

## Service Director Report - Education

To: Children and Young People Committee

Meeting Date: 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021

From: Service Director - Education

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Forward Plan ref: n/a

Outcome: The report is intended to provide an overview to the Committee of the current challenges in education and the short and longer term objectives as we move into the recovery phase.

Recommendation: The Committee is asked to:

- a) Note the report, comment on the elements of the report and request any further information on the areas outlined;
- b) Note the agreement from the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee on the wider support scheme for the Household Support Grant;
- c) Note that the Director of Education and Head of Procurement will be awarding a contract for the Christmas voucher scheme using the RM6255 for the Household Support Grant.

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## 1. Background

1.1 This report provides an update of the key issues the council is facing in the delivery of its statutory functions along with education settings from early years to further education. It is covered across the 4 core areas of business:

1. Covid-19 Response and LA Support for Education
2. Special Education Needs and Disability
3. Capital and Place Planning
4. School and Setting Improvement

## 2. COVID-19 Response and LA Support for Education

### Covid 19 Position

2.1 Covid-19 remains a huge challenge for all education establishments during the first half of this Autumn term. We have seen a significant rise in confirmed cases as the term has proceeded. This follows the removal by the Department for Education of a number of the protective measures, including bubbles and contact tracing.

2.2 The position over the autumn term can be seen below:

	Cases	Settings
W/C 30 <sup>th</sup> August	79	34
W/C 6 <sup>th</sup> September	296	87
W/C 13 <sup>th</sup> September	521	133
W/C 20 <sup>th</sup> September	735	122
W/C 27 <sup>th</sup> September	751	150
W/C 4 <sup>th</sup> October	649	151
W/C 11 <sup>th</sup> October	808	193
W/C 18 <sup>th</sup> October	1240	199
W/C 1 <sup>st</sup> November	885	223
W/C 8 <sup>th</sup> November	603	213

2.3 As a result of concerns around the rising cases, we recommended on the 6<sup>th</sup> October to schools that they introduced additional local measures to help contain the rise in cases. These measures were:

- Face coverings for staff and secondary school students in communal areas
- Staff socially distance and recommend staff meetings are virtual.
- All visitors to schools must wear face coverings in school buildings.
- All non-essential events where parents visit schools are moved to being held virtually.
- Promoting and monitoring uptake of twice weekly LFD (Lateral Flow Device) testing in secondary schools (staff and students) Primary school (staff).

2.4 Following the designation of Cambridgeshire as an Enhanced Response Area, the government agreed that the measures we put in place on 6<sup>th</sup> October will continue until 10<sup>th</sup> December 2021. We also asked to speed up the delivery of the 12-15 year olds

vaccination programme and are working with the School-aged Immunisation Provider, NHSE/I (National Health Service England Improvement) the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to promote this.

2.5 In addition, there are a range of measures that we can consider when there is an outbreak. For schools, an outbreak is where there is a rapid increase in cases, 5 cases in a group that has mixed closely (i.e. a class) or 10% of the school numbers. At this point, we hold a supportive call where an Local Authority (LA) officer and the school consider next steps. Measures will be considered based upon the context of the school. The Enhanced Response Area (ERA) status allows us to consider the following steps only under an outbreak:

- Recommend a one-off PCR test for a wider group or cohort
- Daily LFD testing for close or household contacts (identified by NHS Test and Trace or the setting) while awaiting the results of a PCR (Polymerase chain reaction) test. This includes primary and secondary school-aged children identified as close contacts by the setting at parental discretion
- Introduce methods to reduce intergroup mixing (for example separate break times, staggered entry etc.) – the ringfencing of classes
- Increased frequency of LFD testing (staff and pupils) including daily testing where case numbers are very high amongst an identified group or cohort. This should be done for a minimum of 5 days, increasing to 7 days as necessary to ensure the final test is taken on a school day
- Reinstating on-site LFD testing – Supervised Self-Test Onsite (SSO) which is a 'hybrid' model of testing that will allow schools and colleges to provide onsite testing without the logistics or staffing requirements of a full asymptomatic test site (Secondary and Special Schools only)
- Temporary reinstating face coverings in secondary age classrooms for pupils/students / staff

2.6 Aside from the challenge of Covid-19 cases, there are a number of other challenges we are facing in delivering education:

- Anxiety in parents and staff – the challenge of running schools where there are high cases is significant and this has seen attendance in some schools decline. We have also had a number of staff with significant anxiety especially where classes have seen large outbreaks. We are very grateful for our school staff being so committed to ensuring education continues.
- Rising sickness levels – sickness levels are higher than normal. On 4th November, 5.6% of staff in schools were absent. This is a combination of both Covid-19 and higher than usual respiratory illness.
- Supply availability and funding – a number of schools are reporting there is a lack of supply staff. This is due to high demand due to staff absence and supply staff being deployed supporting tuition in schools. Schools are also reporting challenges with budget – there has been no additional funding to support the costs of delivering additional measures resulting from Covid-19. The only funding schools currently have available is to support pupil catch up.
- Testing rates and vaccination rates – we have been pushing hard to ensure eligible pupils and staff continue to test. There is a challenge around reporting but we

continue to focus on areas where testing is low. The 12-15 and 16-17-year-old vaccination programme continues to be rolled out (see the table over). The initial school visits for 12-15-year-olds will be completed by early December.

Area	12-15 vaccination uptake	16-17 vaccination uptake
Cambridge	40.5%	53.9%
East Cambridgeshire	43.6%	77.6%
Fenland	26.1%	63.2%
Huntingdonshire	44.1%	71.9%
South Cambridgeshire	41.2%	75.8%
East of England	34.4%	62.4%
England	29.3%	57.2%

2.7 Data continues to be monitored on a daily basis and we continue to take account of the balance between maintaining educational attendance and safety in recommending these additional measures.

