

CABINET

THURSDAY, 27 AUGUST 2020

PRESENT: Councillors David Cannon, David Coppinger, Samantha Rayner, Stuart Carroll (Vice-Chairman), David Hilton, Gerry Clark, Donna Stimson and Ross McWilliams

Also in attendance: Councillors Baldwin, Brar, Tisi, Price, Bhangra, Singh and Walters (Part II only)

Officers: Duncan Sharkey, Russell O'Keefe, Kevin McDaniel and Louisa Dean

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Johnson.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Part I minutes of the meeting held on 30 July 2020 were approved.

APPOINTMENTS

None

FORWARD PLAN

Cabinet considered the contents of the Forward Plan for the next four months and noted the changes made since last published, including:

- Transformation Strategy going to the Cabinet Transformation Sub-Committee on 22 September 2020.
- Place Recovery Strategy going to Cabinet on 24 September 2020.

CABINET MEMBERS' REPORTS

A) OUTCOME OF FEASIBILITY WORK ON POTENTIAL SCHOOL EXPANSIONS

Cabinet considered the report regarding the outcome of the feasibility study into the potential of future school expansions.

The Deputy Chairman of Cabinet, Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Health and Mental Health informed Cabinet that officers had assessed the feasibility of expanding all schools in the borough, in response to likely increases in demand arising from planned new housing. The report explained the school expansions feasibility programme and highlights some key overall findings. These studies would be used to underpin development of a strategic school expansion programme.

The Lead Member highlighted that this was a feasibility study of all schools and the possibility of expansion if required and not a programme of work. The finding of the report would be used to inform future decisions.

The Director of Children's Services informed that each feasibility study contained:

- An overview of the school site and buildings.
- A comparison of the site and buildings with national guidelines on school spaces.
- A summary of likely parking and access issues.
- one or more potential options for school expansions, and a comparison of the resulting site and buildings with the national guidelines.
- A brief summary of the condition of the school buildings.

This was part of a long term view of managing the school estate especially in light of the emerging Borough Local Plan. He also highlighted that the study had looked at the future possibility of the Windsor system moving from a three tier to a two tier system. Although the Royal Borough was not pushing for such a change, it had recognised that a number of schools in Windsor have been considering the future of the system given population growth and finances for small schools.

Across the borough, 45 schools had at least one highly feasible or feasible option for expansion. If the recommendations in the report were approved then all the studies would be published on the website.

The projected need for school places came from analysis of the birth rate and data from GP's . In September data would be available for projections over the next 3 to 4 years. It was expected that there would be an increased demand for places in Maidenhead Town Centre.

The Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead said that this was an excellent and important piece of work. The Borough Local Plan was due to be approved and if its implementation was to be successful then the right level of infrastructure was required and this included schools.

The Lead Member for Finance and Ascot informed that the report provided well thought out options to expand schools with feasibility studies for all schools. It was important for residents to see options were available. With regards to the 3 tier system in Windsor the paper provided options if there was a desire to change the system, although this would be subject to future consultation and reports.

The Lead Member reiterated that with regards to Windsor they were potential options and not decisions. If any future proposals were to come forward there would be subject to future consultation. It was always important to look at what was best for children's education looking at national guidelines and local context.

Cllr Baldwin asked how much were demand for private school places taken into account and did we communicate with them regarding their intentions. With regards to new housing he mentioned there was an increase in properties for those over 55 years old and one bedroom properties, he asked how this impacted on forecasts.

Cabinet were informed that with regards to independent school they had to make assumptions about their numbers and feed that into the model. The assumption was that their numbers remained stable. With regards to consultation with them it was usual for them to contact local education authorities for information. With regards to the use of properties there had been an increase in the number of one bedroom properties that also contained families. Property types and the age of children were fed into the model.

Cllr Tisi asked how schools being academies and free schools impacted upon the work and that in appendix A it mentions Oakfield and the feasibility of remodelling including a private nursery; she asked if there was still a private nursery on the site. In response Cabinet were

informed that the nursery was still private and not part of the plans. With regards to academies, the council had a statutory duty to make sure there were sufficient school places in a state funded school. As academies were still state funded they had to be concluded, however we needed the academy trust to agree to any expansion.

Cllr Price asked about the weightings for the feasibility studies and why they were chosen, for example why have costs and value for money as you would have expected a higher weighting on value for money. In response Cabinet were informed that DFE guidance and local circumstances following lessons learnt from the last expansion programme were used to set weightings. Although the main aim is to provide additional spaces we also looked at additional value a project may provide to enhance education as well as looking at future costs benefits such as less maintenance required in the future if additional improvements were made.

Cllr Brar mentioned schemes 58.59 and 60 on the chart and asked if this would convert an infant school into a primary school if land was available. In reply Cabinet were informed that as mentioned these are possible options and that if there was a need then we could look at converting the nursery into a primary school. These were not decisions but options.

Resolved unanimously: that Cabinet notes the report and:

- i) Places on record its thanks to all schools in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead for their help with the school expansion feasibility programme.**
- ii) Requests that the feasibility report for each school is published on the Royal Borough's website.**

B) NEW PROVISION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Cabinet considered the report regarding the outcome of 'informal' public consultation on options for new resource bases attached to schools at six sites in the Royal Borough for SEN provision.

The Deputy Chairman of Cabinet, Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Health and Mental Health informed Cabinet that consultation was carried out on proposals for sites at Dedworth Green First School/Dedworth Middle School; the Furze Platt Primary Federation; Hilltop First School; Homer First School; South Ascot Village Primary School and Wraysbury Primary School. Ascot Village Primary School was added into the consultation following a representation from the school received during the consultation period.

The report recommended in principle approval of four options, providing resourced base at four locations across the borough. It also recommended that formal consultation on those options should now proceed. Cabinet were informed that this was an important area dealing with vulnerable children that would make a difference to their education. Capital funding for any new buildings would come from the Department for Education's £1.227m Special Provision Capital Fund grant to the local authority.

When taking such decisions there were a couple of guiding principles that were always considered; equity of access based on demographic split and distribution and thus he was pleased to see Ascot being included. The second principle was to ensure speed of access as every day matters for this co-hort. It was also important to have participation in decisions.

The Director Children's Services informed that the paper covered a lot of the technicalities of moving forward such as a more formal consultation. The proposed basis would support those who had the academic ability to be supported at mainstream schools but currently had limited

options supporting their special needs. These resource basis would support 40 pupils. 94% of those who responded to the consultation were in favour of the bases. The feedback was from families with children, other families and staff of schools. Each specific proposal would need specific detailed consultation. Ongoing support costs for the bases would come from the High Needs Block within the DSG funding and it was expected that they would reduce pressure currently on the High Needs Block.

The Deputy Leader of the Council, Resident and Leisure Services, HR, IT, Legal, Performance Management and Windsor informed that this was an excellent report that would help vulnerable children. She asked that with regards to revenue costs would there be a reduction in transport costs and would the provision meet future need.

It was confirmed that the need would increase and these would help meet future demand. One of the observations made was the need within mainstream school grow and thus any new school would have to include a resource base. There would be savings when a child has to be sent to specialist provision outside the borough. There would be a small opportunity to make savings regards to transport but this would be small and was not the driving force.

The Lead Member for Finance and Ascot informed that this was a positive step improving provision for children with special education needs and improve their life chances. Its key that they would be able to continue their education in mainstream schools. He asked if specialist staff were already within the schools or if extra resource was required. In response Cabinet were informed that the additional resource going into the bases would allow them to recruit more staff, some will be existing staff that wish to be specialist in this area as well as an opportunity to create new jobs.

Cllr Price mentioned Hilltop First School that had not been recommended to take forward, that it had an outstanding Ofsted report, she asked was this due to costs. She was informed that we could run a base at the school however looking at the factors it did not score as high as Dedworth.

Cllr Tisi asked that if the Windsor system was changed would Hilltop and Homer be looked at again. She was informed that SEN needs were looked at each year and these schools could be used in the future.

Cllr Tisi also asked how many children were educated outside the borough that would use the new provision and how many spaces were there for future growth. Cabinet were informed that there were currently over 1000 children on plans and less ten half go to mainstream schools within the borough. Many would be settles in good provision and they would only be transitioned into the new provision if it was the right thing to do. Within two years it was expected that all 40 spaces would be full.

Resolved unanimously: that Cabinet notes the report and:

- iii) Approves, in principle, proposals to open new Resource Bases for children with social communication difficulties and related behaviours as follows:**

Phase 1

- **Resourced Provision at the Furze Platt Primary Federation, from September 2021.**
- **Resourced Provision at Dedworth Green First School/Dedworth Middle School, from September 2021.**

Phase 2

- **Resourced Provision or a SEN Unit at South Ascot Village Primary School, from September 2022.**
- **Resourced Provision at Wraysbury Primary School, from September 2022.**

- iv) Requests that, subject to approval from the school governing bodies and academy trusts, formal consultation is carried on Phase 1 in Autumn 2020, and on Phase 2 in Summer 2021. The Windsor Learning Partnership is requested to submit an initial Business Case to the Regional Schools Commissioner, seeking the necessary approval of a significant change to an academy.

- v) Delegates authority to determine the proposals following formal consultation to the Director of Children Services, in conjunction with the Lead Member for Adult Social Care, Children’s Services, Health and Mental Health, subject to:
 - no substantive new issues being raised during the formal consultation period;
 - each school agreeing and signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the local authority setting out the scope of the accommodation works.
 - each school agreeing and signing a draft service level agreement setting out the expectations of both the school and the local authority in relation to the running of the Resource Base.

- vi) Approves a budget estimate of £1.227m, and gives delegated authority to the Director of Children’s Services, in conjunction with the Lead Member for Adult Social Care, Children’s Services, Health and Mental Health, to undertake procurement and enter into contracts for the delivery of the new special educational needs detailed in this report.

- vii) Thanks the schools involved for their work on the Resource Bases, including Hilltop First School and Homer First School where proposals are not currently being taken forward.

- viii) Approves a policy stating that there should be a presumption in favour of all new school sites in the borough having a Resource Base.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public were excluded from the remainder of the meeting whilst discussion took place on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 3 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

CABINET MEMBERS' REPORTS

- A) NEW PROVISION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS PART II APPENDIX

Cabinet noted the Part II appendix.

The meeting, which began at 6.15 pm, finished at 7.35 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....