

Cabinet – 23 October 2019

Alternative Accommodation for New Leaf Pupil Referral Unit- Stage 1 Feasibility Study Results

Portfolio: Councillor Towe, Education and Skills

Related portfolios: Councillor Andrew, Economy and Environment

Service: Children's Services

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 To improve the educational outcomes and life chances of our most vulnerable children and young people.

2. Summary

- 2.1 This reports seeks to provide Cabinet with an options appraisal and feasibility study across a portfolio of Council owned properties that, through investment, may be capable of delivering a property solution that meets the needs of the PRU, Walsall Pupil Referral Unit Stage 1 Options Appraisal Report (**Appendix A**), and the addendum to that report (**Appendix B**) and the standards set out in Government best practice.
- 2.2 This report therefore seeks approval to move to the next stage of design feasibility (RIBA 4) for a new build PRU located at the former Educational Support Centre, Field Road, Bloxwich and an adjacent property - the former Pinfold Centre, Field Close.
- 2.3 The basis of the proposal is to accommodate 80 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) places for pupils that have been excluded from mainstream education.
- 2.4 Proposals detailed in this report will have a positive and sustained impact on the objectives and priorities set out in the Council's Corporate Plan and the Council's longer term education capital strategy.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet note the contents of the following reports: Walsall Pupil Referral Unit Stage 1 Options Appraisal Report (**Appendix A**), and the addendum to that report (**Appendix B**).
- 3.2 That Cabinet agree that the preferred option for the relocation of the Walsall Pupil Referral Unit should be to the former Educational Support Centre and former Pinfold Centre, Bloxwich and agree to move to next stage of design and feasibility study for the proposal.

4. Report detail - know

What is Alternative Provision and why do we need it?

4.1 Statutory guidance for local authorities

- 4.1.1 The definition of *alternative provision* (AP) is as follows: education arranged by local authorities for pupils who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not otherwise receive suitable education; education arranged by schools for pupils on a fixed period exclusion; and pupils being directed by schools to off-site provision to improve their behaviour.

4.2 Key points

- 4.2.1 Local authorities are responsible for arranging suitable education for permanently excluded pupils, and for other pupils who – because of illness or other reasons – would not receive suitable education without such arrangements being made.
- 4.2.2 Statutory guidance sets out the Government's expectations of local authorities and maintained schools who commission alternative provision and PRUs.
- 4.2.3 This responsibility applies to all children of compulsory school age resident in the local authority area, whether or not they are on the roll of a school, and whatever type of school they attend. Full-time education for excluded pupils must begin no later than the sixth day of the exclusion. The Secretary of State has the power to make statutory guidance about these duties, and local authorities must have regard to it.
- 4.2.4 Any school that is established and maintained by a local authority to enable it to discharge the above duty is known as a PRU. There is no requirement on local authorities to have or to establish a PRU, and they may discharge their duties by other means. However, only a local authority can establish a PRU.
- 4.2.5 Each local authority has a duty under section 19 of the Education Act 1996 to provide suitable education for children of compulsory school age who cannot attend school. Placing pupils in PRUs is just one of the ways in which local authorities can ensure that they can comply with this duty.
- 4.2.6 There are currently over 421 PRUs in England. Between 2002 and 2003, 17,523 pupils attended PRUs at some point. Although PRUs do not have to provide a full

National_Curriculum, they should offer a basic curriculum which includes English, mathematics, the sciences, PSHE and ICT.

- 4.2.7 Although there is a wide variety of PRUs, they face similar barriers in providing children and young people with a good education. These may include inadequate accommodation, pupils of different ages with diverse needs arriving in an unplanned way, limited numbers of specialist staff to provide a broad curriculum and difficulties reintegrating pupils into mainstream schools.