2.8 Attendance in Cambridgeshire was strong during September then declined in October as cases rose especially in secondary schools. The authority went from top 10% attendance to bottom 10% within a short period of time. Since the reopening of schools after half term, attendance has once again been high. The position on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2021 is below -

	Cambs	East of England	England	High Since September	Low Since September (*)
Overall Attendance	92.6%	91.3%	91.5%	93.7%	86.8%
Primary	93.3%	92.1%	93.2%	94.6%	91.3%
Secondary	91.9%	90.7%	89.7%	93.2%	73.7%
Special Schools	88.6%	87.9%	86.2%	94.6%	73.8%
Pupils with EHCP	87.8%	87.0%	87.0%	90.1%	81.6%
Pupils with social worker	86.5%	84.8%	85.3%	91.4%	80.8%
Pupils Eligible for FSM	88.8%	88.8%	89.6%	91.4%	82.0%

#### Survey of Schools – Feedback on LA transformation

2.9 We recently conducted our three-year survey of schools to understand the quality and impact of the services we provide. We originally undertook this in 2018 and we reissued the same questions (with additions) to see if perception of the quality of LA services had changed. The survey has shown significant improvement in the creditability of the LA but also highlighted a number of areas for further development. The survey is based upon the former Audit Commission survey of LA education services and grades questions on a 4-point measure:



2.10 In analysing the response, only one area declined in their grading (support for children with English as an additional language) and some areas showed substantial improvement. 121 schools replied, less than in 2018, but in the context of Covid this was still a significant sample. The summary comparison by the strategic areas is shown in the table below:

Category	CCC 2018	CCC 2021	Change
1. LA Strategic Oversight of Schools	2.04	3.00	+0.96
2. Support for School Improvement	2.16	2.96	+0.80
3. Facilitating Access to Services	2.28	2.74	+0.46
4. Access/Promoting Social Inclusion	2.15	2.65	+0.50
5. Vulnerable Pupils	1.95	2.47	+0.52

2.11 All schools still value interaction with the LA including academies and wish us to visit schools more regularly to support. There remains challenges around SEND but an understanding from school leaders of the challenges the LA faces especially around funding. It's a large geographical area and there are a variety of views within each area. Communication and support for Covid was consistently the top theme in the feedback. Some of the key comments recorded in the survey are below:

#### LA Strategic Oversight of Schools

- *The Director of Education's leadership and support has been excellent since his appointment. The quality of his leadership has not waivered and I know he is continually trying to improve the team around him.*
- *Communication and consultation around improvement plans could improve and the consistency in clear, effective and timely communication between people in different teams/departments/roles is patchy which can lead to frustration in this area.*
- *Very good under difficult circumstances (pandemic) and a changing landscape (increased numbers of academies etc).*
- *We need a vision and set of values so we are all on the same page.*
- *I think the LA gives a strong lead to educational improvement in Cambridgeshire. We are a very diverse group of schools, with different needs and so it is impossible to develop policies, especially for funding, that suit everyone.*
- *Strategic support to date has been excellent - open, transparent and welcoming.*
- *One recommendation, specifically for new heads to the county, would be the development of some sought of Heads induction.*
- *There has been dramatic improvement in many aspects of the strategic leadership by the LA in schools. This has been demonstrated by the LA response to Covid. It will be exciting to see how this will manifest when the Covid crisis is over. Elected members need a clear commitment to campaigning for the additional funding needed for education, particularly Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).*

- *Even whilst still dealing with Covid, you are reflecting strategically to review how we can continue to work together the excellent close partnership that Covid has brought about to ensure the long term priorities are achieved.*
- *In terms of the LA considering alternative models for school leadership/governance I have not seen this promoted and certainly don't feel it is encouraged.*

### Support for School Improvement

- *Excellent Primary Advisor who actively supports school improvement.*
- *We have had excellent leadership, Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS), maths and English support over the last 3 years.*
- *School Improvement Advisor visits regularly. Also have regular contact with maths and English adviser due to buy in to services.*
- *Support with our Single Central Record prior to our Ofsted inspection. The fact that it was immediate and so supportive was a fabulous help!*
- *Since our inspection in March 2021, advisers coming into the school has been made a priority.*
- *Support for Governors with Head's performance management is always really appreciated by Governors.*
- *The Early Years Team have given us outstanding support.*
- *Support with the headship appointment had been excellent.*
- *I am pleased that the LA are taking an interest in 'Green' schools who do not subscribe to the monitoring service. I appreciate the external monitoring and checking to ensure we continue to be on the right track.*
- *Providing schools with a complete and comprehensive model policy pack, suitable for outstanding schools would be enormously useful.*
- *Reinstating Keeping in Touch (KIT) visits for all schools rather than just those purchasing the school improvement services is a positive step which I think will enable the LA to have a better overview of maintained schools and hopefully flag up the need for support or opportunities to share good practice earlier.*
- *It would be really useful to see more models of good practice both within Cambridgeshire and across the country. As a rural school we don't have a wide network and struggle to gain insight and inspiration outside of our local area.*
- *I felt that there were areas for improvement in both peer review and also understanding that specialist settings can contribute and benefit a great deal from collaborating with mainstreams.*
- *The Local Authority Improvement Group (LAIG) meetings were really helpful to me as a new Head working in a recently RI school to support with rapid school improvement.*
- *There are so many features to this and I feel that I am lucky to work in Cambs where we do have a structure of support that exists. With so few financial resources the county does a fabulous job.*
- *The LA strategy for improvement could be simpler and clearer and more explicit - how could we further support leadership and development for aspiring and existing school leaders?*
- *It would be good to be steered to other schools where best practice can be disseminated in areas where we need support. The LA, however, do ask other schools to visit our EYFS and KS1 for continuous provision.*
- *The LA are there to provide support if needed but if you are a good or outstanding school less involvement. The WhatsApp group has been great to share good*

