

AGENDA ITEM: 11

Pages: 103 - 124

Meeting	Business Management Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date	9th January 2012
Subject	Supply of Secondary School Places Overview and Scrutiny Panel – Draft Report
Report of	Scrutiny Office
Summary	This report presents the findings and recommendations of the Supply of Secondary Schools Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Officer Contributors	John Murphy – Overview and Scrutiny Officer
Status (public or exempt)	Public
Wards affected	All
Enclosures	Appendix 1 – Report of the Supply of Secondary School Places Overview and Scrutiny Panel
Reason for urgency / exemption from call-in	Not applicable

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1. RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 Members of the Committee consider the findings of the Supply of Secondary School Places Overview and Scrutiny Panel, as set out in the report attached at Appendix 1.**
- 1.2 Members of the Committee discuss and agree the recommendations of the Scrutiny Panel.**
- 1.3 The agreed findings and recommendations are forwarded to the Executive for their consideration.**

2. RELEVANT PREVIOUS DECISIONS

- 2.1 Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee, 28 April 2011, Decision Item 5 – the Sub-Committee recommend that a Task and Finish Group be established to review the supply of Secondary School places in the borough, with specific reference made to Secondary School places for girls in the South of the borough).
- 2.2 Business Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 1 June 2011, Decision Item 8 – the Committee agreed to establish a seven Member Overview and Scrutiny Panel to consider the issue of secondary school places in the borough, with a specific reference made to the south of the borough.
- 2.2 Cabinet, 3 November 2011, Decision 6 – Cabinet considered a report in Proposed Phasing Of Primary School Expansions and Investment Strategy to Meet Demand for Secondary School Places.

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 Barnet schools are among the best in the country; a high proportion are rated good or outstanding by Ofsted and are highly valued by residents. Working in partnership with schools to promote high standards, maintain success and offer a diversity of provision to meet parental choice are key to helping to 'Ensure every school is a good school for every child and sufficient school places are available'. This is a strategic objective in the Corporate Plan 2011 - 2013, under the corporate priority 'a successful London suburb'. This is also a key priority in the partnership Barnet Children and Young People Plan 2010-2013.
- 3.2 Barnet Council has a statutory duty under Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 to ensure that sufficient schools for providing primary and secondary education are available in the area.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 4.1 If there were insufficient secondary school places to offer to children of school age in the borough, Barnet would not be able to fulfil its statutory duty under Section 14 of the Education Act 1996. This would also pose a significant reputational risk.
- 4.2 Secondary school projections are based on children already in the school system. The Greater London Authority (GLA) projected Year 7 rolls for 2010/11 to an accuracy level

of 5.3 per cent one year in advance. The council is working with the GLA to further improve the model and will continue to verify the GLA projections against birth date projections and the number of Year 6 pupils in Barnet schools the year before. Over the past two years the number of children in Year 7 as a percentage of those who were in Year 6 the year before has increased. If this continues it will place increasing demand on secondary school places.

- 4.3 Although the local authority continues to have the statutory duty for school place planning, it is not the decision-maker in relation to commissioning new school places for all types of schools. Academies must apply to the Young People’s Learning Agency for permission to permanently increase their admission number, and decisions around the creation of free schools are made by central government. Although many free school proposers chose to engage with the Local Authority, the Local Authority does not know if or when free schools are likely to open in the borough and so it is not possible to include them in medium to long-term school place planning. As such, there is a risk that the opening of a free school could impact on the viability of school expansions planned for the medium to long-term.

5. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 5.1 The council aims to ensure sufficient school places for children in the borough. This applies to all children regardless of gender, faith, ethnicity, disability or other differences. Appendix 1, the final report of the Secondary Schools Scrutiny Panel, highlights the complex requirements of parents and children across the borough, identifying the need for the council to support in school place planning a demand for both faith and non-faith based educational provision alongside a desire from parents to have their children educated within single and mixed sex schools depending on their personal preferences.

6. USE OF RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (Finance, Procurement, Performance & Value for Money, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

- 6.1 There is an allocation of £9m within the current Children’s Capital Programme for school reorganisation (up to 2013/14) to cover secondary schools, special schools and other types of educational provision. Allocation of this to help meet the rising demand for school places, including secondary school places, will be considered by Cabinet Resources Committee. The Children’s Service has indicated that existing successful secondary schools will be considered first for permanent expansions. Table 1 sets out the further resources required to help meet demand for secondary school places in the period from 2014/15 to 2016/17. Some temporary provision may also be required to meet demand in this period.