4.3 New Leaf Pupil Referral Unit

- 4.3.1 New Leaf is the Council's PRU and currently caters for 159_pupils_on roll as at today's date. The number of pupils admitted to the school has risen from 84 in 2015 to 142 in 2018 to 159 in 2019. Students on roll include:

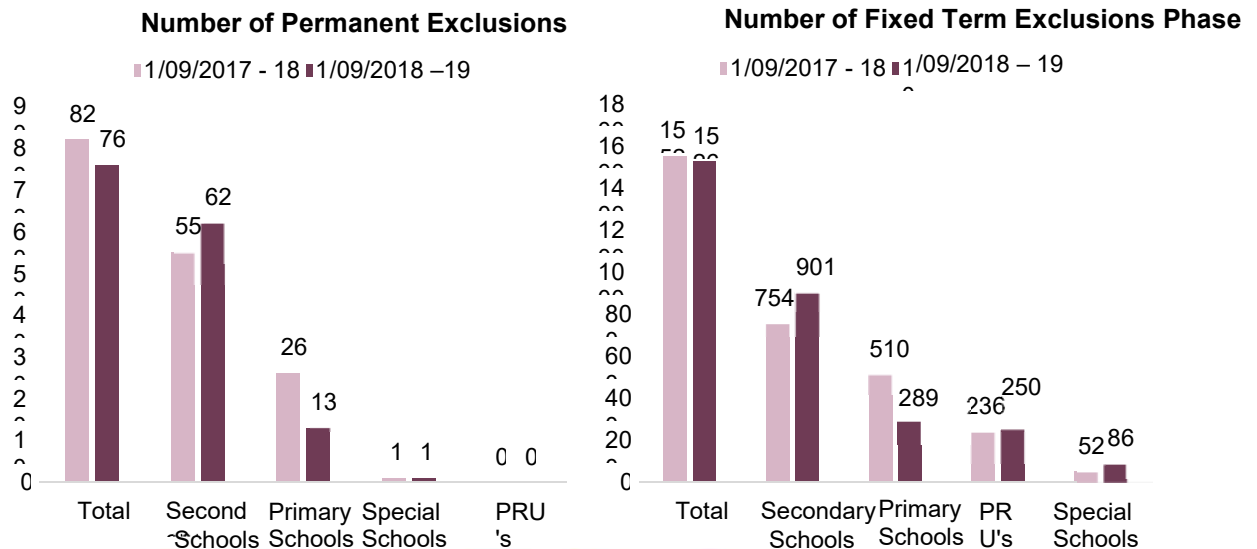
- 28 Primary places (KS1 -3 , KS2 – 25 with 4 x KS2 students undergoing a managed move);
- 131 Secondary places (KS3– 34, KS4 – 97);
- 5 students with an EHCP are awaiting named Specialist Provision and will then come off role.

4.4 Alternative Provision

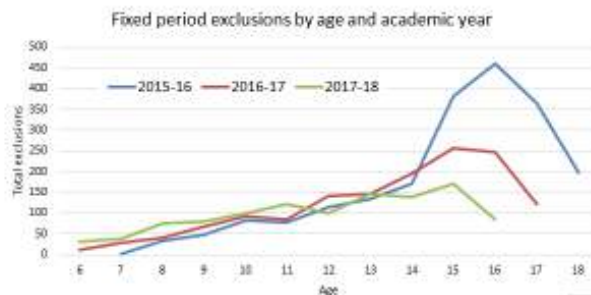
- 4.4.1 113 students access Alternative Provision through other providers via New Leaf- so are on roll but do not physically attend:

- 16 KS2/3 (9 as a full time provision and 7 part time as part of their full time timetable including attending New Leaf);
- 97 KS4 learners

- 4.4.2 A requirement for short stay support for these vulnerable children will be needed in Walsall, including a base for assessment and outreach support. Exclusions in Walsall are rising and have been for at least the past 3 years. There is also a rising trend of fixed term exclusions in the primary sector as pictured in the charts below:



School Exclusions – Fixed Period Exclusions by age



4.4.3 These have 3 year social

and we the last town to

There is a noticeable increase in the number of fixed term exclusions for those aged 11 and younger.