*practice, but there might be more that can be done in terms of school-to-school support. The introduction of a linked person for each school is great.*

### Facilitating Access to Services

- *The Early Years' service is strong and very focused and has enabled our provision to grow and improve. English and maths advice has always been supportive and effective.*
- *We have had high quality input from the Literacy, maths and safeguarding teams as well. I think it is very sad that EYFS support is provided separately, as this is too expensive for small schools with one Reception class.*
- *When I've sought advice from the LA-for example around Governance or safeguarding or Health & Safety have always been signposted to a helpful person who offers current advice and confidence.*
- *The financial support, the traded services support and the support for Headteacher wellbeing has continued to be brilliant.*
- *There is talk of the LA offering HR & Payroll services which we would be very interested.*
- *Support for Head's wellbeing has been very much appreciated. The support to Governors too around the focus on wellbeing has also meant that Governors are very mindful of the need to support Heads too.*
- *Schools Financial Advisor team are great.*
- *Working towards a more integrated system for budget planning, financial processing, personnel and MIS would save a lot of time in schools.*
- *There is concern about the offer next year with key staff leaving. SEND support remains and issue.*
- *Booklet about Primary Offer is clear but other communication related to services such as SEN are more ad hoc.*

### Access/Promoting Social Inclusion

- *Very helpful from a health and safety point of view.*
- *LA are always quick to support us with any queries about building maintenance, building projects/ contractors, health and safety concerns or questions. Fair Access protocol is always very clearly communicated and the exclusion helpline has proved invaluable in the past.*
- *There are not enough specialist SEN pupil spaces in the Local Authority. Therefore some pupils are left in mainstream schools for too long, which causes stress for teachers, parents, pupils and headteachers.*
- *The admissions process for SEND pupils into specialist settings is not well organised and creates additional and unnecessary workload for school leaders.*
- *The admissions service has improved in the last year or two but I am concerned that there is not a clear plan for the many smaller schools in South Cambridgeshire.*
- *High number of children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) - the staff cannot physically meet all these demands and needs and we are quickly running out of capacity.*
- *In general access to services is good. Minor issues are dealt with.*
- *Good support/training and advice in place or accessible.*
- *Transfer of information to schools prior to pupils starting can be severely lacking.*

*Pupils with high need (behaviour or academic) do not always appear to have enough information available for a school to prepare for their admission.*

### Vulnerable Pupils

- *The Local Authority SEND team have been an immense support to our school over the past 4 years. Always transparent and helpful, clear vision for support and clear rationale behind funding. Excellent support and processes in place for EHCP and Statutory assessments.*
- *The support is good but accessing support, especially recently, has been really hard.*
- *We have lots of children for whom support has been delayed, at a time when they need it more than before, because staff were not allowed to come back into schools to complete observations etc*
- *The teams are effective when there is a driving force that ensure that issues are followed up and not left in limbo. This has improved and, with the understanding that funds are limited, the main issue remains that we do not always feel that support can be given as a result.*
- *There are some excellent people in the SEND team, and we have benefited from their advice and support. However, waiting lists are long.*
- *Not enough special school places for the number of pupils that require them which is impacting significantly on the rest of the pupils who don't get the support they should or have lessons disrupted.*
- *Please can we all work together more to ensure that SEND is the leading focus, making Cambridgeshire a leading LA for SEND provision and practice.*
- *The services regarding training for specialist settings and a comprehensive, meaningful Outreach offer that supports school improvement not just individual pupil cases both need a proper review.*

### Covid response

- *The support for all matters related to Covid has been outstanding thank you.*
- *Support over the pandemic has been truly excellent and very helpful.*
- *The approach to Maintained Nursery Schools since the pandemic has certainly been a far more positive one where we have actually felt valued rather than just a financial nuisance.*
- *The quality of communication, leadership and support from LA during the pandemic has been excellent. It has been decisive, relevant and contained common sense throughout.*
- *Throughout the time that I have been involved with Cambridgeshire County Council, I cannot fault the level of support that I have received.*
- *I value the LA and am proud to be head of a maintained school - I still believe we are stronger together and I think the events of the last year have proved that.*

2.12 In analysing individual questions, the 10 questions below were the strongest responses:

	2021	2018
The effectiveness of the leadership provided by senior officers	3.62	2.31
The effectiveness of LA support for Education Safeguarding, including the quality of the training provided	3.6	3.22



The effectiveness of your LA's communication with your school	3.59	2.22
The effectiveness of the leadership provided by elected members	3.23	2.32
The quality of financial support and advice provided by the LA	3.12	2.84
The quality of the LA's support for the development of the Schools Forum	3.10	2.34
Your LA's effectiveness in challenging your school to improve its performance	3.09	2.15
Your LA's knowledge and understanding of your school and its local context	3.09	2.65
The quality of your Local Authority's (LA's) strategic planning for school improvement	3.07	2.08
The effectiveness of LA support for looked-after children i.e. the Virtual School	3.05	2.59

2.13 The 10 lowest scoring questions are below:

	2021	2018
The effectiveness of LA support for meeting the needs of pupils with English as an additional language	1.75	1.97
The effectiveness of facilitation of integrated joint working with social care and health	2.08	N/A
The effectiveness of your LA's planning of school places (including SEND)	2.22	2.04
Your LA's management of the procedures for re-admission of excluded pupils	2.29	1.70
The effectiveness of LA intervention (Hubs etc) in supporting inclusion for vulnerable pupils	2.33	N/A
The efficiency with which statutory assessments of pupils with SEND are made	2.35	1.78
The effectiveness of LA support for Annual Reviews of EHCP's	2.36	N/A
The transparency of your LA's asset management planning process and allocation of resources	2.36	1.70
Your LA's management of the procedures for Elective Home Education	2.38	N/A
Your LA's planning of SEND provision to meet identified needs	2.39	N/A

2.14 Those areas indicated as N/A are new questions for this survey. An action plan to consider all aspects of the feedback is being developed and will form part of the next iteration of the education strategic plan. This will be reported in a future Service Director Report. The challenge of supporting the Covid-19 challenges has meant we have limited capacity to deliver our services.

