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**Democratic Services Section
Chief Executive's Department
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS**

13th December, 2016

MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

As previously notified to you, I enclose a copy of the report for the following item to be considered at the meeting to be held at 9.30 am on Friday, 16th December, 2016.

Yours faithfully,

SUZANNE WYLIE

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

8. Operational Issues

- (j) Consultation Response - Education Authority: Providing Pathways - Draft Strategic Area Plan for School Provision 2017/20 (Pages 1 - 6)

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| Subject: | Consultation Response to Education Authority’s Providing Pathways Draft Strategic Area Plan for School Provision 2017-2020 |
| Date: | 16 December 2016 |
| Reporting Officer: | Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive |
| Contact Officer: | Sharon McNicholl, Strategic Planning and Policy Manager |

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| Is this report restricted? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Is the decision eligible for Call-in? | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> |

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| 1.0 | Purpose of Report |
| 1.1 | <p>The purpose of the report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Update members on the Education Authority’s (EA) current consultation on their draft strategic area plan for school provision. |
| 2.0 | Recommendations |
| 2.1 | <p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Note the details of the consultation and approve a high level response as detailed in paragraph 3.10. |
| 3.0 | Key issues |
| 3.1 | <p>The Education Authority (EA) has launched a consultation on Northern Ireland’s first regional area plan for education, ‘Providing Pathways 2017-2020’. The plan aims to ensure that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs in sustainable schools that are of the right type, of the right size, located in the right place. It sets out the key priorities and objectives for the EA, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) and other sectoral bodies, in light of the Department of Education’s goals to create sustainable schools throughout Northern Ireland.</p> |
| 3.2 | <p>The Area Plan for 2017-2020 establishes Local Planning Districts which align with the 11 Local Government Districts, allowing education to make a contribution to the 11 LGD Community Plans.</p> |

3.3

For each Local Government District the plan sets out:

- Population projections;
- Summary data for Primary Schools;
- Summary Data for Post-primary schools;
- Key issues emerging from analysis of current local provision;
- What will we do?

3.4

The Belfast LG district data is set out below:

- The population in the age range 0-15 years is projected to increase by 7.6% by 2024.
- The population in the age range 16-19 years is projected to decrease by 1.4% by 2024.

3.5

Summary Data for Primary Schools

| Management type | Number of schools | Total approved enrolments | Total actual enrolments | Super-numerary admissions | Number of available places | Number of schools with > 5% surplus or > £75,000 | Number of schools with > 5% deficit or >£75,000 |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|--|---|
| Controlled | 44 | 16,031 | 11,884 | 506 | 4,642 | 22 | 4 |
| Catholic Maintained | 36 | 18,050 | 14,618 | 530 | 3,963 | 19 | 1 |
| Irish Medium | 9 | 1,617 | 1,204 | 32 | 445 | 2 | 3 |
| Controlled Integrated | 2 | 678 | 619 | 17 | 76 | - | - |
| Grant Maintained Integrated | 3 | 1,015 | 1,044 | 46 | 17 | - | - |
| Totals | 94 | 37,373 | 29,369 | 1,131 | 9,143 | 43 | 8 |

3.6

Summary Data for Post-Primary Schools

| Management type | Number of schools | Total approved enrolments | Total actual enrolments | Super-numerary admissions | Number of available places | Number of schools with >5% Surplus or >£75,000) | Number of schools with >5% Deficit or >£75,000) | Entitlement Framework - Number of schools compliant KS4 | Entitlement Framework Number of schools compliant Post-16 |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Controlled | 7 | 5,670 | 5,894 | 233 | 124 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 4 |
| Voluntary | 14 | 15,106 | 15,113 | 306 | 351 | n/a | | 12 | 8 |
| Catholic Maintained | 11 | 9,654 | 7,575 | 465 | 2,571 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 3 |
| Irish Medium | 1 | 600 | 605 | 24 | 19 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Grant Maintained Integrated | 2 | 1,650 | 1,491 | 98 | 257 | n/a | | 1 | 1 |
| Totals | 35 | 32,680 | 30,678 | 1,126 | 3,322 | 10 | 3 | 23 | 16 |

3.7

The Plan identifies the following key issues emerging from their analysis of current provision across Belfast:

- Number of available places
- Location of available places
- Schools facing sustainability challenges
- Equitable access to Entitlement Framework pathways
- Potential for Irish Medium and Integrated school development
- Potential opportunities for shared education
- Need to establish learning support provision in mainstream schools

3.8

In order to address the issues, the EA says that it will develop proposals to:

- ensure that school places are located as required;
- address school provision where sustainability is an issue (primary and post-primary) - (reviews will take account of six Sustainable Schools criteria – see below);
- establish additional learning support and autism specific provision within primary and post-primary schools;
- ensure equitable access to the Entitlement Framework pathways at Key Stage 4;
- reconfigure primary school provision to reduce the number of available places in schools;
- reconfigure post-16 provision to give pupils equitable access to the Entitlement Framework pathways in collaboration with the Further Education sector;
- encourage and facilitate sustainable Irish Medium and Integrated schools; and
- promote shared education solutions which provide sustainable schools.

