

Report to Cllr N Jupp, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

March 2021

Change of status of The Forest Boys' School Horsham Capital Funding for Delivery of Phase One Works

Report by Director of Property and Assets and Director of Education and Skills

Electoral division: Horsham East

Summary

Demand for places at single-sex boys' schools in West Sussex has been declining in recent years and this is evidenced by a reduction in the overall number of families applying for boys schools as first preferences. Reduced pupil numbers impacts upon the finances available to schools and thereby on how the school can deliver the opportunities required to both staff and pupils.

During June 2020, the County Council consulted on changing from a single sex boys' school to a co-educational school from September 2021 entry.

Following the outcome of the consultation, in October 2020 the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills approved the proposal to change The Forest School in Horsham from a Boys' School to co-educational from September 2021 (decision reference [ES08\(20/21\)](#)). This will enable more school places to be available for girls in the Horsham area.

Following approval of a Strategic Outline Case and subsequent approval of capital funds for design fees, in accordance with the capital programme governance process, the County Council's Multi-Disciplinary Consultant (MDC), Faithful+Gould, were appointed in November 2020 to take forward the design for an agreed first phase of works to be carried out at the school.

This report seeks approval for the allocation of funding required to undertake a first phase of works necessary to enable the school to accommodate girls from September 2021. The new facilities will provide increased opportunities for both boys and girls.

Recommendations

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills is asked to approve:

1. The allocation of £1m to fund the phase 1 works as outlined in paragraph 2.1 to enable The Forest School to admit girls from September 2021;

2. The authorisation to commence a procurement process and delegation to the Director of Property and Assets to appoint contractors to fully design and cost the new accommodation;
 3. The submission of a planning application for any works requiring planning permission; and
 4. That subject to receipt of planning permission and statutory consents, the delegation of the authority to enter into a construction contract with the successful provider to the Director of Property and Assets.
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Proposal

1 Background and context

- 1.1 During June 2020 West Sussex County Council agreed, after due consideration of the options regarding future admissions to the school, which included maintaining the school as a single sex boys' school, to consult on the proposal to change the status of The Forest School (Forest) from a single sex boys' school to a co-educational school.
- 1.2 Single sex boys' schools reduce the number of places available for girls in the locality, impacting on the County Council's ability to place girls in schools close to their homes and increasing the demand for home to school transport.
- 1.3 Following consultation, the Cabinet Member took a decision ([ES08\(20/21\)](#)) to implement the proposal to change Forest to become a co-educational School from September 2021. This will increase the number of pupils who can obtain a school place close to home.
- 1.4 During the recent secondary school admissions process, applications for places at Forest School in September 2021 have increased; although it will not be clear until offers of places are accepted by parents how many girls will be attending.
- 1.5 Capital works are required to support this change and ensure appropriate and suitable facilities for girls from September 2021 and to provide capital improvement to the school's facilities.

2 Proposal details

- 2.1. The capital project at Forest includes remodelling of changing rooms and WCs to ensure suitable facilities are provided for both boys and girls; a Year 7 pathway for direct access to the Year 7 tutorial area and new line markings and flooring to the Sports Hall.
- 2.2 It is proposed that a procurement exercise is launched to appoint a contractor to complete the necessary design work, including the submission of a planning application, through a public framework in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders on Procurement and Contracts and PCR 2015. This would enable the full architectural, structural, civil, mechanical and electrical design.

- 2.3 As part of this decision the Cabinet Member is asked to approve delegation of authority to award the contract to the Director of Property and Assets; the process to award will be subject to an officer key decision.
- 2.4 The County Council's Multi-Disciplinary Consultant (MDC), Faithful+Gould, have been appointed to provide contract administration; health and safety advice and services in relation to ICT and furniture and equipment for the full delivery of the project.
- 2.5 The current programme for delivery of the capital works confirms essential works will be complete for September 2021 with submission of a planning application anticipated in March 2021 and works commencing on site in July 2021. Some works may continue past September.
- 2.6 Further phases of work are required as the number of girls attending Forest increase. Future phases are likely to include a Year 7 covered external area; remodelling of science/technology teaching spaces; works to the staff car park and a performing arts space for dance. This will be subject to further capital governance arrangements which are to be brought forward for consideration during 2021.

3 Commercial case

- 3.1 The design and tendering exercise will be managed by the MDC and the Category Lead for Place.
- 3.2 The remodelled and refurbished accommodation will be utilised by the School to support the change to Co-Educational provision and the County Council will put in place mechanisms to monitor that the project is achieving the required benefits.

4 Other options considered (and reasons for not proposing)

- 4.1 There is an option to do nothing but this will not provide appropriate facilities for girls.
- 4.2 There is a further option to undertake all phases at once but time constraints to ensure works are completed for September 2021 do not allow sufficient design time for the future phases.