#### Household Support Grant

2.15 A paper was brought to the October Children and Young People's (CYP) Committee to outline the overview of this government funded scheme and how it was intended to be

operated locally. Agreement was reached over the direct food voucher scheme in the October meeting. The Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee considered the wider support scheme element of the Household Support Grant in its meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> November and the develop outline of this scheme can be found in Appendix 1.

2.16 We had hoped to provide some more detailed information on take up but we are unable to do this because of data protection. 6% of the vouchers allocated over the summer holidays were not claimed. This is in line with previous rounds of the scheme. We believe a proportion of these relate to parents who choose not to claim but we remained concerned that some parents are unable to access the scheme. Every parent receives a text and email when vouchers are sent. We have had over 9,000 email contacts since the scheme started in December 2020 and we reply to all responses within 48 hours.

2.17 We are developing more detailed analysis of voucher take up that we will report in the new year but we are doing all we can to increase take up include resending all vouchers, asking schools to follow up with parents, emailing parents direct and undertaking targeted communication. In the last two rounds we have also written directly to parents in early years settings before allocating the vouchers and followed up where emails haven't been delivered. Information can sometimes be out of date. In this coming round (Christmas), we will also provide translated letters for the key communities.

2.18 In the October half term we provided –

- 16,764 vouchers for school age children
- 1,850 vouchers for children in an early years setting
- 106 vouchers for eligible children not in an education setting.
- Over £10k was provided to FE / Sixth form college to provide funding for students for the half term period (post 16).

2.19 Any unclaimed vouchers will be reclaimed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December and we will be following up all those unclaimed in November. We are currently concluding the procurement arrangements for the voucher scheme for the remaining period of the Household Support Fund (until Easter) and we are intending using the Crown Commercial Service RM6255 (established for this purpose) to deliver these to our families. This framework allows direct award to a provider. Moving to another provider would take additional resources and may delay the distribution of vouchers. The vouchers will be bought at face value or below.

2.20 The latest position on free school meal claims is shown in the table below. There continues to be a rise in the number of children eligible for free school meals.

	Jan-18	Jan-19	Mar-20	Apr-20	Jan-21	Oct-21	Increase since March 2020	% of Children FSM eligible (Oct 21)
East Cambs	1,029	1,349	1,697	1,838	2,138	2,254	33%	17%
Fenland	1,978	2,438	2,926	3,160	3,631	3,863	32%	28%
Huntingdonshire	2,121	2,715	3,546	3,811	4,430	4,599	30%	19%
South Cambs	1,115	1,497	1,821	1,981	2,397	2,639	45%	11%

Cambridge City	1,935	2,497	2,880	3,066	3,537	3,829	33%	27%
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Cambridgeshire	8,178	10,496	12,870	13,856	16,133	17,184	34%	19%
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### 3 Special Education Needs and Disability

- 3.1 In Cambridgeshire 4% of children and young people currently have an Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP). This is slightly higher than the national average. The growth in the number of pupils with SEND, and with an EHCP means that additional places will be required across the 0 to 25 age range.
- 3.2 In the next five years, this is likely to have the greatest impact on the secondary sector and potentially post-16 due to the Council's responsibility under the Children and Families Act to ensure provision for young people with special educational needs and disabilities up to the age of 25. A cross-Directorate working group has been established to produce and implement an action plan in response to current known need.

#### Joint SEND Strategic Action Plan

- 3.3 [Everybody's Business](#) was developed with stakeholders and sets out what we want to achieve for children and young people with SEND and their families. There are three themes:
- SEND is Everybody's Business
  - Identify and respond to needs early
  - Deliver in the right place at the right time
- 3.4 The Strategy is supported by an action plan which describes, in more detail, what success will look like and records the progress being made.
- 3.5 The Joint SEND Strategic Action Plan is being implemented utilising a phased approach. This allows agreed priorities to be extracted from the larger co-produced plan and focusses attention on impact and outcomes towards agreed priorities that have also been selected through co-production with all stakeholders. The Phased approach runs from May to May each year with the first Phase being implemented between May 2021 and May 2022 (there was a delay due to COVID). An interim progress report will be produced in November of each year. And new priorities will be agreed in March, annually, to ensure that the plan is ready to be implemented by May.
- 3.6 Phase One follows each of the three themes with a senior accountable sponsor responsible for each area and the agreed priorities that have been secured through ongoing co-production:
1. SEND is Everybody's business – Senior Accountable Officer – Toni Bailey, Assistant Director for SEND and Inclusion
- Agreed Priorities:
- Local offer (due to be renamed 'SEND information Hub')

- Communications (now with a bespoke working party group)
2. Identify and Respond to Needs Early – Senior Accountable Officer – Wendi Ogle-Welbourn, Executive Director, People & Communities

Agreed priorities:

- Getting Support Early
- Legal Compliance
- Role of the Designated Clinical Officer
- Preparation for Adulthood – 18-25

3. Deliver in the Right Pace at the Right Time - Senior Accountable officer – Oliver Hayward, Assistant Director Commissioning

Agreed priorities:

- Joint Planning and Commissioning
- SEND Quality Assurance

- 3.7 There has been progress and impact across the plan and partnership approaches have served to support this progress. Further work is needed to highlight impact of the progress made, which will be collated to provide information and data for the mid-term progress report in November.

