

## **Cabinet – 12 August 2020**

### **New Leaf Pupil Referral Unit – School Place Planning**

**Portfolio:** Councillor Towe – Education & Skills

**Service:** Children's Services

**Wards:** Aldridge North & Walsall Wood

**Key decision:** Yes

**Forward plan:** Yes

#### **1. Aim**

- 1.1 To create a temporary education setting for the New Leaf Centre – Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), in line with the request of Ofsted to provide an adequate and appropriate educational setting.

#### **2. Summary**

- 2.1 Seeking approval for work to commence the creation of a temporary location for the pupils from the New Leaf Centre PRU in line with the funding detailed in paragraph 4.11.
- 2.2 The Local Authority and Ofsted agreed that the current building was not appropriate for educating some of the most vulnerable pupils. The Local Authority therefore made the decision to provide short-term solution for the educational setting whilst the permanent build was underway.
- 2.3 The report details reasons for the estimated costs for the temporary solution.

#### **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1 That Cabinet approves the temporary relocation of the PRU based on the costs detailed in paragraph 7 until the approved new build is in place for the children.

#### **4. Report detail - know**

##### ***Context***

- 4.1 The New Leaf Centre PRU currently accommodates some of Walsall's most vulnerable pupils in premises that are inappropriate for requirements.

New Leaf PRU was inspected initially in April 2018 and was found to be of an inadequate standard. The Ofsted report specifies "the accommodation for the

children is inadequate and that the buildings are barely fit for purpose. The primary site is in a very poor condition.”

Cabinet approved a proposal to create a new build for the long-term solution for the New Leaf; however, this scheme is not estimated to be completed before September 2022. The total cost of the project has been built into the Basic Need Cash flow forecast and was approved at £7.158m.

- 4.2 As the current New Leaf PRU site can no longer be used effectively to support the educational needs of the pupils; particularly with the Ofsted report, detailing urgent steps must be taken to ensure all pupils are taught in a safe environment – it is crucial that a short-term measure is put into place.
- 4.3 Extensive investigations from Children’s Services and Integrated Facilities Management found an appropriate and suitable temporary site. The Stroud Avenue Family Centre and Spindle Tree Rise Children’s Home - the setting can provide the best educational potential outcomes with a cost effective solution for building works.
- 4.4 It is proposed that 60 children will be able to be accommodated following the refurbishment works at Stroud Avenue Family Centre and Spindle Tree Rise Children’s Home, along with the 34 members of staff.
- 4.5 The scope works is internal reconfiguration of the buildings to provide toilets and suitably sized classrooms. Externally additional parking and secure fencing is required.
- 4.6 Cabinet approval is now being sought in regards to the temporary relocation of New Leaf PRU the project costs are estimated at £850,000 and funding has been identified from within the Capital Programme.
- 4.7 A planning application has been submitted which covers the change of use of the building and any works that are necessary for the building. Planning permission is due 7 September 2020, this a separate process and any comments on the planning application should be made via the planning portal for review by the planning committee. Once planning has been agreed, it is expected the works will take approximately 6-8 weeks.

#### ***Council Corporate Plan priorities***

- 4.8 The proposals to create pupil places to meet identified need and improved educational outcomes contained within this report primarily support the Council’s corporate plan priority, that children have the best start in life and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well.

#### ***Risk management***

- 4.9 The provision of alternative accommodation will enable the Council to meet its statutory duty to ensure that the standard of accommodation is sufficient to meet the educational need of the pupils. Should the project not proceed to conclusion then the Council will be unable to meet its statutory obligations.