Age	Academic Year		
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
6		11	30
7	1	29	39
8	34	41	76
9	48	68	79
10	82	93	100
11	77	84	122
Total	242	326	446



4.5 Previous Premises Review

4.5.1 It has been an ambition of the Council to move the PRU for some time to ensure suitable provision for our children and young people, to enable them to achieve the best outcomes. In 2018, Children's Services commenced the most recent review of alternative property options having decided that investing in the current property at Pelsall Lane was non-viable.

4.5.2 Premises considered previously included:-

- Rowley Robbins nursery annexe, Pinfold Street, Darlaston – Arcadis were appointed to undertake an initial feasibility for a potential temporary relocation of the PRU and proposed a range of options that had a variety

of cost implications ranging from £600,000K to £6million. Rowley Robbins was eventually discounted because it was too small for 80 places;

- My Place – a former youth services building adjacent to Joseph Leckie Secondary Academy, Walstead Road West, South Walsall – this was considered not to be large enough, and other operational requirements have been identified that are better suited to this property;
- Former Alumwell Childrens Centre, Pleck Road- this is currently occupied by TLC service and the building is leased by the Council from a private landlord.

4.6 Ofsted findings and their expectations of the Council

- 4.6.1 The DfE completed an audit of PRU's nationally in 2007 and identified that: 'To provide an appropriate and well balanced curriculum, almost all the PRUs inspected had to overcome limitations in their accommodation'. Their recommendations were that local authorities should:

'Ensure that PRU accommodation is suitable and that improvements are made urgently where necessary'

- 4.6.2 On 18 & 19 April 2018, New Leaf was inspected by Ofsted, who found that the school was inadequate and cited the following:

- *'Accommodation is inadequate. The buildings are barely fit for purpose. The primary site is in very poor condition.'*
- *In order to improve, New Leaf needs to take urgent steps to ensure that all pupils are taught in a safe environment by: ensuring that all buildings are fit for purpose, adequately cleaned and well maintained.*
- *Safeguarding outcomes:*
 - *The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.*
 - *The accommodation in the school is not fit for purpose.*
 - *Facilities for pupils are poor.*
 - *The primary site is dirty and badly maintained.*
 - *Pupils are not always taught in a safe environment.*
 - *The accommodation on the primary site is poor.*
 - *Some rooms on the secondary site are very small.'*

- 4.6.3 Ofsted then carried out a monitoring visit at New Leaf on 19 June 2019 including to review the areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in April 2018 such as for taking urgent steps to ensure that all pupils are taught in a safe environment by: ensuring that all buildings are fit for purpose, adequately cleaned and maintained, where Ofsted stated:

"There remain severe limitations in the space available, particularly for working with pupils who need more intensive attention because of their behavioural or social and emotional difficulties. Moreover, the small space means that there is no capacity to teach key stage 4 pupils on site, which in turn limits the curriculum that is offered for them, as they are all taught at alternative provision."

The management committee remains well focused on the most important actions needed for the PRU to improve rapidly. The chair and members ask good questions both of leaders and of the LA, providing an appropriate level of challenge as well as support. Last term, they provided strong challenge about the slow progress in relocating the PRU to another site. The LA has since carried out a wider exercise than before to find out which sites may be suitable.

The LA has accelerated their processes to find new premises for the PRU. However, in the meantime, despite the improvements made by the staff themselves, a range of issues remain with the building. In particular, noise is not absorbed at all well, which causes distress to pupils with sensory issues. An audit from a specialist in this area within the LA, followed by appropriate action, would go some way towards mitigating the negative effects of the building on pupils' learning while a suitable building is found."

- 4.6.4 As New Leaf was graded Inadequate an Academy Order was put in place which specifies that New Leaf must become an Academy with a sponsor. In June 2019, the Regional Head Teachers Board, on behalf of the RSC, approved an Academy sponsor as the sponsor for the PRU with the caveat that the building would be addressed. The Academy sponsor have also stated they do not foresee conversion happening for at least 18 months to 2 years.