Table 1. Costs of proposed permanent secondary expansion works

Financial Year	2014/15 £m	2015/16 £m	2016/17 £m	Total £m
One form permanent expansion at up to 3 schools, and the commissioning of new secondary school (total build cost of new school, £24m starting in 2016/17) to be delivered by September 2018.	3.0	3.0	8.0	14.0
Total budget required	3.0	3.0	8.0	14.0

- 6.2 If a new secondary school is required, which current projections indicate will be required, it would be necessary to identify and secure appropriate land. Any land acquisition would be additional to the indicative £30m total cost of the proposals set out in table 1.

7. LEGAL ISSUES

- 7.1 Under Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 Barnet Council has a statutory duty to ensure that sufficient schools for providing primary and secondary education are available in the area.

8. CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS

- 8.1 The scope of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees is contained within Part 2, Article 6 of the Council's Constitution.
- 8.2 The Terms of Reference of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees are set out in the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules (Part 4 of the Constitution).
- 8.3 Item 8 of Business Management Overview & Scrutiny Committee Terms of Reference states that the role of the Committee is:

“To coordinate and monitor the work of scrutiny panels and task and finish groups, including considering reports and recommendations and referring to the relevant decision-making body.”

9. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 9.1 At the Children's Service Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee meeting held 28 April 2011, a Members Item was raised relating to the supply of secondary school places in certain parts of the borough. The item outlined parental concerns about a lack of co-educational, non-selective secondary community school places in the south of the borough particularly, but not exclusively, for girls. The Members Item identified that growing demand for primary school places across the borough would result in increasing pressure on secondary school places in the future. Following debate on the item, the Children's Service Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee recommended that a time-limited Overview and Scrutiny Panel be established to consider the issue of the supply of secondary school places in the borough. The Business Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the commissioning body for Task and Finish Groups and Scrutiny Panels, agreed to this request and established a time-limited overview and scrutiny panel to consider the issue.
- 9.2 The demand for school places currently being felt at primary school level within the borough is expected to feed through into demand for additional secondary school places. The latest GLA pupil projections indicate that additional capacity will be required at secondary level from 2015/16. The projections assume that all existing Barnet secondary schools will be at full capacity by this date.
- 9.3 As with the primary stage, GLA projections take into account birth data, migration trends and regeneration and are updated on a yearly basis. For the purposes of secondary school place planning the Council has used a margin of 3 per cent on top of the GLA projections. This is felt prudent based on the recent GLA under projections, and will also

help allow for a certain amount of parental preference. The projected shortfall of Year 7 places in each of the coming years is given below in Table 2. 1FE is equivalent to 30 places per year group expanded.

Table 2 - The projected shortfall of Year 7 places in each of the coming years

2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
3 FE	8FE	13FE	18FE	25FE	24FE

- 9.4 The new environment in which local authorities are operating in terms of school organisation is particularly pertinent for Barnet in the secondary phase. The majority of Barnet's secondary schools now have Academy status. Local Authorities retain the statutory duty for ensuring sufficient school places are available, but decisions around expanding Academies are made by central Government agencies and decisions around expanding Voluntary Aided schools continue to be made by diocesan boards and governing bodies. As such, partnership working is crucial.
- 9.5 In addition, the Free School movement is another avenue outside of the local authority control that impacts on pupil place planning, particularly in the secondary phase. Should a Free School proposer of a large secondary school be successful in an application to Government and have a site in Barnet, additional places would become available outside of the Local Authority's strategy. The Children's Service is aware of at least two proposals, which if successful, would provide substantial additional secondary capacity in Barnet.
- 9.6 For secondary school places, the Children's Service are developing a strategy that seeks to expand existing successful secondary schools first, and then to identify land on which to build a new secondary school. A two pronged approach will help to ensure that there is a balance of provision to meet parental preferences and that the maximum value for money is achieved. As the strategy develops, the Children's Service may need to modify proposals in the light of land values, parental preferences, free school provision and value for money.
- 9.7 In seeking to identify existing schools for permanent expansions the Children's Service intends to use the same criteria for prioritisation as for primary schools, although children tend to travel further to secondary schools and so the criterion demand in the immediate area will not be as crucial as at primary level. There is an allocation of £9m within the current medium term financial strategy for school organisation (up to 2013/14) to cover secondary schools, special schools and other types of educational provision. This will help to deliver additional capacity in the period up to 2013/14. Within the medium term financial strategy for 2014/15 to 2016/17 the Children's Service feel it is prudent to plan for:
- Further permanent expansions at existing successful schools, adding up to three additional forms of entry
 - The development of a new secondary school – up to 9 forms of entry.
- 9.8 The Children's Service has invited all secondary schools to advise the local authority of any ambition to expand their provision and six secondary schools responded. The Children's Service will continue working with schools to identify where additional forms of entry can be added in a way that provides maximum value for money and helps to meet parental preferences wherever possible. In view of the new environment for secondary education, there will need to be an element of responsiveness to opportunities as they arise.

