

CABINET

23 July 2024

Title: School Place Planning and Capital Investment Update	
Report of the Cabinet Member for Educational Attainment and School Improvement	
Open Report	For Decision
Wards Affected: All Wards	Key Decision: Yes
Report Author: Andrew Carr Head of Service: School Investment, Organisation and Admissions	Contact Details: Tel: 020 8227 2254 E-mail: andrew.carr@lbbd.gov.uk
Accountable Director: Jane Hargreaves, Commissioning Director, Education	
Accountable Executive Team Director: Elaine Allegretti, Strategic Director, Children and Adults	
Summary The report provides an update on the forecast demand for education places in primary, secondary and special needs settings. Further, the report sets out new grant allocations received from the Department for Education (DfE), proposed capital adjustments to existing schemes and new projects to create specialist places.	
Recommendation(s) The Cabinet is recommended to: (i) Note the actions being taken by officers to manage school places across the Borough and to meet the demand for specialist places; (ii) Approve the proposed projects, allocations of funding and procurement routes as set out in sections 8 and 9 of the report, to support the provision of new specialist places and improvements; and (iii) Delegate authority to the Strategic Director, Children and Adults, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Educational Attainment and School Improvement and the Head of Legal, to conduct the procurements and award the respective project contracts.	
Reason(s) The decision will assist the Council in fulfilling its statutory obligations to provide a school place for every child and to support priority 4 of the Council's Corporate Plan 2023-2026.	

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Council has a statutory obligation to provide a suitable school place for every child of statutory school age who lives in the Borough and wants a school place. It has been the practice to provide Cabinet with regular information on the forecast demand of pupil numbers at Primary, Secondary and for those who require Special Educational Needs places.
- 1.2 The report provides an overview of the forecast demand for pupil places in primary, secondary and special need places for the next 5 years but also an indication of longer-term trend for the next 10 years using the data we have available.
- 1.3 To ensure that there are sufficient high-quality places to meet current and future demand, data led forecasting takes into consideration the following factors.
 - Numbers of pupils currently in the Borough.
 - GLA data including population, migration and birth numbers;
 - Transition rates from birth to Reception age five years later;
 - New housing proposals as advised in the Local Plan Review and planning applications received for proposed housing developments;
 - Historical data and trends such as migration patterns and those pupils who live in the borough but choose schools outside;
 - Internal knowledge of recent population fluctuations, in particular the impact of population movements into and out of the Borough.
 - Number of pupils with Education Health Care Plans.
- 1.4 The report provides an update on capital grant received and proposals to create further specialist places to meet demand.

2. Update on Pupil Numbers and Capacity for September 2024

- 2.1 In January 2024, London Councils published *Managing falling school rolls in London*. The publication articulated how many London Local Authorities and schools were currently dealing with a significant fall in the demand for mainstream school places. The landscape is stark, affirming our previous view that families have, and continue to, move away from London due to the lack of affordable housing, increase cost of living, the impact of the pandemic and Brexit. With more people choosing to raise a family outside the capital, the birth rates in London continue to decrease.
- 2.2 This picture of decline varies across the capital as there are local influencing factors impacting on demand. We are seeing something similar at a borough level where there are areas of declining primary pupil numbers and conversely growth in others. Long term, there will be a need to create further school places in the south of the borough from the new housing developments as these are built out, however action will be required in other areas to manage/reduce the number of places available.
- 2.3 From a London perspective, there is increasing demand being seen from pupils with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and without exception this is the position in Barking and Dagenham where we are seeing exceedingly high

caseloads of children and young people with more profound needs and where further additional specialist places are required.

