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| Report Title: | Options for increased capacity at Newlands Girls' School |
| Contains Confidential or Exempt Information? | NO - Part I |
| Member reporting: | Cllr Natasha Airey, Lead Member for Education |
| Meeting and Date: | Cabinet - 26 June 2018 |
| Responsible Officer(s): | Kevin McDaniel, Director of Children's Services |
| Wards affected: | All Maidenhead wards |

REPORT SUMMARY

1. Newlands Girls' School was unable to accommodate all first preference requests for September 2018, with families living more than 2.133 miles from the school missing out. Several of those families live in Oldfield ward and have raised concerns that they are unfairly treated by the admission arrangements for secondary school. Whilst there is merit in the complaint, the borough believes that any changes to address this will simply move the disadvantage to other families. The option of random allocation does exist, but this reduces predictability for all families in the area.
2. The Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) is considering the complaint and all admitting authorities [*the Academy secondary schools in Maidenhead*] are awaiting the OSA decision before considering any changes to their arrangements.
3. Adding more places to Newlands can reduce the effect of this situation however there are sufficient school places planned until 2021. This means there is no basic need requirement for an expansion and any immediate expansion would thus be at the expense of other schools and require local capital funding from the council.
4. The Newlands school site is currently two-thirds of the size expected for the current number of pupils and any onsite expansion will be complex to deliver; expensive on a per new place basis; and likely to be contested by Sport England. Earlier feasibility work suggests that expansion on the existing site to 220 pupils per year (from the current 192) could cost in the range £12.6m - £15.8m, at a cost per pupil which is 4-5 times the current national benchmark figure. This high cost includes replacing a proportion of the existing building to support the extra space and providing temporary accommodation during the works.
5. Newlands has been included in Batch 2 of the ongoing feasibility work to determine what is practicable on the site, up to and including total rebuild options, which will feed into the longer term planning of secondary places in the Borough. The cost of this is included in the current allocation of £1.3m.

1. DETAILS OF RECOMMENDATION(S)

RECOMMENDATION: That Cabinet notes the report and:

- i) **Awaits the outcome of the Office of the Schools Adjudicator and feasibility work.**

2. REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S) AND OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The Royal Borough has been considering options for the possible expansion of Newlands Girls' School. This follows the offer of Year 7 places for September 2018, where 38 Maidenhead girls did not get their first preference choice for the school.
- 2.2 In addition, residents connected to Oldfield Primary School have submitted an objection to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA), stating that the admissions arrangements are unfair to children, particularly girls, living in the Oldfield designated area. The objection has been lodged against Newlands Girls' School who, as an academy, are their own admitting authority. A decision is expected this summer.

Demand for school places

- 2.3 Additional secondary school places have already been provided in Maidenhead to meet rising demand. Current allocations for September 2018 Year 7 are about 25 below projection, as higher numbers than average continue to transfer to selective schools in neighbouring authorities. 88% of families secured their first preference secondary school, which is the highest level recorded since 2010.
- 2.4 An additional 30 places will become available at Furze Platt Senior School in September 2019 as part of the existing planned works, and it is forecast that there will be sufficient places to provide a 5% surplus in 2019 and 2020 without further expansion. The annual pupil projections are reported to Cabinet as part of the scheduled schools places report due this summer.

School admissions

- 2.5 Newlands Girls' School is an academy, and sets its own admissions criteria in line with the statutory School Admissions Code¹.
- 2.6 The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead has no direct control over the admissions criteria for secondary school places in the town as the schools are all academies. There was a major review of the school designated areas in 2009 that, over the course of a number of years, resulted in five of the six secondary schools sharing a single designated area. The sixth school, Holyport College, has operated without a designated area policy, but has now introduced one for September 2019 to cover the Bray Parish area.

¹ [School Admissions Code](#), December 2014, Department for Education.