- 9.9 The Colindale Area Action Plan provides for some contributions to be made to secondary education. Within Cricklewood Brent Cross regeneration proposals, Whitefield school will be rebuilt on a new site to at least at its current size and Mapledown special school will also be rebuilt on a new site. In view of the contribution to primary education, there is no developer contribution for secondary places in the Mill Hill East redevelopment.
9. 10 The Supply of Secondary Schools Overview and Scrutiny Panel has sought to incorporate consideration of the issues and opportunities identified above within the recommendations presented in the Panel's final report as detailed in Appendix 1.

10. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 Proposed Phasing Of Primary School Expansions and Investment Strategy to Meet Demand for Secondary School Places – Report of the Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Families – Cabinet, 3 November 2011
<http://committeepapers.barnet.gov.uk/democracy/meetings/meetingdetail.asp?meetingid=7041>

Legal – HP
CFO – MC

**Supply of Secondary School Places Overview
and Scrutiny Panel**

Final Report

November 2011

Recommendations

During the course of the review, the Secondary School Places Overview and Scrutiny Panel acknowledged the significant complexities and constraints that the council faced in relation to school places planning. The Panel sought to develop recommendations that would assist the Cabinet in developing solutions to address school places planning issues in the short, medium and long-term.

At the conclusion of the review, the Panel agreed to make the following recommendations:-

1. Increasing demand for secondary school places be addressed initially by seeking to permanently expand successful and popular schools that are able to provide additional places.
2. Cabinet to recognise the need to meet the demand for non-denominational and coeducational school places in the East Finchley and garden Suburb areas and instruct the Children's Service to develop potential solutions to meet this demand. The details of these potential solutions will be reported to the Scrutiny Panel.
3. Cabinet remains committed to developing a new relationship with schools to ensure that there is a continued dialogue with Barnet's family of schools and faith bodies, enabling the council to continue to influence school place planning and continually raise standards across the schools community.
4. Cabinet are requested to consider developing opportunities to improve facilities for vocational education and training to strengthen the diversity of provision in Barnet.
5. Cabinet instruct the Local Authority to undertake work on finding more suitable accommodation for the Pupil Referral Unit.

Cabinet will be requested to provide a formal response to the recommendations when the report of the Panel is presented to them. In order to ensure that accepted recommendations have been acted upon, the Panel have agreed to re-convene in six months time (June 2012) to discuss the progress made in implementing the above recommendations. In re-convening, the Scrutiny Panel are not intending to commence a further review, instead seeking to receive a formal update on progress. The implementation of accepted recommendations will be continued by the Business Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee at six-monthly intervals.

1. Background Information

1.1 At the Children's Service Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee meeting held 28 April 2011, Councillor Alex Brodtkin submitted a Members Item relating to the supply of secondary school places in certain parts of the borough. The item outlined parental concerns about a lack of co-educational, non-selective secondary community school places in the south of the borough particularly, but not exclusively, for girls. The Members Item identified that growing demand for primary school places across the borough would result in increasing pressure on secondary school places in the future. Following debate on the item, the Children's Service Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee recommended that a time-limited Overview and Scrutiny Panel be established to consider the issue of the supply of secondary school places in the borough.