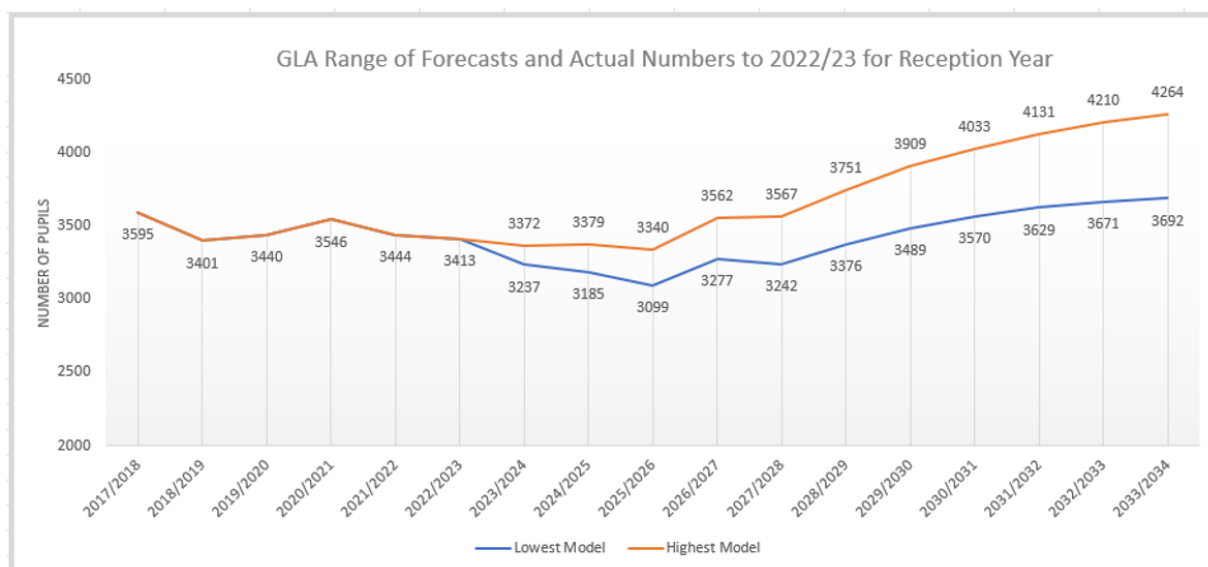
3. Mainstream Primary update

3.1 For primary school places, the forecasts focus on Reception numbers as a key indicator of demand over the medium long term and long term.

3.2 For this Academic Year (2023/24), the actual number on roll (Spring 2024 census) and forecast were very close at 99% accuracy:

Reception Year	Pupil Numbers
Forecast for 2023/24	3300
Number on roll – Spring 2024 census	3293
GLA Forecast Range for 2024/25	3185 to 3379

3.3 For September 2024, on national offer day we were able to offer 3240 school places for families who had applied. The demand for Reception school places across London was down by 2.2% on previous years however Barking and Dagenham showed a slight increase of 6% (185 places). This was in line with our forecasts below.



3.4 The School Places and Capital Investment Cabinet report January 2024 (item 75, para 3.6) highlighted the need to review the primary school estate in some areas of the borough. The reason is that some schools have been adversely impacted by falling demand for mainstream places and by our own long-term forecast were unlikely to change for the foreseeable future.

