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To: Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee – 30 June 2021

Subject: Review of the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2021-25

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper:

Summary: This report informs Members of the progress made in implementing the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2021-25 since its adoption by Cabinet in January 2021.

Recommendation(s):

The Children’s, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to note

- the progress achieved and to consider the report prior to the next version of the Commissioning Plan published in November 2021
- the need to review planned capital expenditure on school places (detailed report to follow).

1. Introduction

1.1 In January 2021 Kent County Council published the latest Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2021-25 (KCP). This set out how the County Council, as Strategic Commissioner of Education Provision, will provide sufficient high quality provision across all types and phases of education, in the right locations, to meet the demands of increased pupil numbers and parental preferences. The KCP is updated annually.

1.2 This report reviews the progress made since the KCP’s production. It covers:

- The impact Covid-19 has had on the County Council’s ability to deliver the additional provision planned in the KCP 2021-25.
- A review of forecasting accuracy.
- The progress in implementing the expansion of school places for September 2021 in mainstream and special schools.
- Progress towards our school admissions targets.
- A brief update on the Capital Budget.

1.3 In summary, this Review demonstrates that:

- Covid-19 has continued to impact on the County Council's ability to deliver new school places for September 2021, the mitigation that we need to put in place for September 2021 could cost the County Council in the region of £3.1m.
- For September 2021, we required fewer permanent and temporary places in both the primary and secondary phases than anticipated. We commissioned 0.3FE permanent primary school places, 30 temporary Year R places, 6.5FE permanent secondary school places and 260 temporary Year 7 places.
- The pressure for additional specialist places has been greater than anticipated. 120 places have been commissioned for September 2021 in special schools or specialist resource provisions. The number of places commissioned in the Independent Non-maintained Specialist sector also continues to rise at a significant rate.
- At a Countywide level, our pupil forecasts were very accurate being within the +/-1% target we set ourselves. We over forecast Year R pupils by 0.3% and total primary rolls by 0.5%. Year 7 pupils were over forecast by 0.9% and Year 7-11 over forecast by 0.3%. The detailed forecasting accuracy is set out in section 5.
- As of October 2020, surplus capacity was 11.7% in Year R and 7.6% across all primary school year groups. This is higher than the previous year (11.0% and 6.7% respectively). In some planning groups, high levels of surplus provision are impacting with schools having to restructure. Surplus capacity across the secondary school sector is at 4.1% in Year 7 and at 5.7% across all years. This is a slight increase on the previous year.
- As of National Offer Day 2021, 89.2% of parents secured their 1st preference primary school place for September 2021, this is slightly below the target of 92%. 95.6% secured their 1st or 2nd preference which is above the target of 95%.
- At secondary level 69.7% secured their 1st preference against the target of 76%. 83.8% secured their 1st or 2nd preference which is slightly below the target of 85%.
- There is a need to review the planned capital expenditure as we are reaching a point where the only option for additional places in the both the mainstream and specialist school sectors could be to add new provision with the consequential impact this would have on the Capital Budget in the medium and longer term.

2. The Impact of Covid-19 on the commissioning of school places

2.1 22 separate school projects are in the process of being delivered for the 2021-22 academic year. Since the first lockdown initiated in March 2020, contractors have worked with KCC to ensure any delay is minimal. They have instigated lots of new initiatives to ensure safety on site, and to make sure that any delays can be mitigated. However, there have been delays in planning application committees which has impacted on our plans. We are trying to mitigate any consequential delays to the delivery of new schools and school expansions and any requirements for modular provisions. The Area Education Officers (AEOs) and their teams, alongside colleagues in Property and school leaders have looked at all options to mitigate any delays and ensure that there is sufficient provision to accommodate all pupils. 8 of the 22 projects have been mitigated at nil cost due to the work of AEOs, property and the goodwill of schools. We have had to

programme some modular allowance where schools who are self-delivering projects have encountered delays and therefore require additional accommodation until the project is delivered. In some cases, modular classrooms that were due to be replaced will be kept longer than anticipated. We estimate that the delays due to Covid-19 for the projects due to be delivered in 2021-22 will cost in the region of £3.1m. However, the cost of materials is increasing at a fast rate and could well impact on this figure going forward.

