



# Committee report

## **POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION AND SKILLS**

Date **1 SEPTEMBER 2022**

Title **SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING**

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### SUMMARY

1. Within the Isle of Wight Corporate Plan, it states that the Council will work with local communities to maintain and ensure appropriate local school provision. The plan states that the Council should ensure that a strategic school places plan is in place and maintained. This report discharges that priority.
2. The Isle of Wight Council has a statutory duty to ensure a sufficiency of school places for Isle of Wight children, this includes to:
  - Ensure sufficient childcare is available to meet the Early Years free entitlement as far as reasonably practicable
  - Ensure sufficient maintained school provision is available to meet the needs of all children aged up to 16
  - Ensure sufficient post-16 provision is available for all Isle of Wight children
  - Give priority at all ages to meet the needs of children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND), learning difficulties and/or disabilities up to 19 (in some cases 25)
  - Support all maintained nurseries, schools and Post-16 provision to function as high-quality, viable and financially efficient services
  - Ensure fair access to educational opportunity and promote diversity and parental choice.
3. This report is focused on ensuring sufficient maintained school provision is available to meet the needs of mainstream children aged up to 16.
4. At present, there is growth in Year 7 intake pupil numbers in the secondary phase, which will continue until 2026-27. The actions identified in this report therefore necessarily focus on the primary phase where a significant decline in pupil numbers is forecast during the five-year forecast period. In 2027-28, the decline in pupil numbers will reach the secondary phase, and therefore further place planning decisions will need to be made to manage surplus capacity in due course.

5. At times, the effective management of school places will include the need to remove surplus places to ensure overall provision aligns with forecast need. Due to a significant reduction in birth rates on the Island, in some areas, action is recommended in the primary phase in order to ensure demand and capacity are aligned and we continue to provide the best outcomes for the children, which is the focus of this report.

## BACKGROUND

6. The Isle of Wight has a diverse system of schools, early years' settings and Post-16 provision. The Council is committed to ensuring that families living on the Isle of Wight have access to a good local school which offers a rich and varied learning experience, has the highest expectations for their children's success and where parents can be confident that their children will be safe. All children have the right to an enjoyable, inclusive, and broad education and it is the role of the local authority to intervene on behalf of children, especially those experiencing vulnerabilities, when this is not the case.
7. The number of births on the Island has reached its lowest since 1941. The drop in the number of births is significant on the Isle of Wight due to its Island geography as migration to the Isle of Wight is greater in older age groups.
8. Longer term pupil trends show the decline in births directly impacting upon the number of children arriving into the primary phase. The numbers of primary pupils are forecast to decrease from c.9,200 in 2017 to c.8,000 by 2025. Secondary forecasts indicate pupil numbers are starting to grow from c.6,000 in 2017 to 6,400 in 2025.
9. The planning and provision of school places is a complex task that must take account of changing populations, parental preference, migration and new housing. Individual schools, subject to status, now have greater autonomy regarding admission numbers and decisions surrounding school expansion/reduction, adding further complexity to the role the Council's statutory sufficiency duty. The geography and rural nature of the Isle of Wight creates challenges in relation to small schools. The main principle of current and future provision is that we will seek to provide local schools for local children, which are both educationally and financially sustainable in the longer term.
10. Having a level of surplus across our schools provides flexibility; allows for movement onto, and around the Island and helps meet parental preference. The consequences of having too many surplus places can be severe. The main impact of reducing places on schools is the resulting reduction in individual school finances.
11. Falling rolls also make planning and staffing decisions difficult, with schools potentially having to make year on year redundancies. There is a particular problem for schools affected by infant class size legislation: they may have limited ability to make savings by changing staffing structures or changing the use of physical space. For example, a school with a 60 intake that only admits 32 pupils must still employ two teachers and heat, light and equip two

classrooms even though the budget for that year group may have nearly halved.

