided through Transport for Greater Manchester, any child offered a school place, which is over the statutory distance criteria, is offered a free bus pass that is provided from council funds. The council receives no central government funding for school bus transport.
- 3.2 The council does receive Basic Need funding to provide additional school places for both permanent and temporary school building expansions and bulge classes. The allocation of Basic Need funding from central government is reported annually to the council Cabinet and the report this year was approved on 31st March 2020.
- 3.3 A shortage of Secondary school places is forecast for 2021 and 2022 intakes, and for school intakes in every following year until the time that the two new mainstream school are delivered.

Key Points for Consideration

4. Contingency plans for Secondary school intake were last reported to Cabinet on 26th February 2019. In those plans schools were asked to volunteer to take additional children for 2019, and for 2020 all schools were asked to take an additional 10 places each in order to meet the forecast shortfall of 120 places for September 2020 intake. Additional capacity delivered through the request for 2020 intake, was funded through Basic Need where capital works were required to meet need.
 - 4.1 For September 2020 our existing Secondary schools offered 60 additional places in 5 of our Secondary schools. 4 of these schools had already been extended in recent years through addition of extra classroom spaces to create extra forms of entry (FE). St Annes Academy also increased its year 7 intake by 30 children (1 FE), and raised its Pupil Admission Number (PAN) to 180 pupils, so that the school will move eventually from a 750 place school to a 900 place school. They consulted on the move to close their sixth form centre and raise their PAN in May 2019. The total number of additional places thus delivered was 90 for September 2020 intake.
 - 4.2 At the point of writing, the allocation of places to applicants for Secondary school showed that all borough schools were full (or close to) except for Oulder Hill Community School and Newhouse Academy (formerly Siddal Moor Sports College). Some change in on-roll numbers both prior and post school opening date is normal as parents and pupils change their plans. The schools Admissions team work to offer places at preferred schools whenever they can. On offer day 87.8% of Secondary first preference offers were met, down from

88.8% the year before.

- 4.3 Pupil forecasts for 2021 and 2022 by Township are shown in the table below. Red text denotes a shortage of places

Township Area	Places Available	2021 Intake forecast	2022 Intake forecast
Heywood	360*	348	387
Middleton	660	774	798
Pennines	510	589	587
Rochdale	1320	1243	1236

* Places in Heywood include Newhouse Academy with an admission number of 210 (which relates to its building capacity rather than its formal PAN, which is currently 270).

- 4.4 Both Middleton township and Pennines areas have had significant rises in pupil numbers and significant numbers of new houses. Both areas see a net in-flow of children at Secondary transition; the schools are popular and mostly oversubscribed. Both areas also see net in-flows from other boroughs. Admissions criteria do not recognise formal borough boundaries but places are offered by admissions authorities on a measure of distance from home to school.

Pennines

- 4.5 The forecast for places in Pennines is steady, from this intake in 2020 through to 2022, with a similar shortages of approximately 80 places per year. The next rise in pupil numbers in the area is due in 2023 for Secondary admissions and is the cohort that will start year 4 now. Without the new school the area will see a forecasted place deficit of 133 places in 2023.
- 4.6 Cohorts in Pennines Secondary schools have risen slowly but steadily, and have been oversubscribed for several years. For the last two years a number of Pennines families have been offered places in Rochdale Township schools. Admission authority criteria do not recognise township boundaries in their pupil distance rankings. In Pennines 18 pupils in 2018/19, and 13 pupils in 2019/20 have been offered free bus travel due to being over the statutory distance.
- 4.7 Extra capacity has been provided previously by a permanent building extension at Hollingworth Academy and additional places have been offered at Wardle Academy in most of the preceding years recently.
- 4.8 It is looking increasingly likely that the new Secondary school building in Littleborough will not be completed for the 2022 intake. School building completion is considered to take about 24 months. The Star Academies Trust has said they stand ready to work to deliver the school as soon as possible once DfE have completed their initial site feasibility investigations. Star Academies have also indicated that they favour opening early in temporary accommodation if possible, but this is at the discretion of the DfE. The local authority must be prepared to meet its obligations to parents and children in Pennines under every eventuality.

- 4.9 The Watergrove Trust (previously Wardle Academy Trust) has now offered to create an additional 100 places over two years at Wardle Academy by modifications within its existing structure. This will increase the admission number to the school from 240 to 290 per year, as bulge classes for 2021 and 2022. Wardle Academy is oversubscribed, and received 289 first preference applications, and 578 total preference applications for places in 2020. The trust is asking for match funding from the council to complete the required internal modifications. The Basic Need funding being requested from the council is detailed in Appendix 1. The request meets a significant need for places in the area and will mean less children travelling too far to school. The costs will be in line with previous Basic Need places created by the council.

Middleton

- 4.10 Primary schools in Middleton have been under significant pupil place pressures for some time. Cohort growth is found in every year group and over the Primary years the increase is approximately 10%. So with the roughly 600 pupils at Reception year, the growth leads to 660 pupils by year 6. Some year groups have seen growth rates much higher. Last year's year-6 cohort had 618 pupils (January 2020 census), while the year 6 cohort starting this September had 693 pupils at the same census. There are currently 660 Secondary school places on offer in year 7 for 2021.
- 4.11 For this (2020) intake an additional permanent increase in the admission number at St Annes Academy and 180 places were offered. At Cardinal Langley RC Secondary 220 places were offered (including a temporary 10 place increase). At Middleton Technology School 270 places were offered. Consequently with 618 pupils in the Primary school (year 6) cohort locally and with 680 places offered, at the time of writing, it looked like all places locally will be filled. This is a 10% in-flow in pupil numbers at Secondary transition.
- 4.12 Historically schools in Middleton see anywhere between 5 and 15% increase in pupil numbers at Secondary transition. Both Middleton Technology School and Cardinal Langley recruit from across borough boundaries. Cardinal Langley Secondary school recruits on faith criteria and Middleton Technology School sits close enough to the Oldham borough border to see significant numbers applying from out of the borough. Both these schools are oversubscribed. The Middleton area, because of its boundary, is also impacted by shortages and surpluses in school places at out of borough schools. For this reason the forecasted place numbers must always be taken with some caution. All local GM boroughs are under similar Secondary place shortages currently.
- 4.13 The forecasted shortage of places in Middleton is 114 place for 2021 and 138 places for 2022. These shortages are calculated from an expected 10% increase in pupils on transition. In some previous years this rate has been higher.
- 4.14 All the Secondary schools in Middleton have now had expansions to increase their pupil admission number: St Anne's (+30), Cardinal Langley (+30) and Middleton Technology (+60). Both St Anne's and Cardinal Langley have also taken additional pupil increases several times in previous year groups.