- 2.7 Although there is variation in exactly how allocation is actually derived, the main categories for admission to all of the secondary schools, in order of priority, are:
- Special Educational Needs.
 - Children in Care.
 - Social and Medical needs.
 - Designated area siblings.
 - Designated area children.
 - Siblings
 - Feeder school children.
- 2.8 Some of the schools also have staff and/or founder children criteria, although generally very few children are admitted under these criteria. Holyport College gives some priority to pupil premium children, whilst Altwood (a Church of England school) also has a religious criterion. Neither Desborough nor Holyport Colleges have a feeder school criterion.
- 2.9 The schools tend to use distance as a way of prioritising applicants within each criteria. This, inevitably, means that children living further away from their preferred school are less likely to get in. There are exceptions at Cox Green and Furze Platt Schools, where a priority linked feeder tiebreak is used to prioritise designated area children attending schools in the Walthams and the Cookhams respectively, ahead of other designated area children (who may live closer).

Applications to Newlands Girls' School for 2018.

- 2.10 Newlands Girls' School has 192 places available for Year 7. For September 2018, 244 applicants put the school as a first preference, including 210 from within the designated area. 38 first preference applicants living in the designated area were not offered a place². Most of these live either on the eastern side of Maidenhead or in the villages. Only one out-of-borough child was admitted, under the social/medical need criteria.
- 2.11 The last child to be admitted to Newlands (excluding the social/medical need) lived 1.8 miles from the school. To put this in context, the Town Hall is 1.7 miles from Newlands.
- 2.12 Since the places were allocated on National Offer Day (1st March 2018), the normal operation of the waiting lists means that a number of children have not taken up places, freeing up space for other applicants. The distance of those admitted now stands at 2.133 miles from the school.
- 2.13 The admission appeals for September 2018 heard 13 cases, with 2 granted on social medical grounds.

Potential changes to the admissions criteria for Newlands' Girls School

- 2.14 The OSA has asked the Royal Borough to comment on the objection to Newlands Girls' School's admissions arrangements. The objectors have suggested that children attending Oldfield Primary School could be given

² As per the statutory co-ordinated admissions process, children with lower preferences for Newlands, but higher priority under the admissions criteria were also offered places at the school. This will include children who, for example, might live close to Newlands but who put an out-borough grammar as a first preference, but didn't get in. They would then have been offered places at Newlands over applicants living further away from the school.

greater priority for Newlands Girls' School by making Oldfield a priority linked feeder. This would mean that any girls' attending Oldfield (and living in Newlands' designated area) would get places at Newlands behind designated area siblings, but ahead of other designated area applicants.

- 2.15 The borough has examined the admissions arrangements and concluded that this would indeed benefit Oldfield girls. We also note that a similar measure would also be needed for Holyport CE Primary School and for Braywick Court School, as all three schools are located in the same area. This has the future potential to raise the priority for all of the girls in an annual cohort of 150 pupils which we would model as 75 girls before allowing for selective school preferences.
- 2.16 Unfortunately, this measure would certainly mean that other girls living in the designated area for the school would not get a place. These children would live closer to Newlands, and would very likely object in turn to the predictable reduction in places resulting from any such change.
- 2.17 One alternative could be to introduce a partial lottery system where (for instance) the places available to designated area children are awarded through random allocation. This has only been adopted in a small number of areas nationally, and there is no clear evidence that it is a better option than other arrangements. It does, however, make the allocation of places less predictable for more families.
- 2.18 It is the borough's view, therefore, that there is no solution via the admissions rules that will address the issues experienced with Newlands this year without disadvantaging other residents. The borough has met with the secondary admission authority representatives to consider the issue, and they agree with this analysis. Only an increase in the number of places, by 44³ to 236, would have enabled all Maidenhead 1st preferences to get in.
- 2.19 The Admission Authorities have agreed that no further action is taken in relation to school admissions arrangements in Maidenhead until the OSA has reached a decision. In any case, only the OSA can now change the admissions arrangements for Newlands Girls' School for September 2019. Any changes that the school themselves decide to make could only take effect from September 2020, following public consultation this winter (as set out in the School Admissions Code).
- 2.20 The OSA's judgement may also make a wider consultation on some or all secondary school admissions criteria desirable. If there is a need for substantial change, there may be a benefit to residents if options are considered through a single co-ordinated consultation run by the borough. This would need to come to Cabinet in November 2018. This is only likely to be necessary if the OSA requires significant changes to several school admissions policies.