12. It is also important to understand that not all schools are affected equally by falling pupil numbers. For example, when there is a 10% drop in numbers, not all schools will see a 10% reduction. In reality, popular schools remain full or close to full and this may mean that a large drop in numbers could significantly affect a small number of less popular schools. When schools are disproportionately affected by falling rolls, those schools are at risk of spiralling decline. This means that we need to consider removing places.
13. The Isle of Wight's Cabinet has given a clear directive that school closures should be avoided wherever possible. This approach has informed the basis of the discussions held to date with headteachers and governors and is outlined in the presentation included at Appendix A.

### FORECASTING SCHOOL PLACES – METHODOLOGY

14. The Council collects data on the historical and current uptake of places in all schools. This data along with other linked information, primarily birth and housing data, is used to forecast school places across the Isle of Wight.
15. Immunisation and Vaccination data from Local Health Authorities are collected by age and Postcode, these are allocated to education planning areas. See Appendix B for defined education planning areas.
16. The methodology used is based upon a cohort survival model. The basic premise is that pupils will roll forward from one-year group to the next at the end of each academic year. If there are known housing developments within a school's planning area, the expected pupil yield is added to the projections where appropriate. This information is provided by the Isle of Wight Local Planning Authority (LPA). Expected changes due to pupil mobility and migration are also taken into account. For each year group, the number of pupils on roll in January is compared with the same cohort a year later. A weighted moving average of the observed changes over the last three years (3:2:1) is calculated and applied in the same way as the participation rate.

Intake into Reception Year – the number of four-year olds living in a school planning area is determined as above. This is compared with the number of pupils that are enrolled by the school and a participation rate is calculated. Again, a three-year weighted moving average is applied to calculate a participation rate for use in forecasting future YR enrolment at schools.

Intake to Year 7 – At secondary transfer, the participation rate is applied to the Year 6 numbers available in the primary schools across the Isle of Wight.

Assumptions - The model assumes that the school population tends to be stable rather than influenced by a trend in the long term; by using this methodology we can mitigate against an exceptional trend. Weighting the average accounts for the assumption that recent events are far more likely to be replicated but using a moving average smooths out high fluctuations in

year groups in a particular year. Data on housing developments is collected and the likely effects of housing developments on pupil numbers is applied to the schools as appropriate. The number of pupils that a particular development is likely to yield is determined from information supplied the Isle of Wight LPA as to the number and phasing of housing units combined with the type and tenure of those dwellings.

#### Understanding the forecasts for school places in each area

17. For the purposes of school place planning, the Isle of Wight is broken down into more localised education planning areas. The presentation provided to all Isle of Wight headteachers and governors (See Appendix A) identifies current and forecast future aggregated pupil numbers and schools' capacities within each planning area and, indicate both actions being taken and actions proposed to ensure a sufficiency of school provision within these areas.
18. When looking at forecasts in each of the following sections it is important to remember that the figures presented are not statements of fact – they are forecasts based on a methodology (described in paragraphs 15-17). It should also be noted that whilst the Local Authority will seek to support parental preference, Council forecasts focus on the number of school places available within a school place planning area. It can be the case that some schools in an area are regularly oversubscribed in relation to parental preference. This could suggest a shortage of school places in the area. However, parental preferences only show where parents would like their children to attend school, not if there is a shortage of school places in an area.
19. School place planning decisions cannot be explicitly based around meeting parental preference. Schools' popularity does change over time and, creating a school place planning system that overly follows such trends would ultimately lead to a lack of choice for parents and a longer-term insufficiency of school places.

#### EDUCATION WHITE PAPER

20. The DfE is currently consulting on a White Paper which contains an aspiration that all schools should be part of a multi-academy trust or planning to join a multi-academy trust by 2030. New levers are likely to be introduced to direct schools to become an academy where they have been judged to be requiring improvement over successive Ofsted inspections. Currently, there are no backstop measures in place to 'encourage' or 'force' schools to join a multi-academy trust by 2030. Importantly, the funding regime for schools in a multi-academy trust is the same as for any other maintained school on the Isle of Wight.
21. The White Paper sets out the possibility of a strong Local Authority (LA) establishing a multi-academy trust in partnership with school leaders. Officers are exploring this possibility with the DfE and a small group of headteachers who have expressed an initial interest in this model. This may provide a vehicle for small primary schools to share expertise and resources, although

there are also additional costs associated with the model such as the appointment of a Chief Executive Officer.