Joint SEND Pledge

- 3.8 The Joint SEND pledge outlines a set of principles and promotes commitment that will help us to deliver on the themes of the Joint SEND Strategy. The Pledge focusses on 7 outcomes based on everyone being able to:

Make transitions easy – **Healthy**

Deliver care as close to home as possible – **Safe**

Nothing about me without me – **Respected**

Have high expectations for me – **Aspirational**

Identify my needs early – **Successful**

Include me – **Included**

Know that I am empowered – **Confident**

- 3.9 You can see the full detail / document here: [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough SEND Pledge - March 2020.](#)

- 3.10 We have shared the pledge with all schools and settings across education, early years, social care and health and we are recording who has successfully signed up to deliver the pledge. Currently, we have 367 settings who have signed up to the pledge, which is a positive start, but we have high ambitions to get as close as possible to 100% of settings signed up by the end of Phase One of the Strategic Action Plan.

SEND Transformation and Improvement Programme

- 3.11 Cambridgeshire County Council is delivering a new SEND Transformation and improvement programme focusing on early intervention for children and young people with

SEND in Cambridgeshire. Our aim is to drive delivery of better outcomes for children and young people, through sufficiency of the right services delivered at the right time and in the right place and at the right cost. The SEND Transformation programme aims to:

- 1 Identify and respond to needs earlier to reduce the level of new demand for statutory support, an ambition set out in the SEND Strategy. A focus on earlier prevention, ensuring support is put in place as early as possible to support children and young people and their families with their needs.
- 2 Focus on ensuring our work reduces costs through improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND. Our transformation plan is underpinned by the idea that through improving outcomes and the wider SEND system, lower costs should result through more children and young people being supported at SEND support level, more young people being able to maintain placements within mainstream settings and those who do require specialist provision accessing this locally.
- 3 Reduce the escalation of need and minimise the current push to move children from mainstream to specialist provision. Supporting children to re-integrate within mainstream where better outcomes can be achieved.
- 4 Take a system wide approach, ensuring our transformation plan is connected to the SEND Strategy and supports delivery of a shared ambition with partners and communities.

3.12 We know that to achieve significant system improvement we need to do things differently, with transformation in SEND underpinned by the following principles:

- Ensuring we have the right provision at the right time - investing in early years and earlier prevention.
- Embedding a focus on strengths and outcomes - understanding the needs of our children and young people and commissioning provision that enables them to meet their outcomes.
- Developing a system-wide view and collaborative working with partners, particularly health, as part of the children's collaborative to shape and deliver change.
- Ensuring our processes enable transparent decision making, with the child at the centre.
- Measuring and sharing our impact.

3.13 There is a continuing increase in the number of children and young people with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), Cambridgeshire now has 5947 EHCPs. Trends for the future forecast a year-on-year increase in EHCPs, with a predicted 47% increase in the number of EHCPs by 2031, based on current trends.

3.14 As part of our planning, we have developed a number of scenario for our future trajectory for SEND that outline our ability to meet our aspiration and manage the challenge of rising numbers.

3.15 The transformation programme is based within a scenario that will not bring spend in line with High Needs Block allocation, however it is considered the most realistic and deliverable option:

- Emphasis on early intervention and changing behaviours early in the system;
- A reduction in the number of requests for EHCPs, through a strengthened SEND support offer and improved inclusion within settings;
- A reduction in the number of plans being issued through more robust, strengths-based decision making;
- Greater inclusivity within mainstream settings, enabling more children to remain in settings and able to return from specialist settings;
- Transparent decision-making and clear expectations around funding.

3.16 The programme will consist of a series of workstreams to shift system behaviours, to manage demand, improve local provision and processes and consequently reduce spend. The workstreams are:

- Changing the Conversation - Embedding a strengths-based, person-centred approach to conversations across the education, health and care system to enable positive, sustainable change which focuses on keeping children supported in their local setting where possible.
- Mapping Provision - Developing a strategic view of provision to inform what is needed, developed and possible against the emerging needs,
- SEND Support – Designing a SEND support system, toolbox, and a shared understanding about what can be provided in mainstream settings.
- Tuition - Review existing arrangements to ensure that tuition and alternative provision is used appropriately and consistently.
- Outreach Model - To facilitate supporting children and young people with SEND in mainstream provision through Special Schools outreach and sharing of their best practice.
- Enhanced Resource Bases (ERBs) - Confirming the commissioning arrangements for ERBs and develop a Cambridgeshire offer for ERBs with effective service level agreements in place.
- Social Emotional and Mental Health – Working with health colleagues in the children’s collaborative to deliver enhanced mental health support to schools and other education settings. Developing specialist provision for pupils with SEMH needs on primary school sites. A clear and consistent approach to monitoring, challenging and supporting schools and settings. A primary school network of early intervention and prevention support services. This will improve outcomes for children experiencing SEMH needs while remaining in mainstream education.
- Preparing for Adulthood - Ensuring focus across the SEND system on preparing every child with SEND to successfully transition into adulthood. Developing a clear

information and supported employment/internships offer with alignment to the inhouse job coaches.

- System Design - to redesign and simplify the SEND system to improve navigation for parents/carers and improve consistency in access and provision.
- Banding & Descriptors – to transform our funding systems to include banding & descriptors of need so there is transparency and flexibility to meet needs.
- Valuing SEND - exploring the potential of introducing the Valuing SEND tool or similar approach, to settings to enable holistic and strengths-based conversations, a better understanding of individual and cohort needs, and how settings are able to meet this.
- Panel Redesign - redesigning our panel decision making structure, developing consistent, transparent and strengths-based multi-agency decision making from assessment through to issue of plans.
- Annual Review improvement - improving our annual review process to ensure these are timely, outcome-focused and of high quality, improving confidence in the system and increased transparency in decision-making
- Legal Review - enabling better use of council resources and more effective joint working with professionals by involving the right professionals at the right time to reduce escalation of cases to legal proceedings.
- Early Years - to integrate areas of development into the SEND Transformation programme (further scoping required)

3.17 In addition to the workstreams detailed above, we have identified the following enabling activities that will support us to deliver change:

- SEND case management system - procurement and implementation of a SEND case management system to improve the SAT team's ability to process cases and reduce the backlog on an ongoing basis.
- Trajectory Management - development and embedding of a trajectory management approach and mechanisms for capturing and sharing programme impact.
- Workforce roles, responsibilities, and development - All people in the SEND system are clear about their role and the role of others and how they each add value to every child with SEND.
- Communications and engagement – To build effective relationships across the system, to support engagement and buy-in to the programme, to manage communications aligned in content and timing of activities within the programme.
- Quality Assurance - Focus on the continuous improvement in the quality of services delivered.
- Data quality – to improve the quality of data recording about EHCP process and placement, delivering new processes for recording activity and finance.