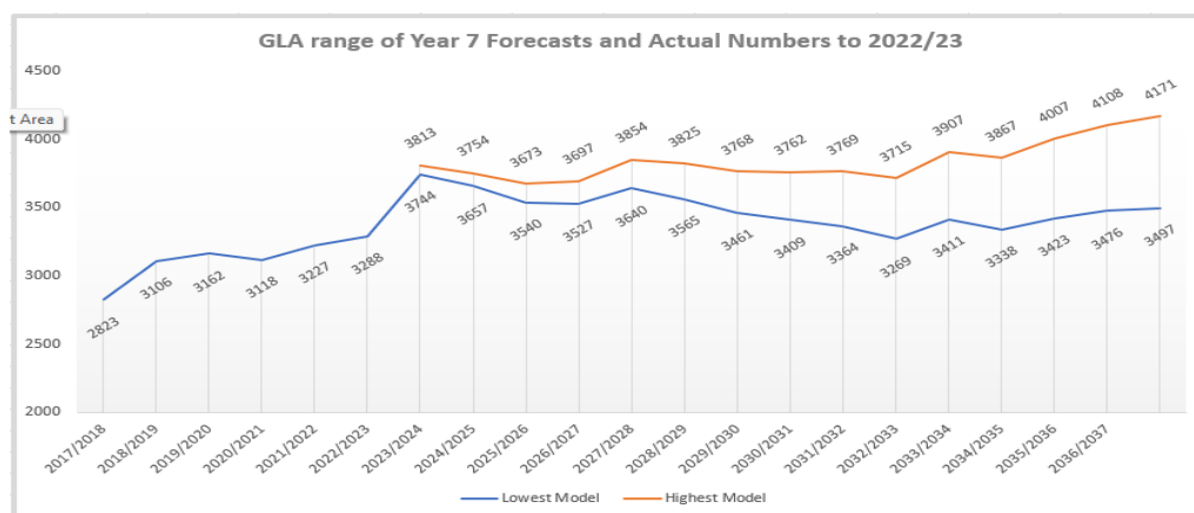
3.5 We need to have the right balance of mainstream places available to match the equivalent demand so that schools in the area can plan and remain financially viable in the long run. Cabinet members will receive a separate report in the autumn term on our first proposal to manage surplus mainstream primary places.

Mainstream Secondary Provision

- 4.1 For secondary school places, the forecasts focus on Year 7, starting secondary school as a key indicator of demand over the medium and long term.
- 4.2 For 2023/24, the actual number on roll that year was lower than forecast by 245 pupils. This represented a forecast accuracy of 93.1%.

Year 7	Pupil Numbers
Forecast for 2023/24	3589
Number on roll – Spring 2024 census	3344
GLA Forecast Range for 2024/25	3540 to 3673

- 4.3 For September 2024, on national offer day we were able to offer 3338 school places for families who had applied. The demand for Year 7 places across London remained static where there was a minimal decrease of 0.03%.
- 4.4 For Barking and Dagenham, there was an increase of 212 applications on the previous year. To date, considering further applications received, a total of 3495 offers have been made for September 2024.
- 4.5 The borough was highest in London for being able to offer preference allocations where 81.67% of pupils were allocated their first preference which was higher than the London average of 69.78%. The borough was also above the London average for allocations of preference 1-3 at 93.58% (London average 89.26%) and preferences 1-6 at 96.2% (London average 94.08).
- 4.6 The medium-term forecasts for secondary school places can be seen on the table below.



5. Current demand for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and specialist places

- 5.1 Numbers of Pupils with SEND continue to rise exponentially in terms of the proportion of the pupil population and severity of their disabilities. The spring 2024

count indicated that there were 1,912 pupils with an Education Healthcare Plan (EHCP) who were allocated across the following provisions below.

Make Up of Provision

SEND Establishment type	%
Mainstream Schools	66.5
Special Schools	29.1
Independent Special School	4.2
Other	0.2

- 5.2 Using the Department for Education (DfE) data published in January 2024, we can see the number of pupils with an EHCP in the borough has almost doubled since 2015/16 and now equates to 3.7% of the school population. Based on this data, we could expect the number of additional EHCP's to increase by circa 120 per year. The demand is placing an immense pressure in finding suitable placements together with the right support these pupils need.
- 5.3 We previously reported further provision is required, not just to meet the demand coming through, typically Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Social Emotional, Mental Health (SEMH) but also the severity of needs being presented. The work of creating further places continues working closely with schools and partners as part of our capital strategy.
- 5.4 As an update, Oxlow Bridge, our new special school being constructed by the DfE has commenced construction on the former council Pondfield depot site. Members may recall that the project had previously been beset by several delays. However, we are pleased to report that it is now moving forward and is scheduled to be open and fully operational from September 2025. The new school will cater for 100 students and will provide a welcomed additional capacity in the sector.
- 6. The Additional Resource Provisions (ARPs).**
- 6.1 The Additional Resource Provisions (ARPs) are small dedicated special educational needs units located within schools. Here, pupils with Educational Health Care Plans (EHCP) are able attend mainstream schools with the additional support that the ARP's bring. The ARPs are run by mainstream schools where places are commissioned by the Council. They are very popular with families as it provides where possible, local provision and where siblings will often attend the same school. The LA continues to work with schools, the consensus of the SEND Sounding Board which is made up of representative Headteachers are that as a highly inclusive borough, we should aim to have ARPs where possible in the majority of schools such is the changing need and demand from our community.
- 6.2 Over the past year we continue to work with schools and their governing bodies to reach agreement in establishing and opening new ARPs. Eastbrook School has agreed to expand their age range into secondary. This will create 8 additional ASD places. Dagenham Park C of E Secondary School has agreed to expand their existing provision providing a further 10 places for pupils with complex needs.
- 6.3 The Executive Headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body of Parsloes Primary School have agreed to establish an ARP provision. Subject to necessary building

