

Report to Cabinet

17 March 2021

Subject:	The Meadows School (9-19) – Extension Works
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Joyce Underhill, Cabinet Member for Best Start in Life
Director:	Executive Director of Children’s Services – Lesley Hagger Director – Education, Skills and Employment – Chris Ward
Key Decision:	Yes (not included in the Forward Plan as the contract needs to be awarded by April in order to complete works for September 2021. The demand for additional SEN places was not confirmed until late February when all placements were finalised)
Contact Officer:	Martyn Roberts, School Place Planning and Capital Manager martyn_roberts@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That Cabinet approve the allocation of £850,000 from the council’s Special Education Needs and Disability capital grant to fund extension works to The Meadows School (9-19), Dudley Road East, Oldbury B69 3BU;
- 1.2 That subject to 1.1 and to planning committee approval, in accordance with the council’s Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules 2018-2019, the Director – Education, Skills and Employment be authorised to accept a tender and agree terms, in conjunction with the Acting Section 151 Officer and in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Best Start in Life, for the award of a contract for construction works at The Meadows School (9-19) Dudley Road East, Oldbury B69 3BU;



1.3 That subject to 1.1 and 1.2, the Director – Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer be authorised to enter into a contract on terms agreed by the Director – Education, Skills and Employment, as required, to complete the extension works at the school.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

2.1 The Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure a sufficient supply of school places. The Meadows School has now reached its optimum pupil capacity. Sourcing placements out of borough is costly, with a significant impact placed upon the High Needs Block. Such placements are not always the right solution for the child and their family. To ensure that the additional school places are ready for the start of the next academic year a start on site is required early May 2021.

2.2 The proposal is to procure construction works through the Construction West Midlands (CWM) framework. Works will entail construction of a small 3 classroom block to enable the admission of an additional 18 pupils. Cabinet will be aware that the council now directly manages the CWM procurement framework. It is recommended that the Local Authority uses the framework to secure a value for money contract to complete the works in readiness for an initial intake in September 2021.


2.3 It is requested the proposal is taken to 17 March 2021 Cabinet. The reasons for the late submission is as follows:

- Placement allocations for Key Stage 2 to 3 pupils were finalised in February;
- This revealed a need for more pupil places at KS3 in special schools with similar areas of expertise to The Meadows;
- As The Meadows would already be full this could mean more external Out Of Borough places would be required – costing more and increasing transport costs;
- The solution increases internal special needs capacity in line with our recent transport presentations and delivers it for the coming academic year;
- The Meadows site has space – we hold grant funding to deliver the project.



To enable construction to commence in early May 2021, award of a contract is required by mid-April.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>Best start in life for children and young people</p> <p>The recommendation in this report supports the desire of the council to focus resources on the specific needs and aspirations of the community. This contributes to the Council's Vision 2030 Ambition 1 – Raising aspirations and resilience, Ambition 3 – Young people to have skills for the future, Ambition 4 – Raising the quality of schools.</p>
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4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 Purpose of the Report

4.2 The proposed 3 classroom block is required from September 2021 to provide additional accommodation at the school to enable the Local Authority to sustain the provision of special school places in line with projected demand.

Council approval is therefore sought to delegate to the Director – Education, Skills and Employment, authority to accept a tender and agree terms for the completion of construction works for the new classroom accommodation at The Meadows School, following a compliant competitive tender exercise.

4.3 Background and main considerations

4.4 The Meadows School is a purpose-built community special school that currently admits up to 185 pupils. The school provides education for pupils deemed to have the following:

Complex, Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties and Autism
Profound and Multiple Difficulties and Autism
Profound / Severe Learning Difficulties and Autism
Severe Learning Difficulties with Physical and Sensory Disabilities



Severe Learning Difficulties

The school is one of five special schools within the Borough. As pressure grows to provide sufficient mainstream school places the Authority is now starting to experience an equal issue within the special school sector.

Pressure for special school places have to date been managed through the expansion of well-established Focus Provision Units attached to mainstream primary and secondary schools.

The scheduled opening of the new High Point Academy and The Elms School in Friar Park, Wednesbury will support the Authority's long-term strategy for special school provision, however there is an immediate need to increase the capacity at The Meadows School to meet existing need.

4.5 The current position

- 4.6 In September 2017 Cabinet resolved to increase capacity and extend the age range of The Meadows School. The age range was increased from 11-19, to 9 -19 years of age to ease the pressure on demand for special school places in the Borough and provide support for children approaching secondary age. The expansion followed a simultaneous expansion of the age range at The Westminster School to 7-19 years of age.