Expanding Newlands Girls' School on its current site

- 2.21 Newlands Girls' School has recently expanded from 186 to 192 children per year group. The further expansion of Newlands Girls' School generally scores

³ 44 includes the 38 1st preferences, plus a number of lower preferences who would still have priority over some of the 1st preference children.

highly in the borough's school expansion prioritisation matrix, particularly in terms of Key Stage 4 attainment/value added, Ofsted and oversubscription.

- 2.22 There is, however, a significant issue with the site itself, which is roughly two-thirds the size it needs to be for its current pupil numbers. The site is 52,912m², and should be 76,200m². Any further expansion would exacerbate this shortage of land.
- 2.23 A small extension is currently being built to accommodate the 192 children per year group, at a cost of just under £1m. This comprises two additional classrooms and some additional dining/hall space.
- 2.24 The borough and the school have considered how to achieve a larger expansion three times over the past decade; initially as part of the old Building Schools for the Future programme; again as part of the consideration of the first phases (2017 and 2018 intakes) of the borough's Secondary School Expansion Programme, and more recently as a potential solution for Phase 3 (2019 intake). Changes to parental preference mean that more places are not currently required for Phase 3, as significantly more parents are applying for grammar school places.
- 2.25 In 2016, a feasibility study was carried out to create a long-term masterplan for the school. This considered ways to address the existing poor accommodation at the school, whilst also allowing expansion by a form of entry to 220 children per year group. The masterplan envisaged the replacement of many of the numerous, older, modular buildings with two new blocks and the creation of additional parking/drop-off at the front of the school.
- 2.26 Restrictions within the site, and the need to keep the school operating during the build, meant that the scheme would have required several phases and a considerable number of temporary classrooms. The cost estimate in 2016, which includes an estimate for fees but excludes furniture, equipment and any abnormalities, was £12.6m. When part of the first phase (i.e. the scheme currently being constructed) was tendered in 2017, the cost was 25% higher than forecast, which could suggest a £15.8m cost for the whole scheme on 2017 prices.
- 2.27 This is approximately £75,238 per place (£15.8m divided by 210 pupils), which compares extremely poorly to the latest national benchmark figure of £18,670 per place (based on a national average cost per secondary place for extension projects of £15,822⁴, multiplied by a 1.18 location to reflect higher construction costs locally). Even without a 25% increase, the cost per place would be £60,000 (£12.6m divided by 210 pupils).
- 2.28 Any additional pupil numbers would exacerbate the shortage of outdoor space at the school, making the agreement of Sport England harder to obtain at the planning stage.

Rebuilding the whole school and expanding it on its current site

- 2.29 Cabinet considered a report on the likely demand for school places resulting from the emerging Borough Local Plan in November 2017. This set out the

⁴ Page 20, [National School Delivery Cost Benchmarking](#), February 2018, Hampshire County Council, East Riding of Yorkshire Council and the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

need for up to 11.3 FE of additional places at Year 7 in Maidenhead, some of which would need to come from the further expansion of existing schools.