3.18 We are making progress against this plan with actions including –

- Programme mobilisation including establishment of governance and reporting arrangements, prioritised programme plan, identification of workstream senior responsible officers and leads, plus communications and engagement plan.
- Business case developed and going through approval process.
- Engagement and launch sessions held including Headteachers, SENCOs and Governors, with further sessions planned throughout October and November. Engagement with the launch events has been incredibly positive with offers for support and expressions of interest for secondment opportunities.
- Statutory Assessment Team Management Consultation completed with the addition of various roles and increased management capacity.
- SEND support work underway and planning for initial focus groups.
- A new outreach model is being developed with close collaboration between special schools in Cambridgeshire and the SEND District Teams. Final arrangements are being worked through and mainstream schools will be contacted with the new offer this term.
- Roll-out of our strengths-based practice / behavioural science approach 'Changing the Conversation' with the Additional Needs Team has begun.

3.19 There remains significant challenge around the Finance position. The High Needs Block has a forecast in-year pressure of £13.6m for 2021/22, this will add to the current Dedicated Schools Grant cumulative deficit of £26.4m. Investment is required to bring in capacity, skills and expertise to deliver the transformation programme. We are looking at a mix of new roles and internal backfill arrangements, external partners and corporate colleagues to provide a blended delivery team. This provides added benefits of drawing on existing skills, and subject matter expertise, as well as offering development opportunities and skills and knowledge exchange. The Statutory Assessment Team and Educational Psychologists have recently had an investment in staffing to ensure frontline business as usual activity is more resilient and able to manage the increasing demand.

3.20 In recognition of the ongoing challenges, Schools Forum agreed in their meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November to contribute around £2.1m to elements of the project including pump priming the investment needed to get new provision established as an invest to save initiative.

3.21 We are maintaining a risk register as part of the programme and the key areas of delay, challenge and risk have been identified as being -

- We have limited management oversight capacity which will impact on the Transformation Programme capacity. Managing business as usual activity alongside transformation will be a challenge throughout the programme.
- Partner capacity to engage due to continued focus on covid.
- While we have prioritised and sequenced the programme of work. The risk remains that we may have been too aspirational with our time frames and workstreams may take longer than we anticipated.



- Lack of quality data may reduce progress on trajectory management and impact other workstreams.

## 4 School and Setting Improvements

### Cambridgeshire School Improvement Strategy

- 4.1 The result of the survey show that changes are being delivered in the LA. Our more recent focus has been on developing our approach to School Improvement and it was noted in the feedback from Headteacher that this area required further clarity. Appendix 2 outlines our proposed school improvement strategy and approach to tackling under performance.
- 4.2 The proposed strategy outlines 3 priorities:
- Covid-19 response recovery, which includes developing leadership and supporting well-being.
  - Ensuring schools have a broad curriculum that is relevant to their context
  - Ensuring end of key stage outcomes in English and Maths continue to improve, and improve outcomes for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in all phases and close the gaps between them and other pupils in the country and nationality
- 4.3 It is our intention to consult schools on this strategy before finalising in the new year. Comments are welcomed from the committee on this document.
- 4.4 More widely, the focus of our school improvement team this term has been:
- Headteacher performance management is nearly complete. This has been an interesting exercise and identified areas for further development within the team e.g. governor training to ensure governors are aware of their responsibilities.
  - Linked to the point above, governor training has continued and there is also a renewed focus on what we know about our governing bodies as well as ensuring that governing bodies are clear on their roles and responsibilities and are ready for Ofsted where an inspection is due.
  - We have had an increased take up of our Primary Offer this year so capacity is very stretched but it is brilliant that we are able to work with more of our schools in a broader capacity. We have three seconded heads who are working with us to support our schools too.
  - Safeguarding has continued to be a priority and is a feature on all School Improvement Records (the new notes of visit.) The School Improvement Records now provide a running commentary of visits in one document so schools receive an updated version after each visit rather than individual notes of visit. There has already been lots of positive feedback from schools about this new format.
  - Our Continuing Professional Development (CPD) offer has continued, mainly online but face to face in some instances, and we have seen a very good take up particularly for English and maths subject leader training.
  - The PE Adviser has recently won a grant of £25,000 to promote and provide swimming lessons for non-swimmers in year 7. It is a statutory part of the primary curriculum that pupils can swim 25m and know water safety by the time they leave year 6. However, this was difficult in the pandemic with pools shut.

- Headteacher recruitment has continued and we have appointed substantive heads for 3 of our maintained schools. We have had to readvertise two roles due to a lack of suitable candidates.

### School Governance

- 4.5 Three Interim Executive Boards remain in operation in Cambridgeshire. One of these is currently being shadowed by the new Governing Body, who will return from January 2022. The remaining two Interim Executive Boards are scheduled to conclude at Easter 2022, with shadowing opportunities being arranged for the Spring Term to promote transition.
- 4.6 Governor Training has remained virtual during Autumn Half Term 1, aligned to the risk posed by gatherings of different people. The decision has also been taken to continue this approach for Autumn Half Term 2 given the current prevalence of cases within the locality. The Local Authority now advises a preference for meetings and monitoring to continue virtually but has allowed for localised decision making amongst Headteachers and Chairs of Governors based upon school specific circumstances and Risk Assessments. Some schools have therefore returned to meetings in person.
- 4.7 The School Governance Team continue to work alongside schools, their leaders and governors across the County. They are currently prioritising re-implementing Pre-OFSTED Governance Checks to consider school's readiness for inspection, which is particularly significant as the inspectorate have now recommenced a structure of inspection visits, following changes to the process during the pandemic.

