

**Report of Director of Children and Families**

**Report to Executive Board**

**Date: 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020**

**Subject: Business Case for rebuilding of the Vine**



Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s): Burmantofts and Richmond Hill, Kirkstall	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Has consultation been carried out?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary**

**1. Main issues**

The purpose of this report is to outline the proposal to create new purpose-built premises to re-house the “Vine” educational centre. The Vine provision is a commissioned service providing adult education for young people aged 19-25 with complex special educational needs who have an Education Health and Care Plan.

The Vine was moved into the Queenswood Education Centre in 2012 following the closure of the Blenheim building and the West Leeds Learning Centre. The Queenswood Education Centre has multiple occupants and whilst initial adaptations were made it was never intended to be a permanent relocation of the Vine.

The numbers of young people needing such a service as the Vine are growing within the city and expansion is needed.

The Queenswood Education centre is not well suited to the needs of learners with such complex special educational needs. Further remediation work to the current building could only be superficial and would not meet the needs of all the learners or allow for growth. It has been the intention to house the Vine in modern, purpose built accommodation since 2016.

A time-limited opportunity has arisen to create a purpose built facility on a spur of land on the same building site as a new secondary school development. The spur of land is owned by the council and has no commercial value but is sufficient for the building of accommodation suitable for the Vine.

The proposal seeks capital investment in a new purpose built accommodation for a 19-25 provision and is a balance of cost avoidance and potential savings.

## **2. Best Council Plan Implications**

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to meet the special educational needs of young people with an Education Health and Care Plan until the age of 25. Desirable local learning places is an efficient use of resources and reduces the risk of costly out of area placement with private providers.

This proposal would establish high quality specialist places within the city for some of our most vulnerable learners, actively contributing towards achievement of the Best Council Plan outcomes of; “Be safe and feel safe”; “Enjoy happy healthy active lives”; “Do well at all levels of learning and have the skills they need for life”.

The proposal would address the lack of sufficiency of educational places for learners aged 19-25 with complex special educational needs and meet the child friendly city aspirations of “Helping young people into adulthood to develop life skills and be ready for work” and “Improving social emotional and mental health and wellbeing”.

## **3. Resource Implications**

Capital investment in a new purpose built accommodation for a 19-25 provision is a balance of cost avoidance and potential savings. Appropriate accommodation will avoid substantial uncontrolled costs that contribute to increasing pressure on the High Needs Block. New accommodation will allow expansion of provision to a capacity of 60, creating 10 additional local learning places and potential savings through a reduction in future out of area placements.

Building works for a new secondary school have already been approved. Potential time limited, efficiency savings in build costs for the Vine provision have been identified on a slip of land on the same site. The slip of land is not otherwise commercially viable and is cost neutral. Once works on the school site are underway, it will become increasingly costly and disruptive to access the site and will reduce or eliminate identified savings.

This site has the potential to deliver accommodation for learners with complex special educational needs by late 2021 to early 2022 and access savings through reduction in out of area placements from the academic year 2022-2023.

Other sites, on commercially viable land, are available with potential to deliver accommodation available for occupation late 2022 to early 2023. This would defer savings until the following academic year 2023-2024 and increase the risk of uncontrolled costs in the interim.

Planning permission would need to be granted prior to the commencement of any construction works required. Once the feasibility stage is complete and, subject to the proposal gaining approval to proceed to detailed design stage, budgets would be realigned to reflect that all parties have agreed the final design and cost estimates, which would take account of site investigations and survey information, in accordance with standard project and risk management principles. The scheme would also be subject to relevant stakeholder consultation.

## **Recommendations**

Executive Board is asked to:

- a) Approve the proposal for new purpose built premises to house a commissioned service providing adult education for young people aged 19-25 with an Education Health and Care Plan.
- b) Note the current budget requirement to deliver the scheme of £10.8m, and approve the proposal to delegate the approval of future design and cost reports in relation to the project to the Director of Children & Families (and/or if appropriate, in consultation with School Places Programme Board).
- c) Note the responsible officer for implementation is the Head of Learning Inclusion.

## **1. Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the proposal to create new purpose-built premises to expand and re-house the “Vine” educational centre for young people with complex special educational needs aged 19-25.
- 1.2 This report contains details of a proposal to meet the LA’s legal duties to provide educational services for young people up to the age of 25 years with an education health and care plan under the Children and Families Act 2014.
- 1.3 The report identifies a unique opportunity to create this purpose built facility on a spur of land on the same building site as a current development for a new secondary school thereby saving costs.

## **2. Background information**

- 2.1 In 2016 the decision was taken to transfer the Vine service for young people with complex special educational needs from Leeds City Council to Leeds City College, changing the Local Authority’s relationship with the service from provider to commissioner.
- 2.2 As part of the 2016 decision to transfer, Leeds City College was granted a three year lease on the Vine accommodation in the Queenswood Education Centre. This lease was in place to allow a phased move from the current site into the purpose built Beeston Centre. However, due to the rising demand in the city for provision for learners with special educational needs and the increasing complexity of the needs

of the learners at the Queenswood centre the transfer did not proceed as originally intended.