1.2 The membership of the Panel (as appointed by the Business Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 1 June 2011) was as follows:

Councillor John Marshall (Chairman)	Councillor Sury Khatri
Councillor Alex Brodtkin	Councillor Mark Shooter
Councillor Jack Cohen	Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb
Councillor John Hart	

Substitute Members:

Councillor Graham Old	Councillor Anne Hutton
Councillor Susette Palmer	Councillor Barry Rawlings
Councillor Reuben Thompstone	Councillor Lord Monroe-Palmer

1.3 The Panel held an initial meeting on 13 July 2011 where they considered and agreed their terms of reference (Appendix A). The scope and purpose of the review was to consider the options currently available in establishing:

- Whether greater school freedoms could offer constructive solutions to the demand for secondary school places
- What resources could be allocated to increasing school places in Barnet to meet parental choice; and
- Potential value for money solutions to address the projected shortfall of secondary school places in the medium and long-term.

2 Review Format

2.1 The Panel agreed that the review should cover the entire borough, with specific reference made to the availability of school places for girls in the south of the borough.

- 2.2 The Panel anticipated making up to four SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely) recommendations to the council's Cabinet. It was agreed that recommendations would not be made that identified specific schools, or which specified a change to policies that are for schools to decide, such as admissions criteria.
- 2.3 The Panel agreed to complete their work within a three month timeframe (by the end of October 2011), with a view to assisting the Cabinet in planning secondary school places provision from 2015/16 onwards. Regular updates on the progress of the review were reported to the Business Management Overview & Scrutiny Committee, the committee responsible for oversight of the work of scrutiny bodies.
- 2.4 Following protocol guidelines stipulated in the council's constitution under Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, the Panel undertook a series of evidence gathering meetings with key stakeholders including parents and school governors, as well as undertaking a site visit to a local secondary school where performance had been rapidly improving to consider its progress in becoming a school of choice for some of the parents who presented evidence.
- 2.5 The Panel also commissioned a survey of Year Five parents in Barnet schools to gain a better understanding about parental preferences for secondary school places.
- 2.6 Primary evidence collated by the Panel was supported by a review of analysis previously undertaken by the Children's Service;
- 2.7 The report of the Scrutiny Panel details findings based on the evidence gathered presented around the reviews scope and purpose as detailed at 1.3 above.

3 Overview

- 3.1 Barnet schools are among the best in the country. A high proportion are rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted and are highly valued by residents. Working in partnership with schools, the council seeks to promote high standards, maintain success and offer a diversity of provision to meet parental choice. The council's Corporate Plan 2011-2013, under the corporate priority of 'A successful London suburb', has the strategic objective to 'Ensure every school is a good school for every child and sufficient school places are available'. This priority is also reflected in the Barnet Children and Young People Plan 2010-2013.
- 3.2 A number of factors are placing significant demand on primary and secondary school places in the borough. Increasing birth rates and population increases associated with regeneration projects are requiring the council to invest in primary school expansions. Over the coming years, significant investment in secondary schools will also be required to meet projected demand. Additionally, the success of the borough's

schools has resulted in the inward migration of families to Barnet, placing further strain on the system.

- 3.3 Barnet is a diverse borough and this needs to be taken into account when planning the type of school places available. There are currently 22 secondary schools within Barnet. Of these, three are selective, seven are single sex and eight are faith based. Of the faith-based schools, four are Catholic, two Church of England and two Jewish. Since government passed enabling legislation, 10 of Barnet's secondary schools have converted to academy status, joining the two pre-existing academies. A further three schools are in the process of academy conversion.
- 3.4 The council's Cabinet agreed an investment strategy in November 2011 to meet the projected demand for primary and secondary school places in the period up to 2016/17¹.

4 Key Findings of Review

- 4.1 The Panel covered several areas and heard evidence from council officers, parents and school governors. The key findings of the Panel were:
1. Projected demand for secondary school places over the forthcoming 10 year period (up to 2021) identified a shortage of 90 places in 2015/16, increasing to 720 places in 2020/21.
 2. Government funding available will not be sufficient to meet the cost of providing enough permanent school places in Barnet. The council is currently investing in primary school places, and there is recognition that additional resources will be required to provide sufficient secondary school places from 2015/16 onwards.
 3. Increasing demand for secondary school places needs to be considered in the context of the complex and changing relationship between schools, the local authority and faith bodies. Legislative changes have resulted in an increasing amount of powers and freedoms being granted to schools. However, the local authority retains the statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places in the local area.
 4. Evidence from parents and school governors, primarily from the N2, N3 and NW11 areas, suggested that the high number of single sex, faith and selective schools were limiting the choice of secondary school placements for many children in their part of the borough.

