

North Somerset Council Decision

**DECISION OF: DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES
WITH ADVICE FROM: S151 OFFICER
AND: HEAD OF STRATEGIC PROCUREMENT
AND: SERVICE LEADER – STRATEGIC PLANNING AND GOVERNANCE
DIRECTORATE: CHILDREN'S SERVICES**



Decision No: CY31 (2021/21 Scheme)

SUBJECT: RAVENSWOOD SPECIAL SCHOOL - BUDGET APPROVAL AND CONTRACT AWARD TO UNDERTAKE A SCHEME OF WORKS TO RECONFIGURE PART OF THE SCHOOL SITE TO MEET RECENT EXPANSION REQUIREMENTS

Key Decision: Yes

Reason:

Children from across North Somerset access Ravenswood Special School.

Background:

Ravenswood Special School (Ravenswood) is located in Nailsea and supports pupils across North Somerset with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) who have additional needs in relation to Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD); Speech, Language and Communication (SLC); Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD), Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD), Visual Impairment needs (VI) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH).

A 2-stage consultation took place between November 2020 and March 2021, seeking support to expand Ravenswood from a range of 112 -119 places to a range of 134 – 140 places to help to meet the increasing demand for pupil places for those with moderate learning difficulties. The Executive will be asked at their meeting on 28 April 2021 to approve this permanent expansion to take affect from 1 September 2021.

To support the expansion in pupil numbers, if the expansion is agreed by the Executive, Ravenswood will be allocated the part of the now vacant Voyage Learning Campus (VLC) site attached to their current school accommodation. This will enable additional reconfigured classrooms and supporting accommodation, reconfigured circulation and some new entrances to be available to meet the extra capacity requirements for the expanded school. Internal adjustments are needed to this area to support the physical teaching requirements for the Ravenswood pupils and to ensure that circulation across this part of the school site meets the needs of its pupils. In making changes, significant heating, lighting and capital maintenance upgrades will also be required.

To ensure that arrangements are in place to deliver the physical changes needed to the site for September 2021 (should the Executive approve Ravenswood's expansion), conditional approval is sought to appoint Mears Facilities Management to undertake this project in accordance with the previously awarded contract for Reactive and Planned Maintenance, Compliance Testing and Minor Works (CSD 97) and the procurement route agreed for minor works up to the value of £500,000.

Decision:

Subject to the Executive agreeing to the expansion of Ravenswood Special School at their meeting on 28 April 2021 to:

- increase the 2021/22 capital programme by £125,000 to be funded as stated,
 - allocate £21,158.68 of developer contribution XCE109
 - allocate £73,841.32 of the High Needs Provision Capital Allocations Grant 2021/22 to deliver extra places at Ravenswood Special School
 - vire £30,000 of the Capital Maintenance Allocation 2020/21 to cover upgrades to heating, lighting and the fabric of this part of the extended school site
- seek approval to utilise the existing contract for Reactive and Planned Maintenance, Compliance Testing and Minor Works and appoint Mears Facilities Management to carry out the required internal modifications and minor entrance extensions at Ravenswood Special School associated with the school's expansion

Reasons:

- To enable pupils with moderate learning difficulties who otherwise may need to be educated outside of the district to access special school places at this North Somerset school
- To utilise an existing contract for minor works, providing cost and time efficiencies, and to ensure the project is delivered by September 2021

Options Considered:

To not proceed with the capital changes to the site or the expansion proposals and continue to educate pupils at schools in and outside of North Somerset that may not be as appropriate when meeting a pupil's special educational needs.

To undertake a full procurement process for the scheme that would not be capable of delivery by September 2021, thereby delaying the expansion by a school year.

