

**Education and Children's Services
Scrutiny Committee
1 March 2017**

Covering Report: Creating New School Places

Summary and Objectives

1. The objective of this agenda item is for the committee to understand better the process of creating new school places, from the perspective of the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC). The RSC's staff will speak briefly to the committee about creating new school places; this follows on from the committee's consideration on 6 September 2016 of 'school infrastructure and capacity planning'.

Scrutiny Focus

2. Key focus areas for this scrutiny include the following:
 - i) General update / refresher on the Regional School Commissioner's role
 - ii) What's involved in creating new school places, from the RSC perspective
 - iii) The good working relationship and information sharing with Suffolk County Council in relation to school infrastructure and capacity planning.

How this relates to County Council priorities

3. This scrutiny is linked to the County Council's corporate priorities as indicated below:

The County Council's Corporate Priorities	Link to this scrutiny
Raising educational attainment and skill levels	✓
Supporting the LEPs to increase economic growth	✓
Maintaining roads and developing Suffolk's infrastructure	✓
Supporting those most vulnerable in our communities	✓
Empowering local communities	

4. Having considered the evidence, the Committee may wish to:
 - i) make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills, and/or the Corporate Director for Children and Young People's Services;
 - ii) agree topics which could benefit from more detailed scrutiny at a future meeting, seek to influence partner organisations, or request further information.

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Background

5. At the meeting on 6 September 2016 the Education and Children's Service Scrutiny Committee looked at 'school infrastructure and capacity planning' (*Agenda Item 7, Evidence Set 5, from that meeting, is the written 3-page summary input that the RSC provided*):
<http://committeeminutes.suffolkcc.gov.uk/meeting.aspx?d=06/Sep/2016&c=Education%20and%20Childrens%20Services%20Scrutiny%20Committee>
6. The objective of the scrutiny on 6 Sep 2016 was for the committee to understand and make any recommendations in relation to the mechanisms for capacity planning and new infrastructure for Suffolk schools, with some emphasis on Early Years provision.
7. The Committee resolved that the Chairman should write to the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) on behalf of the Committee, noting the good level of communication and engagement between the RSC and Suffolk County Council, highlighting recent concerns about communication relating to new Free Schools, and referring to the RSC's comment in his written submission regarding sharing published information about the need for school places.
8. The letter from the Committee to the RSC, dated 26 Oct 2016, is available online, as item 6 of the Information Bulletin (Agenda Item 07) for the Committee meeting held on 1 Dec 2016:
<http://committeeminutes.suffolkcc.gov.uk/meeting.aspx?d=01/Dec/2016&c=Education%20and%20Childrens%20Services%20Scrutiny%20Committee>
9. In his response, on 30 Oct 2016, the RSC thanked the Chairman for the Committee's letter, and suggested that, *'I wonder if it would be helpful if my colleagues, Dan Cooke and Jonathan Lewis, who lead our work on creating school places in Suffolk, were to come and meet the committee?'*

Main Body of Evidence

10. There is no separate report for this agenda item. The online material referred to in the background (above) and the internet links referenced below, provide additional background detail, as required. There will be verbal input to the Committee at the meeting on 1 March.
11. The proposed witnesses / participants for this agenda item are:
 - i. Jonathan Lewis (Deputy Director, RSC Office – East of England and North East London)
 - ii. Daniel Cooke (RSC's Office)
 - iii. Gavin Bultitude and/or Pete Mumford (SCC)

Background / Reference:

- i. The Committee meeting held on 6 September 2016:
<http://committeeminutes.suffolkcc.gov.uk/meeting.aspx?d=06/Sep/2016&c=Education%20and%20Childrens%20Services%20Scrutiny%20Committee>
- ii. The Committee meeting held on 1 December 2016:
<http://committeeminutes.suffolkcc.gov.uk/meeting.aspx?d=01/Dec/2016&c=Education%20and%20Childrens%20Services%20Scrutiny%20Committee>

- iii. Some reference links regarding the role of the RSC in relation to school places:
- a. <https://www.gov.uk/government/people/tim-coulson>
 - b. <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/schools-commissioners-group/about>
 - c. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/517565/RSC-Decision-Making-Framework.pdf
 - d. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-significant-changes-to-an-existing-academy>
 - e. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/east-of-england-and-north-east-london-headteacher-board>
 - f. <https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/research/key-issues-parliament-2015/education/school-places/>
 - g. <http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/5854661/The+council+role+in+school+place+planning/998e5667-6218-4a94-aa57-2633010edc51>
 - h. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/multi-academy-trusts-establishing-and-developing-your-trust>