¹ Cabinet, 3 November 2011, *Proposed Phasing of Primary School Expansions and Investment Strategy to Meet Demand for Secondary School Places*

5. Key considerations expressed by parents when applying to a school included the school's reputation within the community; curriculum and facilities; proximity to home; and Ofsted rating.

5. Basis of Findings

5.1 Secondary Places in Barnet: Supply and Demand

- 5.1.1 In relation to the provision of secondary school places, the Panel was informed that the borough has sufficient secondary school place provision up to 2015.
- 5.1.2 However, the Panel received a presentation from the Children's Service on demand projections for secondary school places which outlined six year projections from 2015/16 to 2020/21. The presentation highlighted the following shortfall in secondary school places over the period. This information is detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1 - Projected Shortfall in Secondary School Places 2015-2021

Up to 2015	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Sufficient capacity	3FE (90 places)	8FE (240 places)	13FE (390 places)	18FE (540 places)	25FE (750 places)	24FE (720 places)

FE = Forms of Entry

- 5.1.3 The expected demand for places is driven by population growth in Barnet which is expected to occur in the coming years. The number of births in the borough has risen significantly since 2002/03. Although not all children born in the borough will go on to take up a Barnet school place it is a strong indicator of anticipated demand. For those due to enter Year 7 (the first year of secondary school) in September 2020 (i.e. children born in 2008/09) there were approximately 940 more births in the borough than for the cohort entering Year 7 this September (those born in 1999/2000).
- 5.1.4 The number of children in Year 7 has fluctuated in line with changing birth rates and trends in migration. As of January 2011 there were 3,527 children in Barnet schools in Year 7. There are currently approximately 3,820 permanent secondary school places in the borough.
- 5.1.5 Greater London Authority projections for 2011 (which take into account birth rates, migration and housing developments) indicate that the Year 7 pupil number will fluctuate in the next three years before rising from a projected 3,800 in academic year 2014/15 to over 4,500 by 2019/20. By 2015/16 a shortfall of 90 secondary school places is projected, rising to a shortfall of around 720 places by 2020/21.
- 5.1.6 The projected shortfall in secondary schools places will present significant funding challenges for the council. In relation to this funding

challenge, the Panel received the following information from the Children's Service:

- To permanently increase secondary school capacity by 540 places (18 FE) would cost around £100m.
- For 2011/12, Barnet received £9m of government funding (Basic Needs Funding) to meet demand for additional school places. This funding is for both primary and secondary school places.
- Due to the immediate pressure on primary school places, this has to be the council's first priority.
- Central Government has indicated that there will be a similar level of funding for additional school places in subsequent years. However, the Government is currently consulting on changes to the national capital funding programme for schools. One of the most significant proposals of the James Review is to establish a single capital pot for each local area overseen by the local authority and involving all responsible bodies, underpinned by a local investment plan.
- The government funding currently available is not sufficient to meet the cost of providing enough permanent school places in Barnet. The council is currently investing in primary school places, and there is recognition that additional resources will be required to provide sufficient secondary school places from 2015/16 onwards.
- However, despite the expected shortfall in secondary school places the first priority for capital investment in schools has to be the creation of additional primary school places to help meet the pressing demand in the primary sector.

5.2. Current Provision in Barnet

5.2.1 Data from the Children's Service provides an insight into the current level of provision and the types of school from which Barnet residents can currently choose.

5.2.2 Currently when parents apply for a secondary school place for their child they can list several schools in order of preference. The first preference schools of parents have been analysed by type of school and are shown in table 2 below. The percentage of all first preferences relates to all parents applying for Barnet schools (which includes those not living in Barnet), while the percentage of Barnet preferences shows only first preferences expressed by Barnet residents.