Financial Implications:

A budget of £125,000, funded by the High Needs Provision Capital Allocations Grant 2021/22, developer contribution funding and the Capital Maintenance Grant 2020/21 is made up as follows:

Costs:

Organisation	Works	Costs to date	Commitments	Committed Spend
CGA Architects	Architectural Design/ Principal Designer (CDM)		£3,500.00	£3,500.00
MH Construction Services Ltd	Quantity Surveying Services		£2,400.00	£2,400.00
Mears Group	Construction (Budget)		£104,350.00	£104,350.00
Surveys	Asbestos		£750.00	£750.00
NSC	Project Management/CYPS/Building Control Fees		£6,200.00	£6,200.00
	Contingency		£7,800.00	£7,800.00
	Sub-Total			
	Total		£125,000.00	£125,000.00

Funding:

The Council is to be allocated at least £500,000 from April 2021 of a High Needs Provision Capital Allocations Grant 2021/22. This project fulfils the requirements of this grant in securing new places for pupils with SEND.

A developer contribution of £21,158.68 (XCE109) is the remaining education contribution from the development 04/P/2670/F North Street, Nailsea's Unilateral Undertaking. The use of this education contribution is in accordance with this obligation.

Ravenswood Special School is a Local Authority School. The Council was allocated £542,630 of Capital Maintenance Grant in 2020/21 to upgrade its school buildings. The capital upgrades to the site can be delivered from this grant.

Legal Powers and Implications:

The contract for Reactive and Planned Maintenance, Compliance Testing and Minor Works was procured using a compliant process under the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and was advertised in the OJEU.

The Education Act (EA) 1996 Section 14A, added by Section 3 of Education and Inspections Act (EIA) 2006 requires Local authorities to consider and respond appropriately to parental representations about school provision in relation to local authorities' functions under Section 14 of the Education Act 1996. Local Authorities must reasonably consider parental representations regarding the provision of schools

and respond accordingly, including outlining any proposed action or, where it is considered action is not needed, to explain the reasons for this.

The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 sets out how Local Authorities should exercise their statutory duties to secure primary and secondary education to meet the needs of the population in their area. The Education and Inspection Act 2006 enhanced the role of Local Authorities, making them strategic commissioners of services with a mandate to promote high standards for all and greater choice and diversity.

The Education Act 2011 maintains the role of Local Authorities as the strategic commissioner of services but provides greater autonomy of education provision by the encouragement of the establishment of academies, free schools, studio schools and Enterprise Colleges that are independent of the Local Authority. The Act gives Local Authorities 'a critical new role as strengthened champions of choice, securing a wide range of education options for parents and families, ensuring there are sufficient high-quality school places, co-ordinating fair admissions, promoting social justice by supporting vulnerable children, and challenging schools which fail to improve.'

Climate Change and Environmental Implications:

The provision of extra local capacity should mitigate the need for pupils to be placed in schools outside the district that may be further away and require additional travelling to and from school. In addition, the re-use of parts of an existing vacant site will allow for the utilisation of an existing otherwise redundant asset.

Consultation:

The Council approved its Education Provision in North Somerset ~ A Commissioning Strategy 2018 – 2021 in September 2018. Support for providing local school places for all pupils is central to the principles set out in this agreed plan.

A statutory consultation took place between November 2020 and March 2021. From the initial stage 1 review there were 28 responses comprising of 3 from parents/carers (11%); 3 from teaching staff (11%); 2 from teaching assistant staff (7%); 2 from Governors (7%); 1 from a pupil (3%); 7 from members of the community (25%) and 10 others (36%). Of those who have responded, 25 (89%) were in support of the proposal and 3 (11%) have no view. In addition, 4 stakeholders participated in the virtual public engagement session. All were supportive of the scheme.

The CYPS Policy & Scrutiny Panel, at their meeting on 29 October 2020, supported the commencement of consultations to expand Ravenswood School. The CYPS Policy & Scrutiny Panel's School Organisation Steering Group received a further update about the proposals on 26 November 2020 and of the consultation responses on 19 January 2021. They continue to be fully supportive of the changes proposed.