4.7 What do we need?

- 4.7.1 Due to the current trends, it has been identified that we need a maximum of 80 place PRU for KS1-4, provided either as a single building or as two units, being a 60 place PRU and a 20 place hub.
- 4.7.2 In interpreting the BB104 space requirements, we have treated all options as KS1-4 PRUs – including the 20 place hub.
- 4.7.3 Accordingly, the building and site requirements needed are detailed in Table 1 below:

Table 1 – Building and Site Requirements		
	Min floor area (sqm)	Min site area (sqm)
60 place KS1-4	1,920	10,160
20 place KS1-4	1,340	8,720
80 place KS1-4	2,210	10,880

4.8 Implications if we do not provide alternative accommodation and options

- 4.8.1 If the Council does not provide a new PRU, the quality of provision at New Leaf will continue to be Inadequate. Outcomes and life chances will decrease for our most vulnerable learners and the Council will also be unable to fulfil its statutory duty as described at the beginning of this paper.
- 4.8.2 In order to provide the Council with the ability to review all property options within its portfolio to accommodate a new PRU and establish a preferred option, including

to satisfy Ofsted's requirements, a RIBA Stage 1 Feasibility Study was commissioned and carried out by external consultants, Arcadis LLP, (pursuant to an existing contractual arrangement with Children's Services to provide a 'critical friend' to the Schools Expansion Programme). This is Walsall Pupil Referral Unit Stage 1 Options Appraisal Report (**Appendix A**). Arcadis undertook a strategic review of the approach to calculating need, options appraisal, procurement routes and general advisory services.

4.8.3 In April 2019, the Council reviewed its surplus to operational requirements property portfolio to identify buildings that may meet the space standards set out in Building Bulletin 104 Guidelines for education buildings for Alternative Provision and the desired 80-place KS1-4 PRU. Using space standards used in the earlier review of the Rowley Robbins Day Nursery, the Council prepared a shortlist of potential buildings to be included in the Stage 1 Options Appraisal, these being:

- Former Rowley Robbins Day Nursery, Pinfold Road;
- Essington Lodge, Essington Road;
- Former Allens Centre, Hilton Road;
- Former Education Support Centre, Field Road;
- Former Pinfold Centre, Field Close.

4.8.4 Also, during the preparation of the Study, the Council was asked to review and consider the Jane Lane School site by the prospective Academy Sponsor, The Academy sponsor, who alongside New Leaf is proposing to academise the Jane Lane School, so this was in addition to the shortlisted properties named above.

4.8.5 The Council's project brief to Arcadis and the methodology they applied is summarised as:

- To appraise existing asset data to inform the analysis and site appraisal;
- To remodel and/or extend the existing buildings to accommodate an 80 place PRU for KS1-4 provided either as a single building or as two units, being a 60 place PRU and a 20 place hub;
- To determine the maximum number of pupils the existing buildings could accommodate;
- To consider the suitability of accommodation and assess the condition of the chosen sites for young people in Alternative Provision of this type;
- To propose extensions where relevant to deliver a project of this size;
- To include teaching and ancillary spaces but also WC provision, provision appropriate for primary and secondary age children with a range of needs and with reference to BB104 guidelines;
- To include staff facilities and administration - number of staff on site (to be agreed);
- To consider the arrangements for car parking on site and drop-off of pupils;
- The proposed development is intended to provide a permanent AP provision for Walsall;
- To consider access to the site from the highway to the school, including safe routes to school and advise;
- Any proposed expansion to be BB104 compliant.

4.8.6 Alongside the project brief, Arcadis advised the Council as to why the space standards required by AP are greater than Mainstream Provision, and how this can have an increase on costs. AP accommodation requires more area per pupil place than mainstream schools because:

- Pupils are taught in smaller groups - for Primary PRUs this is averaging around 8 to 10 pupils per group;
- Staff to pupil ratios are higher, teaching assistants or support staff work alongside the teacher or give support in a separate space;
- Multi-agency meetings are common during the school day requiring confidential meeting rooms. These areas can also be used for the delivery of individual intervention and therapy sessions
- Pupils who are easily agitated often need more personal space around them;
- Pupils in special schools and AP need individual teaching, counselling and therapy, requiring a range of small spaces;
- Visiting professionals, such as speech and language therapists, need access to a desk space and storage in addition to the teaching areas.

4.8.7 Each property was reviewed based on the information available at the time and has been based on previous compliance testing / reporting, and informed by visual observations made during site visits.

4.8.8 Using the findings of Walsall Pupil Referral Unit Stage 1 Options Appraisal Report (**Appendix A**) there were 3 options that were identified as being worthy of further consideration as shown in Table 2 below. These options were then presented and discussed with the Council's Asset Strategy Group.

Table 2 – Stage 1 Options Review

Location	Stage 1 Est. Costs	Arcadis Conclusions	Wider Considerations
Former Education Support Centre	£4.06m	Current building is too small for 80 place PRU but could be reconfigured and new build extension to accommodate the 80 places. Conditional improvements are required. Outdoor space does not meet BB104 standards but a compromise may need to be considered, or off site provision identified.	Would limit any future expansion requirements for Blakenall School. There is also a shared access to a car park that is used by parents and visitors. This site has been declared surplus and any capital receipt is captured in the Smarter Workplaces Budget. The site is easily accessible by public transport (bus and rail) and close to Bloxwich District Centre, and has a relatively central location in the Borough. The site is approximately 3 miles from the current New Leaf Centre.
Former Education Support Centre and Former Pinfold Centre	Not requested by the Stage 1 Study	Alone Pinfold Centre is too small for an 80 place PRU but combined with Education Support Centre both sites may allow new build and refurbishment of buildings to accommodate the 80 place PRU and meet the outdoor space requirements. Costs would need to be prepared for this option. Noting that splitting the PRU accommodation needs across two separate sites should be avoided as this results in a 50% uplift in space requirements as the BB104 guidelines apply to both sites. There are also operational costs of running two sites even though the sites are located next to one another.	As above plus; The Pinfold site has been declared surplus to the Council's requirements. Receipts from the sale of this site have been built into the financial model for the acquisition and refurbishment 139-144 Lichfield Street (the Quest Building) so a decision not to sell would leave a shortfall in this project budget.
Former Allens Centre	£6.06m	Site area is greater than that required by BB104 so can accommodate the 80 Place PRU and utilise the onsite open space for outdoor activity (see note in right hand column). Further design work may determine that part of the site could be retained by the Council for alternative uses.	This site has been declared surplus and a capital receipt is assumed in 2019/20, any decision to accommodate the PRU on this site would leave a gap in the capital income target. The vacant site is of interest to local Members who are concerned with perceived and actual ASB. The land around the footprint of the building is designated open space so a decision to enclose the land which need to ensure off site provision is provided for public use. If a balance of the site is made available for other uses, the appropriateness of alternative uses i.e. residential immediately adjacent to the school will need to be considered. The site located in the far north west of the Borough in a residential area served by local bus services and approximately 3 miles from Willenhall and Bloxwich District Centres. The site is approximately 4.5miles from the current New Leaf Centre.

- 4.8.9 Asset Strategy Group requested that Arcadias be instructed to produce an addendum to the Walsall Pupil Referral Unit Stage 1 Options Appraisal Report (**Appendix A**) in order to consider in further detail options to refurbishment and partially redevelop via a new build solution of the former Education Support Centre and former Pinfold sites, and to consider a wholly new build option for the sites.
- 4.8.10 The addendum to the Stage 1 report (**Appendix B**) summarises that both options are feasible and both options provide the same site area of 8,705m² which falls short of the 10,880m² required by BB104. However, with a building footprint approximately half the size of the refurbishment option, the new build solution will provide circa 800m² more external play / recreation space to the ESC part of the site.
- 4.8.11 The new build (option 1) assumes unrestricted access during construction by forming a temporary vehicular access from Field Road. This would also maintain better access to Blakenall Primary during the works.
- 4.8.12 In terms of maintenance / operational costs the new build option would also be the preference.
- 4.8.13 The new build option was the preferred option of Asset Strategy Group and it was resolved to make a recommendation to Council that the preferred option for the Walsall PRU is a new build and to seek agreement to move to full feasibility study for this option.

5. Council Corporate Plan priorities

- 5.1 **CH1:** Children will be ready for school.
- 5.2 **CH2:** The gaps in educational attainment between the least and most deprived communities will be narrowed for all under achieving groups.

6. Risk management

- 6.1 An increase in exclusions in Walsall means that school children may not be able to access a school place and will need short term placements in New Leaf PRU.
- 6.2 The Council is aware that the prospective Sponsor of New Leaf, The Academy sponsor, (and Jane Lane School) will seek an Academy transfer within the forthcoming years which will require the Council to enter into a long-term academy lease on terms which are not known at the point of writing this report. Using experience from elsewhere for new build schools like that being proposed for New Leaf would see a transfer of land/ property for 125 years.
- 6.3 It must be noted that the work to date is only a Stage 1 Feasibility Report and more work is needed before full costs and timescales can be confirmed and managed, with wider risks identified and mitigated. The next stage design and feasibility that is being requested will identify all key risks, in detail, for consideration before final decision will be sought to build.
- 6.4 There are a number of risks involved in relation to unknown costs regarding existing expansions, future SEND school places and the condition of the current school estate. Should further statutory expansions be identified before 2021/22 or

costs for committed school expansions increase, the Council will have limited uncommitted Basic Need funding remaining to utilise subject to future DfE allocations. Therefore, other funding options would need to be identified.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 Walsall Pupil Referral Unit Stage 1 Options Appraisal Report (**Appendix A**), and the addendum to that report (**Appendix B**) detail an estimated cost of £6.862m for Option 1 (new build) and £4.744m for Option 2 (Refurbishment) to relocate the PRU from New Leaf.
- 7.2 Usual custom and practice is to ring-fence 20% of the total cost of the scheme for contingency, which is held centrally and only accessed when needed. However, the costs provided from Arcadis already contain 15% contingency for risk. Therefore, it is recommended by Finance services to increase the costs by the additional 5% to ensure sufficient contingency is held. Table 3 below shows the revised costs.

Table 3 – Revised Costs Including 20% Contingency			
Option	Est. Cost Exc. 15% Contingency £m	Est. Cost Inc. 15% Contingency £m	Contingency 20% £m
1	5.965	6.862	7.158
2	4.122	4.744	4.946

- 7.3 If costs do not exceed the current estimate, the contingency funding would remain uncommitted at the end of the project. This will then be carried forward into future years for further projects.
- 7.4 There are currently a number of funding streams identified to contribute towards this proposal including pre-agreed DSG of £0.454m, Section 106 of £0.122m and uncommitted Basic Need of £9.781m as detailed in Table 4 below.

Table 4 – Suggested Funding Streams						
	Option 1 (Demo / New Build)			Option 2 (Refurbishment / Demo / New Build)		
Funding Stream	Budget Available £m	Budget to be used £m	Budget Remaining £m	Budget Available £m	Budget to be used £m	Budget Remaining £m
Pre-agreed DSG Allocation	0.454	0.454	0.000	0.454	0.454	0.000
Section 106	0.122	0.122	0.000	0.122	0.122	0.000
Basic Need	9.781	6.582	3.199	9.781	4.370	5.411
Total	10.357	7.158	3.199	10.357	4.946	5.411

Further details about each funding stream is provided below:

7.5 Pre-agreed DSG Allocation

- 7.5.1 Schools Forum approved for up to £0.500m of one off DSG surplus to be ring fenced for the relocation and/or improvement of the PRU in December 2014. Of this, £0.454m remains uncommitted as at September 2019.

7.6 Section 106 Funding

- 7.6.1 The Council is in receipt of Section 106 funding arising from developments within the Borough. Section 106 contributions are agreed when it is considered that a development will have a significant impact on the local area and are agreed as part of a planning application for a development, for example putting pressure on local education facilities.
- 7.6.2 There is a current balance of £0.231m Section 106 funding held by the council for education purposes currently uncommitted. Each Section 106 grant has restrictions on how the funds can be spent. As a result, of the total Section 106 funding available, only £0.122m is eligible to be spent on the relocation of the PRU.

