

**Meeting date:** 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020  
**Report to:** Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Children,  
Education & Skills



**Subject/report title:** Proposals to create additional school places for pupils with Special Educational Needs  
**Report from:** Director of Children’s Services and Skills  
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**Wards affected:**

All Wards

**Public/private report:** Public

**Exempt by virtue of paragraph:** N/A

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**1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 To update Cabinet Member on the outcome of consultation with schools, parents and the wider community on proposals to create an additionally resourced provision for pupils with Autism at Mill Lodge Primary School, and to expand Reynalds Cross Special School.

**2. Decision(s) recommended**

- 2.1 Consider the outcome of the consultation process on the expansion of Reynalds Cross Special School through the use of Coronation Youth Centre from September 2021 and approve that officers commence the statutory process for the proposal.
- 2.2 Consider the outcome of the consultation process on the creation of an additionally resourced provision at Mill Lodge Primary School from September 2021 and approve that officers commence the statutory process for the proposal.

**3. Matters for Consideration**

- 3.1 On 7 September 2020 Cabinet Member approved pre-statutory consultation on proposals to create an additionally resourced provision at Mill Lodge Primary School and to expand Reynalds Cross Special School
- 3.2 Officers launched a 6 week consultation process, with schools, parents and all interested parties to seek views on the proposals. Each of the schools notified their parents and staff bodies and information was published on the Council website.

3.3 A total of 17 responses have been received across both consultations and the details of these are attached at Appendix A.

### **3.4 Reynalds Cross Special School**

3.4.1 A total of 14 responses (including two responses responding to both proposals) were received regarding the proposed expansion of Reynalds Cross Special School, including a narrated power point presentation from the school about the benefits of the proposals for students. This can be viewed by clicking on the link in appendix A

3.4.2 All of the consultation responses are in favour of the proposal, but have raised three key issues:-

(a) Health support for pupils based on the site at Coronation Youth Centre both in terms of capacity of health staff to support the second location and the facilities on site to support health provision for pupils.

(b) That the accommodation at the Youth Centre is fit for purpose and that the feasibility work for the building delivers outcomes that meet the needs and expectations of the Governing Body of the school and the provision of education to this cohort of pupils.

(c) Implications for school transport for pupils being educated across two sites.

3.4.3 The next stage of the statutory process is the publication of statutory proposals and a further four week period of consultation, which would take place in January. If Cabinet Member approves that this proposal moves to the next stage of the process then these key issues will become the focus of more detailed work, which will be reported back before a final decision is taken on the proposal.

3.5 The Governing Body of the School is supportive of the proposal. Feasibility work is ongoing on the Youth Centre building to ensure that all of their questions and concerns can be addressed before seeking their final approval to move forward with the proposal.

### **3.6 Mill Lodge Primary School**

3.6.1 A total of 5 responses (including two responses to both proposals) were received regarding the proposal to create an additionally resourced provision, catering for pupils with Autism, at Mill Lodge Primary School.

3.6.2 Again all of the responses are in favour of the creation of this provision. A number have raised questions about the proposals, so officers have created a frequently asked questions document which will be published as part of the next stage of the process if approval is given to move forward with the proposal.

3.6.3 The Governing Body of the School are supportive of the proposal. Officers have provided further information around funding for the provision where this has been requested and detailed feasibility work has been undertaken on the accommodation on site to ensure that it can meet the needs of this cohort of pupils. Officers will continue to work with the Governing Body to ensure that all of their questions are addressed before seeking their final approval for the proposal.

#### **4. What options have been considered and what is the evidence telling us about them?**

- 4.1 Development of additionally resourced provision is key to the creation of ‘in-house’ provision to meet the on-going increasing demand for specialist provision. Where possible any new provision will not only meet the needs of pupils being newly identified as in need of specialist provision, but will also endeavour to provide a realistic alternative to those families where children are having to travel outside of Solihull.
- 4.2 As part of the process for developing the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) School Place Commissioning Strategy, schools were asked to express an interest if they want to be considered for an additionally resourced provision.
- 4.3 Existing specialist provision is reviewed annually in particular the local level of special school places. There is still immense pressure on Solihull special schools even though there has been a 14% increase in the number of places over the last 3 years. There is clear evidence that there is increase in need and demand for additional places across all 5 of our existing schools. Working in partnership with special school headteachers we are continuing to explore other opportunities to further expand local special school places whilst recognising the need to add additional accommodation to alleviate existing and future pressure.

#### **5. Reasons for recommending preferred option**

- 5.1 Development of ‘in-house’ specialist provision is a key strand within the Children’s Services wider strategy for managing the increase in demand for specialist provision within the high needs grant paid to the Council. Without the creation of additional provision, the council will continue to rely on high cost independent provision located outside of Solihull, putting further strain on both the high needs and transport budgets.
- 5.2 The outcome of the consultation process has shown wide support for both proposals and the issues raised are not considered by Officers as issues that cannot be resolved with further work. Therefore it is Officers view that the proposals should be approved to move to the next stage of the statutory process, the outcome of which will be brought back to Cabinet Member in January before seeking a final decision on each of the proposals.