- 2.30 Based on a desktop exercise looking at site size only, Newlands Girls' School's site could potentially accommodate more children through the use of more multi-storey buildings and all-weather pitches. Cabinet approved a phased programme of feasibility studies to examine expansion options at all 65 borough schools in more detail. Phase one has concentrated on Maidenhead primary schools, and Newlands Girls' has been included in Batch 2, which is due to start shortly.
- 2.31 It is likely, however, that the school would need a near complete rebuild to make the best use of space. In addition, all-weather pitches could prove to be expensive to maintain in the long-term: the enclosed residential setting means that planning permission might not be granted for floodlights, which would in turn reduce any income stream from evening lettings.
- 2.32 A complete rebuild could cost up to £27.4m, based on the national benchmark figure for school extensions and a PAN increase of 18 to 210. No national benchmark figure is yet available for completely new schools. Elsewhere in the South East, however, two secondary schools have recently opened at a cost of £34m for 6FE, and £50m for 9 FE. The higher costs reflect in part the extra expense of a brand new site, as well as the inclusion of £1.3m and £1.9m respectively for furniture, equipment and IT. A rebuild on the current site would, however, need to factor in the cost of phasing the project and of providing temporary accommodation during the build period.
- 2.33 A rebuild could, of course, address any condition concerns around the existing accommodation, although these are the responsibility of the academy trust and Education Skills and Funding Agency (EFSA), rather than the local authority.

Other options

Using an alternative site as a temporary solution

- 2.34 Issues around phasing and providing temporary accommodation on site could be avoided if Newlands Girls' School could be decanted to an alternative site during a complete rebuild. No empty school site exists, however, which means that any alternative would almost certainly require large numbers of expensive temporary classrooms and other facilities. A temporary move would also be very disruptive to pupils' education..

Using an alternative site as a permanent solution

- 2.35 Only one site has been identified through the Borough Local Plan process for the purposes of a new secondary school. This is at Maidenhead Golf Course, where the borough's Infrastructure Delivery Plan states that 7 FE of new secondary provision will need be provided.
- 2.36 There has previously been discussion around the potential for relocating both Desborough College and Newlands Girls' to this site. Even as a compact site school, however, this could be difficult to achieve whilst providing 2,000 new dwellings at the desired density on the whole site.

- 2.37 Newland's Girls' School could, however, be potentially relocated to this on its own, providing an increase in places (210 places per year) and new accommodation. As the pupils would not be on the new site until it was ready to open, there would be no issues with phasing or temporary accommodation. The vacated site could then be redesigned and rebuilt whilst empty, ahead of being opened to meet new demand.
- 2.38 The major issue with this is that Newlands Girls' School would again be close to the edge of town, potentially leaving a different group of Maidenhead residents with limited admissions priority. The borough would also have the cost of building two secondary schools, rather than one, although any options to provide more spaces for Newlands look disproportionately expensive. This approach could produce eight forms of entry, and this would still leave the borough needing to expand other schools in the town, if the maximum expected demand materialised.
- 2.39 Any such scheme would be several years away at the earliest, given the golf course timetable, and a new secondary school can take two to three years to complete.
- 2.40 Over the next few years, the borough will need to develop its strategy for providing new secondary places on the golf course site. This strategy will be partly informed by the outcome of the feasibility works for expansion at the existing schools. It is recommended that this strategy should consider the possibilities of:
- A permanent relocation of Newlands Girls' School to the golf course site.
 - A temporary relocation of Newlands Girls' School to the golf course site whilst its existing site is rebuilt.
- 2.41 The strategy will also need to consider aspects such as the school admissions arrangements and designated areas, and will likely need to be the subject of public consultation.

Options

Table 1: Options arising from this report.

| Option | Comments |
|---|--|
| Await the Office of the Schools' Adjudicator's judgement in relation to the admissions arrangements for Newlands Girls' School. This is recommended. | Newlands Girls' School will be required by law to implement whatever changes are decided by the OSA. It is possible that the OSA will recommend wider changes, and the borough and local schools will need to address those. |
| Consider opportunities for Newlands Girls' School using the golf course site as a temporary or permanent home as part of the wider strategy for secondary school places in Maidenhead. This is recommended. | The likelihood of a new secondary school on the golf course provides some opportunities which should be explored more fully, potentially leading to public consultation on options in due course. |

3. KEY IMPLICATIONS

Table 2: Key Implications

| Outcome | Unmet | Met | Exceeded | Significantly Exceeded | Date of delivery |
|---------|-------|-----|----------|------------------------|------------------|
| None. | | | | | |

4. FINANCIAL DETAILS / VALUE FOR MONEY

- 4.1 There are no additional financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report. The cost of carrying out feasibility works as part of Batch 2 of the feasibility works programme (see paragraph **Error! Reference source not found.**) has already been budgeted for.