- 2.3 Approximately 20% of the SILC population in Leeds require ongoing educational support and services when they leave special school provision at the age of 19. At the present time we are unable to meet all the complexity of needs within the city. The current lack of accommodation and poor quality of facilities for this cohort is contributing to increased out of area placement and increases in spend from the High Needs Block of the Designated School Grant.
- 2.4 Through ongoing sufficiency planning and as part of a new secondary school development, an opportunity for relocation of the Vine has been identified. A spur of land on the same building site, is available and suitable. The spur of land has no commercial value and is already owned by the council. This site provides a time-limited opportunity to create purpose-built accommodation to both improve the quality and increase the places available to meet the specific needs of 60 young people with the most complex needs.
- 2.5 Leeds City College are involved in the speculative design required for the cost estimate, provided by City Development, and are happy to deliver the service from the location. Leeds City College are confident that the accommodation described will support the curriculum offer they have developed, which was graded as outstanding in 2018 by Ofsted. The new premises promise to be an enriching and appropriate environment for the young people in the service and for future learners.

### **3. Main issues**

- 3.1 The Local Authority has a statutory duty to meet the special educational needs of young people with an Education Health and Care Plan until the age of 25. The Vine provision is a commissioned service run by Leeds City College, providing adult education for young people aged 19-25 with complex special educational needs who have an Education Health and Care Plan.
- 3.2 The Vine was moved into the Queenswood Education Centre in 2012 following the closure of the Blenheim building and the West Leeds Learning Centre. The Queenswood Education Centre has multiple occupants and whilst initial adaptations were made it was never intended to be a permanent relocation of the Vine.
- 3.3 The numbers of young people needing such a service as the Vine are growing within the city and expansion is needed.
- 3.4 The Queenswood Education centre is not well suited to the needs of learners with such complex special educational needs. Further remediation work to the current building could only be superficial and would not meet the needs of all the learners or allow for growth.
- 3.5 Our ambition to be child-friendly and inclusive is challenged by a lack of suitable accommodation within Leeds for our most vulnerable learners whose educational needs continue into adulthood up to the age of 25.
- 3.6 Out of area education for learners with complex needs placed with private providers are high cost and do not necessarily result in positive outcomes. The lack of quality

provision in Leeds for this cohort of learners limits the choice and control young people and their families have and can lead to separation of young people from their family and community with significant risk to long term, even life-long, residential out of area placement.

- 3.7 It has been the intention to house the Vine in modern, purpose built accommodation since 2016. An opportunity has now arisen to create a purpose built facility on a spur of land on the same building site as a new secondary school development. The spur of land owned by the council has no commercial value but is sufficient for the building of accommodation suitable for the Vine.
- 3.8 This site provides time-limited efficiency savings in build costs to create purpose-built accommodation to both improve the quality and increase the places available to meet the specific needs of 60 young people with the most complex needs. Once works on the school site are underway, it will become increasingly costly and disruptive to access the site and reduce or eliminate any identified savings.

#### **4. Corporate considerations**

##### **4.1 Consultation and engagement**

- 4.1.1 The process in respect of the proposal has been managed in accordance with the relevant legislation and with local good practice.
- 4.1.2 Consultation will be undertaken with Leeds City College, young people attending the Vine, parents with a child attending the Vine, parent support groups, local residents, ward members and other relevant stakeholders.

##### **4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration**

- 4.2.1 The EDCI screening form for the proposal is attached as an appendix to this report.

##### **4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan**

- 4.3.1 The Local Authority has a statutory duty to meet the special educational needs of young people with an Education Health and Care Plan until the age of 25. Desirable local learning places is an efficient use of resources and reduces the risk of costly out of area placement with private providers and supports the council value of spending money wisely.
- 4.3.2 This proposal would establish high quality specialist places within the city for some of our most vulnerable learners, actively contributing towards achievement of the Best Council Plan outcomes of; “be safe and feel safe”; “Enjoy happy healthy active lives”; “Do well at all levels of learning and have the skills they need for life”.
- 4.3.3 The proposal would address the lack of sufficiency of educational places for learners aged 19-25 with complex special educational needs and meet the child friendly city aspirations of “Helping young people into adulthood to develop life skills and be ready for work” and “Improving social emotional and mental health and wellbeing”.

4.3.4 This proposal contributes to the aspiration for Leeds City Council to be the best council and for Leeds to be the best city in which to grow up in. We want all children and young people in the city to have access to a wide range of opportunities, develop key life skills, and be supported on ambitious pathways to enable them to thrive supporting the council's ambition to produce a strong economy and a compassionate city.

#### 4.3.5 Climate Emergency

4.3.6 A modern, purpose built provision will enable more cost effective heating and lighting to be installed, and by increasing the number of places within the City will reduce travel to external places.

