
A separate report is submitted in the private part of the agenda in respect of this item, as it contains details of financial information required to be kept private in accordance with Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. The grounds for privacy are that it contains information relating to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining the exemption under Schedule 12A outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Cabinet

15th May 2024

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Education and Skills – Councillor Dr K Sandhu

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Director of Partnerships and Performance

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title: Woodfield Relocation to Woodlands Site - Budget Increase

Is this a key decision?

Yes – The proposals within the report will affect all wards of the city and has financial implications in excess of £1m

Executive Summary:

Under Section 14 of the Education Act 1996, Coventry City Council has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places and fair, appropriate access to education for all. It is the Council's role to plan, commission and organise school places in a way that raises standards, manages supply and demand and creates a diverse infrastructure.

On 18th October 2021, Council approved in principle the refurbishing of the existing Woodlands School site to provide a new home for the existing Woodfield Primary and Secondary Schools which would facilitate the subsequent relocation of the Woodfield Schools to the Woodlands site. This report approved the award of contract subject to it being within the approved amount capital refurbishment budget. It was also noted in this report that where the cost of delivering the project exceeds the approved budget limit, a further report to address the shortfall gap will be presented to Cabinet and/or Council for approval prior to award of the contract to the successful building contractor.

Officers have continued to monitor the financial position and on receipt of further funding for SEND capital, the One Strategic Plan report presented to Cabinet on 10th January 2023 which allocated further resource to the project.

The Council has commenced a comprehensive tendering process to appoint the building contractor which has identified a shortfall gap for the main works. This report therefore provides an update and includes a request to approve additional resource to enable the award of contract for the main works.

The shortfall gap is due to inflation, complexities of the design and refurbishment of the listed building, additional costs incurred (e.g. for more invasive surveys), and the increased timescales associated with the complex planning requirements around the three sites (Woodfield Primary, Woodfield Secondary, and Woodlands). As a consequence, the cost of the capital refurbishment works has increased to the sum identified in the private element of this report, requiring additional resource in order to award the main construction contract. The total project cost is anticipated to be the sum set out in the private element of this report, of which includes the project contingency and additional project fees. This is funded by existing education funding and corporate receipts. A detailed breakdown of the costs is included within the finance section of the private element of this report.

The Council has received an additional High Needs Capital funding in March 2024. This funding will be allocated as part of the annual One Strategic Plan report.

It should also be noted that Woodfield Special School is currently in the process of academy conversion, with the conversion being dependent upon significant progress being made on this project. The academy conversion was the subject of a separate cabinet report in October 2021.

In accordance with the Constitution, Councillor N Akhtar, Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee, has been invited to attend this meeting of Cabinet for this item of business (both the public and the private reports) to agree the need for urgency such that call-in arrangements will not apply. The reason for urgency is that the tender process has taken place, and the costs are held until 24th May at which point the validity period has passed. If a decision is not made by this date the costs are subject to review and are likely to increase. The construction programme cannot be confirmed until the award of contract, this means the delivery of the new facility will be delayed, impacting the school pupils and could impact LA reputationally. The academy trust has set out the conversion cannot take place until the works contract is signed. This means any delays to appointing the contractor will impact the academisation process. The school is subject to an academy order and the DfE are applying pressure to both LA and Academy Trust to move this process forward.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to:

- 1) Approve a further sum as identified in the private element of this report for the delivery of the capital refurbishment works to enable the award of the main construction contract which will be financed from within existing Education capital resources.
- 2) Delegate authority to the Director of Finance and Resources, following consultation with the Director of Partnerships and Performance (or in his/her absence the Chief Executive), the Director of Law and Governance and the Cabinet Member for Education

and Skills, to undertake the necessary due diligence including approving any incidental and ancillary actions required to bring into legal effect the recommendation set out in Recommendation 1) above.

List of Appendices included:

None

Background papers:

None

Other useful documents:

Coventry One Strategic Plan and Education Capital Programme dated 10th January 2023
Coventry One Strategic Plan and Education Capital Programme dated 13th February 2024
SEND Proposal for Woodlands Site Cabinet and Council report 12th and 18th October 2021 respectively
One Strategic Plan 2023-2027

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report Title: Woodfield Relocation to Woodlands Site - Budget Increase