works and recruitment, we would aim to have this operational during the new 24-25 academic year.

- 6.4 Gascoigne Primary and William Bellamy Primary Schools have given written notice to the Council that they wish to cease their ARP provisions at each respective school. Both cited different reasonings behind the schools governing body decisions to do so however it is recognised that these closures will be a great loss to the local community they serve. No further students where suitable ARP provision is being sought, will be placed at these schools.

7. **New Grant Allocations and contributions for 2024**

- 7.1 The DfE announced in May 2024 its grant allocations to Councils for Funding for School Condition (repair and maintenance) and High Need Capital Provision.
- 7.2 The Council received £5,297,829 School Condition grant for 2024/25 to invest in the maintenance of school buildings. For the High Needs funding, the Council received an allocation of £2,689,690 in March and further £1,093,808 to support the development of new specialist places.

8. **Proposed New Capital Projects.**

- 8.1 **Barking College** provides opportunities for post- 16 pupils with SEND as a destination and thus pathways for further education or starting employment. The College's offer is very good for Barking and Dagenham students however they are unable to take students with more severe disabilities as they are hindered by their existing accommodation.
- 8.2 The College and senior officers from the Council have been working closely together on a project where an existing building on the college campus could be refurbished and provide specialist facilities for SEND students and to enable the College to accept further specialist places for Barking and Dagenham students. Post 16 students with SEND are often the most difficult to place, the proposal presents an exciting opportunity to help support the demand for this particular cohort.
- 8.3 The High Needs Capital grant the Council receives from the DfE can be used to support post-16 colleges. It is part of the grant conditions attached to the award. The cost of the project would be up to the value of £650k where the College would procure, and project manage the scheme through their Estates Management team.
- 8.4 Both the Council and College require the new provision to be available for students for the new September 2024 term. For the College to progress the project and in the best interest of the Council, the Chief Executive has undertaken urgent action under the provisions of Part 2, Chapter 16, paragraph 4 of the Constitution in order to approve the allocation of £650,000 High Needs grant to fund capital works at Barking and Dagenham College.
- 8.5 **Riverside Bridge Special School.** Following approval by the DfE, Riverside Bridge Special School has been expanding the number of places available for SEND pupils. In total 90 additional places were approved, and the school has gradually increased their cohort by 30 places each year on the City Farm site. Adaptation

works are required to convert the class spaces and auxiliary spaces so that they are suitably equipped for special needs pupils. £300k has been set aside to enable these works to be completed.