- 4.15 In neighbouring Heywood, Holy Family Secondary school has also has a building extension to increase its admission number (+30) and taken additional children in other intake years and Newhouse Academy (formerly Siddal Moor Sports College) was in negotiation on a building extension which, because of its conversion to Academy, has now been put on hold. Siddal Moor Sports College did increase its pupil admission number at the request of the council and offered 30 additional places in 2018 and 60 additional places in 2019 and 2020. Because the building extension is now on hold, the council is aware that while the official PAN is 270, the academy must also safeguard the health and safety aspects of the school accommodation for its pupils. Academy schools are under the direct control of the Secretary of State for Education through the Regional School Commissioners Office and are not under local authority control.
- 4.16 Contingency planning for the additional places needed for September 2021 in Middleton is needed. The council is working closely with the DfE to create additional capacity through the early opening of the Edgar Wood Academy. Altus Education Partnership trust (Rochdale Sixth Form College trust), who successfully bid to open the new school, have said they fully support the efforts of the council and are committed to supporting local parents to find the best solution for parents needing school places for their children in Middleton.
- 4.17 The current timeline is for the Edgar Wood Academy permanent school building to be ready for the 2022 intake when it will offer 180 places in that intake. At this early stage that timeline could however shift. An outline plan has been submitted to the local planning authority for the permanent site at Birch / Bowlee, and with the delivery of the scheme now progressing, if no significant obstacles are encountered and if planning consent is given, the opening date of September 2022 is eminently achievable. Gaining planning consent for the school is at the discretion of the local planning authority who are constrained to follow both procedure and the law.
- 4.18 For 2021, if early opening of the Edgar Wood Academy is agreed by DfE, a temporary site must be found and a temporary school built. Statistics by Schools Week media (20th September 2019) has suggested up to 50% of new schools are currently being delivered in temporary school buildings. Altus Education Partnership and the Edgar Wood Academy team have stated their desire is to open an Outstanding school from day 1, and they stand ready to provide an excellent education to Middleton children who apply for their new school when it opens. Contributions towards infrastructure for the temporary site is also being requested (appendix 1) in this report in order that any site matters falling outside of the DfE remit can be delivered in a timely manner.
- 4.19 If the new school opens in Middleton for September 2021 then 120 places will be offered and this will meet the forecasted need. If DfE decide that the school cannot be opened early then existing schools in Rochdale are being asked, once again, to create additional places. With the current Covid situation, this is a uniquely difficult time for the council to be asking its Secondary schools to create more additional space to meet the forecasted pupil place need. Consequently, the Director of Children's Services is asking all its Secondary

schools to consider what additional places they feel they can now offer to Rochdale families needing places. Funding from Basic Need will be offered to schools to fund any building works necessary as detailed in appendix 1.

Alternatives Considered

- 4.20 The council must meet its statutory duty to offer all borough pupils a place in Secondary schools and this document details the preferred option of the early opening of the Edgar Wood Academy and the backup plan for additional capacity.

Costs and Budget Summary

- 5.1 Costs of any capital works associated with creating additional capacity at existing Secondary schools will be met by the Basic Need allocation from DfE. This includes both works at Wardle academy and further schemes brought forward to meet need for 2021.
- 5.2 Where applicable, schools offering additional pupil places to meet the LA's statutory need may also be eligible for additional revenue funding from the Dedicated Schools Grant. The policy and funding available for basic need growth has to be agreed with Schools Forum.
- 5.3 It is expected that some costs could be requested by DfE from the council if early opening in temporary accommodation of the Edgar Wood academy goes ahead and this will be funded through Basic Need as it is required to provide additional school place capacity.

Risk and Policy Implications

- 6.1 This reports details a plan to support the early opening of the Edgar Wood Academy to meet the forecast for school places in September 2021. It also details the plan to meet the place need, in the event that the new school does not open. If the new school does not open and sufficient places are not created then there is a risk that the council will fail in its statutory duty to offer a place to every child living in the borough a Secondary school place. 10 of the 12 Secondary schools in Rochdale are their own Admission authority i.e. the council does not have control over their admissions processes.
- 6.2 Provision of sufficient Secondary school places, within the new school buildings that are being delivered through the centrally managed Free school programme, are not under control of the local authority, but because the statutory duty to provide places resides with the local authority then consequently the local authority needs to be ready to work with local partners to meet the needs of its residents if required.

Consultation

- 7.1 In order to open the new Edgar Wood Academy the Altus Education Partnership trust need to run a statutory consultation to seek stakeholder views.

- 7.2 Any temporary school accommodation that meets the criteria is required to go through the statutory consultation process.
- 7.3 Any additional capacity at Wardle Academy must be agreed with the Watergrove Trust governing board. The trust is an independent body and must abide by DfE regulations with respect to academy processes.

Background Papers	Place of Inspection
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