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1. Under Section 14 of the Education Act 1996, Coventry City Council has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places and fair, appropriate access to education. This includes securing a sufficiency of appropriate education places for children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN). It is the Council's role to plan, commission and organise school places in a way that raises standards, manages supply and demand, and creates a mixed economy of infrastructure. Woodfield Special School is the only specialist setting in the city which accommodates pupils with Social, Emotional, & Mental Health (SEMH) needs.
- 1.2. Cabinet approval on 10th January 2023, approved funding for the capital refurbishment works on the former Woodlands site. Following the commencement of a comprehensive tender process, the tender returns show that the contract price is in excess of the funding allocated within the overall budget for the project, necessitating an increase of the sum set out in the private element of this report to be made available to facilitate the award of main construction contract. Details of the reasons for the increase are outlined in Paragraph 4 below.
- 1.3. Value Engineering process has been undertaken to explore savings and obtain the most value within the timescales for delivery. Value Engineering to date has reduced the tender by approximately 2.4%.
- 1.4. Following an Ofsted inspection at Woodfield School in March 2020, which resulted in a grading of 'Inadequate', Woodfield School is required to academise. The Governing Body of Woodfield School has made a successful application to the Secretary of State for an Academy Order under the Academies Act 2010 ("the 2010 Act"). Following the West Midlands Headteacher Board in October 2020, it was agreed that Woodfield School will join the Sidney Stringer Multi-Academy Trust ("Sidney Stringer MAT") as a convertor academy and thereafter will cease to be maintained by the Local Authority. The academy conversion was the subject of a separate cabinet report in October 2021. Since the academy order was published, Woodfield school working with Sidney Stringer MAT has achieved a 'Good' Ofsted rating in November 2023.
- 1.5. The complexities of this project, and changes in timescale have meant that the school still remains maintained. The Council in conjunction with the Department for Education, Woodfield School and Sidney Stringer MAT are working towards the target completion date for this academisation, subject to leases being agreed and all other agreements in place.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

Option 1 - Approve the additional resources (Recommended)

- 2.1 An increase in resources is required to cover the shortfall gap within the main contractor's tender return and enable the Council to award the contract. This would also allow the project to proceed with minimal impact on the timescale set out in section 3 below.

- 2.2 School age Education, Health, and Care plans have increased from 2,091 to 3,150 within the last 5 years, and within this growth is an increased demand for SEMH places. Woodfield school is the specialist setting within the city that provides SEMH support.
- 2.3 Coventry City Council currently procure c.80 places outside of the city for children with SEMH needs. These are within other Local Authorities Schools (32) and the Independent Special Sector (49). The project will provide additional places to ensure we can place more children and young people with SEMH needs within Coventry. Although there may always be some children and young people placed out of city due to the complexity of their needs, a number will have been placed out of the city due to lack of places within city. On average a pupil with SEMH need placed in the independent sector costs £57k per academic year per pupil, with transport costs on top of this. The average cost per annum for a pupil in a Coventry Special and Alternative Provision Schools is £23k per annum per pupil in 2023/24. Based on the significant difference in cost between independent school places and those in a Coventry school, the development of this site could reduce future placement costs by up to the sum set out in the private element of this report per annum based on current price differences.
- 2.4 The project will transform and utilise a currently vacant education building with listed status ensuring we maximise and invest into our Education assets for the benefit of Children and Young People and the local community. The completion of this project will provide a future proofed fit for purpose educational environment, offering a full range of facilities including sport to learners, with the capacity to grow. The potential utilisation of the 'Woodlands site' enables the physical separation of phases specifically primary and secondary to ensure that pupils from either phase are able to benefit from age appropriate curriculum and resources. The site security and design will ensure that pupils will only be able to access their own internal and external learning environment.
- 2.5 The focus on the future development of the site has always ensured the community use is complementary to the education provision and to reduce any impact of the loss of community use. Investing in the school and site also supports the longevity of the sports provision on the site.

Option 2 - Do nothing (Not Recommended)

- 2.6 At the time of the original report in 2021 the option of Woodfield Special School remaining on its current sites was considered. Both buildings are rated as 'Satisfactory' in terms of building condition but, as noted by surveys, if they are to continue to be used, they would require investment to ensure they remain fit for purpose. The work identified that the ongoing capital works required, including potential for any future expansion, would require a substantial investment. It was concluded that the sites were unable to expand to meet additional capacity needs, and that the school could operate more efficiently and effectively on one site.
- 2.7 The Council will continue to incur maintenance costs at the Woodlands site, and due to its listed status, there is little opportunity to repurpose the site to be financially viable for other projects. There is currently a revenue budget for the site; although this is likely to be insufficient if additional security continues to be required due to damage, burglary and anti-social behaviour.

- 2.8 If the project was not going to progress, there would need to be consideration of costs associated with the Woodlands site and building. The condition report undertaken in 2017 highlighted the sum set out in the private element of this report as being required for upkeep and maintenance costs. Many of the buildings have remained vacant since this date and limited works have been undertaken as part of project to date.
- 2.9 Woodfield Special School is currently in the process of academy conversion with Sidney Stringer MAT, with the conversion being dependent upon this project progressing.