9. Proposed changes to existing projects

- 9.1 In Decembers 2017, the School Place Planning and Capital Investment Report (item 69, para 5.5,) members agreed to set aside £7m of capital funding to support the provision of school places if required in the Chadwell Heath area. This in part was to take into consideration, proposals to remove some industrial activities in Selinas land and Freshwater Road for housing development.
- 9.2 To date, these housing projects have not come to fruition and indeed, one of the most significant sites, the former Muller dairy site currently being redeveloped, will retain its industrial use. In view of the most up to date information on both pupil demand and capacity within the area, it is proposed that the funding previously set aside as part of our long-term, albeit prudent capital strategy should now be reduced to £2m. The balance will be returned the main capital funding pot so that it can be utilised elsewhere when needed.
- 9.3 In the School Place Planning and Capital Investment report (January 2024, item 75 para 8.5) Members approved the conversion of the former Rectory Road building to be used by Mayesbrook School Tuition Plus offer. The scheme has been in design development with the end user and the professional design team. Since reporting, intrusive surveys have revealed the building in poorer condition than anticipated requiring more reinstatement/upgrading of the existing building fabric to bring up to current building regulations and improve thermal sustainability. It is proposed to increase the budget by £980K.
- 9.4 In the same January 2024 report, (para 8.2), Members approved the replacement and rebuilding of several buildings on Trinity Special School. This scheme is currently in design development with the end user and Professional design team. The cost plan for the project produced by the Local Education Partnership (LEP) has indicated that it would be prudent at this stage to set aside an additional £1.2m for the scheme. This is because the final proposed scheme has been enlarged to provide 10 more high dependent special places student places. In addition, there are extra costs due the need to develop the project in phases because the school site is constrained by existing buildings which must be kept safely operational.
- 9.5 In January 2020 School Place Planning and Capital Investment report (item 94 para 8.2), Members agreed to set aside £2.0m of capital funding to deal with previously expanded schools that have subsequent issues due to increase numbers of pupils using existing facilities. Examples of additional works have been:
- loss of space for small group tuition
 - need to improve dining facilities.
 - visitor reception and interface
 - improving external spaces
- 9.6 There remains further work to be undertaken in this area. Members are asked to set aside a further £500k to support schools affected.

10. Current and proposed position regarding capital funding

- 10.1 Members will be aware that the Council has been prudent in its use of capital grants when creating mainstream and specialist places. This has been achieved partly through the expansion of existing schools but also identifying suitable and efficient routes to market such as the Local Education Partnership (LEP) on larger projects which has enabled the Council to seek continuous improvement, innovation and value for money. Frameworks such as NHS for modular buildings, traditional tending and the Councils own company BDTP are used so that every pound spent is cost effective.
- 10.2 Below is our current position in terms of available capital funding to invest in projects.

Previous funding balance position (adjusted for reconciliation to actual grant balances and remaining budgets)	£3,380,474
New High Needs Grant funding allocated	£3,783,498
Section 106 Planning agreement funding received.	£55,000
School provision Chadwell Heath area not required and returned. (Para 9.1)	£5,000,000
Sub Total funding available	£12,218,972

- 10.3 Below is our proposed capital position taking into consideration existing scheme adjustments and new proposed projects.

Total Funding available	£12,218,972
Barking College	£650,000
Riverside Bridge City Farm	£300,000
Trinity Special School	£1,200,000
Mayesbrook School -Rectory Road	£980,000
Small works projects to schools	£500,000
Balance of unallocated funding	£8,588,972

11. Options Appraisal

- 11.1 The agreed investment strategy (see Future Planning Programme to meet Basic Need [including SEN places] 2019 to 2027 Cabinet 21 January 2020) is first to expand provision on existing school sites as far as practicable to meet local demand on a forward looking basis (i.e. to seek value for money solutions which have longevity); secondly to seek and build on sites in areas of demand in Council or other public ownership that are suitable for development as a school and which also offer value for money and longevity; then subsequently to support those external providers that have access to further capital funding and are capable and willing to provide high quality inclusive education places that comply with the Council's Admissions Policies.
- 11.2 The variables that influence the delivery of this strategy are: demand fluctuations; the willingness of governing bodies to accede to expansion plans; funding

limitations; cost variances – specific to sites and timescales to achieve cost efficient / competitive prices often in short timescales.

- 11.3 Options exist for any specific scheme and are explored to ensure that the overall strategic outcomes sought are achieved in the most beneficial way being both economic and appropriate for the school. Other overall strategies e.g. to rely on outside providers to meet the prospective short fall of school places would not be effective on their own: timescales and speed of reaction are too short for these providers to react in a meaningful way.

12. Consultation

- 12.1 These proposals are not Ward specific. There has been consultation with a range of officers throughout the Council in order that appropriate matters are considered including financial, legal, procurement and others mentioned in section 12 of this report.

13. Procurement Implications

Implications completed by: Francis Parker – Senior Procurement Manager

- 13.1 The spend detailed in the report will be procured in line with legislation at the time of the procurement and in line with the Council's Contract Rules and governance processes.

14. Financial Implications

Implications completed by: Alison Gebbett – Capital Accountant

- 14.1 This report provides an update on projected pupil numbers and planned place provision for the upcoming year but also longer-term projections, along with the known resources available to support this provision. The report highlights the demand for special educational needs and sets out the options that are being reviewed.
- 14.2 The report sets out the pot of available uncommitted grant funding for funding new schemes for both new pupil places and SEND provision. This has been reconciled against actual grants received and announced and the existing budget allocations as reported to Assets and Capital Board monthly and reported to Cabinet quarterly as part of the capital monitoring finance report.
- 14.3 Proposed new projects to be funded from the Basic Need and High Needs grant pot are set out at 10.3 above totalling £3.630m and Cabinet approval is requested to add this amount to the capital programme.
- 14.4 This report also sets out capital programme funding announced of £5,297,829 Schools Condition Capital for 2024/25. Cabinet approval is requested to also add this to the capital programme.
- 14.5 These allocations are all fully grant (or section 106) funded and will have no additional financial implications for the Council. Any major risks, issues or overspending that becomes apparent will be monitored, managed, and reported on as part of the Council's normal quarterly capital monitoring process.

15. Legal Implications

Implications completed by: Georgina Foster Education Lawyer, Law & Governance

- 15.1 Any procurement carried out must comply with the Council's Contract Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (the "Regulations") where the contract has a value in excess of procurement thresholds set out in the Regulations.
- 15.2 In line with the Contract Rules, Cabinet can indicate whether it is content for the Chief Officer or delegated authority to award the contract following the procurement process with the approval of Corporate Finance.
- 15.3 The report author and responsible directorate are advised to keep the Council's Legal team fully informed at every stage of the proposed tender exercises. The team will be on hand and available to assist and answer any questions that may arise.
- 15.4 Local authorities have legal duties to identify and assess the special educational needs of children and young people for whom they are responsible. Local authorities become responsible for a child or young person in their area when they become aware that the child or young person has or may have special educational needs and the local authority must ensure that those children/young people receive support to help them in "achieving the best possible educational and other outcomes".
- 15.5 Each local authority is required to publish a Local Offer detailing relevant information about all the services and support it expects to be available for children/young people with special educational needs and/or a disability for whom they are responsible. The Local Offer must set out what the local authority expects in terms of support provided by schools/colleges, educational health and care provision, training provisions, transport arrangements from home to school/college and support for preparing the young person for adulthood and independent living. The local authority has a duty to secure sufficient school places which applies to all children, including those with SEND.

16. Other Implications

- 16.1 **Risk Management** - The provision of school places is a matter which is directly identified in the Corporate Risk Register and listed at Corporate Risks 31 – Provision of School Places. An assessment of specific risks is set out below:

Risk that funding levels will not be sufficient to meet demand to create new education places needed - This risk is high impact (4) and medium (3) probability = 12 red. This risk is being managed by purchasing the most affordable accommodation which is system build where possible. Post control the risk is high impact (4) and low (2) probability = 8 amber.

Risk that funding levels will not be sufficient to create suitable new school places - This risk is high impact (4) and high (4) probability = 16 red. This risk is being managed by purchasing the most affordable accommodation, which is system

build, and blending it with site specific proposals. Post control the risk is high impact (4) and low (2) probability = 8 amber.

Primary and Secondary schools: risk that site availability would prevent delivery of school places in the areas where demand is highest - This risk is high impact (4) and medium (3) probability = 12 red. This risk is being mitigated, as far as practicable, by expanding all available sites in high demand areas, and reviewing other buildings for potential school use. Post control the risk is still high impact (4) and medium (3) probability = 12 red.

