



## CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 October 2012 (Special)

**Subject Heading:**

Requisition of Cabinet Decision regarding Primary School Expansions 2013/14

**CMT Lead:**

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**Policy context:**

This decision has implications for all schools, located across all wards in the Borough.

In accordance with Paragraph 17 of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Rules, a requisition signed by two Members representing more than one Group (Councillors Clarence Barrett and Keith Darvill) has called in a decision of Cabinet dated 26 September 2012. The text of the requisition appears at the end of this report:

### **CABINET DECISION**

At its meeting on 26 September 2012 Cabinet considered a report on the proposals for primary school expansions in the borough for 2012-13, owing to a projected shortage of primary school places for September 2013, and made the following decisions:

1. the 15 schools listed in Appendix 1 (of the Cabinet Report) for proposed permanent expansion from September 2013 to meet the projected deficit of primary places;
2. statutory processes to be initiated to permanently expand the capacity of eight of those 15 schools by September 2013: Harold Court Primary; Harold Wood Primary; Pyrgo Priory Primary; St Patrick's Primary; Rise Park Infant and Junior schools; and Towers Infant and Junior schools;
3. the proposal to expand Branfil Primary School from 1 September 2013, following the Representation Period which ended on 31 August 2012;
4. Officers to take all necessary steps in order to deliver the expansion programme, including the submission of planning applications
5. the commencement of a tendering process for construction/ refurbishment works at issue of tenders for Harold Court Primary, Harold Wood Primary, Mead Primary, Parsonage Farm Primary, Rise Park Infant and Junior

schools, Towers Infant and Junior schools, together with all associated investigations e.g. soil survey

- 6 that the final allocation of available Capital funding as detailed within this report be delegated to the Lead Members for Children and Learning and Value, and the Group Directors of Children's Services and Finance and Commerce.

### **Reasons for decisions:**

These decisions are necessary to provide sufficient additional primary places to meet the forecast rise in primary pupil numbers projected from September 2013 and beyond. The reasons for proposing specific schools for expansion are given in Appendix 1 of the Cabinet report.

### **Other options considered and rejected:**

The option of adapting existing accommodation for 'bulge' (temporary) classes to respond to the projected deficit of primary places was considered because this would be more affordable and avoid the risk of providing permanent accommodation that might then become surplus in the foreseeable future.

This option was rejected because of the high level of confidence in the latest pupil forecasts for 2012 that project the birth rate will be sustained at the current high level for the medium term and the corroboration of these projections by the latest ONS forecasts. Given the long term confidence in forecasts the permanent expansion proposals were considered to provide best value for money and the preferred option of schools for responding to expansions.

In some planning areas there was more than one option for deciding on a school to expand for September 2013 and a clear rationale was given for each school being proposed and which is specified in Appendix 1. As projections of rising pupil numbers is forecast to continue, all schools that were not proposed for expansion in 2013 will be fully considered for any future programme.

The decision to proceed with planning applications and tendering arrangements in parallel with the statutory consultation process is a necessity in order to avoid delays in delivering the required capacity. In the event of the statutory consultation being unsuccessful, the planning permission and contract award will not be implemented.

## **REASONS FOR REQUISITION**

The reasons for the requisition were detailed on the formal notification and were detailed as follows:

1. to review the selection of 15 schools and Branfil School set out in the Report to Cabinet for permanent expansion;
2. to consider the capital and revenue financial risks predicted for the cost of expansion of the schools;
3. to review the timetable to deliver the proposed expansions.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Committee considers the requisition of the decision of Cabinet and determine whether to uphold it.**