## ADMISSIONS

22. For Community and Voluntary Controlled (VC) schools, the LA is the admission authority and therefore manages any amendments to a school's PAN. However, community and VC schools have the right to object to the Schools Adjudicator if the LA set a PAN for them that is lower than they would wish. There is a strong presumption in favour of an increase to the PAN to which the Schools Adjudicator (SA) must have regard when considering any such objection (para 1.3 of the School Admissions Code). Therefore, it is considered unlikely that the Schools Adjudicator would support an application to reduce the PAN if the Governing Body are not in support.
23. For Voluntary Aided, foundation and academy schools, the Governing Body is the admission authority so the LA cannot enforce an amendment to PAN.

## HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT

24. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 created new duties on the IWC to provide free transport for pupils in receipt of free school meals or whose families receive the maximum level of Working Tax Credit. Statutory Guidance has been issued by Central Government, particularly Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance (July 2014) and 2010 Post-16 Transport Guidance (February 2014) and is used by all LAs to inform policy and provision of the transport service. The July 2014 Guidance requires the LA to review its Home to School Transport arrangements regularly to ensure that they provide the most cost-effective service.
25. There are no priority/catchment areas for primary and secondary schools. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to apply for the school nearest to their home address. A pupil's nearest school is calculated by direct distance. This is a straight line from the centre of the home address to the centre of the school. This is calculated using the local authority's geographical information system (GIS). Home to School Transport is assessed on whether they are attending their nearest school (direct distance or walking route) and whether the shortest walking route is over the qualifying distance. The legislation specifies the statutory distances (2 and 3 miles) that apply to the provision of home to school transport, when distances are calculated from a pupil's home address to school, the measure of the shortest available walking route from the centre of the home address to the centre of the school building is used to ascertain whether the pupil lives more than the minimum number of miles to be entitled to free transport provision.

## FINANCE

26. Schools are funded through the ring-fenced Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) using a local funding formula. On the Island this mirrors the Department for Education's (DfE) national funding formula. The revenue funding passed through the LA for maintained schools is strictly controlled by operational guidance supplied by the DfE and changes in schools generally have a per

pupil impact on the overall funding allocation. When the overall pupil numbers in an area reduce, the local allocation is reduced on a per pupil basis.

27. All schools have devolved funding, accounting systems and bank accounts and it is their responsibility to remain individually financially viable. Uncertainty around places creates budget risks at an individual school level, as they work to maintaining efficient right sized establishments that ensure in-year income matches in-year expenditure. The School Standards & Framework Act 1998 requires local authorities to have a Scheme for Financing Schools. The scheme drives the requirements of schools in managing their deficits and the local authority role is around adherence to the scheme only as it has no power to write off or contribute towards individual school deficits. When a school closes any deficit balances fall to the local authority, and therefore surplus capacity increases the risk of inefficient schools and potential increased deficits impacting upon local authority budgets. Sponsored academy conversion also results in deficits falling to the local authority, only convertor academies have deficits funded by the incoming trust or DfE.

#### PLANNING AREA REVIEW (PRIMARY AND SECONDARY)

28. The information detailed within this section outlines both the current and forecast position within each of the forecast areas. The September 2022 figures as at May 2022 which included all updated offers; however, these numbers are subject to change
29. COWES (WEST)

<b>Cowes (West) Primary Schools</b>							
<b>Primary Planning Area</b>	<b>Number of Primary Schools</b>	<b>Year R: Total PANs Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year R: Number on Roll Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year R: % surplus Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year R: Proposed PANs Sept 2024</b>	<b>Year R: Forecast No. on Roll Sept 2024</b>	<b>Year R: Forecast % surplus Sept 2024</b>
Cowes Primary	4	180	158	12.2%	180	108	42.6 %
<b>Cowes (West) Secondary Schools</b>							
<b>Secondary Planning Area</b>	<b>Number of Secondary Schools</b>	<b>Year 7: Total PANs Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year 7: Number on roll Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year 7: % surplus Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year 7: Proposed PANs Oct 2024</b>	<b>Year 7: Forecast No. on Roll Oct 2024</b>	<b>Year 7: Forecast % surplus Oct 2024</b>
Cowes Secondary	1	210	226	-7.6%	210	223	-6.2%