### Breakfast and After School Club Provision in Cambridgeshire

- 4.8 In May, the Joint Administration outlined in their Joint Administration agreement their commitment to work with schools and partners to widen the network of breakfast clubs in schools during term-time. The impact of free or differentiated subsidised breakfast club places (either for individuals or whole school) and the link to improved attainment for children facing food poverty is well researched (see appendix 6 for more information). We have began the process of developing proposals and this section outlines the progress to date.
- 4.9 In Cambridgeshire 73% of primary phase schools have breakfast club provision, they are a blend of registered third-party providers and directly school run paid for services that serve working parents. All but a few breakfast clubs are fee paying, the majority charge between £2.00 and £7.00 per session.
- 4.10 Additionally, 73% of primary phase schools have after school club provision, with the same provider type blend as breakfast club provision. Most of these schools provide both access to breakfast and after school clubs, but these may be offered by differing provider types (breakfast club may be school run and after school club may be run by a private provider). All after school clubs appear to be fee paying and range from £3.50 for a short session to £13.05 for a later pick up.
- 4.11 There are a number of childminders who also provide breakfast and after school club provision on an ad-hoc basis.

- 4.12 To build breakfast club capacity cross communities we propose the following next steps:
- Work with charities, businesses, early help, settings and schools to develop how to target and offer free places in otherwise affluent areas ([Pockets of Poverty](#))
  - Create a development toolkit for schools and settings
  - Map Free School Meals (FSM) data against areas of no provision and target new development

4.13 A further update will be brought in the new year updating these actions.

## 5 Capital and Place Planning

### Local Authority Education Organisation Plan

5.1 The Council has a statutory duty for place planning across the 0-19 age range:

- To ensure there are sufficient and suitable childcare places for parents to be able to work and train and to ensure there are sufficient childcare places for families to access their funded entitlements (Childcare Act 2006).
- To provide a school place for every child living in their area of responsibility who is of statutory school age and whose parents want their child educated in the state-funded sector (Section 14 of the Education Act, 1996).
- To secure sufficient and suitable education and training opportunities to meet the reasonable needs of all young people over compulsory school age but under 19 (or under 25 with a learning difficulty) in their area (Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act, 2009).
- To have regard to the need to secure special educational provision for pupils who have special educational needs (Section 14 of the Education Act, 1996).

5.2 Cambridgeshire is one of the fastest growing counties in the country with almost 50,000 new homes planned in total across the City's five districts by 2031. This means that there continues to be a significant pressure on education places.

5.3 The Council's Education Organisation Plan provides details of the pressures which have been identified and the actions planned in response, to ensure these duties can be met over the next five years. The latest document, which is updated on an annual basis, was published in September – see Appendix 3 for details.

### Early Years and Childcare

5.4 In line with Council policy, new schools on large developments are built with early years' facilities to ensure sufficient places exist for the earliest occupants of a development and help to alleviate the pressure on existing settings. This includes:

- Marleigh (Cambridge City)
- Northstowe (South Cambridgeshire)
- Bourn Airfield (South Cambridgeshire)

- Genome Campus (South Cambridgeshire)
- Waterbeach New Town (South Cambridgeshire)
- St Neots Eastern Expansion (Huntingdonshire)

5.5 In established communities, pressures have been observed within the North of Cambridge City, Trumpington and Ramsey. Additional childcare is now required in these areas which offers the full range of funded childcare entitlements, including childcare for funded two-year olds.

5.6 The Council publishes a Market Position Statement (MPS) which sets out the priorities for the development of early years/childcare provision across the county. Through these statements, all providers, regardless of their governance model (e.g. childminder, private, voluntary, independent, school or academy), are invited to expand or develop new early years and childcare provision to meet the identified pressures. The latest update was released in January 2020 (see appendix 4) and we have begun work on a new childcare sufficiency assessment and one of the outcomes will be an update of the MPS.

#### Primary and Secondary Provision

5.7 The different pressures on available education places require a range of approaches to commissioning school places. These include local area reviews, new development negotiations and working in partnership with other key stakeholders such as the Department for Education (DfE).

5.8 In recent months, the Council has launched a Presumption Process for two new schools; a 3FE/630 place primary school to serve Waterbeach New Town, and a 1FE/210 place primary school to serve the village of Sawtry. Both schools are expected to open in September 2023.

5.9 The Department for Education (DfE) have also approved two schools to pre-implementation stage of its Free School Programme. This includes a 2FE/420 place primary school to serve Marleigh, a development to the north of Newmarket Road which is expected to open in September 2022 and an 8FE/1,200 place secondary school to serve the development at Alconbury Weald with the opening date yet to be confirmed.

5.10 Expansion projects are also planned at The Pathfinder C of E Primary School (Northstowe) to reflect the growing community at Northstowe, Littleport Primary School (Littleport), Ermine Street Church Academy (Alconbury Weald) and Cambourne Village College (Cambourne).

#### Post-16 Provision

5.11 In 2019/20, the Council's Research Team, in conjunction with commissioning and delivery partners, undertook a county-wide review of post-16 provision in response to forecast growth in the numbers of 16- and 17-year-olds.

5.12 The review concluded that the combination of planned new provision (Alconbury Weald, Cambourne and Northstowe) and proposals put forward by the sector during the review, are

sufficient to expand the supply of post 16 places to meet the forecast demand across the County and will also continue to provide some market flexibility.