3. Progress in Expanding the Number of School Places

- 3.1 Changes to the number of school places available happen for a variety of reasons. KCC commissions both temporary and permanent places, schools which are their own admissions authorities may offer places above their published admissions numbers (PAN), and temporary places available in one year may not be available in subsequent years.
- 3.2 For admission in September 2021, there were 19,788 Year R places available, 58 more than the previous year. Within the secondary sector 19,908 Year 7 places were available, 489 more than the previous year. Not all the additional places were commissioned by KCC. The ability for schools to self-determine temporary increases above their published admission number without recourse to the Local Authority adds to the complexity of place planning in the medium and longer term.
- 3.3 The pressure for special school places continues to grow. 82 additional places were planned in KCC maintained special schools for September 2021. However, due to the increasing pressure for specialist places some additional provision has been required with 120 additional places being commissioned in our maintained schools. The increasing number of places commissioned in Independent Non-maintained Specialist Provision shows no signs of slowing down. As of January 2021, this totalled 1,266 places, an increase of 191 places from January 2020. This is an increase of 18% over the year. 552 of these independent placements were for ASD and 475 for SEMH.
- 3.4 Figure 3.1 summarises new primary and secondary places identified in the 2021-25 Commissioning Plan as needing to be commissioned by September 2021 and compares this to the places delivered¹, as Figure 3.2 does for specialist places. Figures 3.3 to 3.5 set out any variation between what was planned to be commissioned for September 2021 and what was commissioned.

Figure 3.1: Comparison of the Year R and Year 7 commissioning intentions for September 2021 with places delivered

	Primary		Secondary	
	Permanent Year R	Temporary Year R	Permanent Year 7	Temporary Year 7
Need identified in Plan	2.3FE	30	7.5FE	375
Places delivered	0.3FE	30	6.5FE	260

¹ Delivered in the case means that additional provision should be in place for September 2021.

	Primary		Secondary	
	Permanent Year R	Temporary Year R	Permanent Year 7	Temporary Year 7
Difference	-2FE	0	-1FE	-115

Figure 3.2: Comparison of the specialist provision commissioning intentions for September 2021 with places delivered

Need identified in Plan	82
Places delivered	120
Difference	+38

Figure 3.3: Variations between the commissioning intentions for primary school provision by September 2021 and delivery

District	Planning Group	To be Commissioned by 2020-21	Variation	Reason	Impact
Dartford	Dartford North	1FE expansion	Not commissioned	The preference figures indicated that there was a significant surplus that removed the need.	No negative impact as there were sufficient places for National Offer Day
Dartford	Dartford East	1FE expansion	Not commissioned	The preference figures indicated that there was a significant surplus that removed the need.	No negative impact as there were sufficient places for National Offer Day

Figure 3.4: Variations between the commissioning intentions for secondary school provision by September 2021 and delivery

District	Planning Group	To be Commissioned by 2020-21	Variation	Reason	Impact
Canterbury	Canterbury and Faversham Selective	Up to 30 Year 7 places	Not commissioned	A selective school offered over PAN which meant there were sufficient selective places.	No negative impact as all children grammar assessed were offered a place at a grammar school.
Canterbury	Canterbury Non-Selective	No provision was planned	45 temporary places commissioned at Archbishops School	Additional places required for offer day to ensure sufficient secondary school places in Canterbury.	A positive impact as there were sufficient secondary places for National Offer Day.
Thanet	Thanet Non-Selective	Up to 30 Year 7 places	Not commissioned	Additional places not required.	No negative impact as there were sufficient secondary places for National Offer Day.
Thanet	Thanet Selective	Up to 30 Year 7 places	Not Commissioned	Additional places not required.	No negative impact as all children grammar assessed were offered a place at a grammar school.

District	Planning Group	To be Commissioned by 2020-21	Variation	Reason	Impact
Gravesham	Gravesham and Longfield Non-Selective	1.5 FE expansion	0.5FE commissioned	0.5FE offered sufficient additional provision.	No negative impact as the 0.5FE ensure sufficient provision was available for National Offer Day.
Sevenoaks	Sevenoaks and Borough Green Non-Selective Planning Group	Up to 60 Year 7 places	35 places were added	Site constraints limited the additional temporary provision to 35 places which was sufficient.	No negative impact as 35 places were sufficient to meet the local need for National Offer Day.