Explanatory notes:

#### Primary

- Currently with the PAN reduction undertaken by Cowes Primary School, the area has a manageable level of surplus capacity which allows for in year movement. Typically, this is around 10% surplus capacity.

- There is a decrease in Year R pupils forecast in the area. A future consideration for reducing surplus places within the area is to lower the PAN for one or both 2FE Primary Schools (Gurnard Primary School and Lanesend Primary School).
- Autumn Census data to be reviewed and if required measures taken to reduce surplus.

30. COWES (EAST)

<b>Cowes (East) Primary Schools</b>							
<b>Primary Planning Area</b>	<b>Number of Primary Schools</b>	<b>Year R: Total PANs Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year R: Number on Roll Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year R: % surplus Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year R: Proposed PANs Sept 2024</b>	<b>Year R: Forecast No. on Roll Sept 2024</b>	<b>Year R: Forecast % surplus Sept 2024</b>
East Cowes Primary	2	90	70	22.2%	90	67	26%

Explanatory notes:

Primary

- The number of Year R pupils living in the planning areas are typically accommodated within the number of places available.
- Currently there are no plans to reduce the total number of places available within the planning area. Autumn Census data to be reviewed and if required measures taken to reduce surplus.

31. NEWPORT

<b>Newport Primary Schools</b>							
<b>Primary Planning Area</b>	<b>Number of Primary Schools</b>	<b>Year R: Total PANs Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year R: Number on Roll Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year R: % surplus Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year R: Proposed PANs Sept 2024</b>	<b>Year R: Forecast No. on Roll Sept 2024</b>	<b>Year R: Forecast % surplus Sept 2024</b>
Newport Primary	10	403	323	19.9%	403	311	22.9%
<b>Newport &amp; West Wight Secondary Schools</b>							
<b>Secondary Planning Area</b>	<b>Number of Secondary Schools</b>	<b>Year 7: Total PANs Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year 7: Number on roll Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year 7: % surplus Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year 7: Proposed PANs Sept 2024</b>	<b>Year 7: Forecast No. on Roll Sept 2024</b>	<b>Year 7: Forecast % surplus Sept 2024</b>
Newport Secondary	3	480	474	1.3%	480	466	2.9%

Explanatory notes:

Primary

- Year R pupils in the area remain steady for the forecast period.

- The area presents a number of surplus places which will accommodate future fluctuations across the years with a possible increase in numbers forecast for September 2025.
- Due to a low intake for September 2022 Barton Primary School has requested to reduce their PAN from 45 to 30. This temporary measure for 2022 is under review by the OSA (Office Schools Adjudicator) with a decision expected Autumn 2022. This reduction will be assessed against demand for September 2023.
- Currently there are no further plans to reduce the total number of places available within the planning area. Autumn Census data to be reviewed and if required measures taken to reduce surplus.

## 32. RYDE

<b>Ryde Primary Schools</b>							
<b>Primary Planning Area</b>	<b>Number of Primary Schools</b>	<b>Year R: Total PANs Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year R: Number on Roll Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year R: % surplus Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year R: Proposed PANs Sept 2024</b>	<b>Year R: Forecast No. on Roll Sept 2024</b>	<b>Year R: Forecast % surplus Sept 2024</b>
Ryde Town	6	240	187	22.1%	240	169	29.4%
Ryde Rural	2	45	43	4.4%	45	37	16.9%
<b>Ryde Secondary Schools</b>							
<b>Secondary Planning Area</b>	<b>Number of Secondary Schools</b>	<b>Year 7: Total PANs Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year 7: Number on roll Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year 7: % surplus Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year 7: Proposed PANs Oct 2024</b>	<b>Year 7: Forecast No. on Roll Oct 2024</b>	<b>Year 7: Forecast % surplus Oct 2024</b>
Ryde Secondary	1	270	290	-7.4%	270	286	-5.9%