Table 2 - Preferences of Applicants Compared to Provision Available

	% of all first preferences	% of Barnet first preferences	% of provision
Non-denominational	75.0%	71.6%	66.5%
Jewish	7.5%	8.7%	7.9%
Catholic	10.6%	9.6%	16.7%
Church of England	6.9%	10.1%	9.0%
	% of all first prefs	% of Barnet first prefs	% of provision
Selective	35.2%	17.3%	9.7%
Non-selective	64.8%	82.7%	90.3%

5.2.3 From the information held by the Children's Service it is possible to discern that:

- For September 2011, first preferences vary from 8.5 per place (Henrietta Barnett) to 0.2 per place (Bishop Douglass)
- 62.4 per cent of first preferences were met for the September 2011 secondary school intake (excluding late applications)

5.2.4 Analysis undertaken by the Children's Service also indicates that the demand for selective schools distorts demand for girls and boys schools. Furthermore, the information relating to parental preference may also be influenced by:

- Parents expressing a first preference for a school they don't want, due to admissions criteria and lack of other options; and
- Parents who are less able to make themselves heard (e.g. English is second language, or they don't understand the system) may not be expressing any concerns they have

5.2.5 These two issues have also been noted in national studies.

5.3 *Allocating School Places within the Context of Changing Relations between Schools and Local Authorities*

- 5.3.1 Barnet currently has two community secondary schools in the borough. This means that the local authority employs the staff, owns the land and buildings and decides which admissions criteria to use. One of these community secondary schools is in the process of converting to academy status. The remainder of Barnet's secondary schools are academies, foundation or voluntary aided schools, which own their land and premises. Free schools and academies are funded directly from government, rather than through local authorities.
- 5.3.2 As a local authority Barnet Council has a statutory responsibility for ensuring there are sufficient school places in the local area. However, since the Academies Act 2010, which enables schools to convert to academy status giving them greater freedoms, it has become more challenging for local authorities to ensure that there are sufficient school places in their areas due to their diminishing influence.
- 5.3.3 This is because decisions about converting to academy status, the establishment of free schools, and the expansion of academies and free schools are made by the Secretary of State, not local authorities. At present local authorities hold the budget for school expansions, including for academies.
- 5.3.4 The decision making arrangements for sixth form provision is also changing with decisions and funding regarding sixth form provision, which is controlled centrally, moving from the Young People's Learning Agency to the Department for Education.
- 5.3.5 As such, any new or expanding schools in the borough will have an impact on the council's overall strategic school planning. However, as local authorities have limited leverage over academies and free schools, in order to influence decisions, local authorities will be increasingly reliant on the development of strong partnerships with schools to influence decisions.
- 5.3.6 It should be noted that despite the changing relations with schools local authorities still have an important role to play in the allocation of school places, for example:
- All academies continue to be part of coordinated admissions process which is managed by the local authority. Local authorities still retain responsibility for coordinating admissions across these schools and with neighbouring authorities, offering parents their highest available preference.

- Local authorities also coordinate in-year admissions and, as of 2011/12, applications for year groups other than normal points of entry. However, this does not affect an academy's right to determine which applicants have priority for admission
- Local authorities retain overall responsibility for ensuring that there are sufficient school places to meet demand locally. Where individual academies make a request to the Secretary of State to expand their pupil numbers and/or age range, this should only be done following local consultation, with the decision being informed by the views of the local authority, as the commissioner of pupil places
- In relation to catchment areas it should be noted that the Dept. for Education states that:

The academy is its own admission authority. That means that it becomes responsible for its own admission arrangements. If it has a catchment on conversion it retains that catchment until it decides to change it. Local authorities cannot change an academy's catchment area even if it has previously done so when the school was a maintained school.

If the academy does decide to change its catchment it will need to consult on the change alongside its other admission arrangements in line with the requirements in the Admissions Code.

Any catchment must serve children of different abilities from the area.

- Two of Barnet's secondary schools are currently in the process of converting to academy status. As of September 2011, it is anticipated that just over half of Barnet secondary schools will be academies. Local authorities have no decision-making ability in relation to free schools and academies. Accordingly, the council will need to work closely with academies and free schools to help influence place planning.
- In addition to the matters identified above many schools, including academies and voluntary aided schools, own their own land, further limiting the council's ability to influence secondary school place planning.

5.4 Issues raised in Discussion in Parent / Parent Governor Representations to the Panel

- 5.4.1 The Panel received oral and written representations from parent governors from Brookland, Garden Suburb, Holy Trinity, Martin and Manorside Schools. Submissions covered a range of concerns,

including shrinking catchment areas and children coming into the borough from outside Barnet. Parents spoke of their personal experiences in attempting to find appropriate places for their children. Parents and parent governors from the schools above had been working collaboratively to explore all possibilities to try to find a solution to the problems they faced.

