

## RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION

Tuesday, 15 September 2015

**Decision No:** (CAB 15/16 15376)

DECISION-MAKER:	CABINET
PORTFOLIO AREA:	EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE
SUBJECT:	EXPANSION OF SPRINGWELL SPECIAL SCHOOL
AUTHOR:	Robert Hardy

### THE DECISION

On consideration of the report of the Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Social Care, Cabinet agreed the following:

- (i) To add, in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules, a sum of £1.3M to the Education & Children's Social Care Capital Programme for phase 1 of the expansion of Springwell School funded from non-ringfenced Department of Education Basic Need capital grant.
- (ii) To agree for further work to continue so that detailed proposals and costings can be brought back to a future Cabinet meeting on the longer-term plan to create the further capacity required at Springwell School.

### REASONS FOR THE DECISION

1. Current State - The number of children whose statutory assessment of their Special Needs results in a legally-binding decision to admit them to Springwell School continues to increase. The number of children whose statutory assessment results in a placement at a mainstream school in Southampton also continues to increase. This is largely a result of the changes in age-range and scope of assessment introduced by the Children & Families Act from September 2014.
2. The Council's revenue funding to meet costs in the High Needs Block has also increased significantly for the current financial year and beyond. This has been achieved by transferring resources from the schools block, following consultation with the Schools Forum as additional resources have not been provided for within the Dedicated Schools Grant, (DSG). Further, the current and anticipated increase in demand in special school places will continue to put pressure on High Needs budgets as there no additional money is expected from future years DSG allocations.
3. Separate work has also been undertaken to create a forecasting model for the future, which the authority previously lacked, and this will be used to guide proposals for further development of special school capacity and provision.

4. Provision for Year R in Sept 2015

Once no bids were received for the Year R provision for Sept 2015, a range of alternative temporary solutions were explored. The only viable option that met the requirements of this group of children was a short-term, low-cost adaptation of space at Start Point Sholing. This will accommodate all of the 2015 Year R group, but is not viable as a long-term option for a number of reasons.

5. These include the future requirements for the use of this space to accommodate expansion of Start Point provision; the fact that this space would only ever be usable as Year R provision but capacity at Springwell would still need to increase to accommodate these children at Year 1 and above. There are also dis-economies of scale (and cost) for SCC and the school to continue to add further satellite provision to the mix.
6. The maximum capital budget requirement to adapt Start Point Sholing as outlined above is £110,000. The request to add funding and approval for this spend has been included in the wider Education & Children's Social Care Capital Programme report that is on the same agenda as this report. This meets the cost of adaptations at Sholing and some staff-related adaptations at Springwell which couldn't be accommodated at Sholing. For September 2015 the 'satellite' Springwell classes at Bassett Green School (agreed as a temporary solution to the equivalent problem last year) return to the use of that school and those children join the rest of Year 1 at Springwell.

## **DETAILS OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

If capacity at Springwell Special School is not increased, there are only two alternative routes open to the Council.

Option 1 - The first would be to direct mainstream primary schools to accept children with high level special needs and to provide ongoing additional revenue support packages to those schools that would have the capacity to accept them. This carries significant financial risks and the risks of legal challenge from those mainstream schools, many of whom already accept children with significant levels of special needs.

A detailed financial estimate of the scale of the revenue pressure related to this option has not been prepared, but can be undertaken. It is likely to be in the region of £500,000 per year. This figure is based on an average cost for additional funding per pupil of £20,000. An estimate of the cost and reputational risks of significant legal challenges by schools is harder to quantify. But we have already seen the number of SEN and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST) cases rising and a significant number of those are requiring us to make placements in independent sector schools as alternatives to local special schools, not placements at mainstream schools.

Option 2- The second option would be to place children in independent sector special schools (or be required to by SENDIST), none of which fall within the city's boundaries. The lowest current annual cost of such a placement is £57,000 for a child attending such a school as a day pupil (not residential) and the council would also be required to support additional daily transport costs in addition to the placement cost.

The current and estimated size of year groups at Springwell is 24 children, equated to an annual revenue placement cost of £1.37m (24 X £57,000) plus additional transport costs.

Other options considered – Other sites for the build have been considered, for example the former school buildings at Eastpoint were considered as part of option appraisal, but rejected due to existing plans for future ownership of the site and income to the authority associated with this.

#### **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: 15 September 2015

Decision Maker:  
The Cabinet

Proper Officer:  
Judy Cordell

#### **SCRUTINY**

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

Call-In Period

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 ( <i>if applicable</i> )