

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 20th April 2023

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director, Children's Services

PORTFOLIO: Children and Young People

SUBJECT: High Needs Provision Capital Allocation –
Proposed Expansion of Special Educational
Needs & Disability Provision – KEY
DECISION

WARD(S) Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 In March 2022 the Council received notification from the Department for Education that it would be allocated £3.3M in capital funding over a two year period to support the provision of new places and/or to expand existing provision for pupils and students with high needs. This report sets out the progress to date, and seeks the Board's approval for the proposals made, with regard to expanding the special educational needs and disability provision in Halton.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That

- 1) the report be noted;
- 2) the Board approves in principle the proposals for the additional Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provision, and the issuing of statutory notices for those schools where applicable – detailed in Appendix A,

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 In March 2022 the Council received notification from the Department for Education that it would be allocated £3.3M of capital funding (High Needs Provision Capital Allocation) over two years to support the provision of new places or to expand existing provision for pupils and students with high needs.

3.2 In the autumn term 2022, officers wrote to all schools to seek expressions of interest from them in offering new or additional SEND provision at their school, based against the required need as set out in the SEND Sufficiency Strategy 2022-25.

- 3.3 Nine Expressions of Interest from schools were received, seven were identified for progression to feasibility stage as detailed in Appendix A, as they met the need identified within the SEND Sufficiency Strategy. Based upon the 7 expressions of interest proposed to be taken forward, this will provide 97 additional SEND places within Halton at our existing mainstream schools, thereby supporting the Council's Inclusion Agenda. Officers have undertaken visits to those schools to establish their requirements in terms of capital investment with a view to progressing to feasibility stage with those proposals.
- 3.4 Some schools already have existing SEND provision and were offering to expand their current provision or offer additional new provision. For other schools the offer would be a completely new provision and would require the publication of a statutory notice in accordance with the Making Significant Changes ("Prescribed Alterations") to Maintained Schools 2023 guidance set against the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.
- 3.5 Through this additional offer of specialist educational provision and support, Halton resident pupils will have access to provision in-borough where previously they may have attended out of borough provision which is costly. In addition, with out of borough placements there is usually a requirement to provide assistance with transport, and through the provision of in borough offers, that requirement for assistance with transport will significantly decrease.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The proposed programme of works will ensure that the Council can continue to offer and expand its in-borough special educational needs provision wherever possible, helping to reduce expensive out-borough placement and transport costs, and meet need more locally within Halton.
- 4.2 The Council has a duty under the Department for Education's Special educational needs and disability code of practice 2015 to support high quality provision to meet the needs of children and young people with SEN, with a focus on inclusive practice and removing barriers to learning. Through the offer of more localised specialist provision, the local authority can further build on its existing provision and continue to demonstrate the fulfilment of its duties in accordance with the code.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 All projects proposed will be funded from the High Need Provision Capital Allocation Grant allocated to the Council by the Department for Education.

- 5.2 Should the initial overall value of the projects proposed exceed the amount of capital funding available, then the projects will be value engineered to be met within budget. This has already been discussed with those schools who have submitted an expression of interest.
- 5.3 By investing in additional SEND provision in-borough, either through expansion of existing provision, or through completely new provision at existing schools, the Council will reduce its High Needs expenditure, which is currently funded through the High Needs block of the Dedicated Schools Grant, a significant amount of which is currently spent on out of borough provision. It is important that preventative action is taken now to help reduce financial costs to the Council in the future, and by retaining Halton resident pupils at local provision, this will help drive down placement and travel costs for the Council longer term.
- 5.4 Circa £1.6M has been set aside for the first phase of capital works as proposed in Appendix A, but these costs are subject to feasibility studies and procurement processes and will be value engineered in agreement with schools to meet the capital funding available. It is intended that these projects will be phased in terms of opening based on the capital work required, with the intention that some could open in September 2023, then January 2024 and the remainder in September 2024.
- 5.5 Whilst the current estimated costs of the proposed works are circa £1.6M, further capital works to expand SEND provision within borough are continuing to be explored and discussed with Halton's schools. Projects to support the wider SEND need in Halton are also being discussed, and a further report will be submitted to the Board in this regard.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

The Capital Programme will support continuing demand for in-borough special educational needs provision, allowing Halton resident pupils to remain in-borough where possible.

The Strategy will also support the SEND strategic plan to increase sufficiency of inclusive, educational provision in borough. Expanding the in borough offer will also support children and young people with SEND to achieve their aspirations and achieve strong outcomes, fulfilling their potential.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

As above

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**
N/A

6.4 **A Safer Halton**
N/A

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**
N/A

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The demand for specialist support for children and young people with SEND is increasing, and places are currently limited within the borough. By expanding existing provision, and creating additional places, children can receive the support they need within the borough and help to reduce expenditure within the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

7.2 The Council has been allocated this funding from the Department for Education, as they also recognised a need for additional specialist places and provision in Halton, and through these proposed works, the Council demonstrates expenditure against need.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 The High Needs Provision Capital Allocation provides capital funding to deliver new places, supporting learning in both mainstream and special provision and allows Halton resident pupils to be educated in-borough where possible.

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Through the introduction of local provision, there will be a reduction in the number of children and young people needing out of borough provision, which in turn will help reduce fuel costs/emissions.

10.0 **REASON(S) FOR DECISION**

10.1 The Council is required to demonstrate appropriate identification of need against spend from the High Needs Capital Allocation Grant.

10.2 To deliver and implement the capital programmes.

11.0 **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

None.

12.0 **IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

It is intended that the first phase of additional provision could be offered from September 2023, the next phase from January 2024, and the remainder from September 2024.

13.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
High Needs Provision Allocation 2022-24 Department for Education	People Directorate	Catriona Gallimore
Special educational needs and disability code of practice 2015	People Directorate	Catriona Gallimore