To ease pressure for school places at The Meadows School, recent minor works were undertaken to enable admission of an additional 20 pupils. The school building has now reached its optimum building capacity for school places with the need to expand accommodation to provide for an additional 18 pupils.

This report seeks Cabinet approval to grant to the Director - Education, Skills and Employment, in conjunction with the Acting Section 151 Officer, and in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Best Start in Life, authority to, accept a tender and agree terms, for the award of a contract for the completion of the proposed 3 classroom extension at the school, following completion of a competitive tender exercise.



Strategic Finance has confirmed that Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) capital grant in the amount of £850,000 is available to fund the works.

4.7 Consultation (Customers and other Stakeholders)

- 4.8 At the school level the senior management team has kept staff updated with options being considered to meet the increasing pressure for places at the school.

Officers within the Education, Skills and Employment Directorate have met with the Head Teacher and representatives of the Governing Board to discuss an outline brief that has informed the decision to provide a 3-classroom extension to the school to meet projected demand.

Subject to Cabinet approving the report recommendations, planning consent will be required for the proposed development when appropriate consultation will be undertaken with stakeholders.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 Taking 'no action' is not an option since the Authority would fail in its statutory duty as referenced in para. 2.1 above, and 6 below. The school is unable to sustain curriculum delivery with the shortfall in teaching accommodation for the number of pupils requiring school places from September.

The Orchard and The Westminster Schools have previously extended their respective age ranges to provide additional school places to assist the Authority's pupil place planning.

Site appraisals have determined there is only one location that can sustain a 3-classroom extension without placing further impact upon external curriculum and service areas and offers a value for money solution.



6 Implications

<p>Resources:</p>	<p>Financial implications: Strategic Finance have confirmed that there are sufficient resources within the SEND capital grant allocated by central government to fund the proposed scheme.</p> <p>The total cost of the project is estimated to be in the region of £850,000.</p> <p>Staffing implications: the school's delegated budget from the Local Authority will provide for increased staffing costs associated with the expansion of the school by 3 additional classrooms.</p> <p>Land implications: there are no land implications as the proposed development can be located within the existing school boundary.</p> <p>Building implications: re-modelling of the school accommodation has recently been undertaken to accommodate additional pupils. The need to provide for additional pupils at the school now requires an appropriate extension to the school's accommodation.</p>
<p>Legal and Governance:</p>	<p>In accordance with the Education Act 1996 the council has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient schools available for the children of Sandwell. Any school organisation changes arising out of the development of the project will be subject to the relevant statutory processes.</p> <p>The council shall ensure that any procurement of contracts necessary for this proposal are undertaken in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules.</p>



	The freehold interest in The Meadows School (9-19) is held by the Council.
Risk:	<p>The Corporate Risk Management Strategy (CRMS) has been complied with – to identify and assess the significant risks associated with this decision / project. This includes (but is not limited to) political, legislation, financial, environmental and reputation risks.</p> <p>Based on the information provided, it is the officers' opinion that for the significant risks that have been identified, arrangements are in place to manage and mitigate these effectively.</p> <p>If this report is not agreed, then the council will risk having an insufficient level of school places which is contrary to the council's statutory responsibility. If there is an insufficiency of school places this will have a detrimental impact on children's future access to school places within Sandwell and the council's reputation will be detrimentally affected.</p> <p>The council's strategic risk register currently includes an amber risk in respect of school place planning: SR040. The recommendations above if approved, will assist in the continued mitigation of this risk.</p> <p>An additional Project Risk Register has been prepared and will be managed during the lifetime of the project to ensure that time, cost and quality are continually monitored to mitigate any risk to the council. There are currently no significant risks identified.</p>
Equality:	An Equality Impact Assessment initial screening has been undertaken and a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required for this report.



<p>Health and Wellbeing:</p>	<p>This proposal supports the allocation of school places for pupils assessed as requiring an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) to support their educational needs and gives clarity to parents and carers about how their child’s assessments will be considered and fulfilled.</p> <p>There will be a positive impact for young people with special needs and disabilities as there will be increased capacity for the provision of places.</p> <p>As a special school there will be further design solutions replicated from the existing school building to ensure that all complex needs of pupils are met.</p>
<p>Social Value</p>	<p>In supporting the provision of sufficient special school places for children assessed with an EHCP the proposal will continue to prepare children to lead an independent life as possible, providing them with appropriate life skills to live independently, progress to Further Education, and / or secure employment opportunities upon leaving full-time education.</p>

7. Appendices

7.1 None

8. Background Papers

None.

