



EXECUTIVE 26th AUGUST 2021

Report Title	Proposal to fund a 'Connected Offer' or annex site to Isebrook SEND College at the 'Four Seasons' building, Kettering.
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Executive Member	Cllr Scott Edwards, Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills

Key Decision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Forward Plan Reference (if yes to Key Decision)	
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there public sector equality duty implications?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Applicable paragraph number for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1974	

List of Appendices

No appendices

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide Members with all the necessary information to make a fully informed decision on the proposal to fund an annex site or 'Connected Offer' provision to Isebrook SEND College, Kettering.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) has a statutory obligation of providing a sufficiency of school places across all phases of education and in all areas of North Northamptonshire;
- 2.2 The current and forecast demand for secondary SEND places within North Northamptonshire means that NNC is currently at risk of failing to meet this statutory obligation and that immediate action is required to provide additional SEND capacity;

- 2.3 This report presents a proposal for approval that will assist NNC in fulfilling this statutory obligation within the area, through the provision of an annex site or 'Connected Offer' to Isebrook SEND College, that will provide an additional 20 secondary SEND places from 21/22 onwards;
- 2.4 The report seeks to establish the reasons that this proposal has been made and provide the required evidence to support the reasons for recommendations made in section 3.2 of this report., This evidence will include; the demand for the new provision, the benefits the 'Connected Offer' will provide to students that will attend the provision and the financial benefits that will be realised by NNC as a result;
- 2.5 The provision of the 'Connected Offer' will cost £531,886 and it is proposed that NNC fund this proposal from available and uncommitted 'SEND Capital Grant' funding received from central government. This funding is ring-fenced specifically for the 'provision of new and improvement of existing SEND places'.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Executive:
- a) Note the proposal to establish an annex site or 'Connected Offer' provision to Isebrook SEND College at the 'Four Seasons' building, Kettering by the Creating Tomorrow Academy Trust (the Academy Trust that operates Isebrook SEND College)
 - b) Approve the required expenditure of £481,886 to allow for the progression of the proposed scheme and to note that this scheme will be funded via SEND Capital Grant funding received directly from central government;
 - c) To delegate authority to the Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills in consultation with the Executive Director of Children's ServicesE to complete all necessary documentation to ensure effective delivery of the scheme.
- 3.2 Reason for Recommendations:
- The recommended course of action is the most cost-effective manner of providing additional SEND places in the Kettering area of North Northants;
 - The Council and its customers will receive the maximum benefit from the option proposed. The proposal will provide a bespoke specialist education provision within the area that is not currently available, that is specifically designed to meet the individual needs of the cohort of students that will attend the new provision;
 - To proposal will assist the Council in fulfilling its statutory obligations of providing a sufficiency of SEND places by providing an additional 20 secondary SEND places in the area.

4. Report Background

- 4.1 As of September 2021, it is forecast that there will be a deficit of circa 25 primary and 135 secondary SEND places in North Northamptonshire as a whole. This deficit of places has been calculated by comparing demand with the total capacity provided by the SEND units (attached to mainstream schools) and the specialist provision (special schools) located in the area;

