

Notice of:	EXECUTIVE
Decision Number:	EX15/2018
Relevant Officer:	Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services
Relevant Cabinet Member :	Councillor Kath Benson, Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning
Date of Meeting :	12 March 2018

SPECIAL SCHOOL PROVISION NEXT STEPS

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To approve the provision of a new social, emotional and mental health Free School in Blackpool and that the delivery is via the Local Authority self-delivery model.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 To agree the provision of a new 48 place social, emotional and mental health school on a Blackpool Council owned site on Langdale Road Blackpool which was previously the site of the Langdale Adult Training Centre.
- 2.2 To agree that the new school is delivered via the self-delivery model with the Council being responsible for the development of the new school, with funding being provided by the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

- 3.1 The Blackpool pupils who require access to the social, emotional and mental health specialist school have complex needs and require long-term intensive intervention before they can be integrated into main stream schools. The pupils who are referred to the new provision will have already accessed and exhausted current provision within Blackpool which will usually include short term intensive intervention either through specialist outreach services or the Pupil Referral Unit.

The pupils are currently transported for approximately 40 – 50 minutes each way per day and for children who display challenging behaviour these journeys can present safety concerns for both staff and young people. The 16 schools the pupils currently attend do cater for the diverse range of needs for the pupils, but do not provide links to the Blackpool community and as a result transition back into the Blackpool community when the placements are finished can be turbulent and are often

unsuccessful. However the desired outcome remains that all young people who attend Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 should be enabled to reintegrate back into mainstream education.

The new school is being funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency and the transfer of the land from the vacant/ underused portfolio to the Education portfolio will be funded by the Education Department based upon a valuation provided by the Council's Estates Department.

The new school will be able to provide specialist expertise and advice to current mainstream and Pupil Referral Unit provision in Blackpool, which would help to reduce the need for young people to attend specialist provision in the long-term.

The new school would be funded by reducing the number of commissioned places with the independent providers and significantly reduce transport costs.

Young people will be admitted from school year 5 to 11 and the ages will be between 10 and 16. There will however need to be a phased approach to admissions starting with a smaller number of pupils when the new school opens with the intention of being full within two years of opening.

The recommendation to deliver the project via the self-delivery model is being made as although the project will be fully funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency self-delivery will allow for the Council to have control over the quality of the build, nature of the facility and to promote the use of local labour within the construction process and increase the local area engagement. The new school will also help to provide job creation in Blackpool.

It is proposed to deliver the project through the Blackpool Local Education Partnership (LEP) and for the building project to be project managed by the Council's Education Property Team.

3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

To approve the development of the new school to be delivered directly by the Education and Skills Funding Agency. There would be the risk that the Council's influence in shaping the development of the new provision was minimised.

4.0 Council Priority:

4.1 The relevant Council priority is “Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience”.

5.0 Background Information

5.1 Blackpool has seen an increase in the number of young people needing Education, Health and Care plans/ statements over a relatively short period of time. In 2012, 513 young people had statements with this rising to 658 in 2016 and the projected number for 2020 is 825. The increases are in part due to Blackpool being a net importer of need and this increase is currently unsustainable and cannot be supported with the current funding allocations.

5.2 Currently within Blackpool there is no SEMH (social, emotional and mental health) specialist school provision and the majority of Blackpool pupils who need specialist provision are transported out of the borough to independent special schools at a considerable cost to the authority, annual cost approximately £23 - £50,000 per pupil. An expression of interest for a new free school was submitted to the Education Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA) and following the submission they have agreed to proceed to the next stage of the process, a feasibility survey and to enter into the appointment process of choosing a sponsor for the school.

5.3 Two approaches can be taken for the construction of the facility. One approach would be for the Education and Skills Funding Agency to directly deliver the school however, under recent amendments within the free schools programme there is also the other option which is for the Council to deliver the construction of the school under the ‘self-delivery’ model.

5.4 Approval is being sought for the Council to self-deliver the project, with the construction being delivered by the Local Education Partnership (LEP).

5.5 The new school would reduce a significant cost burden on the Council and see the number of commissioned places out of borough reduce. The provision would also reduce the cost of transporting the young people to the out of borough independent providers.

5.6 The Special Educational Needs provision for young people has reduced in Blackpool and this has resulted in the Pupil Referral Unit being oversubscribed with more independent specialist places increasing and the number of places in Blackpool special schools increasing. The new school would reduce the number of commissioned out of borough independent specialist placements whilst providing outreach services to mainstream schools to support young people with social,

emotional and mental health and communication difficulties.

