

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, EDUCATION & EARLY HELP SERVICES

TO:	POLICY COMMITTEE		
DATE:	16 JULY 2018	AGENDA ITEM:	15
TITLE:	THE BASE - AUTISTIC SPECTRUM CONDITION PROVISION AT BLESSED HUGH FARINGDON CATHOLIC SCHOOL		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	CLLR PEARCE	PORTFOLIO:	EDUCATION
SERVICE:	DCEEHS	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	MYLES MILNER	TEL:	01189 372904
JOB TITLE:	SCHOOL SERVICES SERVICE MANAGER	E-MAIL:	myles.milner@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 In response to the rising Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) demand within the borough, it is proposed that the Autistic Spectrum Condition Provision at Blessed Hugh Faringdon School is redeveloped to provide 30 SEND pupil places compared to the current 15 pupil places.
- 1.2 In order to develop the new building it will be necessary to demolish the existing modular classroom block which dates from the 1990's and has exceeded its useful life, as well as the original caretaker's house, which dates to the original school building. A classroom is incorporated into the existing caretaker's house and therefore a replacement classroom is also required as part of the redevelopment.
- 1.3 Following a formal design and build tender process to appoint a contractor in 2016, Extra Space Solutions were appointed to develop the scheme in conjunction with Employers requirements established by the Council. The tender for the scheme has been developed by the company to our satisfaction in the sum of £1,623,071. Due to the need to ensure protection for future Reading SEND pupil placements should the school academise, it was agreed to develop an agreement between the Council and Diocese linked to placement of Reading SEND pupils. This has taken some time to agree.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That Spend approval be given in the sum of £1,973,684 to the project to develop a 60 pupil place the provision of a new Autistic Spectrum Condition building at the Blessed Hugh Faringdon School
- 2.2 That approval is given to enter into a contract with Extra Space solutions Ltd to develop the Autistic Spectrum Condition Provision at Blessed Hugh Faringdon School in the sum of £1,623,071.
- 2.3 That approval be given to the demolition of the existing life expired, modular teaching units, and caretaker house at Blessed Hugh Faringdon School.

3. POLICY CONTEXT & BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The local authority (LA) has a legal duty under the section 13a of the Education Act, 1996, as amended by section 5 of the School Standards and Framework Act, 1998, to:

“ensure that their functions relating to the provision of education to which this section applies are (so far as they are capable of being so exercised) exercised by the authority with a view to promoting high standards.”

- 3.2 The local authority has specific duties relating to children with special educational needs (SEN):
- Securing SEN provision for pupils with SEN;
 - Promoting integration of pupils with SEN;
 - Making provision for children and young people with Education Health and Care plans (EHCPs);
 - Enabling pupils to be educated in accordance with parents' wishes; and
 - Ensuring that education and training functions are exercised with a view to promoting high standards
- 3.3 The emerging demand for additional SEND places was detailed within the Education Capital Programme options report which was approved by Policy Committee on 2 November 2015. The current capital programme 2018-21 retains specific provision for this scheme.
- 3.4 The process to develop the new Autistic Spectrum Condition Provision at the Blessed Hugh Faringdon School was stopped in early 2017 following concern expressed that the school might become an academy and potentially dictate the future of any new provision developed by the Council. Consequently it was decided to enter into a Development Agreement with the School and Catholic diocese of Portsmouth to preclude any such decision by the academised school. Drafting and getting all party agreement has taken considerable time as the development agreement covers several main elements. In February 2018 approval was granted through the decision book, as set out below to enter into this agreement:

It is the decision of the Director of Children, Education and Early Help Services and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Education that the Council enters into a Development Agreement with the Diocese of Portsmouth and the Governing Body at Blessed Hugh Faringdon School to hand over the new Autistic Spectrum Condition Base building to the school, with the agreement that the new building is designated for Reading's SEND place requirements.

4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1 Current Position:

The local authority currently has insufficient places at Borough based special school settings for children who are on the autistic spectrum. This results in a number of children with Autistic Spectrum Condition being placed in special schools, some of which are out of borough, including independent schools. In many cases, this also results in higher placement and travel costs, and does not offer provision that is of any higher quality than can be provided in Borough.