#### **6. Implications and Considerations**

- 6.1 State how the proposals in this report contribute to the priorities in the [Council Plan](#):

Priority:	Contribution:
<p>Economy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Revitalising our towns and local centres.</li><li>2. UK Central (UKC) and maximising the opportunities of HS2.</li></ol>	<p>These proposals seek to create additional specialist school places to meet increasing demand for places for pupils with EHCPs. Demand for places is increasing due to higher levels of complex need, growing school cohorts and families migrating into</p>

<p>3. Increase the supply of housing, especially affordable and social housing.</p>	<p>the Borough through new housing development.</p>
<p>Environment:</p> <p>4. Enhance Solihull's natural environment. 5. Improve Solihull's air quality. 6. Reduce Solihull's net carbon emissions.</p>	<p>By creating additional specialist places in Solihull, more families will be able to access places closer to home and limit the number that have to travel, in some cases significant distances, to access provision outside of Solihull.</p>
<p>People and Communities:</p> <p>7. Take action to improve life chances in our most disadvantaged communities. 8. Enable communities to thrive. 9. Sustainable, quality, affordable provision for adults &amp; children with complex needs.</p>	<p>Increasing the number of specialist places in 'good and outstanding' schools in Solihull will offer high quality school places, close to home, for some of our most vulnerable pupils. These proposals offer a more cost effective method of provision delivery, predicated on a model of creating two places in Solihull for the cost of one place in Independent provision outside of Solihull.</p>

## 6.2 Consultation and Scrutiny:

6.2.1 This report outlines the outcome of a 6 week period of consultation and seeks permission to carry out a further four week period of statutory consultation on specific proposals to increase places at Reynolds Cross Special School and to create an additionally resourced provision at Mill Lodge Primary School.

6.2.2 The Parent Carer Voice Group and the North Parents Support Group have been updated on the proposals as part of the termly meetings with Officers.

6.2.3 No report has been considered by Scrutiny Board.

## 6.3 Financial implications:

6.3.1 These proposals are part of the Dedicated Schools Grant – High Needs Block Recovery Plan. The revised plan was reported to and approved by Cabinet on 5 November 2020.

6.3.2 **Revenue** – For the Mill Lodge proposal a funding model based on an appropriate staffing structure has been developed with the school. The provision will cater for up to 8 pupils at a place value of £25,800 per place a total revenue cost of £206,000. The ultimate purpose is to prevent the need longer term for an equivalent out of borough placement at an average cost of £50,000 per annum.

6.4 The expansion of Reynolds Cross Special School will seek to create an additional 20 places over the two year implementation period at £19,412 or £24,404 per place depending on pupil need, at an estimated total revenue cost of £418,000 (14 lower cost places, 6 higher cost places). Places in special schools outside of Solihull typically cost circa £40,000 per place plus travel costs.

- 6.4.1 **Capital** – Both projects have been the subject of preliminary feasibility work, undertaken by the Property Services Team, and involved consultation with relevant officers and school stakeholders. The feasibility work has shown that the Mill Lodge accommodation can be remodelled and equipped to make an environment suitable to provide a sensory environment for the students identified.
- 6.4.2 Feasibility work at Coronation Youth Centre has also identified that the Centre can be remodelled to make an appropriate space for school use, based upon its usage by older pupils, and still provide for a wider youth offer.
- 6.4.3 The costings for both projects, at their respective stage of feasibility, formed the basis of the provisional funding included in the, now, approved Children’s Services Capital Programme 2020/23, reported to the Cabinet Member on the 9 July 2020.
- 6.5 Legal implications:
- 6.5.1 Both the creation of an additionally resourced provision and the expansion of a special school by more than 10% require a statutory process. This report seeks to commence this process with a period of consultation.
- 6.6 Risk implications:
- 6.6.1 One of the key risks is that additional specialist provision cannot be added in time to meet the growth in demand that is forecast. This will increase the Council’s reliance on out of Borough high cost provision and associated additional travel costs.
- 6.6.2 In addition there are risks such as proposed costs of individual proposals exceeding the resources available.
- 6.7 Equality implications:
- 6.7.1 These proposals seek to enhance the educational offer available in Solihull for pupils with Special Educational Needs and seeks to support wider inclusion for all pupils by offering a range of educational provision.

## **7. List of appendices referred to**

- 7.1 Appendix A – Consultation responses

## **8. Background papers used to compile this report**

- 8.1 Cabinet Portfolio Holder report 7 September 2020

## **9. List of other relevant documents**

- 9.1 None