

REPORT TO: Schools Forum

DATE: 11th October 2023

REPORTING OFFICER: Operational Director – Education,
Inclusion and Provision

SUBJECT: SEND Capital Programme Updates

WARDS: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To update Schools' Forum on the progress of SEND capital programme linked to the 2022 SEND sufficiency strategy

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 2.1 The report is noted. Schools' Forum members are informed of the SEND capital position and planned increase for resource base provision during the academic year 2023-2024

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 SEND capital Programme:

Following notification from the Department for Education that Halton would be allocated £3.3M of capital funding (High Needs Provision Capital Allocation) to support the provision of new places or to expand existing provision for pupils and students with high needs, officers wrote to all schools to seek expressions of interest from them to offer new or additional SEND provision at their school, based against need identified within the local authority.

During Autumn term 2022, the SEND sufficiency Strategy 2022 was shared with schools outlining SEND provision available and gaps in provision within borough related to a range of designated needs. Schools were asked to submit Expressions of interest if they were able to provide any provision for the identified gaps based on our needs and sufficiency analysis.

On 20th April 2023 the Executive Board approved a statutory consultation process for five schools in Halton – four primary and one secondary, to offer new Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) provision alongside their current mainstream provision. The Board also agreed to the progression of capital works at two Halton primary schools who already offered specialist provision and were not subject to statutory consultation (Oakfield Primary School in Widnes, and Woodside Primary School in Runcorn).

The Board were also advised that officers were due to hold discussions with other schools in Halton with regard to the expansion of their existing SEND provision and would report back to the Board accordingly. Those discussions have taken place and Ashley School, Brookfields School, and Kingsway Academy, have also offered to expand their existing SEND provision to help meet need.

A summary of the responses to the public consultations for the five schools where the SEND provision would be new provision was also shared with Executive Board. The consultation ran between 10th May 2023 and 7th June 2023, and sought approval to proceed with the new provision at those schools, and to the expansion of existing provision at Ashley School, Brookfields School, and Kingsway Academy, using High Needs Provision Capital funding from the Department for Education to fund the capital works required at all schools. Responses from the consultation were positive.

During summer term, feasibility work was carried out across the schools whom submitted expressions of interest and work is planned across these provisions with some work already started.

3.2 Next Steps:

Over the course of the 2023-2024 academic year, schools with the new or expanding resource base provision will work closely with the SEND service ensuring consistent Service Level Agreements, support and funding arrangements are agreed. Schools will open their provision once building works are completed, staff trained and recruited and pupils will be allocated as appropriate according to need. Cluster networks, training and support from a range of teams will ensure that all schools with resource base provision will have the support system and network to share effective practice and further develop knowledge across the borough.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Capital Funding is allocated to these approved new resource base provision and the aforementioned expansions. Following completion of building works if further funding is available, then further opportunities to submit interest will be shared. The development of new resource based provision will have a positive impact on high needs Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) with a reduction over time of high cost specialist out of borough provision. Such provision will also reduce demands on home to school transport costs for eligible children and young people with SEND.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

5.1 Children & Young People in Halton

It is essential that children and young people's needs are met in a timely and effective manner, but also securing best value for all. Increasing

specialist provision within borough to meet the needs of our children and young people with SEND, will positively impact children being educated on their local community.

5.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

None.

5.3 A Healthy Halton

None.

5.4 A Safer Halton

None.

5.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

6.1 Expansion of provision within Halton will reduce long term financial risk .

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 The Local Authority must discharge its statutory responsibilities in relation to all schools and settings and children and young people with SEND.

8.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None identified.