Figure 3.3: Variations between the commissioning intentions for specialist provision by September 2021 and delivery

District	To be Commissioned by 2020-21	Variation	Reason	Impact
Folkestone and Hythe	14 place SRP	Delayed until 2022.	Further surveys were and are still required to fully understand the costs of the project prior to any decision to proceed.	Pressures for specialist ASD places continue to be seen in this part of the County. The delay in commissioning additional ASD places could lead to pupils having to travel further to access the appropriate provision.
Gravesham	15 place primary SLCN provision in Northfleet	Delayed until 2022	The accommodation for the SRP is in place at Springhead Park Primary School and will open in September 2022. This is to allow the school the appropriate time to engage specialist staff who can run the setting.	The delay in commissioning additional SLCN places could lead to pupils having to travel further to access the appropriate provision.
Folkestone	8 SEMH Year 7 places at Goldwyn Folkestone	Places were not planned in KCP	The pressure for additional special school places was greater than anticipated.	Positive impact as more pupils will be able to access a school place appropriate to their needs.
Ashford	8 Year R PSCN places and The	Places were not planned in KCP	The pressure for additional special school places was	Positive impact as more pupils will be able to access a school place appropriate to their

District	To be Commissioned by 2020-21	Variation	Reason	Impact
	Wyvern School		greater than anticipated.	needs.
Maidstone	20 Year R PSCN places at Five Acre Wood	Places were not planned in KCP	The pressure for additional special school places was greater than anticipated.	Positive impact as more pupils will be able to access a school place appropriate to their needs.
Canterbury	12 PSCN Year R places and St Nicholas School	Places were not planned in KCP	The pressure for additional special school places was greater than anticipated.	Positive impact as more pupils will be able to access a school place appropriate to their needs.
Swale	12 Year R places and 7 Year 7 places at Meadowfield School	Places were not planned in KCP	The pressure for additional special school places was greater than anticipated.	Positive impact as more pupils will be able to access a school place appropriate to their needs.

4. Increase in the Number of Academy Schools

4.1 There has been a small increase in the number of academy schools operating in Kent. As of April 2021, there were 273 academies in the County.

5. Forecasting Accuracy

5.1 The KCP sets out school based forecast roll numbers by planning groups at both primary and secondary school levels. The overall forecast numbers are accurate within +/-1% at a County level in respect to both school-roll based and pupil residence-based numbers.

5.2 Figures 5.1 to 5.4 set out the school based forecast primary and secondary school rolls for 2020-21 and compare these to the actual school rolls as of October 2020. The target is to be accurate to within plus or minus 1% at County level. Figures 4.1 to 4.4 show that:

- Year R rolls were over forecast by 0.3% / 56 pupils.
- Years R-6 rolls were over forecast by 0.5% / 669 pupils.
- Year 7 rolls were over forecast by 0.9% / 157 pupils, and
- Years 7-11 rolls were over forecast by 0.3% / 226 pupils.

This demonstrates a high level of forecasting accuracy at a County level. However, there are variations across the districts. Where school based forecasts are under or over forecast by +/-1% and 30 pupils we look at the resident based forecasts. If that is also outside of the accuracy measure, we look further into the factors.

5.3 For primary, there were three districts where Year R school based forecast were outside the +/-1% and 30 places (Thanet, Dartford and Folkestone and Hythe). Across Years R-6, three districts were over forecast by more than +/-1% (Folkestone and Hythe, Dartford and Thanet). In all cases the resident based forecasts were within our tolerances and this is simply that the distribution of pupils within the schools in the Districts had changed from what was forecast.

5.4 For secondary, there were nine districts where Year 7 school based forecasts were outside the +/-1% and 30 pupils. In three of these cases, Dartford, Dover and Tonbridge and Malling the resident based forecasts were also outside of the tolerances. In each case this was due to fewer Year 6 pupils transferring into the district/borough schools than had been forecast. Further work will be required to understand why this was the case. Across Years 7-11 two districts were over or under forecast by +/-1% (Tonbridge and Dover). The resident based forecast for Tonbridge and Malling were also outside our tolerances. This was due to a reduction in the cohort survival rate which in essence means that the existing cohort reduced further than forecasts suggested they would.

5.6 Forecasting methodology incorporates a weighted migration factor across all year groups, a transition factor that forecasts the Year R roll and the Year 7 roll based on resident preschool, Year 6 numbers respectively and travel to school patterns. All factors are based on historic trends at a planning group level. Occasionally the migration into a planning group or the transition from one school phase to another can be significantly higher or lower than expected. This in addition to a change in the published admissions number or the popularity of a school, can have a significant impact on the forecasts for a district. What we do not know is if the

pandemic has had any lasting impact on the numbers of pupils in schools (we know that there has been an increase in the number of families choosing to elective home educate) or if traditional travel to learn patterns, particularly in the secondary sector have changed because of the pandemic.