### ***Financial implications***

- 4.10 Cabinet approved a total budget of £7.158m for the planned creation of a new permanent facility, which was approved in October 2019.
- 4.11 The total estimated cost for the temporary site is £850,000, and funding is available as per the table below:

<b>Funding</b>	<b>Total required £m</b>	<b>Temporary</b>	<b>Permanent</b>
DSG funding for PRU	0.454	0.000	0.454
Section 106 Funding	0.133	0.011	0.122
Basic Need allocation	6.582	0.000	6.582
DSG funding for SENDI	0.806	0.806	0.000
Sale of Caretaker's House – for MUGA	0.033	0.033	0.000
	<b>8.008</b>	<b>0.850</b>	<b>7.158</b>

- 4.12 The only comparable indicator for the additional £0.850m temporary facility is the Cost of School Buildings 2019 national benchmarking study which indicates that the per pupil place for a SEN school is £42,590 for refurbishments. The additional costs for the temporary facility of £0.850m achieves a per pupil place of £14,167 based on 60 pupils, which is below the benchmark for value for money.
- 4.13 The £0.850m is the best estimate of cost available at the design stage therefore a 20% contingency is included within the total costs. If the costs do not exceed the current estimates then the contingency funding would remain uncommitted at the end of the project and will be carried forward to future years for future projects.

### ***Legal implications***

- 4.14 Should the expansion not be completed and the places not made available, the Council will not be in a position to fulfil its statutory duty.

### ***Procurement Implications/Social Value***

- 4.15 There are no procurement implications, the contractors comply with the councils social value requirements and the educational needs of the pupils will be met.

### ***Property implications***

- 4.16 The property will change use under planning law to an educational establishment. This places additional requirements on Walsall Council if it seeks to dispose of the property within a period of 8-10 years. Under Schedule 1 to the Academies Act 2010, consent is required from the Secretary of State for Education for the disposal of any premises, or part thereof which has been used as a school within 8 years

or the proposed disposal. Under section 77 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998, consent of the Secretary of State for Education is required for the disposal of any school sports fields (including hard and soft play areas) where the field has been used as part of a school within the previous 10 years. Both of these processes are complex, and, there is a requirement to re-invest the proceeds from the disposal of the playing fields disposal in a specified school sports facility. In both cases, there is no presumption in favour of the grant of consent for disposal. The temporary use of Stroud Avenue and Spindle tree Rise will therefore have a significant implication on the potential future disposal of the building.

### ***Health and wellbeing implications***

- 4.17 The Council has a statutory duty to promote health and wellbeing and reduce Health inequalities between groups.
- 4.18 There has been no indication that the content of this report would have any adverse impact on the health and wellbeing of staff and pupils based at Walsall schools. Whilst failure to relocate the pupils would have negative implications as the site current accommodating the children is not appropriate
- 4.19 Walsall Council is a Marmot Council, meaning that it has adopted a set of Evidence-based strategic objectives to reduce health inequalities amongst Walsall residents. Every report must refer to the Marmot objectives and must confirm that the proposals have been tested against those objectives. The objectives are:
- Give every child the best start in life
  - Enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives
  - Create fair employment and good work for all
  - Ensure a healthy standard of living for all
  - Create and develop healthy and sustainable communities
  - Strengthen the role and impact of ill-health prevention

### ***Staffing implications***

- 4.20 No Staffing Implications

### ***Reducing Inequalities***

- 4.21 It is of importance to the achievement of the Council's strategic objectives that the young people of Walsall are able to access the right provision to meet their needs in order to achieve appropriate qualifications. Progressing to employment and/or training and make a positive contribution within the borough in the future.

### ***Consultation***

- 4.22 There are no requirements for a formal consultation in line with this report.

## **5. Decide**

Cabinet approves the funding for the temporary move of the Pupil Referral Unit.

## 6. Respond

Subject to Cabinet approval, works to commence at Stroud Avenue Family Centre and Spindle Tree Rise Children's Home subject to Grant of Planning Permission and costs at previously stated.

## 7. Review

A review of Walsall borough estate has been undertaken to determine where the most appropriate permanent location will be for the pupils for the New Leaf Centre PRU on a long-term basis and works are underway to begin this project.

### Background papers:

**New Leaf Centre Ofsted Report – April 2018**

**Special Measure Monitoring Inspection Letter – December 2019**

### Author



Alex Groom  
School Organisation Manager  
☎ 01922 652583  
✉ alex.groom@walsall.gov.uk



Sally Rowe  
Executive Director

12<sup>th</sup> August 2020



Councillor Towe  
Portfolio holder

12<sup>th</sup> August 2020