

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

November 2021

Phase 2 Special Support Centre Programme – West Park CE Primary School, Worthing - Allocation of Funding

Report by Mr A Edwards, Director of Property and Assets and Mr P Wagstaff, Director of Education and Skills

Electoral division: Goring

Summary

The County Council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for all children who need a place.

Increasing provision for children and young people with SEND through the creation of additional places in Special Support Centres (SSCs) will assist with the aim of enabling children to attend school locally. As a consequence this will reduce the number of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) moving from maintained schools and academies into costly education provision in the Independent and Non-Maintained Special School sector, often at schools not situated in West Sussex.

It is proposed to redesignate and create 4 additional places at the SSC at West Park Primary School in Worthing. The school currently caters for 840 children aged between 4 and 11 with an existing SSC that is currently designated and resourced to provide 10 places for children with Additional Learning Needs

Approval is required for the allocation of funding from the Capital Programme to provide the necessary accommodation at West Park for the redesignation of the SSC from Additional Learning Needs to Social Communication Needs and to increase the current planned places from 10 to 14 children aged 4 to 11 from September 2023. In addition the budget will fund all associated fees, ICT and furniture and equipment.

Recommendations

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

1. The allocation of £0.935m to fund the necessary accommodation and external play area as set out in paragraph 2.1. This will enable the redesignation of the Special Support Centre (SSC) from Additional Learning Needs to Social Communication Needs and an increase from 10 to 14 planned places at the SSC at West Park CE Primary School in Worthing from September 2023;
2. The authorisation to commence a procurement process and delegation to the Director of Property and Assets to appoint contractors to complete the design and cost the new accommodation;

3. The delegation of authority to the Director of Property and Assets to submit the necessary planning application, to obtain any statutory consents and enter into a construction contract with the successful tenderer.
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Proposal

1 Background and context

- 1.1 There is a need to reduce the number of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) moving from maintained schools and academies into costly out of county education provision. Increasing provision for children and young people with SEND through the creation of additional places in Special Support Centres (SSCs) will assist with the aim of enabling children to attend school locally and meets a key objective of the County Council's [SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2019 - 2024](#)..
- 1.2 It has been identified that children with autism and/or social, emotional and mental health needs are more likely than not to move into independent and non-maintained schools (INMS) because it is currently not possible to meet their needs in maintained schools and academies. By creating more provision to meet these areas of need the County Council will be able to reduce spending on both expensive placements at INMS and costs associated with transporting children to out of county provision.
- 1.3 Redesignating the SSC at West Park CE Primary School to cater for those pupils with Social Communication Needs will assist in meeting this need. Existing pupils will continue on roll as the designation changes with all new placements relating to Social Communication Needs. Young people with Additional Learning Needs will continue to be offered a mainstream placement.
- 1.4 In West Sussex there are around 20,000 children and young people with SEND receiving support in an early years setting, school or college, with over close to 6,500 of these having a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- 1.5 Depending on the requirements of the EHCP, children will require a place in a mainstream school, SSC or maintained Special School. In recent years, the requirement for SSC and Special School placements has increased significantly and projections indicate that this trend will continue. Additional capacity is therefore required in SSCs to enable children to be on roll at a mainstream school close to home; to reduce revenue costs of out of County placements in INMS and to reduce costly home to school transport costs.
- 1.6 In October 2020 the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills approved the budget required to develop the design for the capital works required for 6 SSCs including the redesignation and increase in places at West Park Primary School ([decision ES09 \(20/21\) refers](#)). Following this the County Council's Multi-Disciplinary Consultant (MDC), Faithful+Gould Ltd. were appointed to undertake the full design in accordance with the Royal Institute of British Architects recommended process stages 2-7.

2 Proposal details

- 2.1 The building project at West Park CE Primary School will enable the redesignation of the SSC from Additional Learning Needs to Social Communication Needs and increase the SSC from 10 to 14 places for primary aged children. The works will encompass the provision of a classroom; group room; calming room; sensory room; with associated WCs; kitchenette and external play area.
- 2.2 It is proposed that a procurement exercise is launched to appoint a contractor to undertake the construction activities to expand the Special Support Centre through an open single stage tender, advertised on the Council's e-Sourcing portal In-Tend, as well as Contracts Finder in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders on Procurement and Contracts and Public Contract Regulations 2015 (PCR 2015).
- 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 MDC have been appointed to provide design services; 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 additional accommodation indicates this will be available for September 2023 with works commencing on site in Autumn 2022.
- 2.6 The design and tendering exercise will be managed by the MDC and the County Council's Procurement Category Lead for Place.
- 2.7 The additional accommodation will be utilised by the School to support the placement of children into the Special Support Centre and the County Council will put in place mechanisms to monitor that the project is achieving the required benefits.