- 4.2 This is despite NNC's predecessor organisation, Northamptonshire County Council, providing the following new SEND capacity between 2015 and 2020 in the area in which now forms North Northamptonshire;
- 93 new primary places via extensions to existing SEND schools and SEND units;
 - 111 new secondary places via extensions to existing SEND schools and SEND units;
 - The establishment of a new 100 place 'all-through' SEND school;
- 4.3 A new secondary SEND free school is due to open in the East Northants area from September 2021, will provide 27 places in its first year of operation (and 100 new secondary SEND places in total once full). This new school will provide much needed new capacity within North Northamptonshire and will assist in mitigating against the forecast deficit of secondary SEND places from September 2021;
- 4.4 However, further new capacity will still be required to help mitigate against the forecast deficit of SEND places in North Northamptonshire both now and in the future. SEND pupil projection forecasts collated by NNC indicate that the total number of children and young people in receipt of an Education Health & Care (EHC) Plan is forecast to increase by 520 or 23% in the period 2021 – 2025;
- 4.5 The proposal to establish an annex site or 'Connected Offer' to Isebrook SEND College will provide an initial 10 new places for the 2021/22 academic year and a total of 20 places from the 2022/23 academic year onwards;
- 4.6 As well as providing much needed additional new capacity to assist in meeting demand in North Northamptonshire, the 'Connected Offer' will also meet the needs of a new and growing cohort of circa 20 students within the area. The students that the proposed new provision will cater for have a primary SEND need of 'Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH) and can be categorised as 'anxious school refusers' who are of average or above average ability;
- 4.7 This proposal is the result of a collaboration between Officers within the EHC team at NNC and the Creating Tomorrow Academy Trust. It has been specifically designed to provide both bespoke accommodation and a bespoke method of curriculum delivery that are tailored to meet the individual needs of the students that will attend it. The new provision is expected to significantly improve both the attainment levels achieved by this cohort of students and positively impact their future life chances as a result;
- 4.8 Should NNC be unable to place a child or young person in receipt of an EHC Plan within a SEND unit or specialist provision within its maintained or academy estate, NNC will be legally required to secure a place in an independent or out of county provision to ensure it continues to fulfil its statutory obligations in this respect. Places in independent or out of county provisions are significantly more costly than those in NNC's maintained and academy SEND estate, and the utilisation of these places represent a significant pressure to the High Needs Block (HNB) of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), which provides the revenue funding for all specialist places. This budget is under significant pressure at the current time and additional places are required within the maintained and academy estate to mitigate against this particular issue. It is forecast that the HNB of the DSG will overspend by £3m in the 2021/22 financial year;

- 4.9 Revenue funding from the HNB of the DSG in the amount of £320,000 (for the initial 10 students) has been agreed as the base funding for the proposed new 'Connected Offer'. Had these same 10 students been placed in independent or out of county provision it would have cost the HNB £762,000 in total to educate same 10 students in the 2021/22 academic year. This proposal can therefore be considered to represent a cost avoidance benefit to the HNB of the DSG £442,000 for the 2021/22 academic year. This cost avoidance benefit will increase in future academic years as the 'Connected Offer' grows in size;
- 4.10 The 'Four Seasons' building which will provide the site for the proposed 'Connected Offer' provision is a former Day Centre for elderly people owned by NNC, located in School Lane, Kettering. The building has already been leased to the Creating Tomorrow Academy Trust for delivery of the proposed new provision. The building needs significant refurbishment to make it suitable to accommodate an education provision for students with additional needs. Works required include;
- Refurbishment and redecoration of all internal areas;
 - Works to increase robustness of the structure to ensure suitability for cohort of students that will attend the provision i.e. window replacement;
 - Reconfiguration and redecoration of all toilet facilities;
 - Replacement of end of life Mechanical & Engineering elements of the building;
 - Refurbishment of existing Café/Kitchen area;
 - Works to provide a secure perimeter and access to the building;
- 4.11 The anticipated cost of these works is £531,886, however, £50,000 was previously committed to this scheme by Northamptonshire County Council and remains unspent, so this request for expenditure equates to £481,886 in new funding;
- 4.12 All works will be funded from SEND Capital Grant funding that was allocated to Northamptonshire County Council for the 2020/21 financial year. This funding was provided specifically to NNC's predecessor organisation for the provision of 'new or improved' SEND places and is ring-fenced for this purpose. NNC has more than sufficient SEND Capital Grant funding available to it for the delivery of this scheme;
- 4.13 It is estimated that the construction programme for the proposed works will take approximately 12 weeks once a contract has been awarded for the works.