Explanatory notes:

### Primary

- There is a forecast decrease in Year R pupils for both Ryde Town and Ryde Rural planning areas.
- Ryde Rural, due to its isolated nature, accommodates small numbers of children which translate to a large percentage of surplus when compared to the places available.
- For Ryde Rural, there are no further plans to reduce the total number of places available within the planning area. Autumn Census data to be reviewed and if required measures taken to reduce surplus.
- Ryde Town has a significant number of surplus places and action is required to reduce the overall number.
- Oakfield CE Primary School has lowered their PAN from 45 to 30 for September 2022.
- Within Ryde Town, two schools, Greenmount and Haylands Primary, who hold a larger proportion of forecast surplus have been approached to reduce their PAN from 60 to 45. Currently, these proposals have been



unsupported. Please see paragraph 38 for the outcome of these consultations.

- This area remains under review to determine the impact of declining population/new housing on individual schools and how this is best managed going forward.

### 33. SANDOWN, SHANKLIN & VENTNOR

<b>Sandown, Shanklin &amp; Ventnor Primary Schools</b>							
<b>Primary Planning Area</b>	<b>Number of Primary Schools</b>	<b>Year R: Total PANs Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year R: Number on Roll Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year R: % surplus Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year R: Proposed PANs Sept 2024</b>	<b>Year R: Forecast No. on Roll Sept 2024</b>	<b>Year R: Forecast % surplus Sept 2024</b>
Sandown & Shanklin	7	250	200	20%	250	172	31.1%
Ventnor	4	112	89	21%	95	53	44%
<b>Sandown, Shanklin &amp; Ventnor Secondary Schools</b>							
<b>Secondary Planning Area</b>	<b>Number of Secondary Schools</b>	<b>Year 7: Total PANs Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year 7: Number on roll Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year 7: % surplus Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year 7: Proposed PANs Sept 2024</b>	<b>Year 7: Forecast No. on Roll Sept 2024</b>	<b>Year 7: Forecast % surplus Sept 2024</b>
Sandown & Ventnor Secondary	2	305	321	-5.24%	305	316	-3.6%

Explanatory notes:

#### Primary

- There is a forecast decrease in Year R pupils in the area and there remains a significant number of surplus places, particularly within the Ventnor planning area.
- Within the Ventnor area, St Francis Primary School reduced their PAN from 45 to 30. Wroxall Primary is considering lowering their PAN from 25 to 15. Godshill Primary School has also requested to lower their PAN from 27 to 20 for September 2024.
- Within the Sandown and Shanklin area, Broadlea Primary School has reduced their PAN from 60 to 45 but this has not reduced the overall surplus. Further options have been considered and consulted upon with the Headteachers and Governing Bodies. These include the following PAN reductions:
  - Bembridge Primary reduce their PAN from 30 to 20
  - Broadlea Primary reduce their PAN from 45 to 30
  - The Bay CE Primary reduce their PAN from 60 to 45

Please see paragraph 38 for the outcome of these consultations.

34. WEST WIGHT

<b>West Wight Primary Schools</b>							
<b>Primary Planning Area</b>	<b>Number of Primary Schools</b>	<b>Year R: Total PANs Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year R: Number on Roll Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year R: % surplus Sept 2022</b>	<b>Year R: Proposed PANs Sept 2024</b>	<b>Year R: Forecast No. on Roll Sept 2024</b>	<b>Year R: Forecast % surplus Sept 2024</b>
West Wight Primary	4	74	76	-2.7%	74	79	-6.6%

Explanatory notes:

Primary

- The West Wight planning area forecast data currently remains stable, following the review of surplus places which concluded the closure of All Saints CE Primary School as of September 2020.
- Brighstone CE Primary reduced their PAN from 30 to 15 in September 2021.
- The LA is closely reviewing demand for places with the use of additional physical accommodation already available at schools should extra admissions be required.