5.4.2 A former Chair of Martin Primary School identified that, as a group, attempts had been made to find solutions to the increasingly scarce places available at secondary schools in the borough that parents would consider as schools of choice. The parent governors have been in dialogue with Christ's College School, with a view to persuading them to become co-educational to help meet the growing demand for school places for girls in the south of the borough. However, following the representations made by the group, the Christ's College school governors had voted not to become co-educational at this time.

5.4.3 Overall, discussions with the parent/parent governors identified issues which could be categorised into five areas:

- Issues relating to selective and non-selective admission policies;
- Academic standards;
- Location of schools;
- Perceptions of parents and pupils; and
- Marketing of schools.

5.4.4 Details of the evidence representations received and the Panel's response is detailed below.

5.5 *Issues relating to selective and non-selective admission policies*

5.5.1 During discussions it was suggested that at Year 6 children did not have equal opportunities to transfer to the secondary schools of their choice because many of Barnet's schools were selective, faith-based or single sex. This was felt to be impacting particularly on girls.

5.5.2 The Panel were informed that up to a third of parents in some primary schools were currently opting to send their children to independent schools because they felt they had no prospect of getting their children into their state school of choice within the borough. It was also suggested that parents and families who could not afford a private education may feel they were in a position where they had little choice but to apply for places at faith schools which might not necessarily be synonymous with their own cultural beliefs.

5.5.3 Representations made to the Panel thus emphasised the need for more non-denomination, co-educational schools to provide places for the rising numbers of children coming through the education system.

5.5.4 Furthermore, parents and carers with male and female children highlighted that they did not want to send their sons/daughters to an all boys school or all girls school because this meant that they would not have the benefit of taking advantage of the sibling rule when it came to placing younger sons/daughters in the family.

5.6 Academic standards

5.6.1 Parent governors identified that parents and carers wanted to send children to good schools with high educational attainment. Panel Members highlighted the recent achievements of the currently undersubscribed Whitefield School which has raised standards significantly over the past few years, with children achieving solid grades. Some parents expressed their high expectations and were interested in the number of A* and A GCSEs (including English and Maths) achieved at a school rather than the number of A* to C GCSEs.

5.7 Location

5.7.1 Parents concerns were raised regarding long journey times to schools in parts of the borough which were a significant distance away from children's homes. This was especially the case where children were not able to attend schools closer to their homes due to specific admissions criteria. However, parents also indicated that they would be prepared to travel for a school of their choice.

5.8 Perceptions

5.8.1 Parents were keen to emphasise that perceptions of a school's reputation were important to parents. The Panel were advised that parents and carers considered the views of other parents regarding reputation and this was taken into account when making selection decisions.

5.8.2 Parents in the Garden Suburb area had started to consider Whitefield as an option for their children. Some parent governors and Members felt that asking children to travel from further afield to Whitefield (for example from East Finchley) could be a significant deterrent to parents. The good work taken to improve Whitefield's reputation and their recent achievements was recognised, and work is ongoing to further enhance the reputation of the school.

5.8.3 Parent governors told the Panel that when discussing the move to secondary education, the perceptions of young people themselves could play a significant role. This was especially the case when considering how children felt about the changes in their new life circumstances. If there were negative reports in the playground about a school that a child might be changing to, it could have a detrimental effect on that child's self esteem and confidence when dealing with the transition.

5.9 Marketing

- 5.9.1 The Panel was informed that marketing campaigns and name changes could encourage parents to choose formerly failing schools in some cases. However, parents tended to be interested in the academic results of a school, how long it took to get to the school and where the school was located. These were the primary considerations that parents had to weigh up when expressing their preference of school.
- 5.9.2 The speakers felt that one of the possible solutions was to convince selective schools to change their policies to help provide secondary education for all. One speaker said that she felt it was important to keep the dialogue alive with schools such as Christ's College with the aim to persuade them to reconsider their selection criteria.