3. Timetable

3.1 The timescale is set out in the following table:

Dates	Task	Duration
6 November 2023	Start on site of demolition strip out contract works	complete
18 December 2023	Construction Works - Upload of ITT information	complete
January 2024	Disposal Works - Appoint Agent to market housing sites disposal	complete
10 January & 31 January 2024	Construction Works - Mid tender review meetings with tendering suppliers	complete
23 February 2024	Construction Works - ITT returns due and evaluation / negotiation	3 weeks
8 March 2024	Disposal Works - Bids returned for both sites. Review response / submissions for purchase of disposal sites	2-3 weeks
22 March 2024	Completion of Demolition Works	complete
15 th May 2024	Cabinet approval for project budget	
May 2024	Target date for Contractor appointment	
Summer 2024	Targeted Date for Contractors on Site	
May 2025	Completion of Phase 1 (Primary School Buildings)	
September 2025	Completion of Phase 2 (Secondary School Buildings)	
October 2025	Practical completion and handover to Woodfield school	

4. Financial Changes Rationale

- 4.1 Cabinet approved the capital refurbishment works to a value of the sum set out in the private element of this report in October 2021, with a further allocation added in 2023. The original report included within the recommendations the possibility of needing to return to Cabinet for further approval should the cost of delivering refurbishment works exceed the approved budget limit.
- 4.2 Since the original budget was agreed for the main contract there have been significant changes to the construction market. Costs for national construction work between May 2021 and now have increased based on the Building Cost Information Service Construction Data Tender Price Index. Further details are set out in the private element of this report.

- 4.3 This increase is also supported by the national benchmarking report (National School Delivery Cost Benchmarking – published by the Department for Education) that shows in 2017 the average capital cost per specialist pupil place was £65K. The most recent report is a cost of £97k per pupil showing an increase in cost of nearly 50%.
- 4.4 There has also been an increase in cost due to changes in the design. This is reflective of the complex nature of the project. In order to gain as much information as possible and de-risk the tender process the demolition and strip out works already undertaken have been used to inform the work programme for the remaining elements of building. This has highlighted areas within the existing structure that require additional strengthening and fire protection measures. Following further intrusive structural surveys in the existing listed structures, it has also been highlighted that there are further requirements in order to provide a compliant fire strategy in line with the new fire regulations for multi storey buildings. This has increased the cost by the sum set out in the private element of this report.
- 4.5 Other alterations to the design that have increased the cost include:
- Additional requirements to provide compliant drainage strategy to current flood regulations.
 - Additional safeguarding requirements including fencing.
 - Improvements to site wide services to meet new energy requirements.
 - Repairs/replacement of several roofs following asbestos and condition surveys.
 - Additional strengthening works to structure to support the new windows and internal services requirements.
- 4.6 The appointed cost consultants who are supporting this project have advised that the current tender prices are competitive in the current market.

5. Comments from the Director of Finance and Resources and the Director of Law and Governance

Financial implications

- 5.1. From the initial work undertaken to date it is anticipated that the budgetary requirement can be summarised as set out in the private element of this report.
- 5.2. The overall total project costs are anticipated to be in the sum set out in the private element of this report. Further information setting out the breakdown of costs are contained in the private element of this report. The total project cost is funded from within the education capital programme using existing approved education resources and corporate receipts.
- 5.3. The final recommendations for the submissions received in relation to the disposal sites are not yet completed although the budget previously approved includes an assumption that capital receipts from disposal of the sites will provide resource to fund the total project. The work undertaken in relation to this aspect of the project costs gives confidence that this receipt is achievable.
- 5.4. This will necessitate a reprioritisation of resources but will not impact upon any imminent or active projects. The One Strategic Plan annual report will provide an update on the allocation of capital resources, including the additional High Needs capital funding received in March 2024. This will take account of new projects required as a result of basic need demand.

- 5.5. The report has set out costs and risks associated with not progressing the project in relation to the existing Woodfield sites and buildings, and the future use of the Woodlands school site and building.

Legal Implications

- 5.6. The City Council has a statutory duty under Section 14 of the 1996 Education Act to provide sufficient school places. Failure to comply with these statutory requirements would leave us unable to expand school places as required and could result in a breach of statutory duty. The recommendations set out in this report seek to mitigate this from occurring.
- 5.7. In accordance with Section 77 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act the Council must obtain permission from DfE to dispose of the education sites (Hawthorn Lane, Stoneleigh Road, and partial disposal of the former Woodlands Academy). This consent is now in place. A condition of the disposal consent from DfE is that land receipts from the disposal site are ringfenced towards the delivery of the project.
- 5.8. The Cabinet's attention is drawn to the Public Sector Equality duty (PSED General Duty) under the Equality Act 2010, which requires public bodies to have regard, when making decisions, to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. The Cabinet is specifically referred to the Equalities Impact Statement at paragraphs 5.4 below, setting out the consideration that has been given to equalities issues which should be considered when approving the recommendations in this report.

