

## RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION

Tuesday, 14 March 2023

**Decision No:** (CAB 22/23 35639)

DECISION-MAKER:	CABINET
PORTFOLIO AREA:	Cabinet Member for Children and Learning
SUBJECT:	SEND Programme
AUTHOR:	Paul Capocci, Tammy Marks

### THE DECISION

Modified recommendations:

- (i) To approve the commencement of consultation, based on the option recommended in section 23. The option outlined is for the expansion and reconfiguration of Southampton Special Schools to create 278 additional spaces across 3 identified sites as per Table 1, section 23, subject to consultation and statutory school organisation decisions.
- (ii) To agree a further report to be brought back to Cabinet prior to the commencement of the strategy. This report will detail the outcome of the consultation including any required amendments to the programme.
- (iii) To approve spend of £0.67m in 2023/24 for the next phase for the SEND programme to proceed with preparatory work as outlined in the report from General Fund capital. Should any of the schemes not proceed following the outcome of the consultation these costs will be abortive costs which will be charged to the General Fund revenue account. The risk of the capital programme not proceeding is very low after 3 years of extensive consultation and phase 1 feasibility work. Equally, the risks of not doing the work are also high as surplus places within the city are needed to lower costs and not having these will lead to extensive use of out of city and independent specialist provision, at much greater cost. It is unlikely the costs would fall in full to revenue, but if any cost does, we will need to rely on staff savings via more vacancies being managed including those from early help and young people services. This would in turn impact on early intervention services, ultimately increasing demand.
- (iv) To agree to the commencement of work prior to consultation closing, understanding that there is a risk of abortive costs should any scheme not proceed needing to be charged to revenue.

### REASONS FOR THE DECISION

1. There is a requirement to deliver a programme of improvements and

expansions at various SEND Schools across the city. From this, a reconfiguration of existing sites and schools were identified to meet targets for additional pupil places. This recommendation aligns with the proposed approach for delivering SEND provision across the city.

2. The proposed strategy creates the maximum number (278 places) within the budget in the capital programme, based on the constraints within the sites as identified. The original number of extra spaces planned overall for these 3 sites was initially 246 places, with 63 places planned for the Great Oaks, Green Lane site. Increased potential accommodation for an additional 32 spaces have been identified for this site, bringing the total planned places to 95 spaces (63 +32) on the Great Oaks, Green Lane site.
3. The proposed strategy will enable the council to meet its statutory obligation to provide a sufficiency of special school places, allowing children and young people to attend schools within the city, maximising their inclusion in their local communities. This will prevent the need for the Council to provide out of city places at a premium. \*Refer to Table 1 within Option 3 Proposed Solution para 23.
4. The delivery of local school places prevents the need to rely on high cost independent placements, leading to savings and cost avoidance (reducing overspend) in the ring fenced \* High Needs Designated Schools Grant (DSG) and the General Fund Home to School Transport costs budget. \* Appendix G
5. Progressing a planning application to have the temporary modular builds converted into permanent provision significantly reduces the capital budget to achieve the number of places to meet the need in the city.
6. Note: Should any of the schemes not proceed following the outcome of the consultation these costs will be abortive costs which will be charged to the General Fund revenue account. Funded from efficiencies and restructure of staffing resource.

## **DETAILS OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

1. Do Nothing: No funding required by the council.  
This will not meet the required statutory requirement to deliver sufficient school places, with a specific regard for children with SEND.  
\*\*This will have a significant impact on the councils High Needs Funding and Home to School Transport budget, increasing the existing deficit.  
\*Refer to Table 1 within Option 3 Proposed Solution para 23.  
\*\*Appendix G
2. Option 1: Seek an increase in capital funding in line with outcome of feasibility studies for the four sites, namely; Great Oaks (Green Lane & Vermont Close), Vermont School, St Monica and Polygon School. This option would provide an additional 338 places across the 4 sites and would help target the predicted pupil numbers for 2029. This is not recommended for the following reasons:
  - Financial pressures of the Local Authority. This does not consider the opportunities for national funding, specifically relating to the expansion/refurbishment of The Polygon School.(The Council applied for a rebuild of Polygon funding through the DfE and this was rejected in January 2023. The Council also applied for a secondary SEMH special school in the most recent free school round and were advised end of February 2023 this has been rejected.)

- Current Financial Situation of the Council,
  - Costs estimated above the current budget and
  - The refurbishment of Polygon school was included in original proposals however Polygon will not form part of the current phase of the SEND programme as it was not possible to achieve additional places on this site.
  - Impact to existing service users on Green Lane Site as they would potentially need to offer up areas currently being used under existing arrangements, agreements and leases.
3. Option 2: Seek increase in capital funding to fund 3 of the projects (Green Lane, Vermont School & St Monica) within the feasibility study (excluding the expansion/refurbishment of Polygon). Feasibility studies explored the potential for the various sites to provide places at industry benchmarked costs. This option removes the proposals for the Polygon school from the programme as, the site topography is challenging, and the school would not be able to offer any additional SEND places and Polygon has been omitted from this phase of the SEND Programme.
- This is not the recommended option for the following reasons:
- Current Financial Situation of the Council,
  - Costs estimated above the current budget and
  - Impact to existing service users on Green Lane Site as they would need to offer up areas currently being used under existing arrangements, agreements and leases.
4. Several iterations of expansion provision have been developed and explored through formal appraisal and feasibility studies to determine what options could be financially viable.

#### **OTHER RELEVANT MATTERS CONCERNING THE DECISION**

None.

#### **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

None.

#### **CONFIRMED AS A TRUE RECORD**

We certify that the decision this document records was made in accordance with the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2000 and is a true and accurate record of that decision.

Date: 14<sup>th</sup> March, 2023

Decision Maker:  
The Cabinet

Proper Officer:  
Judy Cordell

SCRUTINY

Note: This decision will come in to force at the expiry of 5 working days from the date of publication subject to any review under the Council's Scrutiny "Call-In" provisions.

Call-In Period expires on

Date of Call-in *(if applicable) (this suspends implementation)*

Call-in Procedure completed *(if applicable)*

Call-in heard by *(if applicable)*

Results of Call-in *(if applicable)*