5.10 Community consultation survey responses

- 5.10.1 The Panel instructed that a survey be carried out in order to gain a better understanding of parental preferences and how this matched the choices available to parents. The survey was aimed at parents of children in Year 5 Barnet schools (both state and private) as this group would be starting to consider which secondary school they would ideally like their child to attend.
- 5.10.2 255 responses to the questionnaire were received. This compares with approximately 3,400 children on roll in Barnet schools in Year 5 in addition to those privately educated who were also alerted to the survey via their schools. As such the results of the survey should not be viewed as representing a scientifically accurate sample of the demand for school places, but rather as providing an insight into the considerations of at least some of the parents who will be seeking school places for their children.
- 5.10.3 Responses to the survey highlighted that:
- 88.8 per cent of respondents would prefer their child to attend a state school in Barnet;
 - 75.4 per cent felt that their child would attend a state school in Barnet; and
 - 5 per cent said they would prefer a non-state school.
- 5.10.4 The majority of parents, 52.8 per cent, would ideally like their child to attend a mixed sex school. However, there were also a significant number of parents, 24.3 per cent, expressing a preference for a single sex school, with 25.1 per cent expressing no preference.
- 5.10.5 46.4 per cent of parents said they would ideally prefer their child to attend a non-religious school. However, there was also demand for

religious provision, with 8.5 per cent of all respondents preferring a Catholic school, 14.9 per cent a Church of England school, and 13.6 per cent a Jewish school. This equates to 37 per cent of respondents seeking a faith based school.

- 5.10.6 When asked to choose between their child attending selective and non-selective schools there was no clear preference with 38.7 per cent opting for selective, 32.8 per cent choosing non-selective with 31.1 per cent of respondents expressing no preference. This result does not reflect overall demand for non-selective places as captured by the Children's Service (see table 2 above).
- 5.10.7 Key considerations expressed by parents when applying to a school included reputation within the community; curriculum and facilities; proximity to home; and Ofsted rating.
- 5.10.8 48.7 per cent of survey respondents were prepared for their child to travel up to five miles to school with 34.5 per cent being prepared to allow their child to travel two miles.

5.11 Vocational Training

- 5.11.1 The Panel received evidence about proposed national changes to vocational training based on the Wolf Review which considered how vocational training can be improved for 14 – 19 year olds. It also heard about vocational training opportunities in Barnet. Barnet College is the largest provider of vocational training with 43 different level 2 qualifications (which are equivalent to 5 GCSEs at A*-C) taken by 1,196 students of whom 427 are Barnet residents.
- 5.11.3 In Barnet, take up of apprenticeships has been slow due to the relatively low number of small and medium enterprises being set up. Many people still believe that apprenticeships are solely for trade or craft purposes. However, business administration and accountancy are also part of local apprenticeship schemes.
- 5.11.4 The Panel suggested that the 14 – 19 age groups might consider the vocational training route as an alternative to A-levels. More appropriate channelling of young people's talents in this way could assist with freeing up space in schools where there is a shortage of places.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 Barnet schools are among the most successful in the country, with a significant number being rated good or outstanding by Ofsted. However, the success of Barnet schools combined with a growing population is placing increasing strain on school places. There has been a rising number of births in the borough and significant regeneration is also underway and being planned. Current projections indicate that there will be a shortfall in secondary school places by 2015/16. As such, it is essential that additional capacity is planned in the short to medium-term, as well as the long-term. As well as planning sufficient capacity, it is also vital that future capacity helps meet reasonable parental preferences.
- 6.2 Barnet benefits from a diverse range of schools including faith-based, non-denominational, and single and mixed sex, which helps to support parental choice. This is to be celebrated, but it also poses challenges. For example, the high number of single sex, faith and selective schools in the N2, N3 and NW 11 area has been raised as a concern by some residents who feel that the mix of schools in their locality is limiting the choice of secondary school places, especially for girls. The Panel has recommended that Cabinet instruct the Children's Service to identify potential solutions to address this concern.
- 6.3 The greater autonomy that schools have when they convert to academy status or are set up as new free schools has the potential to be hugely positive. However, it also means that the council must build a new relationship with schools as it moves towards different ways of working. Maintaining strong relationships with the Barnet family of schools will be crucial in helping the council to influence future school place planning and discharge their statutory responsibilities in this regard.
- 6.4 The evidence received by parents, school governors and officers emphasised the importance of high quality education. Barnet is justly proud of its excellent schools and must continue to work with schools to continually raise standards, ensuring that every school is a good school for every child and sufficient school places are available.