6. Other implications

6.1 How will this contribute to the One Coventry Plan?

<https://www.coventry.gov.uk/strategies-plans-policies/one-coventry-plan>

This report supports the One Coventry Plan priorities by:

- Improving Educational Outcomes – Specialist dedicated places at a Special School reserved for pupils with SEND.
- Raising the Profile of Coventry - by providing additional school places in Good or Outstanding schools.
- Creating the Infrastructure – Aiding Schools to be self-sufficient.
- Rationalising our property portfolio – maximising the use of city council assets and enabling schools to reach their potential.
- Creating the infrastructure for the city to grow and thrive – by providing additional school places for Coventry residents.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

Monitoring is carried out through several different processes. This project will be monitored through a project management team and will be subject to careful scrutiny and regular assessment on progress towards identified milestones. Further monitoring will be carried out through progress reports to the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, Cabinet, and quarterly budgetary control monitoring.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

There are no specific impacts on the organisation.

6.4 Equalities / EIA

6.4.1 Children and young people with SEND can experience greater discrimination and may have fewer opportunities than children without SEND. The proposal aims to ensure that all Coventry children have access to education in accordance with their needs. Any revised accommodation changes and admission arrangements take into account the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 in the context of their possible impact on equal opportunities.

6.4.2 Public authority decision makers are under a duty to have due regard to 1) the need to eliminate discrimination, 2) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not 3) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not (public sector equality duty - s 149(1) Equality Act 2010). The applicable protected characteristics are disability, gender reassignment; race, religion or belief, sex; sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity.

6.4.3 Decision makers must be consciously thinking about these three aims as part of their decision-making process with rigour and with an open mind. The duty is to have “due regard”, not to achieve a result but to have due regard to the need to achieve these goals. Consideration being given to the potential adverse impacts and the measures needed to minimise any discriminatory effects.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment

6.5.1 The Department for Education’s Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy sets out a vision for the UK to be the world-leading education sector in sustainability and climate change by 2030. In England this will be achieved through both education and practical steps to transition to net zero, create more resilient infrastructure to adapt to a changing climate and create a better environment around education settings which includes enhancing biodiversity and improving air quality. By 2025, government requires all education settings to put in place Climate Action Plans.

6.5.2 All future build and refurbishment programmes will need to report impacts in terms of carbon emissions in relation to the targets for carbon reduction to be achieved and future cost benefit analysis will need to incorporate the environmental and socio-economic costs of the impacts of the carbon emissions from the developments on climate change.

6.5.3 Coventry has 117 schools (excluding private owned). Of these 117 schools, 52% are LEA schools and purchase energy from Coventry City Council and therefore, captured within scope 3 of Coventry City Council’s annual greenhouse gas emissions report. LEA schools account for 9% of Council emissions.

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

Planning for additional SEND places will require close partnership working with the Health, Social Care and Private/Voluntary Organisations and will enable multi-agency support and provision for children with SEND to be made.

Report authors:**Name and job title:**

Rachael Sugars, Head of Service Education

Chloe Webb, Education Capital Strategy and School Organisation Manager

Tel and email contact:

Tel: 024 7697 7278

Email: Rachael.Sugars@coventry.gov.uk

Enquiries should be directed to the above person.

Contributor/ Approver name	Title	Service Area	Date doc sent out	Date response received or approved
Rachael Sugars	Strategic Lead Education and SEND	Education and Skills	24/04/24	25/04/24
Michelle Salmon	Governance Services Officer	Law and Governance	24/04/24	29/04/24
Nicola Williams	Principal Project Manager, Project Delivery	Property Services and Development	24/04/24	24/04/24
Jeannette Essex	Head of SEND and Specialist Services	Education and Skills	24/04/24	30/04/24
Helen Williamson	Finance Manager	Finance and Resources	24/04/24	26/04/24
Ewan Dewar	Head of Finance	Finance and Resources	24/04/24	26/04/24
Lucy Hobbs	Head of Project Delivery	Property and Development	24/04/24	24/04/24
Oluremi Aremu	Head of Legal and Procurement Services	Law and Governance	24/04/24	29/04/24
Names of approvers for submission: (Officers and Members)				
Julie Newman	Director of Law and Governance	-	24/04/24	29/04/24
Richard Moon	Director of Property Services and Development	-	24/04/24	29/04/24
Barry Hastie	Director of Finance and Resources	-	24/04/24	01/05/24
Kirston Nelson	Director of Partnerships and Performance	-	24/04/24	26/04/24
Councillor Dr K Sandhu	Cabinet Member for Education and Skills	-	24/04/24	27/04/24

This report is published on the council's website: www.coventry.gov.uk/councilmeetings