A Public Notice was issued on 11 February 2021. Further comments were invited. By the closing date of 11 March 2021 four responses had been made, all in support of the changes proposed.

In summary, those responding recognised the importance of having additional specialist placements, although there was some concern raised about the need to have appropriate facilities and staff to meet the requirements of a larger school population. The changes proposed in this Decision Sheet support solutions to these concerns.

Risk Management:

If the Council is unable to provide extra places locally it may need to secure placements outside this district. Not having a local quality placement may result in additional placement and transport costs to non-local provisions.

Equality Implications:

Have you undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) ? Yes

Since undertaking the school expansion consultation, the EIA has been reviewed and has been changed as shown below:

Protected Characteristic Groups	Before Consultation	After Consultation
	Impact: High (H) Medium (M) Low (L) or None (N)	
Disabled people	H	H
People from different ethnic groups	N	N
Men and women	L	N
Lesbian, gay or bisexual People	N	N
People on a low income	M	N
People in certain age groups	M	H
People in particular faith groups	N	N
Transgender people	N	N
People who are married or in a civil partnership	N	N
Women who are pregnant or on maternity leave	N	N

There were two consultees who expressed concerns regarding the Public Sector Equality Duties. One notification was from a student within a protected group, but they gave no reasons for their concerns. The second was a parent/carer of a child in a protected group who expressed nervousness that expanding the school could be detrimental to those who benefitted from attending a small school. A smaller school can be beneficial for the needs of some students with anxieties that require special consideration to be given to them by having appropriate personal space. There were expressed concerns that this could be compromised.

Whilst it is accepted there will be more pupils able to attend Ravenswood if approval to expand the school is given, an assessment of the site has been undertaken. This Decision Sheet seeks budget and procurement approval to expand and reconfigure the current Ravenswood site to permanently deliver extra classrooms and supporting accommodation.

In terms of the EIA, it is felt that with appropriate mitigations undertaken by the school, who are experienced in caring for their pupils, the benefit of the school being able to accommodate additional pupils is greater than the risk of harm. There is no harm identified in relation to different genders and the risk to those on low incomes was reduced following consultation as no concerns were identified. The change remains positive for disabled people and the consultation has shown this is a positive change for SEND children aged 4 – 19.

Corporate Implications:

This use of funding supports the Council's key outcomes that are laid out in North Somerset's Corporate Plan in relation to:

- A Thriving and Sustainable Place – having local places will assist the Council to become a carbon neutral area by 2030
- A Council which Empowers and Cares about People – the project provides places for some of our most vulnerable pupils and allows them to access a local educational provision that will support them leading in the future as independent a life as they can. The school supports its pupils to fulfil their full potential
- An Open and Enabling Organisation – the reuse of part of a redundant site ensures the Council manages its resources wisely

Appendices:

None .

Background Papers:

Children & Young People Policy & Scrutiny Panel - <https://apps.n-somerset.gov.uk/Meetings/ByCommittee/11/2020/88>

Signatories:

Decision Maker(s):

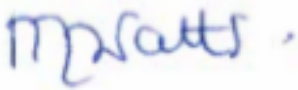


Signed:

Title: Director of Children's Services

Date: 27 April 2021

With Advice From:

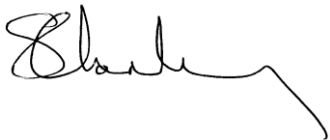


Signed:

Title: S151 Officer

Date: 22 April 2021

With Advice From:

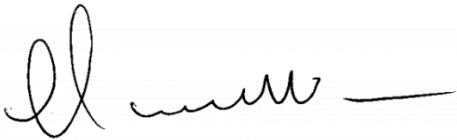


Signed:

Title: Service Leader – Strategic Planning and Governance

Date: 22 April 2021

With Advice From:



Signed:

Title: Head of Strategic Procurement

Date: 22 April 2021

Footnote: Details of changes made and agreed by the decision taker since publication of the proposed (pre-signed) decision notice, if applicable: