

CABINET MEETING – 9 FEBRUARY 2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I

Title of Report:

Proposal to Make Necessary Variations to the Council's Capital Programme Relating to New and Existing Education Proposals and to Procure Capital Works for Education Proposals Included within the Council's Capital Programme

Author(s):

Executive Director of Neighbourhoods

Purpose of Report:

To provide information relating to and seek a decision on the proposal to procure capital works for the refurbishment of the former Harraton Skills Centre/ Primary School;

To provide information relating to and to seek a decision on the proposal to procure capital works for the refurbishment of Barnes Junior School to replace the current dining block and refurbish the main building and to procure refurbishment works related to Fulwell Junior School; and

To provide information relating to and seek a decision to vary the Council's Capital Programme in relation to proposals to rebuild Hetton Primary School.

Description of Decision:

Cabinet is asked to:

- Authorise the Executive Director of the Neighbourhood Directorate to procure capital works to facilitate the refurbishment of the former Harraton Skills Centre, a replacement dining block at Barnes Junior School, and refurbishment to the teaching blocks at Barnes Junior School and Fulwell Junior School;
- Approve the funding arrangements for delivery of the proposed works at Harraton Skills Centre and approve the resultant variation to the Capital Programme; and
- Approve the funding arrangements associated with the development of a new Hetton Primary School and approve the resultant variation to the Capital Programme.

Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework?

Yes

If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework

Suggested reason(s) for Decision:

The proposals contained within this paper have been identified as necessary to ensure that the Council effectively meets its statutory duty to ensure that there are enough local school places to meet demand and provides buildings that are safe and suitable for delivery of education.

The development of the former Harraton School site will enable the Council to further increase the sufficiency of local specialist autism places. The refurbishment of the Harraton School is anticipated to result in a further 64 places for the city.

Barnes Junior School and Fulwell Junior School have both been identified as requiring capital investment. This includes replacement of the current dining block at Barnes Junior School and the delivery of a further £2.5m of condition works at each of the main school buildings at both Barnes Junior School and Fulwell Junior School.

Council previously approved a programme to replace the current Hetton Primary School buildings. It is proposed the scope of works associated with that scheme are expanded to include enhanced external facilities and internal works to facilitate any required future capacity increase at the school.

Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected:

- To retain current levels of local specialist autism provision. This will result in a long-term shortfall of local specialist school places and lead to a requirement for the Council to seek higher cost alternative placements;
- To retain current dining facilities at Barnes Junior School and not resolve capital issues at the main teaching blocks at Barnes Junior School and Fulwell Junior School. This results in the increased risk of potential school closures; and
- To retain the current scope of works at Hetton Primary School. Without the changes to the programme any costs associated with further expansion of places at the site are anticipated to cost circa £1.1m more. Changes also increase the opportunity to use the wider outdoor resources at the site at all points in the year.
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Impacts analysed;

Equality ☐ Privacy ☐ Sustainability ☒ Crime and Disorder ☐

Is the Decision consistent with the Council's co-operative values? Yes

Is this a "Key Decision" as defined in the Constitution? Yes

Is it included in the 28-day Notice of Decisions? Yes

PROPOSAL TO MAKE NECESSARY VARIATIONS TO THE COUNCIL'S CAPITAL PROGRAMME RELATING TO NEW AND EXISTING EDUCATION PROPOSALS AND TO PROCURE CAPITAL WORKS FOR EDUCATION PROPOSALS INCLUDED WITHIN THE COUNCIL'S CAPITAL PROGRAMME.

Report of the Executive Director of Neighbourhoods

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide information relating to and seek a decision on the proposal to procure capital works for the refurbishment of the former Harraton Skills Centre/ Primary School;
- 1.2 To provide information relating to and to seek a decision on the proposal to procure capital works for the refurbishment of Barnes Junior School to replace the current dining block and refurbish the main building and to procure refurbishment works related to Fulwell Junior School; and
- 1.3 To provide information relating to and seek a decision on the proposal to vary the Council's Capital Programme in relation to the proposal to rebuild Hetton Primary School.

2. Description of Decision

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to:
 - Authorise the Executive Director of the Neighbourhood Directorate to procure capital works to facilitate the refurbishment of the former Harraton Skills Centre, a replacement dining block at Barnes Junior School, and refurbishment to the teaching blocks at Barnes Junior School and Fulwell Junior School;
 - Approve the funding arrangements for delivery of the proposed works at Harraton Skills Centre and approve the resultant variation to the Capital Programme; and
 - Approve the funding arrangements associated with the development of a new Hetton Primary School and approve the resultant variation to the Capital Programme.

3. Introduction/Background

- 3.1 The Council holds the statutory duty to ensure that local school places meet the requirements of the city's population. This duty includes ensuring sufficiency of mainstream nursery, primary and secondary school places and school places for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN).
- 3.2 In 2016 the Council secured funding from the Department for Education to develop a new school for 96 children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The school, the Harry Watts Academy, is based in North Sunderland and is projected to open at the end of February 2021.

- 3.3 The Council created a temporary school at the former Harraton Skills Centre to accommodate the pupils identified for enrolment at the new school for the period September 2020 to February 2021. To date 40 pupils are accessing specialist school provision at the temporary school site. Prosper Learning Trust, sponsors of the Harry Watts Academy, has a three-year lease to deliver provision from the site.
- 3.4 The Harraton site has proved a popular setting and, with further modification, is considered a suitable setting for the long-term delivery of specialist autism provision. It is therefore proposed that the site is refurbished further and retained as a long-term delivery setting for specialist school places as a satellite site of the Harry Watts Academy in North Sunderland.

4. Harraton Skills Centre Proposal

- 4.1 The Council proposes that Prosper Learning Trust's current lease for Harraton Skills Centre, is extended and the school developed as a permanent ASD provision. The Harraton site will operate as a satellite provision of the main Harry Watts Academy site in North Sunderland
- 4.2 Separate approval for the grant of the extended long-term lease will be sought under delegated powers once the terms of the lease have been agreed.
- 4.3 The school has been identified as in need of further refurbishment to ensure its appropriateness for the cohort as a long-term setting and to increase the capacity of the school. Works will include conversion of former vocational space to traditional class bases to create six additional teaching areas, the development of studio facilities and refurbishment of electrical and mechanical facilities at the school site. Early cost estimates identified an overall capital requirement for works of £0.7m which will be funded from the Basic Need Capital allocation.
- 4.4 Works will commence in June 2021 and will be completed by December 2021 to facilitate September admissions.
- 4.5 The Council has projected that the main Harry Watts Academy will be at capacity by 2023. It is possible to increase the building size by a further four classrooms and this has to date been the projected ASD expansion strategy for the city. Based on current project cost estimates the cost to create a two-storey extension to the main Harry Watts buildings to increase the capacity by a further 32 places is estimated at a minimum of £1.4m.
- 4.6 During the delivery of the Harry Watts Academy building programme the Council sought approval from the DfE to vary the scheme to enable the proposed extension to be built as part of the main programme, with costs at that time estimated to be £0.7m if delivered as part of the main delivery scheme. The DfE were unable to accommodate this request.
- 4.6 Long term use of Harraton as an ASD provision as opposed to the expansion of Harry Watts would enable the Council to create a minimum of 64 new ASD places in the city at a cost of approximately £11,000 per place as opposed to the expansion of the Harry Watts building which would create 32 places at approximately £44,000 per place.

- 4.8 Should this proposal not proceed the Council will be required to secure suitable alternative places for pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) for whom a specialist school place has been identified as necessary. Places would be required from either an independent or out of area residential provision. The revenue costs are projected to be an estimated £25,000 - £30,000 more per pupil per year in comparison to costs for placements at the proposed Harraton site for each year they attend that alternative provision.
- 4.9 There will also be additional transport cost requirements. This will vary depending on the location of the pupils and the alternative provision commissioned.

5. Barnes Junior School

- 5.1 In March 2020 Council approved a proposal to replace the current dining block at Barnes Junior School with a new building. Capital costs are currently estimated to be £2.89m.
- 5.2 Cabinet will, elsewhere on today's agenda, consider an additional proposal to refurbish the main school block at Barnes Junior School as part of the 2021/2022 capital programme. This proposal seeks to resolve condition issues related to the building structure, window replacement, electrical and mechanical and general building issues. The overall scope of works has been estimated at £2.5m. Subject to approval of the capital programme by full Council in March 2021, it is proposed that Cabinet approves procurement of works for both the replacement dining block and the main teaching block at Barnes Junior School. Surveys and further investigative work are planned to commence in April 2021.

6.0 Fulwell Junior School

- 6.1 Cabinet will, elsewhere on today's agenda, consider an additional proposal to refurbish the main school block at Fulwell Junior School, as part of the 2021/2022 capital programme. This proposal seeks to resolve condition issues related to the building structure, roofing works, electrical and mechanical, amendment of food preparation and servery facilities and general building issues. The overall scope of works has been estimated at £2.5m. Subject to approval of the capital programme by full Council in March 2021, it is proposed that the Cabinet approves procurement of works at the main teaching block at Fulwell Junior School. Surveys and further investigative work are planned to commence in April 2021.

7.0 Hetton Primary School

- 7.1 Following further programme evaluation and discussions with the leadership of Hetton Primary School the Council proposes that the scope of works associated with the delivery of the new primary school is amended. Works are now proposed to include the development of additional external facilities (including the delivery of synthetic playing surfaces to enable year-round external activities) and internal works to enable the future expansion of capacity at the school should this be required in the future.
- 7.2 The estimated budget for the new school, including amendments, is £5.740m. This represents an increase of £0.887m from the £4.853m currently approved within the Capital Programme. Additional costs will be met through the Basic Need Capital budget. It is estimated that carrying out works during the build process will result in cost avoidance of £1.1m compared with delivering these works post 2023.

7. Reasons for the Decision

- 7.1 The proposals contained within this paper have been identified as necessary to ensure that the Council effectively meets its statutory duty to ensure that there are enough local school places to meet demand and provides buildings that are safe and suitable for delivery of education.
- 7.2 The development of the former Harraton site will enable the Council to further increase the sufficiency of local specialist autism places. The refurbishment of the Harraton School is anticipated to result in a further 64 places for the city.
- 7.3 Barnes Junior School and Fulwell Junior School have both been identified as requiring capital investment. This includes replacement of the current dining block at Barnes Junior School and the delivery of a further £2.5m of condition works at each of the main school buildings at both Barnes Junior School and Fulwell Junior School.
- 7.4 Council previously approved a programme to replace the current Hetton Primary School buildings. It is proposed the scope of works associated with that scheme are expanded to include enhanced external facilities and internal works to facilitate any required future capacity increase at the school.

6. Alternative Options

- 6.1 The following options are not recommended for the reasons given;
- To retain current levels of local specialist autism provision. This will result in a long-term shortfall of local specialist school places and lead to a requirement for the Council to seek higher cost alternative placements;
 - To retain current dining facilities at Barnes Junior School and not resolve capital issues at the main teaching blocks at Barnes Junior School and Fulwell Junior School. This results in the increased risk of potential school closures; and
 - To retain the current scope of works at Hetton Primary School. Without the changes to the programme any costs associated with further expansion of places at the site are anticipated to cost circa £1.1m more. Changes also increase the opportunity to use the wider outdoor resources at the site at all points in the year.

7. Impact Analysis

- 7.1 **Equalities** – As part of the statutory proposals to create the Harry Watts Academy , an equality impact was carried out to ensure that all decisions were undertaken in a fair, equitable and transparent manner, and would not affect those groups who have protected characteristics under the general equality duty. It is not considered that this proposal alters those outcomes
- 7.2 **Sustainability** – The proposals contained within this paper will contribute towards the sustainability of educational places for children with Education, Health and Care Plans across the city.

11. Other Relevant Considerations / Consultations

11.1 Financial implications

The proposed programme to refurbish Harraton Skills Centre (£0.7m) will be funded from the Basic Need Capital allocation, available for this purpose.

The costs associated with the development of a replacement dining block at Barnes Junior School (£2.89m) are included in the approved Capital Programme. Proposed programmes to refurbish the main teaching blocks at Barnes Junior School (2.5m) and Fulwell Junior School (£2.5m) are considered elsewhere on today's agenda.

The proposed variation to the programme costs associated with the new Hetton Primary School (£0.887m) will be funded from the Basic Need Capital allocation.

In accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules, the Cabinet may authorise variations to the Capital Programme provided such variations are within available resources and consistent with Council policy. It is proposed that Cabinet authorise the proposed variation.

Places at the Harraton site will be commissioned through the current SEN place commissioning process. Revenue costs for places will be met through the High Needs Block allocation.

11.2 Legal Implications

The procurement exercises will be carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's own Procurement Procedure Rules.