5. Issues and Choices

- 5.1 This proposal relates to the fulfilment of NNC's statutory obligations in respect of the provision of a sufficiency of SEND places in North Northamptonshire. Taking no action would have represented a clear and immediate risk to these statutory obligations and resulted in an increased pressure of the HNB of the DSG as identified in section 4.9 of this report and was therefore not a viable option;
- 5.2 The provision of a stand-alone building at Isebrook SEND College was considered, however, this was discounted due to restrictions in the physical space on the school site and as a building located on an operational school site

would not meet the individual needs of this cohort of students. Further site searches were conducted in the town of Kettering but no other suitable site was identified as being suitable from either a physical or financial perspective;

- 5.3 The current proposal will realise the following benefits and can be considered to represent the best choice for the provision of new secondary SEND places in the Kettering area of North Northamptonshire at the present time;
- The proposed provision will provide 20 new secondary SEND places to assist NNC fulfil its statutory obligations;
 - The proposed provision will provide a bespoke new provision to meet the individual needs of a new and growing cohort of students in the area that is not currently available and is expected to increase the life chances of the students that attend the provision;
 - The proposal represents a cost avoidance benefit to the HNB of the DSG of £442,000 in its first year of operation, which can be expected to approximately double from its second year onwards. This cost avoidance benefit will repay the capital outlay for the scheme in 16 months.

6. Implications (including financial implications)

6.1 Resources and Financial

- 6.1.1 This scheme will require approval of £481,886 for its progression (in addition to the £50,000 that was approved by NNC's predecessor organisation for this purpose). As per section 4.12 of this report, the scheme will be 100% funded by SEND Capital Grant funding received from central government for this purpose;
- 6.1.2 The proposed new unit will require revenue funding for its operation from the 2021/22 academic year onwards from the HNB of the DSG. The proposal will receive £320,000 of revenue funding in its first year of operation which will double from the second year as the 'Connected Offer' will double its capacity. However, the proposal represents a substantial cost avoidance benefit as identified in section 4.9 of this report;
- 6.1.3 This construction works related to this scheme will be project managed by colleagues within NNC's Capital Projects Team and sufficient resource is available within the team for this purpose.

6.2 Legal

- 6.2.1 There are no legal implications arising from this proposal.

6.3 Risk

a) Risk(s) associated with the proposal

Risk	Mitigation	Residual Risk
Costs higher than available budget	All works to be procured through NNC procurement frameworks or with three quotes to be obtained to ensure best value is achieved. Sufficient SEND Capital Grant available for delivery of scheme.	Green
Covid-19 impacts upon delivery of schemes	Timeframes for delivery arranged in full accordance with the school and in full compliance with all government advice	Green

b) Risk(s) associated with not undertaking the proposal

Risk	Risk Rating
NNC fails to fulfil its statutory obligation of providing a sufficiency of secondary school SEND places.	Red
The cohort of students that will attend the proposed new provision do not attend a setting that is best placed to meet their individual needs and they do not realise their potential.	Red
NNC does not realise the cost avoidance benefits that the proposal would deliver and additional pressure on the HNB of the DSG is realised.	Red

6.4 Consultation

6.4.1 No statutory consultation process is required in relation to this proposal.

6.5 Consideration by Scrutiny

6.5.1 None.

6.6 Climate Impact

6.6.1 The refurbishment and replacement of end of life Mechanical & Engineering elements within the 'Four Seasons' building, in addition to the replacement of windows on site, will ensure that the building is far more energy efficient than it is at present;

6.6.2 The provision of an increased number of secondary SEND places within the Kettering area will ensure that students attending the new provision will not be required to travel to independent or out of county provisions located further from

their place of residence. This reduction in journey times can be considered to be a positive climate impact.

6.7 Community Impact

6.7.1 If approved, this proposal will create a bespoke educational provision designed to cater towards the individual needs of a new and growing cohort of students within North Northamptonshire and one that will benefit all future students that attend this provision. This proposal will have a positive impact upon the SEND community within the area.

7. Background Papers

7.1 None.