UPDATE AND PROGRESS REPORT

35. A number of our schools on the Island that have been subject to declining pupil intakes have proactively reviewed their PANs and made amendments to meet need. These are summarised below:

- **Oakfield Primary School**, Ryde – reduced PAN from 45 to 30 for September 2022.
- **Barton Primary School**, Newport – applied to OSA (Office Schools Adjudicator) to reduce PAN from 45 to 30 for September 2022. This application has not yet been approved.
- **Godshill Primary School**, Godshill – request received from the Governing Body to reduce the schools PAN from 27 to 20 in September 2024.
- **Wroxall Primary School**, Wroxall – applied to OSA to reduce PAN from 25 to 15 in September 2022. This application has not yet been approved.

36. Following the presentation to all headteachers, individual meetings have taken place with the following primary schools identified as having a significant number of surplus places:

- Bembridge Primary School, Bembridge (48.3% surplus in 2024)
- Broadlea Primary School, Lake (50.7% surplus in 2024)
- Greenmount Primary School, Ryde (39.4% surplus in 2024)
- Haylands Primary School, Ryde (34.7% surplus in 2024)
- Niton Primary School, Niton (40% surplus in 2024)
- The Bay CE School, Sandown (24.5% surplus in 2024)

37. Feedback and questions from schools as set out below:

- Concerns around the 'mixing' of age groups and practical management of PANs that are different to a multiple of a standard class size of 30.
- The size of the site being built/designed for a larger intake than the PAN. Running costs would not be reduced in line with the reduction in income generated by the PAN as there will still be a requirement to maintain the site/buildings.
- Reducing larger schools to smaller schools to avoid school closures, regardless of how small their roll, has a direct impact on the ability of larger schools to have staff numbers, and expertise, to provide system wide support to other schools.
- Maintaining lots of smaller schools is not the best use of the current cadre of headteachers.
- Whether local housing developments will have an impact on numbers the timescales for such developments.
- Schools will only see the financial benefit to PAN reductions put in place for September 2024 in September 2026 and that will continue to result in budgetary pressures.
- Educationally, a larger cohort provide opportunities to peers working at age related expectations or above to model their work to peers needed to accelerate their progress. Small cohorts do not provide the same level of opportunity for peer to peer learning.
- Having classrooms containing multiple year groups makes curriculum planning more challenging and that affects workloads of teachers working in those classes.
- Small schools provide less opportunity for professional dialogue between teachers and teachers have to manage a larger number of subjects and/or aspects of school provision.
- Concerns were raised around the resilience and wellbeing of staff in small schools, as well as the impact of staff leaving such schools.

38. As part of the drafting of this paper, officers provided opportunities for school leaders to help shape the strategic direction being proposed. Officers presented the attached slides (Appendix A) at a scheduled meeting for all headteachers and called an open meeting for school governors. Both meetings were well attended and wide-ranging viewpoints were expressed.

39. The consensus is that there needs to be a strategic plan to address the number of surplus places. School leaders were pleased that the LA was undertaking this piece of work. However, nearly all participants felt that more radical steps other than PAN reductions are required including school amalgamations and closures. Schools have expressed concerns that this should not be a decision for each Governing Body to take alone and that an Island wide approach is needed.

40. School leaders explained their concerns about impact on school budgets as numbers declined and the tough decisions that would have to be taken around staffing to continue to balance the books. Many expressed concerns

about the effect on the quality of education being provided where children were left with very small cohorts within their peer groups. In addition, school leaders explained the impact on staff well-being and professional development opportunities within a system of small schools with falling rolls.

41. The conclusion of many school leaders was that a more radical re-organisation needed to take place with school amalgamations and closures being part of the solutions. In the meeting with school governors, it was articulated that schools were a part of their communities though and that any closures would be challenging to achieve. Almost universally, both headteachers and governors expressed their frustration that the Council was over-relying on PAN reductions as the main strategy.

#### APPENDICES ATTACHED

Appendix A – School Place Planning presentation

Appendix B – IOW School place planning areas

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