4.2 Option Proposed

- 4.2.1 The option proposed is to provide a wholly new dedicated block (The Base) at the Blessed Hugh Faringdon Roman Catholic Secondary School to consolidate and expand current provision. This will meet the demand for 30 specialist places for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Condition, and replace the 30 place mainstream classroom lost when the old caretaker house is demolished. The estimated capital cost of the scheme is identified within the Council's Capital

Programme but, due to the 12 month delay associated with establishing formal agreement with the School and Portsmouth Catholic diocese, the overall project costs, which will include all legal fees, are significantly higher than first estimated. The additional sum involved is calculated at £127.7k

4.2.2 Other Options Considered

There is no other secondary mainstream school currently with existing, proven, quality provision for this group of pupils within Borough. The only options are placements in mainstream schools or specialist provision, incurring higher revenue costs, chargeable to the high needs block of the Direct Schools Grant (DSG), for which the Council is the Accountable Body.

4.23 A do nothing option is not acceptable to either the school or the Council as it involves the service being delivered in a dilapidating building and a deteriorating environment for the pupils concerned. It would also reduce our ability to meet the increasing demand for specialist places as part of the SEND Strategy. It would reduce our ability to reduce external placements with the associated additional costs of the placements and transportation.

4.24 Unit Closure

The Borough would lose significant proven expertise in meeting the needs of pupils with Autistic Spectrum Condition and would face significantly higher costs to secure out of Borough placement solutions. The costs would have to be met from the High Needs budget, which is already subject to considerable pressure.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 The project will contribute to the following strategic aims:

5.2 To establish Reading as a learning city and a stimulating and rewarding place to live and visit by investing in further spaces at The Base, Reading is demonstrating its commitment to providing learning opportunities for all within the Borough.

5.3 To promote equality, social inclusion and a safe, healthy environment for all Autistic Spectrum Condition Provision places at The Base will help to meet the growing demand for secondary SEND places within the Borough;

5.4 By providing further in Borough places, we can prevent SEND pupils having to travel to out of borough settings - reducing our spend on the high needs block for school places and reducing the transport costs per pupil;

5.5 The ability to stay within the Borough also provides additional social benefits for the pupils and their families, allowing them to generate local friendships and support from other families which they can sustain outside of school, which is often very difficult for pupils when placed away from home.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

6.1 To date an open evening was held at the school to display and share the plans for the new building. Generally plans for the development were well received, especially amongst school staff and the parents of SEND pupils currently at The Base. Only one comment was received from local residents with a suggestion

on possible improvements to the design. These have been noted and formed the basis to an alteration to the roof design.

- 6.2 Formal consultation for the expansion of the school is not required under the Department for Education Guidance, as the unit is within a mainstream school and would not be increasing their admissions number.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

- 7.2 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is relevant to the decision. An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is provided at Appendix A. The EIA has identified no negative equality impact and a positive equality impact in relation to disability because the proposal aims to provide further places for Secondary SEND students - so improving the opportunities for pupils to stay at a school within Reading.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Council has a statutory duty to provide a school place for every child of statutory school age, resident in the Borough who seeks one.

- 8.2 A Development Agreement and Service Level Agreement for the use of the new building has been formulated to set out the delivery of the build and the ongoing management and service delivery. This is to ensure Reading Borough Council has the ability to manage the placement of students into the Base to serve the needs of Reading's SEND students. The agreement will be between Reading Borough Council, the Diocese of Portsmouth and the school's governing body. To date the need for the agreement has incurred considerable delays to the project, with the building originally planned for completion in September 2017.

- 8.3 The proposed Works contract is being procured through the Southern Counties Modular Framework Agreement in accordance with contract procedure rule 9 (3). This Framework Agreement has been through the EU regulated tendering process to appoint the Framework Contractors. This means that individual projects using the Framework and carried out by Framework Contractors do not have to be advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) again. A Work contract with the framework contractor will be entered into.

- 8.4 Design management and contract administration is being undertaken by Hampshire County Council, working in accordance with the Reading & Hampshire Property Partnership, and overall project management through the Education Asset Management Team.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The existing Autistic Spectrum Condition Provision at the Blessed Hugh Faringdon School is able to provide places for 15 SEND pupils. Following redevelopment, the unit will be able to accept 30 pupils. The project is funded through a combination of ESFA grant funding streams along with additional costs being met from the Capital programme.
- 9.2 Top up fees for The Base are £5,146 per pupil, with transport provided for students up until Year 10 at a cost of £2,829 per pupil per year, after which time they are encouraged to use the bus. Alternative placements would be to send students to High Close in Wokingham at a cost of £40,912 per pupil with transport costs of £6,381 per pupil per year or TVS with top up fees of £28,576 per year and transport costs of £2,829 per pupil per year.

9.3 Revenue Implications

- 9.3.1 The table below demonstrates that based on a reasonable assumption whereby we see the introduction of the new building into use by September 2019, the Council's reliance on independent providers reduces year by year. Consequently, we estimate that the cost of reliance will also fall year by year until we can see an actual major saving made annually from 2021 onwards.