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| 3.9 | <p>Sustainability criteria</p> <p>The six criteria of the Sustainable Schools policy are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quality educational experience 2. Stable enrolment trends 3. Sound financial position 4. Strong leadership and management by Board of Governors and principals 5. Accessibility 6. Strong links with the community <p>The documents also provides a profile of current special school provision across the EA and proposals.</p> <p>Proposed feedback</p> |
| 3.10 | <p>It is proposed that the Council makes the following comments in relation to the Draft Strategic Area Plan for School Provision 2017-2020.</p> <p>Belfast’s community plan – the Belfast Agenda</p> |
| 3.11 | <p>Education is at the heart of Belfast’s new community plan – the Belfast Agenda. It is seen as fundamental to removing barriers to opportunity for people across the city, reducing life inequalities and ensuring our young people fulfil their potential.</p> |
| 3.12 | <p>The Council notes the Area Plan’s alignment with the Programme for Government and in particular – its contribution to improving educational outcomes; addressing educational inequalities; improving the quality of education and improving child development.</p> |
| 3.13 | <p>The Council, with its partners, which include the Education Authority, CCMS and the Department for Education has just begun public consultation on the Belfast Agenda. The Agenda also prioritises addressing educational inequalities and improving educational attainment within Belfast. Some of the starkest figures with respect to educational inequality are within Belfast, with figures for achievement of at least 5 GCSE Grades A*-C (including English and Maths) ranging between 19 per cent and 100 per cent between wards (2014/15). There is a significant gap in attainment between those children entitled to free school meals and those who are not.</p> |

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| 3.14 | <p>The Council therefore welcomes the intention to align the area planning process with the community planning process from 2017 onwards and would like more detail and discussion as to how it is intended this will be progressed; in particular whether it is intended that local government districts will be represented in area planning structures going forward or whether community planning structures will play a specific role. A partnership approach will be important so that we maximise the benefit of the school estate and other complementary local investment at a local level. The council notes that at present there is no local government district representation within the support structures for area planning.</p> |
| 3.15 | <p>Evidence and information emerging from the Local Development Planning process should also inform the development of local area plans.</p> |
| | <p>Population Projections</p> |
| 3.16 | <p>As noted in paragraph 3.4 above, the official 2014-based population projections identify a 7.6% increase in the Belfast population in the age range 0-15 years and a 1.4% decrease in the age range 16-19 years by 2024. However, the Council's own research found that the continuation of existing demographic trends would serve to restrain economic and employment growth.</p> |
| 3.17 | <p>The council has undertaken its own population modelling work to inform the preparation for the new Local Development Plan for the City. This is reflected in the Belfast Agenda's aspiration to grow the population of the city so that by 2035 Belfast will be home to 70,000 more people. This would represent a total increase in the Belfast population of more than 47,000 above the official 2014-based projections produced by NISRA, which if achieved would have significant implications for population profile and consequently the education provision required.</p> |
| 3.18 | <p>Details of the projected population change as a result of these policy aspirations, including the growth within the 0-15 and 16-19 age groups, should therefore be taken into consideration when finalising the area plan.</p> |

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| <p>3.19</p> <p>3.20</p> <p>3.21</p> <p>3.22</p> | <p>Proposal to reconfigure primary school places</p> <p>The council is unclear about the impact of the proposal to “reconfigure primary school provision to reduce the number of available places in schools” in Belfast which is included within section 4.9 “Emerging Issues and Proposed Actions for each Local Government District”. The council would like clarification of this statement given the Education Authority’s own projection of population growth of 7.6% within the age-range 0-15 to 2024 and given community planning partners’ ambition to grow the population of the city by 70,000 by 2035.</p> <p>Special Education Needs Categories</p> <p>The Council notes in section 5.3 of the document with respect to special schools which support pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD). The draft plan states that with respect to SLD schools, ‘...work will be required to bring enhanced consistency across the Belfast City Council area in particular’. The council would welcome further information about this and about the development of any regional model with respect to special schools, particularly where this impacts on Belfast.</p> <p><u>Financial Implications</u></p> <p>There are no specific financial or resource implications.</p> <p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>There are no specific equality or good relations implications.</p> |
| <p>4.0</p> | <p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p> |
| <p>4.1</p> | <p>None</p> |