Risk that the cost of the rate of deterioration of the school estate will outrun the funding available to maintain it - This risk is high impact (4) and high (4) probability = 16 red. This risk is being mitigated as far as practicable by lobbying DfE for improvements in funding. Post control the risk is high impact (4) and medium (3) probability = 12 red.

Risk that final costs will be higher than estimate costs - This risk is high impact (4) and high (4) probability = 16 red. This risk is managed through monthly finance meetings and initial planning figures that architects and schools are asked to work within being set below the highest estimate to allow for unforeseen challenges.

- 16.2 **Contractual and Procurement Issues** - It is anticipated that projects will be procured through options related either to the Local Education Partnership or through the Council's Framework of Contractors or other national or local frameworks which are accessible to the Council to secure value for money. It is a requirement of the grant funding to achieve value for money and demonstrate that all procurement options have been evaluated.

Legal, procurement and other professional advice will be sought regarding the appropriate procurement routes and contractual agreements to procure and secure the individual projects. All procurement activity will be conducted in compliance with the Council's Contract Rules and new post Brexit Public Procurement Legislation. The procurement routes will be approved at Procurement Board which will consider a report from Education Commissioning about a procurement strategy based on a project basis. This will ensure that Value for Money is tested.

Projects will be subject to the Capital Appraisal Process and the agreement of the Procurement Board to progress schemes.

- 16.3 **Staffing Issues** - There are no specific staffing issues although the growing demand for school places will create additional opportunities in schools for both teaching and non-teaching staff.

- 16.4 **Corporate Policy and Equality Impact** - The decision will assist the Council in fulfilling its statutory obligations to provide a school place for every child and support the intention of the Council's Vision and Priorities, including encouraging civic pride, enabling social responsibility, and growing the Borough. It is part of the mitigation of Corporate Risk 31 – Inability to Provide School Places.

The short-term impact of the recommendations for the coming year would be positive for customers on all counts of race, equality, gender, disability, sexuality, faith, age and community cohesion. The longer-term outlook is unlikely to be

positive on the proposed funding levels as it will be difficult to address need on current budget levels.

- 16.5 **Safeguarding Adults and Children** - Adoption of the recommendations in the short term would contribute to the Council's objectives to improve the wellbeing of children in the borough, reduce inequalities and ensure children's facilities are provided in an integrated manner, having regard to guidance issued under the Childcare Act 2006 in relation to the provision of services to children, parents, prospective parents, and young people.
- 16.6 **Health Issues** - The health and wellbeing board and JSNA highlight the importance of investing in early intervention and education to support children's and young people's long-term wellbeing. The evidence and analysis set out in Fair Society, Healthy Lives (Marmot Review) has been developed and strengthened by the report of the Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances. The reports draw attention to the impact of family background, parental education, good parenting and school-based education, as what matters most in preventing poor children becoming poor adults. The relationship between health and educational attainment is an integral part of our Health and Wellbeing Strategy. At this point there is no need to change the focus of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy as a result of this report. Healthy Schools funding is to be welcomed.
- 16.7 **Crime and Disorder Issues** - Appropriate consideration of the development of individual projects will take into account the need to design out potential crime problems and to protect users of the building facilities.
- 16.8 **Property / Asset Issues** - This proposed decision would facilitate the improvement and renewal of Council assets.

Public Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report:

- "Review of School Places and Capital Investment – Update December 2018" report (Cabinet, 12 December 2017 Minute 69 [Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 12 December 2017, 7:00 pm | LBBD](#))
- "Review of School Places and Capital Investment – Update January 2021" report (Cabinet, 21 January 2020 Minute 94 [Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 21 January 2020, 7:00 pm | LBBD](#))
- School Place Planning and Capital Investment report (Cabinet, 23 January 2024 Minute 75 [Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 23 January 2024, 7:00 pm | LBBD](#))
- London Councils publication "Managing falling school rolls in London" [london_councils_-_managing_falling_school_rolls_2024_0.pdf](#) (londoncouncils.gov.uk)

List of Appendices: None