7.7 Uncommitted Basic Need Grant

- 7.7.1 Basic Need allocations are paid to local authorities to support the capital requirement for providing new pupil places by expanding existing maintained schools, free schools or academies, and by establishing new schools. This is a section 31 grant, meaning it is un-ring fenced and not time-bound, so that local authorities can make the best decisions for their local area. There is currently an uncommitted Basic Need balance of £9.781m.
- 7.7.2 Taking this in the context of New Leaf, Ofsted have highlighted existing places are not suitable and do not meet the needs of the children. Therefore, we need to look to create new places to ensure provision can be provided to the standard required.
- 7.7.3 The DfE Basic Need guidance suggests that funding is intended for new or additional school places. As such, the assumption is that Basic Need Grant can be utilised towards the costs of this project.
- 7.7.4 Local Authorities are required to verify this funding has been spent on capital projects through the section 151 officer's return, as well as providing spend data through their annual School Capacity Survey return.
- 7.7.5 It should be noted that the Council is currently under scrutiny from the DfE regarding value for money achieved from previous school expansions. The authority is currently working with the Education and Skills Funding Agency and external partners to identify where improvements can be made so that greater efficiencies and improved value for money can be achieved.
- 7.7.6 There is no current benchmarking cost per pupil place suggested for PRU provision of which to compare estimated costs against. There is however a benchmarking cost for Special Schools, detailed by the Educational Building and Development Officers Group (EBDOG) in their national school delivery benchmarking report, which is deemed an appropriate comparator due to the additional works required for this type of education setting. The benchmark is set

at £65,433 per place. Based on current cost estimates provided, following the Stage 1 Options Appraisal report (Appendix 1) and the addendum to that report (Appendix 2), the average cost per place (excluding contingency) for each option is detailed in Table 5 below.

Table 5 – Benchmarking Comparisons			
Option	Cost per pupil place £	Benchmark cost per pupil place £	Variance (under) / over benchmark £
1	74,562	65,433	9,129
2	51,525	65,433	(13,908)

7.7.7 On this basis, option 1 would currently exceed the benchmark cost per pupil place by circa £9k and would be above the VFM level set nationally. As already set out, this could generate further scrutiny via the DfE regarding achievement of value for money. A further review of the high level cost estimates will be considered as the project moves forward to the next stage.

7.7.8 Regarding further Basic Need allocations, it should be noted that the DfE have confirmed they will not be able to announce the allocations for places needed in 2022 in 2019 due to lack of clarity around school capital budgets from Central Government. Historically, the DfE have tried to announce allocations 3.5 years ahead of when places are needed in order to allow local authorities sufficient time to plan ahead and complete works in time for when additional pupil places are required.

7.7.9 As mentioned earlier, there are a number of risks involved in relation to unknown costs regarding existing expansions, future SEND school places and the condition of the estate. Should further statutory expansions be identified before 2021/22 or costs for committed school expansions increase, the Local Authority would have limited uncommitted Basic Need funding remaining to utilise subject to future DfE allocations. Therefore, other funding options would need to be identified.

7.8 Capital receipts

7.8.1 It should be noted that the Education Support Centre has previously been declared surplus to the Council's requirements. Therefore, any expected capital receipts from the sale of the land and buildings will no longer be achieved and will not be available to support future corporate projects.

7.8.2 Sale proceeds from the former Pinfold Centre had previously been allocated to support the purchase and refurbishment of Lichfield Street (the Quest building) in line with the Smarter Workplaces Capital Programme. If the decision is made not to sell this property, alternative funding options will need to be identified in order to fill the gap (circa £100k).

7.8.3 However, using this site will reduce the overall cost of this project due to utilisation of existing Council owned land.

7.8.4 An estimate of the capital receipts that could have been achieved from the sale of the properties are provided in Table 6 below.

Table 6 – Estimated Capital Receipts	
Location	Estimate Range of Capital Receipt
Former Pinfold Centre	£100k
Education Support Centre	£500k - £750k

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 If Cabinet approves the Recommendations of this report, legal advice will be taken about educational and planning issues and consents arising out of the relocation of the PRU together with the contractual arrangements for any subsequent design and build work, plus any related supplies of goods and services as part of the full feasibility study.

9. Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 9.1 Procurement advice will be taken about the proposals if Cabinet approves the Recommendations. We will need to consider how we procure the next stages of design advice, and options for future procurement of a contractor to implement.

10. Property implications

- 10.1 This report sets out the property implications throughout, detailing how an options appraisal has been undertaken across the whole of the Council's property portfolio to identify a build/ site that was capable of accommodating the requirements of the PRU.
- 10.2 Through the further design work that will be required to progress the preferred option, consideration will be needed as to the maintenance requirements and standards that the new buildings will need to meet. Further work will be needed to identify the net operating costs of the new building and these costs will be met by New Leaf through devolved budgets.
- 10.3 It is understood that New Leaf will be subject to academisation at a point in the near future. As part of the academisation process, under the terms of the Academies Act 2010 the Council will be obliged to grant a lease of the property to the academy trust for a term of 125 years at nil rent.
- 10.4 At the time of writing this report the Council has not given further consideration as to how it may manage the site/ property currently occupied by New Leaf, the building is not likely to be fit for occupation once vacated. The wider Pelsall Lane site is occupied by Rushall Primary School and the Education Development Centre and the campus is located in the Green Belt.

11. Health and wellbeing implications

- 11.1 A new PRU building will provide fit for purpose classroom space in line with current building design recommendations. In relation to the Marmot principles the most relevant principles in line with pupil place planning with school builds is that enabling all children and young people to maximise their capabilities and to have control over their lives.

12. Staffing implications

- 12.1 There will be staffing implications due to relocation of the PRU. These will be incorporated into the feasibility study and reviewed if Cabinet approves the Recommendations.

13. Reducing Inequalities

- 13.1 The aim of a PRU is to reduce the impact of inequalities for children and young people who have been excluded from school, through providing appropriately targeted, specialist support and intervention, to enable them to make progress in relation to education and training.
- 13.2 It is of crucial importance to the Council's strategic objectives that the young People of Walsall are able to access the right provision to meet their need in order to achieve the appropriate qualifications, progressing to employment and / or training and to make a positive contribution within the Borough in the future.

14. Consultation

- 14.1 Consultation to date has included New Leaf PRU and Portfolio Holders named in the report. If Cabinet approves the Recommendations future consultation will include all stakeholders identified during the process.

15. Decide

- 15.1 Cabinet note the findings of Walsall Pupil Referral Unit Stage 1 Options Appraisal Report (**Appendix A**), and the addendum to that report (**Appendix B**).
- 15.2 Cabinet approval to move to the next stage of design feasibility for a new build PRU, located at the former Educational Support Centre, Field Road, Bloxwich and an adjacent property- the former Pinfold Centre, Field Close.
- 15.3 The high level costs for both options are detailed in Table 7 below.

Table 7 – Summary of Revised Options		
	Option 1 (Demo / New Build)	Option 2 (Refurbishment / Demo / New Build)
Site and buildings	Vacant	Vacant
Site Area	8,705m ²	8,705m ²
Programme	71 weeks	75 weeks
Est. Capital Cost	£7.158m	£4.946m

16. Respond

- 16.1 Subject to Cabinet approval IFM will be instructed by Children's Services to progress the preferred route and move to the next stage of design feasibility.
- 16.2 IFM will commission all pre-construction site investigations to identify any abnormal costs that would cause the budget to be exceeded and will report their findings to Children's Services.

16.3 The preferred option for relocation is in the same road as Bloxwich Active Living Centre, which was a project where the ground conditions increased costs. If difficult ground conditions or ecological studies are found for the PRU relocation to here, then the timescales could be longer.

17. Review

17.1 If Cabinet approve the recommendations then a further report will be presented to Cabinet at appropriate stage to gain authority to proceed.

Background papers

Walsall Pupil Referral Unit Stage 1 Options Appraisal Report (**Appendix A**), and the addendum to that report (**Appendix B**).

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Sally Rowe
Executive Director

14 October 2019



Councillor Towe
Portfolio holder

14 October 2019