Table 3: Financial Impact of report's recommendations

| REVENUE COSTS | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Additional total | £0 | £0 | £0 |
| Reduction | £0 | £0 | £0 |
| Net Impact | £0 | £0 | £0 |

| CAPITAL COSTS | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Additional total | £0 | £0 | £0 |
| Reduction | £0 | £0 | £0 |
| Net Impact | £0 | £0 | £0 |

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Provision of school places

- 5.1 Local authorities are under a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places in their area. This is set out in the Education Act 1996, Section 14, subsections 1 and 2. The borough receives the 'Basic Need' grant from the government for this purpose, which can be spent on new school places at all types of school (Academy (including free schools), Community, Voluntary Aided and Voluntary Controlled).

- 5.2 There is no legal duty to provide any particular level of surplus places.

School admissions

- 5.3 The School Admissions Code 2014 is issued under Section 84 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. The purpose of the code is to ensure that all school places for maintained schools excluding maintained special schools and all academies are allocated and offered in an open and fair way.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

Table 4: Impact of risk and mitigation

| Risks | Uncontrolled risk | Controls | Controlled risk |
|--|-------------------|----------|-----------------|
| None arising from the recommendations. | | | |

7. POTENTIAL IMPACTS

- 7.1 There are currently no implications arising from the recommendations in this report with regards to staffing/workforce, sustainability, Equalities, Human Rights and community cohesion, accommodation, property or assets.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Officers have met with the Maidenhead secondary school Headteachers to discuss the objection to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator.
- 8.2 Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel meets on Tuesday 17th July, and its comments will be reported to Cabinet.

9. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Table 5: Implementation timetable

| Date | Details |
|---------------|--|
| Summer 2018 | Receive judgement from the Office of the Schools' Adjudicator. |
| Summer 2018 | Carry out Batch 2 feasibility works, including Newlands Girls' School. |
| Autumn 2018 | Discuss options for changes to school admissions arrangements with schools (if required by OSA). |
| November 2018 | Report to Cabinet on any options for changes to school admissions arrangements for public consultation (if required by OSA). |

- 9.1 Implementation date if not called in: Immediately.

10. APPENDICES

Contained in paper copies

- None.

Electronic only

- None.

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- Admissions arrangements for Maidenhead secondary schools.
- [School Admissions Code](#), Department for Education, December 2014.
- [National school delivery cost benchmarking](#), Hampshire, February 2018.
- Delivering New School Places for the Borough Local Plan, Report to Cabinet, November 2017.

12. CONSULTATION (MANDATORY)

| Name of consultee | Post held | Date sent | Commented & returned |
|--------------------------|--|------------------|---------------------------------|
| Cllr Natasha Airey | Lead Member/ Principal Member/Deputy Lead Member | 7/6/2018 | 7/6/2018 |
| Alison Alexander | Managing Director | 7/6/2018 | 7/6/2018 |
| Kevin McDaniel | Director of Children's Services | 7/6/2018 | 7/6/2018 |
| Russell O'Keefe | Strategic Director | | |
| Andy Jeffs | Strategic Director | | |
| Rob Stubbs | Section 151 Officer | | |
| Nikki Craig | Head of HR and Corporate Projects | | |
| Louisa Dean | Communications | | |
| | Other e.g. external | | |

REPORT HISTORY

| | | |
|---|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Decision type: Non-key decision. | Urgency item? No. | To Follow item? No. |
| Report Author: Ben Wright, Education Planning Officer, 01628 796572 | | |

