



**REPORT of  
DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITY**

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**to  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
10 JANUARY 2018**

**PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION IN THE MALDON DISTRICT**

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update an item of scrutiny relating to primary school education in the Maldon District previously considered in January 2017.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (i) that the Committee notes the update on progress in relation to recommendations made in January 2017;
- (ii) that the Committee notes the performance update of primary education within the Maldon District;
- (iii) that the Committee makes recommendations to the relevant educational providers on key findings and makes recommendations to this Council on initiatives to assist the educational providers in improving performance within the Maldon District as follows:
  - a. the Council offers the Diocese of Chelmsford and Essex County Council use of district promotional materials to aid recruitment of Teachers and School Governors within the Maldon District;
  - b. that the Council provides details of local Town and Parish Councils to the Diocese of Chelmsford and Essex County Council to enable sharing of Governor recruitment issues by specific area to raise awareness and assistance in recruitment;
  - c. the Council facilitates dialogue between Town and Parish Councils with schools within their locality to encourage greater joint working.
- (iv) that future updates relating to progress on the above recommendations are made to the Locality Board and this matter is now concluded by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES**

3.1 In January 2017 Members scrutinised primary level education (Minute No.853 refers) in particular, the scrutiny sought to:

- determine what the current situation is and how this compares to the County and national pictures;
- evaluate the trends in standards and how the District compares with other local authorities in Essex or whether there are factors that are particular to the Maldon District;
- examine what is being done to ensure that the standards improve. (What are the relevant current policies, procedures and practices that are in place; how successful have they been and how they will make an impact in the future?);
- exert local influence and support to drive up the quality of primary education across the whole District where possible.

3.2 The Recommendations made by this Committee in January 2017 were as follows;

- (i) that the Council encourages collaborative partnerships to ensure best outcomes and that best practice is shared between schools regardless of Local Education Authority (LEA), faith or academy background;
- (ii) that the Council looks to assist in the recruitment and retention of teachers through investigation of affordable housing provision;
- (iii) that the Council assists in finding and recruitment of quality governors for local schools;
- (iv) that this scrutiny is re-visited by this Committee to monitor progress at a future date.

### 3.3 **Update**

3.3.1 In preparation for this item of scrutiny meetings have been held with representatives of the Diocese of Chelmsford and Essex County Council to further explore some of the issues included within the recommendations detailed above.

3.3.2 At the meeting of this committee a short joint presentation will be made by representatives of the Diocese of Chelmsford and Essex County Council to update Members on educational performance. The representatives will also be available to answer any questions Members may have as a result of the information provided.

3.4 A key area of concern common to both education providers is the recruitment and retention of teachers in our rural district. The lack of the provision of affordable housing for teachers is seen as a major barrier particularly in small rural schools and this is hampering recruitment. In addition the peninsular nature of the area also has an impact upon recruitment. Mr Gayler (Strategic Housing Manager) has been asked to look at options which may help to ease the housing issue and has made the following comments:

3.4.1 At a time when there is a housing crisis and recognition by the government that the broader housing market is ‘broken’, the impact of this will be felt by a wide range of people within the District and further afield as an unfortunate but inevitable consequence of the current housing problems faced by many. The Council is already struggling to meet its statutory duties to those who are homeless, as evidenced by the rising number of households in temporary accommodation and it is not feasible or advisable at this moment to consider allocating homes to others if this compromises

the Council's ability to give preference to those in greatest need. This includes households who have children in local schools and need to remain close to their local area so as to minimise disruption to their children's education.

- 3.4.2 In the short term, the implementation of the Homeless Reduction Act in April 2018 is likely to place extended duties on the Council's Housing Service which will make it even more challenging to allocate homes to any other groups until such time as plans to improve supply begin to deliver an adequate supply. This may help those teachers who find themselves at risk of becoming homeless but hopefully this will be a very small number and we recognise that this is a different side to the same issue.
- 3.4.3 The Council's Strategic Housing Service has worked with local parish Councils and other partners to identify and help meet the need for affordable housing in rural areas to meet the need of those who live or work in the area. This is now covered by Policy H5 and could also be delivered through the Council's Community Led Housing programme if sites are identified and brought forward for this purpose as an exception to other policies. Officers would be willing to discuss with the LEA, local diocese and others any opportunities for bringing forward land for this purpose. If willing, this can be developed through the Council's Housing Strategy that is currently being drafted.
- 3.4.4 Whilst affordability is recognised and understood as a problem facing many local households and local employers, especially smaller businesses, the cost of smaller homes to buy or rent compares favourably with other neighbouring areas, especially Chelmsford. There are possible options that could be linked to additional supply of homes that would not detract from the Council's legal duties but there would need to be a policy based approach to this. Officers will therefore also look to the LEA and other possible employers of key workers to see if it is possible to obtain more detailed information on housing need and the risk of essential services failing that can be used to develop a policy as part of the Housing Strategy.
- 3.5 Whilst recognising that staff recruitment can be difficult for local schools, particularly those located on the Dengie Peninsula for the above reasons, the District Council can offer support in promoting the merits of the Maldon District as a place to live and/or work. As part of the Council's own staff recruitment campaigns, high quality internet based and printed recruitment material is now produced. The generic material promoting the quality of life that the District offers, the transport links and the proximity to London, for instance, could be used by schools directly and/or the Education Authority. If Members were minded, this level of support could be offered and access given to some of the Council's photographic library and Sense of Place materials.
- 3.6 It is thought that if the Diocese of Chelmsford and Essex County Council could share information with the Council in a timely manner relating to both Teacher and School Governors shortages by area, some local targeting could then be undertaken. This could be particularly effective to attract School Governors through joint work with the local Town and Parish Councils for example. Perhaps key to this issue is to reinforce the position of the local school at the heart of the community and this could be achieved in a number of ways. In discussion options including using schools for wider community use were explored. An example being Southminster Primary School which at the moment has spare capacity and resultant accommodation surplus.

It may be possible in the interim period, until pupil numbers are expected to recover, that facilities could be utilised by the community. As a result some local residents may feel better able to engage with the schools and offer to become Governors for example.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 The aim of this review is to see how this Council can assist the educational providers within the Maldon District to ensure good standards of education are being achieved for students in primary education.

#### **5. IMPACT ON CORPORATE GOALS**

- 5.1 The Council states its corporate goals and high level outcomes in the Corporate Plan for 2015 - 19. An objective under the corporate goal 'Creating opportunities for economic growth and prosperity' is 'raise aspirations and improved skills and training provision'. The start in life that is provided to the primary school pupils in the District is a crucial foundation on which to build in terms of achieving this goal and outcome given that comparatively poor attainment levels may affect their outcomes in later life.

#### **6. IMPLICATIONS**

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – None identified.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – No issues identified.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – No issues identified.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – None identified.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – None identified.
- (vi) **Impact on the Environment** – No issues identified.

Background Papers: None.

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