- 5.8 Further investigation is being undertaken across all districts where the variance was outside the expected level of tolerance and changes to the transition and migration factors will be made should the need arise.

Figure 5.1: Comparison of Year R forecast v October 2020 roll

District	Forecast Year R roll (2020/21)	Actual Year R roll Oct 2020	Difference (forecast less actual)	% variance (%)
Tonbridge & Malling	1,566	1,595	-29	-1.8
Canterbury	1,362	1,383	-21	-1.5
Swale	1,867	1,882	-15	-0.8
Maidstone	1,946	1,959	-13	-0.7
Sevenoaks	1,323	1,330	-7	-0.5
Ashford	1,517	1,517	0	0.0
Gravesham	1,365	1,363	2	0.1
Dover	1,163	1,151	12	1.0
Tunbridge Wells	1,190	1,178	12	1.0
Thanet	1,523	1,486	37	2.5
Dartford	1,613	1,571	42	2.7
Folkestone & Hythe	1,126	1,090	36	3.3
Kent Totals	17,561	17,505	56	0.3

Figure 5.2: Comparison of Primary (Year R-6) forecast v October 2020 roll

District	Forecast primary roll (2020/21)	Actual primary roll Oct 2020	Difference (forecast less actual)	Over / under forecast (%)
Gravesham	9,699	9,743	-44	-0.4
Canterbury	10,333	10,352	-19	-0.2
Tunbridge Wells	8,647	8,638	9	0.1
Swale	13,065	13,051	14	0.1
Ashford	10,956	10,931	25	0.2
Maidstone	13,725	13,643	82	0.6
Sevenoaks	9,569	9,508	61	0.6
Tonbridge & Malling	11,614	11,532	82	0.7
Dover	8,503	8,430	73	0.9
Folkestone & Hythe	8,316	8,228	88	1.1
Dartford	11,126	10,982	144	1.3
Thanet	11,055	10,901	154	1.4
Kent Totals	126,608	125,939	669	0.5




 Under forecast (top half)

 Over forecast (bottom half)

Figure 5.3: Comparison of Year 7 forecast v October 2019 roll

District	Forecast Year 7 roll (2020/21)	Actual Year 7 roll Oct 2020	Difference (forecast less actual)	Over / under forecast (%)
Ashford	1,585	1,653	-68	-4.1
Maidstone	2,166	2,221	-55	-2.5
Canterbury	1,627	1,658	-31	-1.9
Gravesham	1,492	1,504	-12	-0.8
Sevenoaks	559	550	9	1.6
Tunbridge Wells	1,591	1,566	25	1.6
Swale	1,769	1,732	37	2.1
Thanet	1,548	1,505	43	2.8
Tonbridge & Malling	1,851	1,800	51	2.9
Dartford	1,938	1,878	60	3.2
Dover	1,333	1,281	52	4.1
Folkestone & Hythe	1,160	1,113	47	4.2
Kent	18,619	18,461	158	0.9



 Under forecast (top half)

 Over forecast (bottom half)

Figure 5.4: Comparison of Year 7-11 forecast v October 2020 roll

District	Forecast Secondary roll (2020/21)	Actual Secondary roll Oct 2020	Difference (forecast less actual)	Over / under forecast (%)	
Sevenoaks	2,597	2,622	-25	-1.0	Under forecast
Maidstone	10,240	10,312	-72	-0.7	
Gravesham	7,098	7,130	-32	-0.5	
Ashford	7,427	7,460	-33	-0.4	
Canterbury	7,742	7,768	-26	-0.3	
Swale	8,374	8,365	9	0.1	Over forecast
Tonbridge & Malling	8,654	8,612	42	0.5	
Thanet	7,185	7,148	37	0.5	
Folkestone & Hythe	5,400	5,366	34	0.6	
Dartford	8,794	8,728	66	0.8	
Tunbridge Wells	8,056	7,940	116	1.5	
Dover	6,163	6,053	110	1.8	
Kent	87,730	87,504	226	0.3	