5.7 A sponsor for the school is currently being evaluated and they will be a key stakeholder in the building project. This sponsor would be appointed by the Education and Skills Funding Agency and the Council has been involved in this evaluation.

5.8 Is the Corporate Delivery Unit aware of this report? Yes

The Corporate Delivery Unit has been consulted and has no issues to be raise.

5.9 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

5.10 List of Appendices:

None.

6.0 Legal considerations:

6.1 A licence would needed to be granted for feasibility works to be undertaken on the site and a contract will need to be entered into with the Local Education Partnership for the building project and to enter into the required legal documentation.

7.0 Human Resources considerations:

7.1 The proposal for the delivery of the development would be via the Blackpool Local Education Partnership with the Eric Wright group undertaking construction works on site. There will be a financial allowance made within the Education and Skills Funding Agency funding envelope for professional fees and project management. The Council resource to manage the project will include an Education Property and Development officer to lead the project with technical support from Property Services. There will be an element of legal support for the project and the cost and fees will be offset against the Education and Skills Funding Agency funding.

8.0 Equalities considerations:

8.1 None.

9.0 Financial considerations:

9.1 The scheme is being fully funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency via the Free Schools Programme. It is not anticipated that any additional resource will be required from other Council budgets for the delivery of the project.

9.2 Once fully operational, the school will be funded by the commissioning of 48 places at a fixed annual cost of £10,000 each, plus a lump sum of £150,000, and variable top-up funding for each pupil on the roll of the school (NB these are 2017/18 values and are subject to annual review). The level of top-up funding is determined by reference to the needs of each individual pupil, but it is estimated that this will be approximately £8,500 per year, meaning that the costs of each place is likely to be in the region of £22,000 each year. Given that the costs of placements in out-of-borough provision can exceed £50,000 per year, the creation of the in-borough provision will deliver significant cost savings.

9.3 The High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant, from which funding for specialist places comes, is currently overspending against the available income, and the establishment of the new special free school is part of the medium-term plan to manage the financial pressures.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 The Council would prefer to self-deliver the project as this would allow for more local input to the design and quality of the new facility. It is anticipated that the funding envelope will be sufficient for the delivery of the new school and that project costs will be contained within the budget.

10.2 The Council is currently in discussion with the Education and Skills Funding Agency over timescales for the delivery of the new facility however it is anticipated that the school will be open during 2020.

11.0 Ethical considerations:

11.1 None.

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 None.

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 Local Authority Commissioned Special Free Schools Submission

14.0 Key decision information:

14.1 Is this a key decision? Yes

14.2 If so, Forward Plan reference number: 12/2018

14.3 If a key decision, is the decision required in less than five days? No

14.4 If **yes**, please describe the reason for urgency:

15.0 Call-in information:

15.1 Are there any grounds for urgency, which would cause this decision to be exempt from the call-in process? No

15.2 If **yes**, please give reason:

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

16.0 Scrutiny Committee Chairman (where appropriate):

Date informed: 2 March 2018 Date approved:

17.0 Declarations of interest (if applicable):

17.1 None.

18.0 Executive decision:

18.1 The Executive agreed the recommendations as outlined above namely:

1. To agree the provision of a new 48 place social, emotional and mental health school on a Blackpool Council owned site on Langdale Road Blackpool which was previously the site of the Langdale Adult Training Centre.
2. To agree that the new school is delivered via the self-delivery model with the Council being responsible for the development of the new school, with funding being provided by the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

18.2 Date of Decision:

12 March 2018

19.0 Reason(s) for decision:

The Blackpool pupils who require access to the social, emotional and mental health specialist school have complex needs and require long-term intensive intervention before they can be integrated into main stream schools. The pupils who are referred to the new provision will have already accessed and exhausted current provision within Blackpool which will usually include short term intensive intervention either through specialist outreach services or the Pupil Referral Unit.

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The recommendation to deliver the project via the self-delivery model is being made as although the project will be fully funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency self-delivery will allow for the Council to have control over the quality of the build,

nature of the facility and to promote the use of local labour within the construction process and increase the local area engagement. The new school will also help to provide job creation in Blackpool.

It is proposed to deliver the project through the Blackpool Local Education Partnership (LEP) and for the building project to be project managed by the Council's Education Property Team.

19.1 Date Decision published:

13 March 2018

20.0 Executive Members in attendance:

20.1 Councillor Blackburn, in the Chair

Councillors Benson, Campbell, Cross, Jackson, Kirkland, Smith, I Taylor and Mrs Wright

21.0 Call-in:

21.1

22.0 Notes:

22.1