4.3.7 Any contractors for the proposed development will have demonstrated a robust Waste Management Plan, be registered with The Considerate Constructors Scheme, of which, the main consideration of the scheme falls into three categories: The general public, the workforce and the environment. Contractors will also be sympathetic to the Leeds Talent and Skills Plan by striving to employ local trades thus reducing the impact of extended travel. Resources, procurement and value for money

#### 4.4 **Resources, procurement and value for money**

4.4.1 The initial high level construction estimate is £10.8m for new purpose built accommodation for 60 learners aged 19-25 with Education Health and Care Plans. Out of area provision is costly. Current equivalent out of area placements average 50k per place per annum for a three day education placement. Individual placement costs may be higher.

4.4.2 Providing places in Leeds allows improved accessibility to local and desirable learning places and is an efficient use of resources.

4.4.3 Planning permission would need to be granted prior to the commencement of construction works required. Once the feasibility stage is complete and subject to the proposal gaining approval to proceed to detailed design stage, budgets would be realigned to reflect that all parties have agreed the final design and cost estimates, which would take account of site investigations and survey information, in accordance with standard project and risk management principles. The scheme would also be subject to relevant stakeholder consultation.

#### Sources of Funding

4.4.4 The annual cost of borrowing the £10.8m required to build will be £374k per annum over the life of the new accommodation.

4.4.5 Cost avoidance and any revenue savings should be realised from the reduced numbers of out of area independent placements. Leeds City College, as further education provider, receives funding from other sources for the pupils at the provision. The lease and rental fee previously agreed with Leeds City College was nominal, to facilitate the move to other Leeds City College premises. A new leasehold agreement, reflecting the improved accommodation in new build

premises, increased capacity and additional facilities is expected to offset the borrowing costs.

4.4.6 Any leasehold agreement will sit alongside a renegotiated specific service level agreement with Leeds City College in respect of the Vine.

4.4.7 The current accommodation only allows capacity for five adult social care placements on site. Adult Social Care colleges are interested in the potential expansion in provision of day placements.

#### **4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in**

4.5.1 We have legal duty under the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Education Act 2011 to meet the needs of all learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities up to the age of 20 and where there is an Education, Health and Care Plan up to the age of 25.

#### **4.6 Risk management**

4.6.1 This proposal has been developed to allow learning places to be delivered for late 2021 to early 2022. A decision not to proceed at this stage may expose the council to a risk of uncontrolled costs incurred providing suitable safe placements in private out of area provision, until appropriate accommodation is built or sourced.

4.6.2 Demand for specialist learning places is rising. There is also a corporate risk associated with failing to provide sufficient further education places for learners with an Education Health and Care Plan in good quality buildings that meet the needs of local communities.

### **5. Conclusions**

5.1 Our ambition is to be a compassionate city with a strong economy. As a vibrant and successful city we aspire to be inclusive and to support and protect our most vulnerable children and young people.

5.2 This proposal supports the local authority's statutory duty to meet the further education needs of young people aged 19-25 with complex special educational needs who have an Education Health and Care Plan.

5.3 The Vine accommodation situated at Queenswood Education Centre is not well suited to the needs of learners with such complex special educational needs and has been planned to be re-sited since 2016.

5.4 Further remediation work to the current building could only be superficial and would not meet the needs of all the learners or allow for the increase in places that are now needed.

5.5 The alternative to new premises for local provision is increasing private out of area provision. This not only limits the choice and control of young people with complex special educational needs and their families but can also lead to separation of young people from their family and community with significant risk to long term,

even life-long, residential out of area placement. This option is also financially costly and has not been shown to improve outcomes.

- 5.6 New, purpose built premises are required to ensure the authority is able to meet its legal obligation to provide specialist learning places for 2021 and beyond. There is rapidly rising need, and insufficient suitable provision.
- 5.7 Building works for a new secondary school have already been approved. Potential time limited, efficiency savings in build costs for re-siting and extending the Vine provision have been identified on a slip of land on the same site. The slip of land is not otherwise commercially viable and is cost neutral. Once works on the school site are underway, it will become increasingly costly and disruptive to access the site and will reduce or eliminate identified savings.
- 5.8 The proposal seeks capital investment in a new purpose built accommodation for a 19-25 provision and is a balance of cost avoidance and potential savings. The cost avoidance case for a new purpose built premises was agreed as sound by the Financial Planning Group on the 16th of November 2020. It is therefore recommended that the proposal be approved.

## **6. Recommendations**

- 6.1 Executive Board is asked to:
  - a) Approve the proposal for new purpose built premises to house a commissioned service providing adult education for young people aged 19-25 with an Education Health and Care Plan.
  - b) Note the current budget requirement to deliver the scheme of £10.8m, and approve the proposal to delegate the approval of future design and cost reports in relation to the project to the Director of Children & Families (and/or if appropriate, in consultation with School Places Programme Board).
  - c) Note the responsible officer for implementation is the Head of Learning Inclusion.

## **7. Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

- 7.1 None

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.