### Small Schools

- 5.13 The organisation of educational provision is under constant review as part of the discharge of the Authority's statutory duty to ensure an appropriate match between the supply of, and need for, school places.
- 5.14 When OfSTED inspected the Authority in January 2004, inspectors advised the Authority to establish a clear definition of a small school as a means of strengthening its position when planning any reviews of its primary educational provision.
- 5.15 In response, in June 2004, the then Education Spokespersons endorsed an officer recommendation that the Authority's definition of a small primary school would be one with fewer than 100 pupils. In addition, the Spokespersons agreed that for schools falling within this category and forecast to remain so for the foreseeable future, alternative operational models would be explored, including federation, amalgamation and closure.
- 5.16 It was felt that the Authority needed to retain the option of closure in the event that following a review, this was judged to be the best and/or only option, taking account of the circumstances of the case. In reaching this position, Members took account of the government's presumption against closure of small rural primary schools.
- 5.17 In the intervening period, alternative models of school organisation and leadership have been and continue to be explored and, in some cases implemented, in response to challenges and pressures faced by some of the Authority's smaller schools including:
- falling pupil rolls
  - limited demand for places from the school's catchment area
  - the ability to deliver and sustain a balanced budget
  - difficulty in recruiting teachers and/or governors
  - higher expectations around pupil attainment and associated standards of teaching and learning
- 5.18 Reviews have also been undertaken in cases where the Authority has concerns of standards of teaching in learning.
- 5.19 Size is not a pre-determinant of the quality of teaching and learning which takes place in a school or of the experiences of the children on roll. However, the smaller the school and the size of year groups can create particular challenges for both staff and pupils.
- 5.20 In recognition of the challenges and pressures which small schools can and do face, officers now consider that any school with fewer than 150 pupils should be classified as a small school. This is in line with the Department for Education's (DfE's) guidance.
- 5.21 At the current time, there are 35 schools across Cambridgeshire which would meet the definition of a small school, 18 of which are Church of England primary schools. A small

group of officers working in partnership with the Director of Education of the Ely Diocese have developed a draft checklist to inform the Authority's approach to future reviews and decisions in respect of small schools. This checklist can be found in Appendix 5.

- 5.22 An initial briefing and engagement session has been held with the chairs of governors of the schools concerned to get them to start to think about the alternative organisational and management options available. Follow up sessions need to be planned alongside targeted work with those schools identified as facing the greatest pressures to remain financially and educationally viable as 'standalone' schools.

## 6. Alignment with corporate priorities

### 6.1 Communities at the heart of everything we do

- Schools and early years settings are at the heart of communities. Ensuring effective recovery from Covid-19 will support communities getting back to normal.

### 6.2 A good quality of life for everyone

- Providing high quality education should enhance the skills of the local workforce and provide essential childcare services for working parents or those seeking to return to work. Schools and early years and childcare services are providers of local employment.

### 6.3 Helping our children learn, develop and live life to the full

- The funding will support the most challenging families on low income to support feeding their children during the school holidays.

### 6.4 Cambridgeshire: a well-connected, safe, clean, green environment

- There are no significant implications for this priority.

### 6.5 Protecting and caring for those who need us

- Education is the major universal service the council provides as all children are required to access education. School and early years settings play a critical role in safeguarding and protecting the welfare of children and families. Post Covid-19, this role is becoming even more important.

## 7. Significant Implications

### 7.1 Resource Implications

The need to ensure sufficient capacity for the SEND statutory process will be considered as a capacity bid. The funding requirement is currently being considered. Capital schemes are including in the current medium term financial plan

### 7.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

As outlined in the report, we are in the process of procuring the voucher provider using a Crown Commercial Service RM6255 framework for vouchers. Owing to the short time scales and the additional cost (both direct and indirect) of changing provider, a direct award is the preferred route at this stage. We will aim to conclude the procurement in early December.

- 7.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications  
There are no significant implications within this category.
- 7.4 Equality and Diversity Implications  
There are no significant implications within this category.
- 7.5 Engagement and Communications Implications  
There are no significant implications within this category.
- 7.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement  
There are no significant implications within this category.
- 7.7 Public Health Implications  
There are no significant implications within this category. We will be working with Public Health to promote breakfast club provision and the offer of health eating.
- 7.8 Environment and Climate Change Implications on Priority Areas:  
There are no significant implications within this category.

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance? Yes  
Name of Financial Officer: Martin Wade

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS Head of Procurement? Yes  
Name of Procurement Officer: Henry Swann

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or LGSS Law? Yes  
Name of Legal Officer: Fiona McMillan

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?  
Yes  
Name of Officer: Jonathan Lewis

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?  
Yes  
Name of Officer: Simon Cobby

Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact? Yes  
Name of Officer: Jonathan Lewis

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health? N/A

If a Key decision, have any Environment and Climate Change implications been cleared by the Climate Change Officer?  
No implications – any changes will be considered under relevant decision e.g. school build.

## 8. Source documents

## 8.1 Source documents

- Appendix 1 Cambridgeshire Household Support Fund – an alternative format is available on request
- Appendix 2 Draft Cambridgeshire School Improvement Strategy - an alternative format is available on request
- Appendix 3 Education Organisation Plan 21/22 - an alternative format is available on request
- Appendix 4 Market Position Statement Jan 2020 - an alternative format is available on request
- Appendix 5 Draft Checklist for consideration of small schools / small school list.
- Appendix 6 - Breakfast Clubs Research Evidence and Funding Opportunities

## 9. Accessibility

9.1 Accessible versions of this report and appendices 5 and 6 are available on request from [Jonathan.lewis@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:Jonathan.lewis@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

9.2 Appendices 1 to 4 are available in an accessible format on request to [Placeplanningreferrals0-19@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:Placeplanningreferrals0-19@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)