5 Consultation, engagement and advice

- 5.1 The Capital and Assets Board (the Council's internal governance process for capital projects) has considered and supports the proposal and comments from the Board have been incorporated into the final proposal and recommendations. No material changes have been made to the proposal or the recommendations since consideration by the Board.
- 5.2 The Headteacher and Governors have been fully involved in the design and they will continue to be involved as the design work concludes.
- 5.3 The details of the proposal have been shared with the local Member representing the Horsham East Division.
- 5.4 The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources has been consulted on this proposal.

- 5.5 A small element of the work will be subject to planning permission.
- 5.6 The Commercial Panel has been consulted on this proposal.

6 Finance

- 6.1 Since funding for the day-to-day operations of schools comes from the ring-fenced Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), the implications of the change to school organisation for the Council’s on-going revenue budget is cost neutral. The amount of funding that a school receives to meet its day-to-day running costs is largely driven by the number of pupils on roll in the autumn census each year. No changes to staffing are proposed by the County Council and Forest will organise its staffing based upon the number of pupils on roll.
- 6.2 The table below shows the additional draw down into the main Capital Programme required is £1m to complete the project. This includes all fees, FF&E, ICT and other costs. With the previously approved budget of £0.15m the total budget required for the project is therefore £1.15m.
- 6.3 The £1m being requested will be funded from the Schools Basic Need Programme within the approved Capital Programme. The table below demonstrates the funding split and funds available based on the approved capital programme for 21/22.
- 6.4 Every opportunity to use S106 Developer contributions to support capital investment will be explored.
- 6.5 Should the works outlined in paragraph 2.1 be delivered within the approved budget, additional works regarded as essential for the move to co-ed from September 2021 will be taken forward up to the limit of the approved budget.
- 6.6 The full budget required for the first phase of works at Forest is £1.15m. £0.15m has previously been approved for design fees and therefore the funds required through this decision is £1m as indicated in the table below. It is proposed that this is funded from the Schools Basic Need Programme.

Capital Programme allocation	2021/22 £m	2022/23 £m	Total £m
Forest project allocation	1.0	0	1.0
Funded by:			
Schools Basic Need	1.0	0	1.0

7 Risk implications and mitigations

Risk	Mitigating Action
Capital investment is not sufficient to meet all the curriculum needs of a co-educational school.	Phase 1 works have been agreed with the school which prioritise the capital works required to both accommodate girls and ensure quality of provision
Contractor's ability to deliver this project on time and to budget.	The MDC Project Manager will work closely with the contractor and school to drive forward a programme to enable delivery to programme
Planning permission is refused	Pre-planning consultation will be undertaken with Planners and statutory consultees to minimise the risk of issues arising – the Year 7 pathway is expected to require planning consent.
Parental interest in applying for places in the school once co-educational could be limited.	This proposal will deliver the necessary facilities to enable the school to accommodate girls providing confidence to parents that the school will offer suitable provision for both sexes. Following approval to change to co-ed, parents have now expressed preferences for starting school in September 2021. Applications for places at Forest have increased compared with applications for 2020.
Capital Delivery and MDC ability to deliver Phase 1 works for September 2021 may be at risk due to the relatively fast programme	Surveys and design required to inform the programme for delivery are now underway. Capital Delivery. Priorities for September 21 delivery have been agreed.

8 Policy alignment and compliance

8.1 Legal Implications

The County Council's MDC has been appointed to undertake the design work required. The MDC was competitively procured from the Crown Commercial Framework reference RM3741. The instruction of the MDC to provide technical consultancy advice for the design of the works at The Forest is compliant with public contract regulations PCR 2015 and the Council's Standing Orders.

The resulting construction contract will be procured via a Public Framework in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders on Procurement and Contracts and PCR 2015 as applicable and Legal Services will be instructed in the usual manner.

8.2 Equality Duty and Human Rights Assessment

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires that public bodies, in exercising their functions, have due regard to the need to (1) eliminate discrimination,

harassment, victimisation and other unlawful conduct under the Act, (2) advance equality of opportunity and (3) foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. This proposal will ensure suitable places and equality of opportunity for both boys and girls.

8.3 Climate Change

The County Council's Design Guides are to be adhered to in relation to the design of the new accommodation. The Design Guides have recently been updated to ensure school building designs are in line with the County Council's Climate Change Strategy.

8.4 Crime and Disorder - None

8.5 Public Health – None

8.6 Social Value - Not application for this specific proposal.

Andrew Edwards

Director of Property and Assets

Paul Wagstaff

Director of Education and Skills

Contact Officer: Leigh Hunnikin, Education Capital Programme
Manager, 0330 2223051,

Background papers

None