3 Other options considered (and reasons for not proposing)

- 3.1 There is an option to do nothing but this will not offer any savings to the high needs block, create much needed additional places for children with SEND, particularly those with Social Communication Needs, or enable children to be placed in a Special Support Centre near to home.

4 Consultation, engagement and advice

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 The Headteacher, Governors and Church of England Diocese have been fully involved in the design and support the proposals and they will continue to be involved as the design work continues at the School.
- 4.3 The details of the proposal have been shared with the local Member representing the Goring Division.

- 4.4 The proposal will be subject to planning permission. Pre-application advice has been sought and received from the appropriate planning authority .
- 4.5 The Commercial Panel, part of the County Council’s internal governance process for assessing procurement proposals, has been consulted on this proposal.

5 Finance

- 5.1 There is provision in the capital programme to progress this project. The table below shows the additional draw down into the main Capital Programme required is 0.935m to finalise the design work and implement the proposal at West Park Primary School.
- 5.2 The £1.055m being requested will be funded from the unallocated SEND Grant approved by the County Council in February 2021. The SEND Grant was provided by Government to enable investment and create additional places for children with SEND. The table below demonstrates the funding split and funds available based on the approved capital programme for 21/22.

| | Approved Capital Programme £m |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Special Schools - SEND pipeline Capital Programme | 7.007 |
| Oak Grove design | -0.060 |
| Palatine | -1.986 |
| Oak Grove design | -2.251 |
| West Park | -0.935 |
| St Margaret’s | -1.064 |
| Felpham | -1.224 |
| Oak Grove forecasted underspend | 0.900 |
| Balance remaining | 0.386 |

- 5.3 The remaining unallocated funds after the allocation for project implementation for West Park, St Margaret’s and Felpham is £0.386m when looking at amounts approved within the Capital Programme.
- 5.4 The total gross cost of the project, including the design fees of £0.120m is £1.055m. The gross cost per place is £264,000 for the 4 additional places created but it should be noted that these additional costs are necessary to enable essential works to the current SSC accommodation including provision of a calming room and sensory room to meet requirements for the redesignation. Cost per place for the 14 new Social Communication Needs places created is £75,000 which is in line with benchmarks for SEN projects of £70,000 per place created.
- 5.5 The budget requirement to complete the project is therefore £0.935m funded from the SEND budget within the approved Capital Programme. The table below shows the projected profile of the gross project costs.

| Capital Programme allocation | 2021/22 £m | 2022/23 £m | Total £m |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| West Park SSC project allocation | 0.500 | 0.555 | 1.055 |

- 5.6 The creation of additional SSC places is projected to save £34,000 per place per annum when comparing the cost of an SSC placement to the cost of a placement in INMS. This is anticipated to save £136,000 per annum once all 4 additional places in the SSC are filled.

6 Risk implications and mitigations

| Risk | Mitigating Action |
|---|---|
| Insufficient allowance in capital programme to award the contract tender to the contractor. | This report is seeking funds estimated as being required at this stage. There are some issues in the construction industry relating to inflation of materials. Contingencies have been included within the budget sought. |
| Contractor's ability to deliver this project on time and to budget. | The County Council's Capital Delivery Team and MDC Project Manager will work closely with the contractor and school to drive forward a programme to enable delivery for September 2023 occupation. |
| Planning permission is refused | Initial pre-planning consultation has been undertaken with Planners and will continue, along with liaison with statutory consultees, to minimise the risk of issues arising. |

7 Policy alignment and compliance

- 7.1 [Our Council Plan](#) sets out the corporate priorities and includes a commitment to help people and communities to fulfil their potential. This proposal will provide appropriate accommodation and equipment to best meet the needs of the young people within the SSC but will also enable inclusion within a mainstream school setting.

7.2 Legal Implications

The County Council's MDC has been appointed to undertake the design work required and this work is ongoing. 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 extension of West Park is compliant with public contract regulations PCR 2015 and the Council's Standing Orders.

The resulting construction contract will be procured via an open single stage tender on the Council's e-Sourcing portal In-Tend, as well as Contracts Finder 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.

7.3 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 school places for those with protected characteristics.

7.4 Climate Change

The County Council's Design Guides have been adhered to in relation to the design of the remodelled accommodation. The Design Guides have recently been updated to ensure school building designs are in line with the County Council's [Climate Change Strategy](#).

7.5 Crime and Disorder - None

7.6 Public Health – None

7.7 Social Value - Not applicable for this specific proposal.

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Background papers

None