Revenue Implications	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022
Number of additional places at resource unit	0	8.75	12	15
Core Funding (£10,000)	£ -	£ 87,500	£ 120,000	£ 150,000
Top-up funding (£5,146)	£ -	£ 45,028	£ 61,752	£ 77,190
Transport (£2,829)	£ -	£ 16,974	£ 16,974	£ 16,974
Total Revenue funding	£ -	£ 149,502	£ 198,726	£ 244,164
Number of places needed that would go to the resource	15	6.25	3	0
Potential Placements at Highclose (avg : £40,912)	5	2	0	0
Potential Placements at TVS (avg : £28,576)	3	1	1	0
Potential Placements at Alternative Provision (avg : £15,000)	7	3.25	2	0
Cost of potential placements	£ 395,288	£ 159,150	£ 58,576	£ -
Cost of transport for potential placements	£ 49,506	£ 20,510	£ 8,487	£ -
Total Revenue funding	£ 444,794	£ 179,660	£ 67,063	£ -
Annual saving when completed				-£ 200,630

- 9.3.2 Annual Savings of £200k will be seen from 2021/22 once all additional 15 places have been filled. This includes savings on place funding of £168k, made annually from the Dedicated Schools Grant, reducing the current deficit, and £32k revenue savings achieved from the reduced transport costs, which will be incorporated into the Corporate Savings Strategy.

9.4 Capital Implications

- 9.4.1 The project is Basic Need Grant funded by the Central Government, Education Skills and Funding Agency.
- 9.4.2 The table below sets out spending to date on the project and when the remainder is planned to be spent.

Capital Programme reference	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
-----------------------------	---------	---------	---------	---------

from budget book: page line	£000	£000	£000	£000
Proposed Capital Expenditure	164.182	63.934	1708.480	37.088
Funded by Grant (Basic Need Funding)	164.182	63.934	1708.480	37.088
Total Funding	164.182	63.934	1708.480	37.088

9.5 Value for Money (VFM)

9.5.1 The project has been through the Modular Framework Agreement in accordance with contract procedure rule 9 (3). This Framework Agreement has been through the EU regulated tendering process to appoint the Framework Contractors. All 9 contractors within the framework quoted for the project, and quotes assessed against technical and financial criteria.

9.5.2 The average cost per place of a new special school place when benchmarked with the National School Delivery Cost Benchmarking is £67,379, and the cost per place for the new Block at Blessed Hugh Faringdon School, including abnormals and all legal costs for the Development agreement is £32,895

10. Risk Assessment.

10.1 Cost Risk 1 - Project has to cover costs of repair works to public sewers

Cause - A sewer pipe runs under the proposed site. CCTV surveys have been carried out and show the condition of the pipe to be poor in places. Thames Water, who are responsible for the sewer, have carried out their own survey and have awarded a permission to build over. The condition of the sewer is the responsibility of Thames Water; however should any damage occur during the build process, there may be a financial impact on the project. Education capital projects carry a 5% contingency within the cost plan which will be used to cover any additional unexpected costs.

Likelihood - Possible

Severity - Moderate

Mitigation - The foundations of the building have been designed to reduce the impact on the sewer pipes. An amount for remedial repair works for the sewer pipes has been included within the cost plan.

10.2 Cost Risk 2 - Electrical Upgrade to Local Infrastructure

Cause - The preferred option for the building's electrical supply is to utilise the current supply to the present temporary building, and upgrade the school's main electrical panel. There is a risk that the local substation may require upgrading to cope with the additional capacity.

Likelihood - Possible

Severity - Moderate

Mitigation - An alternative option is available to upgrade the existing supply to the Bungalow instead. This would remove the need to upgrade the substation.

10.3 Cost Risk 3 - Existing site conditions

Cause - Due to the issues surrounding the public sewers, the ground conditions survey was put on hold until more information was received from Thames Water. As a result the ground conditions survey is currently in progress and designs for drainage and foundations have been based on assumptions.

Likelihood - Possible

Severity - Moderate

Mitigation - For foundations, the design has been based on data from nearby Southcote Primary, where the ground conditions were poor. This is what the cost plan has been based on. For the below ground drainage, a desktop study has been carried out, which indicates the build-up is clay. This means it is likely soakaways cannot be used and drainage will need to connect directly to the sewers, via attenuators. The cost plan should account for these drainage costs within the standard rates.

11. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

11.1 Education Capital Programme options report which was presented to Policy Committee on 2 November 2015

Corporate Plan and Budget 2016-19 - Policy committee February 2016

Councils Capital Programme - Policy Committee February 2017

Council's capital Programme - Policy Committee February 2018