6. Progress in Achieving the Targets

- 6.1 The targets which relate to providing sufficient school places are set out in 'Vision and Priorities for Improvement 2018-21.'
- 6.2 The target is to maintain 5% surplus places in both primary and secondary schools. Maintaining sufficient surplus capacity in schools across a planning group is essential both to meet increased demand, and to enable parental preferences to be met. However, as most of the school funding is pupil led, too great a surplus of places can cause viability issues for schools.
- 6.3 Figure 6.1 shows that surplus capacity in Reception classes across Kent is at 11.7% and for all primary aged pupils it is 7.6%. This is an increase on the previous year. We expect the number of surplus places to fall if housing comes forward as planned. Surplus primary school capacity across a district may mask pressures within specific planning groups. Where pupil numbers do not increase and surplus capacity is forecast to remain high, we will work with headteachers of both maintained schools and academies to look at ways to reduce surplus capacity. This could be through the reduction in pupil admission numbers and/or the removal/re-designation of temporary classrooms.
- 6.4 Surplus capacity in Year 7 across Kent is at 4.1%. Across Years 7-11 it is at 5.7%. The surplus capacity at Year 7 being below the 5% threshold is expected due to the increased numbers of primary aged pupils transferring to secondary schools. Year 7 numbers are expected to peak around 2023-2024 before falling back. We therefore need to balance the commissioning of permanent and temporary secondary places so that we are not over commissioning permanent places leaving schools with a legacy of excess surplus places.

Figure 6.1: Surplus capacity in mainstream schools as of October 2020

October 2020		
District	% Year R	% Years R-6
Ashford	10.0	6.5
Canterbury	13.5	7.4
Dartford	8.8	3.9
Dover	13.8	10.8
Folkestone & Hythe	17.6	9.2
Gravesham	11.3	5.1
Maidstone	8.0	4.7
Sevenoaks	14.9	11.8
Swale	10.0	8.4
Thanet	14.6	11.0
Tonbridge & Malling	9.8	7.1
Tunbridge Wells	11.2	6.4
Kent	11.7	7.6
District	% Year 7	% Years 7-11
Ashford	-0.2	5.5
Canterbury	0.9	3.3
Dartford	2.2	3.9
Dover	7.5	10.3
Folkestone & Hythe	6.9	3.9
Gravesham	2.9	0.6
Maidstone	5.9	5.8
Sevenoaks	-1.9	1.8
Swale	4.8	5.9
Thanet	-2.1	4.6
Tonbridge & Malling	9.6	11.3
Tunbridge Wells	7.1	7.0
Kent	4.1	5.7

6.4 We set targets for the percentage of families securing their first preference school for entry in September 2021. For primary schools, the target was 92% and on National Offer Day 89.2% of parents secured their first preference. For secondary schools, the target was 76% and 69.7% of parents secured their first preference.

6.5 The target for first and second preferences for both primary and secondary schools was 95% and 85% respectively. This year 95.6% secured their first or second preference in a primary school and 83.8% of parents secured their first or second preference at a secondary school.

7. Capital Funding

7.1 Since the KCP was published the Basic Need (BN) Allocation has been announced with KCC allocated £20.2m for the 2022-23 academic year. The basis of allocation is to add a third year of funding to a rolling three-year funding allocation. To put this into context, the £20.2m would be insufficient to fund one 6FE secondary school.

7.2 Basic need funding provides for mainstream school places only. We have seen a significant rise in the need for new specialist places in the last few years. This is adding significant pressures on the Capital Budget. We have received some additional capital funding for the specialist sector with £11.2m from the Special Provision Capital Fund and £6.6m from the High Needs Provision Capital Allocation. Both funding streams have already been allocated towards projects.

With a new 240 place special school costing in the region of £20m the funding received from Government is insufficient to meet the rapidly growing need.

- 7.3 As ever, commissioning the additional school places required will rely on a combination of the BN funding, developer contributions and prudential borrowing, particularly in regard of the specialist sector. Area Education Officers consistently take a prudential approach to balancing out the need for additional school places against the cost that adding new places will have to KCC's capital budget. We have managed to keep costs down for several years by finding alternative lower cost solutions, adding temporary rather than permanent places and pushing back new schools as far into the future as is possible. We are at a point where new provision is the only option with the consequential need for higher levels of capital funding to ensure the Local Authority can meet its statutory duty regarding the provision of sufficient school places.

8. Recommendations:

The Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to note

- the progress achieved and to consider the report prior to the next version of the Commissioning Plan published in November 2021
- the need to review planned capital expenditure on school places (detailed report to follow).

9. Background Documents

- 9.1 Vision and Priorities for Improvement 2018-21:
https://www.kelsi.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/68498/Children-Young-People-and-Education-Vision-and-Priorities-for-Improvement-2018-2021.pdf
- 9.2 Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2021-25:
https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/104675/Commissioning-Plan-for-Education-Provision-in-Kent-2021-to-2025.pdf

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